


Crossing the text frontier: Teachers resisting African language texts for learning



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Background: Scholars have identified the benefits of using African languages and bilingual approaches in South African education; at the same time, the dominance of language ideologies and systemic constraints work against the full implementation of bilingual education.

Objectives: This article tracks the early responses of the pre-service and in-service teachers in two intervention projects to the bi/multilingual pedagogies presented to them and their uptake in their pedagogy.

Method: The study probes the responses of teachers who were comfortable with African language use in oral activities but did not yet take this up in reading and writing activities. Data from two focus group interviews in two research projects are analysed using critical discourse analysis.

Results: The use of African languages in written form posed a frontier yet to be breached by these teachers in their classroom practices.

Conclusion: We argue that the dominant, entangled reasons for what we call the 'text frontier' in bilingual learning in South Africa are the following: the coloniality of literacy, linked to colonial language ideologies which position African languages as deficient vehicles of academic pursuit; the lack of bilingual learning materials; teachers' own experience with using African language texts in their education; and the pressure of monolingual standardised systemic assessments.

Contribution: Our work contributes to an understanding of how language and literacy ideologies impact pedagogy. The article concludes with an exploration of the implications of the text frontier for the use of African languages in education.

Keywords: bilingual; African languages; literacy ideologies; colonial language ideologies; teacher education; decoloniality.

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between language and literacy ideologies and pedagogy regarding two teacher intervention projects in South Africa. The projects worked with primary and high school science teachers and promoted bi/multilingual teaching methods in oral and written activities using the resources of isiXhosa and English. South Africa has a language in education policy (Department of Education 1997) which enables multilingualism in teaching and learning. The policy allows schools via the school governing body to select one or more official language as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) and explicitly requires that schools describe the multilingual approach they are using. South Africa also boasts a large body of research which points to the benefits of bilingual education, including biliteracy (Guzula 2022; eds. Heugh, Pluddemann & Siegruhn 1995; Makalela 2018; Mbude 2018; Nomlomo 2007). In addition, the country has an historical record (albeit in support of apartheid ideology) of successful, formalised bilingual English-Afrikaans education (Malherbe 1946), which has benefitted mainly 'White' children. Despite these realities, South Africa has to date not provided formal bilingual education in African languages and English for most African language-speaking children. Except for a minority of Afrikaans-English bilingual schools, school governing bodies have not taken up the opportunity of offering teaching and learning in more than one language. This is not surprising considering that neither the national nor provincial education departments have provided learning materials or curriculum documents beyond Grade 3 in any of the indigenous African languages and, in some cases, officials actively discourage the use of more than one language in

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teaching (Western Cape Education Department 2014, 2017). The trajectory for most African language speaking children is home language (or rather the standardised African language that the school has designated as home language) as language of instruction in the first 4 years of schooling (Grade R–3) and then a switch to English in Grade 4 (McKinney 2017). There is, however, a new impetus for mother tongue-based bilingual education to be rolled out from 2025 (Department of Basic Education 2024).

Despite this historical lack of official government support for bilingual education, teacher education interventions continue to offer teachers and schools resources and training in implementing bilingual methods using African languages. Examples include the bilingual Foundation Phase teacher education programme at the University of Fort Hare (Ramadiro 2022) and Nelson Mandela University, the multilingual Foundation Phase literacy module at the University of Cape Town (Abdulatif, Guzula & McKinney 2021), and some time ago the Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA)'s Training of Trainers for Bilingual Education in Southern Africa (TOTSA) programme (Benson & Pluddemann 2010; eds. Heugh et al. 1995). Most of these projects have worked with bilingualism in an African language and English in oral practices as well as in texts. These are focused on the language subjects in the Foundation Phase as well as all subjects in the Intermediate Phase. However, the focus of this article is on two recently established bilingual education intervention projects working with in-service and pre-service science teachers in the Intermediate Phase (primary school) and Senior Phase (high school) in Cape Town. Forerunners of these projects were the Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA) project which worked with senior primary science teachers in the Western Cape (Nomlomo 2007) as well as the Language Transformation Plan (LTP) in the Western Cape (Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele 2014).

Previous studies have shown how teachers and learners comfortably use bilingual practices for learning science in the oral mode (Hattingh et al. 2021; Probyn 2009). However, the use of familiar African languages in written science texts – both reading and writing – has been resisted (Tyler 2023). Therefore, the present study focuses on teachers' language and literacy ideologies which shape their responses to the inclusion of African languages in learning materials and asks the following guiding questions: What are the language and literacy ideologies of science teachers engaged in bilingual education intervention programmes? How do these language and literacy ideologies influence their uptake of African languages in written form, including learning materials?

Coloniality and the invention of African language literacy

To contextualise the teachers' language and literacy ideologies as well as their experiences in this study, we draw on the interrelated scholarship on the colonial invention of African languages (Makoni & Pennycook 2005). Furthermore, more

recent work on the invention of literacy in Southern Africa (Kell 2022; Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ 2018) as well as on the 'coloniality of language' is used (Veronelli 2015). Veronelli has extended the paradigm of the coloniality of power introduced by Quijano (in Veronelli 2015) to include a dimension of the 'coloniality of language' as a critical component of coloniality which persists in post-colonial societies. Veronelli describes how colonised peoples were constructed during colonial conquest as at the same time languageless and deficient in their use of language. Two processes of subjugation ensued from this view of colonised peoples: firstly, Western colonisers – specifically linguists and missionaries – invented African languages according to the template of Western language theory. For each African 'nation', a national or 'tribal' language was invented which was distinct from other African languages (Makoni & Pennycook 2005). This process made the speakers' understanding of their language use invisible and superimposed a monoglossic ideology on their language practices. Over time these invented languages have become sedimented into African language speakers' repertoires (Guzula 2022) and constitute the standardised versions of officially recognised languages, such as isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Setswana, which are taught as subjects in South African schools.

Kell (2022) has extended the concept of the invention of languages into literacy to focus on the specific process of coloniality working in the area of written text. In an interview with literacy colleagues, Kell traces the effects of the missionaries' invention of an orthography for African language literacy in South Africa:

[T]here's a kind of alienation that happens for local speakers of language because they weren't fully in charge of the ways in which their languages became written languages since it was already happening through the epistemological lenses, the morphologies and the sounds of the missionaries' languages, their forms of writing and their preconceptions about literacy. (p. 176)

Another effect of the coloniality of language shaping current perceptions of African language texts is the exclusion of literature written in African languages from the 'canon' of African literature. Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ (2018) draws attention to the existence of novels written in isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho, predating novels written by Africans in English and questions their exclusion from the 'canon' of African literature. He invites readers to imagine the absurdity of 'European literature' excluding fiction written in European languages (such as Spanish, German, French or Polish) (McKinney 2022). An historic conference convened at Makerere University in 1962 titled 'African Writers of English expression' and widely recognised as a key moment in the establishment of the canon of African literature excluded any literature written in African languages. Interviewed by his son, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o reflects on the effects of the coloniality of language on his own thinking at the time (Mukoma Wa Ngũgĩ 2018):

No writer in an African language was invited. And no writing in an African language, even in translation, was ever discussed ... We had been socialised into taking English as the linguistic norm ... We never questioned that linguistic premise. (p. 18)

Likewise in the context of education, the conception of literacy which we have inherited is largely based on English literacy (Kell 2022:187). Lastly, African languages as written texts have also been affected by processes of erasure. A telling example is the erasure of early versions of Afrikaans written by slaves at the Cape (Alim, Williams, Haupt & Jansen 2021).

The colonial processes of canonisation and invention of languages have produced a situation in contemporary African education where literacy in African languages occupies a rarified and highly limited place in curriculum and assessment. We will show that a stubborn barrier to the use of African languages in written form, called the African-language text frontier, exists in teaching and learning of school subjects (such as science) outside of the African-language subjects.

Teachers' language ideologies and African languages in classroom texts

The present study is particularly focused on South African teacher language and literacy ideologies and how these shape their views and practices. As stated above, almost all South African children transition to official English-medium education after Grade 3 while oral bilingual practices such as translanguaging persist. The term *code-switching* is quite familiar to South African teachers and is embedded in their practice, albeit illicitly most of the time (Probyn 2009). Research also shows teachers allowing learners to use different languages in their talk, in group work, and plenary (see Hattingh et al. 2021).

Given the efficacy of the oral translanguaging practices as well as their widespread use, the question that presents itself is why such bilingual practices are limited to the oral form. In contrast to research on oral bilingual language use in classrooms, translanguaging research involving writing in African languages (beyond the African language lesson) has been limited to intervention studies outside of formal classrooms (Guzula 2022; Krause-Alzaidi 2023; Tyler 2023). As discussed above, broader conceptions of written language as bearer of authority and standards (Lillis & McKinney 2013) make it likely that colonial language ideologies may prevent teachers from viewing African languages as a legitimate, literate resource in the classroom. A further and associated challenge is the fact that teacher education in South Africa itself is largely carried out through monolingual English (Ramadiro 2022), and thus teachers do not have the experience in their own schooling or their teacher education to deal with texts written in African languages. In addition, all high stakes assessments in subjects apart from African language subjects are conducted in monolingual English or Afrikaans forms (Prinsloo 2021; Probyn 2009).

Methodology

The present study uses focus group interview data collected during two ethnographically informed (Copland & Creese 2015) intervention projects. The data for this article has been

selected for its relevance to the teachers' language and literacy ideologies in particular. The projects collaborated with teachers to interrogate and shift practices in their multilingual classrooms to legitimise the use of African languages for learning. In the Western Cape, the African language spoken by the majority of 'Black'¹ school-aged children is isiXhosa. The teachers sampled for the present study are all bilingual: isiXhosa-dominant and proficient in English. The sample from the first project 'Leveraging languages for science teaching in multilingual classrooms' (2020–2021), hereafter Project 1, focused on three pre-service teachers. The second project *Bilingual learning materials* (2022–2025), hereafter Project 2, focused on three in-service teachers at one school. The research was reviewed by the research ethics committee of the University of the Western Cape and followed principles of voluntary participation and informed consent. All names of individuals and institutions are pseudonyms.

The projects were ethnographically informed in that the researchers were interested in the current practices of the teachers and their language and literacy biographies and attitudes before the intervention. Therefore, questionnaires and interviews as well as classroom observations formed key data sources in both projects. Other data sources included student teachers' assignments, recordings of classroom lessons taught by in-service teachers, copies of children's classwork and assessments. In addition to teachers, learners and their parents were also participants in Project 2. The baseline questionnaire and interview data helped not only to shape the interventions, but also provide insight into the reasons for the decisions teachers take. The conviction that current practices and life experience influence teachers' practices stems from a sociocultural understanding of language and literacy. The sociocultural approach to language and literacy research is built on research which connects the social world and histories of actors to their current practices and beliefs (Street 1984). Focus group interviews with teachers, conducted by Tyler, gave insight into the uptake of the proposed changes in practice as well as the beliefs and feelings of the teachers towards the new and existing practices. This article presents interview data, analysing instances of teachers' reported attitudes and decisions towards African language use or translanguaging in written texts used as learning resources. We follow a linguistic ethnographic approach (Copland & Creese 2015) as well as thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun 2006) to identify teacher language ideologies.

Findings: Project 1

Project 1 was based in the third year of the 4-year Bachelor of Education course at a Western Cape university. The first phase of the project consisted of a 6-week online teaching unit delivered to 80 natural science methodology students in 2021 on topics such as oral and written translanguaging,

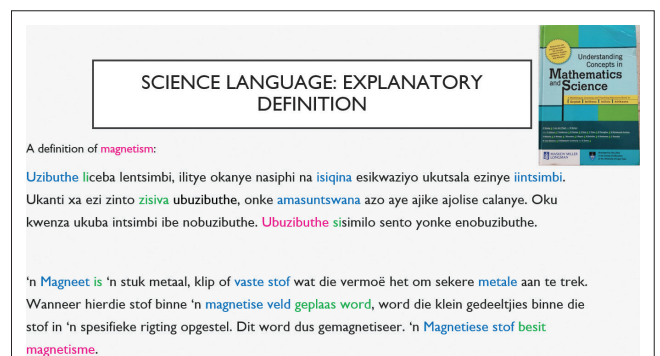
¹This term refers to the apartheid-era racial category assigned to indigenous African people and is problematised as a social construction here using scare quotes.

science terminology in different languages and language policy. The second phase involved lecturers visiting students at school during their teaching practice period in their fourth year of studies. In Phase 1, the lecturers on the multilingual science methodology course (including Tyler) shared multilingual resources with the students such as worksheets, glossaries, dictionaries, and tests. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are examples of PowerPoint slides used in the lectures.

Students who were enrolled in Project 1 held energetic debates with each other using the chat function of the video conferencing tool about whether only English or all languages are valuable for learning science. Their assignment consisted of a science lesson plan for Grade 8s in which they had to demonstrate how they would draw on learners' linguistic repertoires in their teaching. Three pre-service teachers participated in a focus group interview conducted by Tyler during the practical teaching placement in 2022, the year following their participation in the methodology course. The purpose of this focus group was to enable discussion of the uptake of the multilingual pedagogies taught on the course. The teachers were all undertaking their teaching practical experience at a high school in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Onele and Lilomso were teaching science and Zinzi was teaching mathematics. These three students were enthusiastic about multilingual teaching and learning during lectures and also expressed these sentiments in their written assignments. However, none of them reported using isiXhosa texts or isiXhosa for writing, that is, isiXhosa literacy practices, in their teaching. Here we focus on their comments about bi/multilingual text including isiXhosa in English-medium science teaching.

Prior to Extract 1, the interviewer asked whether they thought of using any of the multilingual or isiXhosa language text resources they were exposed to in lectures or making written bilingual resources themselves. All three student-teachers reported that they had not used materials in a language other than English. They explain further in the extracts that follow:

In Extract 1 (Table 1), Onele refers to two examples of the oral use of isiXhosa in their teaching. The first use of isiXhosa to 'explain', employed a lexicon from the children's out-of-school lives (see Table 1 L12) and was acceptable to Onele and the in-service teacher who was referred to in Line 1. However, when the register shifted to 'scientific concepts' (see Table 1 L17, L22), Onele describes how the use of isiXhosa terms was met with derision from learners (see Table 1 L17, L22). This stated limitation on the use of African language for informal oral language in



Source: Young, D., Van Der Vlugt, J. & Qanya, S., 2005, *Understanding concepts in Mathematics and Science: A multilingual learning and teaching resource book in English, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Afrikaans*, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town.

FIGURE 2: Lecture slide showing examples of explanatory definitions in Afrikaans and isiXhosa.



FIGURE 1: Lecture slide showing a selection of science texts written in African languages.

science was also found in a previous study (McKinney & Tyler 2019). Since Grade 4, scientific concepts have solely been taught in English, leading to the socialisation of 9-year-old learners to perceive African language terminology as 'out of place'. Their language and literacy ideologies possibly have a contribution to the text frontier in bi/multilingual education.

In Onele's words we see the prominence of the monolingual English standard in written text. In reading (L24), writing (L3, L25) and in assessment (L6, L7) the 'expectation' is that learners will encounter and need to produce monolingual English text. Onele states unequivocally his awareness that 'they are required to write in English' (L3), emphasising with the passive construction that this is beyond his control. Thus, the modelling of the use of African languages in written texts Onele received during the multilingual B.Ed. methodology course had no impact on his conception of 'good' language use for science pedagogy during his first teaching experience. The authority and expectation of English-only published text ('that is not how it is written in the textbook' L24) proved too powerful, especially as Onele had no experience of isiXhosa science texts in his own schooling. Onele did not even position isiXhosa scientific terminology as a bridge to the English concepts, but rather something to be avoided. Indeed, he imagines the teacher thinking 'you are delaying us' (L5); in other words, the use of written African languages would impede or prevent access to English and therefore to the scientific concepts that should be learned.

TABLE 1: Extract 1 - Onele.

Lines	Participant responses
L1	I know the teacher maybe can explain in isiXhosa
L2	But I thought maybe if I'm
L3	Since they are required to write in English
L4	If maybe I come with a text written in isiXhosa
L5	I think maybe the teacher will be like uh maybe you are delaying us ne with isiXhosa language
L6	Because this won't be how the test will be maybe or the exam will be set
L7	This is not how the exam will be set
L8	So the teachers are able to
L9	I I what I did I explained in isiXhosa instead of writing down in isiXhosa
L10	I would maybe have diagrams and explain in isiXhosa
L11	Like when I had the brick and the sponge
L12	When I said to them okay <i>esi sisonji lena esi sistena</i> [this is the sponge and this is the brick]
L13	You see
L14	And I explained that in isiXhosa instead of writing down [Extract continues after intervening turns]
L15	In Term three when they were doing forces uh magnetic forces
L16	I I said <i>imagnethi</i> [a magnet] all that
L17	And they were like laughing
L18	I'm talking about these words <i>mazibuthe</i> [magnetism]
L19	Saying that <i>mazibuthe</i>
L20	So I feel like when you are introducing some concepts
L21	Scientific concepts in isiXhosa
L22	They feel like ja maybe you are playing or you are not serious
L23	You see
L24	Because that is not how it is written in the textbook
L25	And that is not how they are expected to write

Zinzi echoes Onele's explanation that the use of isiXhosa would hinder the successful learning of English through science. She voices a conviction held by many South African parents and teachers that the best way to learn English is for teachers and children to use it exclusively or mainly in their learning of all subjects. This conviction has been shown to be erroneous by many research studies (Bamgbose 1983; Thomas & Collier 2002). Zinzi also adds a further reason for not seeking isiXhosa language resources: She herself would find writing science in isiXhosa difficult (L7). This is corroborated in an earlier study when the top student in a high school science class, an isiXhosa speaker, said that writing science in isiXhosa would be 'very hard' (Tyler 2023:125). The academic field of science is conceived of as an English domain, even though many words that scientists use are derived from older languages such as Latin and Greek. Zinzi emphasises this in Line 3 (Table 2) with the use of the word 'especially'. Zinzi's experience is not surprising given the lack of non-fiction texts and science materials available in African languages in South Africa. She and her peers have not been exposed to science written in an African language. While her own science learning experience might have benefitted from oral translanguaging, written materials and assessments would have been exclusively in monolingual English.

Lilomso expresses a discourse of minimalism and concession related to the use of isiXhosa in oral explanations. In Line 5 (Table 3), she prefers a 'little explanation in isiXhosa' indicating that only oral isiXhosa should be used sparingly to ameliorate the lack of understanding in her students, 'where the learners don't [*understand*]'. Here she echoes another teacher who referred to 'smuggling in the vernacular' in her classroom (Probyn 2009) – words that reveal a belief that isiXhosa is illegitimate in the class and should be used as little as possible. Apart from its minimal use orally, Lilomso rules out using isiXhosa in the authoritative written form: 'not that we [...] must look for the textbooks or any resources in isiXhosa'.

The language ideologies expressed by Onele, Zinzi and Lilomso, which reproduce the belief that African languages cannot be used for science and should only be used in oral explanations when learners struggle to understand in English, reproduce Anglonormativity and the coloniality of language and literacy described earlier in this article. We understand these ideologies as produced through the legacy of these novice teachers' own education and socialisation where they were not exposed to African language text for science or any other field of study outside of the study of African languages itself. Furthermore, the monolingual English textbooks and assessments, which they encounter in schools, reinforce these ideologies.

Findings: Project 2

Project 2 works with in-service science teachers in two schools in Cape Town. The data used in this article were collected at Ilitha Park Primary School in Khayelitsha where

TABLE 2: Extract 2 - Zinzi.

Lines	Participant responses
L1	I did not think about it [using isiXhosa language texts]
L2	And I think it's because I've always had this notion that like they need to use English mostly cos they need to be familiar
L3	Especially for science
L4	They need to be familiar with science words
L5	So now
L6	And I think now that I'm thinking about it
L7	It will be very much difficult for me to even write science words in isiXhosa

TABLE 3: Extract 3 - Lilomso.

Lines	Participant responses
L1	I also say to myself
L2	Maybe if teachers when they are explaining some of the things
L3	They can explain in isiXhosa
L4	Not that we we they must look for the textbooks or any resources in isiXhosa eh
L5	Just give the little explanation in isiXhosa where the learners don't
L6	Because it's not like the learners don't understand everything
L7	They understand some portions

a bilingual English-isiXhosa science booklet, *iSayensi Yethu* [our science] (bua-lit collective 2022), was tested in a Grade 4 classroom. The booklet was designed and written by a team of isiXhosa-English bilinguals. It aimed to provide epistemic access to the science content for African language speakers and also to raise the profile of isiXhosa in an academic content subject beyond Grade 3 (Guzula & Tyler forthcoming). Ms Azania, the Grade 4 natural science teacher at Ilitha Park Primary school, received the *iSayensi Yethu* booklets in January 2022. The introduction of the learning material had the support of the principal and the serving official of the education department. Ms Azania used the booklets in her teaching earlier in the year, but without any special bilingual pedagogy training or classroom support. The data analysed below are taken from the first focus group interview Tyler held with the three science teachers – Ms Azania, Mr Kwezi and Mr Mohau – where the booklet as well as their pedagogy prior to the introduction of the booklet was discussed. The interview took place in September 2022 before observation of the use of the learning material in classrooms began in January 2023.

The following discussion occurred in response to Tyler's question about which learning material the teachers would choose to use in class. There were three textbooks displayed on the table: a monolingual English book, the bilingual isiXhosa-English *iSayensi Yethu* book and a monolingual isiXhosa book (Figure 3).

Ms Azania started by saying she would choose the English book and the bilingual book. Then it was Mr Mohau's turn to reply.

Extract 4:

- T1 Mr Mohau: Because if the learners master and then they are good in English they understand that means I can use this one (English) for those ones and then there are those that are still struggling maybe, I can try to use that one [bilingual]

- T2 RT: OK, Mr Kwezi would you do the same?
- T3 Mr Kwezi: I would do the same ja, I can use this one [bilingual] as a low level, if I may put it that way
- T4 RT: So Xhosa is the low level hey?
- T5: (non-verbal response by all laughing)
- T6 Mr Kwezi: Let's say that
- T7 Ms Azania: Slow slow learners

All three teachers explain that they would only use a bilingual isiXhosa-English text as a concession towards children who are academically the weakest in class, positioning isiXhosa alongside 'struggling' and 'slow' learners. The phrases 'struggling', 'slow' and 'low level' reveal the expectation that the 'normal' learner should be able to cope with monolingual English text and that the introduction of isiXhosa would be both remedial or compensatory (only for the weaker learners) and minimal (only for some learners). Here the teachers echo Lilomso in Extract 3 who wanted to minimise the use of isiXhosa through 'little explanations' only. As in the findings from the student-teachers in Project 1, minimising and restricting the use of isiXhosa to the oral mode in learning is an expression of Anglonormativity (McKinney 2017) and the colonial process of 'normalising the abnormal' (Thiong'o 2018). The inverse of the preference of isiXhosa for weak learners is the association of the use of English with intelligence, a language ideology expressed by teachers and principals in Makoe and McKinney's research (2014) in Johannesburg schools that also conflated proficiency in English with intelligence.

Tyler probed Ms Azania's use of the booklet prior to the commencement of the classroom-based support, asking whether the booklet was read by the children in class. Ms Azania's response opens Extract 5, and we discuss a particular passage in the booklet (bua-lit 2022:9).

Extract 5:

- T1 Ms Azania: We did read the text
- T2 RT: Did they, sorry for all the questions, did they read it themselves out loud or silently or did you read it for them and they followed the text
- T3 Ms Azania: I read for them and then they followed the text
- T4 RT: A and did you read it exactly as it's written '*imbotyi ngumzekelo wezityalo*' ['a bean is an example of a plant'] or did you read it differently
- T5 Ms Azania: [ja], I said 'a bean'
- T6 RT: So did you translate it into English as you were reading
- T7 Ms Azania: Yes
- T8 RT: Ah interesting, so every time you saw Xhosa you translated it//
- T9 Ms Azania: I just summarised it before (RT: oh you summarised it) because I read it before I go to the class, to the lesson, so I just summarised it for them

Versioning or, as Ms Azania terms it, 'summarising' a text into another language in a bilingual classroom can be a



Source: Adatia et al. (2014); bua-lit (2022) and Green et al. (2014)

FIGURE 3: A monolingual English textbook (left), a bilingual isiXhosa-English textbook (centre) and a monolingual isiXhosa textbook (right).

pedagogically beneficial task (Tyler 2023). However, in this instance, the isiXhosa text is absent from the teacher's voicing of the academic content and so its authority as a science meaning-making resource is diminished. While the learners have access to isiXhosa science text for the first time, its impact is reduced when the teacher does not read it aloud. Ms Azania's laughter (T5) as she admits that she translated to English rather than reading the original isiXhosa text suggests a possible awareness developing through the interview questioning of how she is deliberately excluding the use of isiXhosa in written form from her science lesson.

Her response also reveals an unanticipated use of the *iSayensi Yethu* materials. She reports reading the text before she goes to class. Potentially, the booklet is functioning as a teacher resource to consolidate her own understanding of the topic. While the booklet was not designed as a teacher resource, Ms Azania is showing through her practice that the content, presented in isiXhosa and English, is useful as background reading, despite her unwillingness to read it aloud in class at this stage. Ms Azania went on to use the bilingual materials in her Grade 4-class. Her feedback on this practice was very positive as can be seen in her comments in a feedback meeting to Grade 4 parents.

Extract 6: Ms Azania's feedback to parents

Nam andifuni nophosisa ndandikwelaqela lootitshala abangayiva ncam lencwadi uqala kwabo ulantuka uqala kwayo uku introduswa. Kodwa ndithe once ndiyisebenzise eklasini yenze umsebenzi wam walula lencwadi ke iteach ngesiXhosa kunye nange nange english, yiEnglish kunye nantoni nesiXhosa. So indenze ndibone abantwana benomdla

kakhulu ibenze iinterest abantwana kakhulu ngoba ke omnye umntana ebekwazi ukuhlala if yiEnglish only.

ngoba ku Grade 4 kukhona beqala ufunda iscience once bayibhuda bangabinamdla kwa grade 4 kobanzima ukuya kwezinye iigrade kunye nala science

[I don't wanna lie I was also part of the group of teachers who didn't really understand this book when it was first introduced. But once I used it in class it made my work really easy for me in class, because it teaches science in isiXhosa and English, in English and isiXhosa. So I started seeing my children being more interested, they were very interested, because I would see the child is confused when I was teaching in English only.]

[(B)ecause they are only beginning to do science in Grade 4, so if they lose interest now it will be difficult for them to carry on with science to other grades].

Ms Azania describes how the experience of using the bilingual book made her job 'easy' and stimulated her learners' interest in science. She expresses the importance of this for learners' continuation with science, linking the bilingual materials directly to the children's future in the field of science. The change in Ms Azania's attitude to the inclusion of isiXhosa in text in her class was possible through her willingness to try the materials and through the experience of teaching bilingually.

Discussion and conclusion

Our analysis shows that teachers neither resisted oral translanguaging per se, nor was there any evidence of resistance to mixed language use in text in particular, but rather they resisted the use of African languages in written

text. The data showed that pre-service teachers who were exposed to translanguaging pedagogy and catalogues of African language texts for learning science did not spontaneously seek out African language texts to teach science. Furthermore, when bilingual African language-English texts were introduced to in-service teachers they indicated that they would use them only under special circumstances. In the interviews, teachers gave the reasons for the lack of use of African language texts as:

- Using African languages, especially in text, would be counterproductive when preparing learners for English monolingual assessments.
- African languages should only be used orally and minimally.
- African language texts should only be used as compensation for weaker learners.
- Concern over bilingual or African language text working against English proficiency, especially in preparation for standardised tests.

These reasons given by teachers reveal powerful colonial language and literacy ideologies which perpetuate the myth that European languages such as English are superior and that African languages should not be entextualised in written form or used in formal education. As the view is prevalent among younger novice student-teachers as well as experienced qualified teachers, these ideologies present a serious potential obstacle to implementation of bi/multilingual education using African languages alongside English. These ideological barriers, constituting a 'text frontier', exist in society at large and not only among teachers. It is important that much-needed advocacy work acknowledges the racialised nature of these language and literacy ideologies that continue to exclude African languages, which are associated with 'Blackness', from written materials and formal education. Anglonormative and colonial ideologies will only shift when African language texts become visible and are used in the school environment, especially in high status assessments as well as in teacher education. With national and provincial education department advocacy and support for the formal use of African languages as Languages of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LOLTAs), there is hope that the use of these languages will become normalised in formal educational settings. Addressing language ideologies and increasing language inclusion are two elements of critical translanguaging (Lau, Tian & Lin 2021) which are essential to addressing linguistic injustice in education.

Beyond language ideologies, the findings in this study point to the specific challenges of colonial *literacy ideologies* which have pernicious effects on the use and development of African language texts for learning across the curriculum. The authority and permanence of written text in isiXhosa, the materiality of African languages in written form, in contrast to the relatively fleeting nature of oral discourse, is confronting after such a long history of exclusion. According to Kell (2022), 'a kind of alienation' of literacy in African languages is a consequence of the coloniality of literacy that

resonates in this confrontation. We need to better understand this alienation to support a process of unlearning or dismantling these literacy ideologies. Making sense of teachers' literacy ideologies and the text frontier is critical as we work towards implementing mother tongue-based bilingual education. In tandem with explicitly addressing ideologies and pedagogies, teachers need exposure to a range of texts written in African languages as well as opportunities to work with these texts through reading and writing practices so that these become familiar. Witnessing and participating in teaching practices where African languages in text are included is critical for teachers to develop this familiarity. Ms Azania's experience, reported on in Project 2, is a case in point. The case studies presented in this special issue are a testament to the power of modelling and classroom-based support. Publishers also have a role to play in publishing more African language texts for schools, and school managers can assist by making African languages visible in print at their schools. These trans-societal efforts will all contribute to a virtuous cycle (Mohanty 2018) of raised status and use of African languages in South African schooling.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

R.T. collected data, performed initial data analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. R.T. and C.M. engaged in the writing and editing of the final research article.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape and ethics consent was received on 25 August 2022. The ethics approval number is HS 20/1/13; HS22/6/32. The research followed principles of voluntary participation and informed consent. All names of individuals and institutions are pseudonyms.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not openly available to the public due to the ethical consideration of confidentiality.

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