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Hybridity and eclecticism in rethinking the multilingual turn in English language pedagogies

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Background: The article critiques the monoglossic ideologies that dominate current educational practices in South Africa, which often marginalise indigenous African languages and fail to facilitate the dynamic multilingual realities of learners. It examines the impact of English language pedagogies in multilingual settings, particularly in South Africa, where the dominance of English affects indigenous languages and cultures.

Objectives: The article aims to advocate for a paradigm shift in language education, proposing the integration of plurilingual and translanguaging pedagogies to address South Africa's complex linguistic and cultural landscape.

Method: The study analyses educational policies, curriculum documents, and literature on language learning and teaching approaches, focusing on monoglossic ideologies and their alternatives, such as translanguaging and plurilingualism.

Results: The article suggests that merging plurilingual and translanguaging pedagogies can lead to more inclusive and effective language education practices. Such a hybrid pedagogy would facilitate language learning, foster social cohesion, and actively empower learners to participate in a multicultural society.

Conclusion: The proposed paradigm shift calls for collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, and communities to embrace linguistic diversity as a resource and to transform language education in South Africa.

Contribution: This shift aims to innovate pedagogical practices, ensuring that all languages in learners' repertoires are valued and that education reflects the sociocultural realities of the nation. It contributes to the discourse on language education by advocating for a hybrid approach that integrates translanguaging and plurilingualism, offering a comprehensive perspective on multilingual and multicultural education in South Africa.

Keywords: African language pedagogies; plurilingualism; English language pedagogies; social justice; translanguaging; multilingualism; multiculturalism; language repertoires.

Introduction

There has been a rise in linguistic and cultural diversity in communities globally. As a result, educational settings are now characterised by increased cultural and linguistic diversity due to various socioeconomic and political factors that have led to people from different backgrounds sharing spaces in physical or virtual communities (Chen et al. 2022; Turner & Tour 2023). In these diverse contexts, many view English as a disruptive influence on the local languages and cultures on which it has been imposed (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 2022), often to the detriment of indigenous languages. Still, it also has the potential to provide access to economic prosperity and inclusion or as a necessary condition for educational achievement where English is the dominant language of education (Chalmers & Murphy 2021). This paradoxical relationship between English and indigenous languages is especially evident in South Africa, a multilingual and multicultural country with a complex history of colonisation and apartheid, which, through separatist ideologies and racial stratification, unsettled the harmonious coexistence of diverse people. This sociocultural context involved one group dominating others and relegating their culture and languages to an inferior position. Hence, sociocultural aspects such as the multilingual and multicultural nature of indigenous communities and the oppression they suffered affected how indigenous languages were disparaged. Similarly, in the post-apartheid era, sociocultural aspects emanating from the drive for national cohesion, redressing past inequalities, the newly found freedom of association and movement, and improved socioeconomic conditions for some gave rise to novel linguistic and cultural super-diversity.

Despite the prevalent focus of Language in Education Policies (LiEP) on diversity and recognition of the demand for education to respond to learners' diverse needs and the individual cultural and linguistic resources they bring to the classroom, monoglossic ideologies are widespread in educational settings (Makalela 2016). These ideologies prioritise the dominant language in society while undervaluing others (Kircher & Kutlu 2023). The influence of monolingual ideologies continues to shape language instruction models, and impact teachers' beliefs about linguistic diversity and effective pedagogical practices to facilitate learning in these circumstances. Consequently, monolingual ideologies have dominated many educational contexts, hindering the implementation of practical bilingual and multilingual pedagogical approaches (Flores 2013). As a result, linguistic diversity is often perceived as a deficit and a threat, which results in learning challenges for multilingual learners (Phyak et al. 2022; Smeins, Wildenberg & Duarte 2022). These learners are denied epistemic access to basic education, as English or another dominant language is the language of learning and teaching. This poses a challenge to multilingual learners whose dominant language is not the language of learning and teaching, resulting in epistemic injustice (Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele 2023).

In principle, the South African LiEP acknowledges the immense advantages of multilingual approaches to education and the value of children learning through languages with which they are familiar (DoE 1997). Hence, all official languages are given equal status by the different language policies; however, this does not reflect the reality experienced by many, in terms of how their primary languages are valued in significant formal and official contexts. The prevalence of English has relegated African languages to personal spaces of linguistic and literacy practice, and rendered them inconsequential and less meaningful in crucial areas such as education, politics, and law (Probyn 2018). Therefore, schools mainly use English and in some instances, Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. This approach often results in poor academic performance for learners taught in English instead of their mother tongue (Mkhize 2023; Mpanza 2023). This is a well-known issue resulting from the parallel monolingual or supposed additive bilingual approach to education (Sapire & Essien 2021). However, this approach has led to a decline in the usage and status of local African languages, perpetuating existing educational inequalities that post-apartheid policies aim to address (Mpanza 2023; Sefotho 2022). Learners whose primary language is one of the local African languages, are disadvantaged by having limited exposure to their mother tongue in formal education settings as the language of instruction in favour of English, the predominant language of learning and teaching from Grades 4 to 12 for these learners. Consequently, many learners struggle to develop either or both their mother tongue and academic English literacy skills. For most learners in the South African context, their primary language is one or more indigenous African languages. It is a response to the multilingual educational context in South Africa that disadvantages mostly L1 African language learners who are required to learn in their mother tongues for the first three years of school to adopt English as the language of learning and teaching in the fourth year (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour 2019). Several studies describe how such learners face many challenges stemming from their developing English competence, which has dire consequences for their academic achievement (Maluleke 2023). This approach often results in the stunted development of the primary and additional language, referred to as semilingualism (Mpanza 2023). The current binary approach to English and indigenous African languages results in pedagogies presenting them as conflicting entities that are dealt with separately. Therefore, the article advocates for a paradigm shift in language education, proposing the integration of plurilingual and translanguaging pedagogies to address South Africa's complex linguistic and cultural landscape. It argues for recognising the potential of plurilingualism to support the translanguaging theory and practices already accepted in this context, because of the compatibility of these two ideologies and their potential to provide meaningful principles to inform teacher-initiated pedagogical practices to transform the unequal sociocultural reality inside and outside the classroom.

Methodology

The study used a literature-based integrative approach to research, focusing on translanguaging and plurilingual theory and pedagogies in South Africa's multicultural context. Integrative reviews typically involve a broad selection and integration of literature, which may include qualitative and quantitative studies, surveys of methodology, and theoretical reviews (Torraco 2005). This article synthesised diverse prior research and reviewed translanguaging studies in South Africa, advocating for a rethinking of multilingual education approaches in this context. The study highlighted the need for a new approach to multilingualism in the education system, challenging traditional educational ideologies and practices.

Theoretical perspective

The study is based on the sociocultural theory (SCT) to explore the potential of integrating translanguaging and plurilingualism. While some consider these approaches as language learning theories, the study chose the SCT as a key perspective for several reasons. The main reason is that the study focuses on sociocultural factors influencing language learning and language in education. This aligns with SCT's emphasis on the importance of sociocultural context in learning. The SCT specifically highlights language as a sociocultural tool that facilitates learning. It also underscores social interaction and language as a cultural tool that mediates learning (Rajendram 2023). Therefore, the study considers the role of language in education from a sociocultural perspective. It highlights how marginalising learners' diverse language repertoires lead to inequalities. Affecting the valuation or devaluation of languages based on sociocultural conditions.

Background and context

The position of African languages in comparison to English within the South African education system has significant consequences for learners whose primary language is an African language. As a result of the marginalisation of indigenous African languages, there is a negative perception of learners who speak African languages (Guzula 2019). Guzula (2019:4) succinctly and poignantly captures the misrepresentation of the status of these learners by current approaches to language in education that view these learners as 'passive/agentless, as failures, as having low levels of comprehension, as unable to decode, as needing remedial assistance, as non-readers, and as non-producers of meaning'. The linguistic resources and diverse literacy practices outside formal education, where these learners thrive and show exceptional competence, are undervalued and not exploited to support learning in schools. This emanates from the 'Anglonormative' view of learners in which they are judged against the English monolingual native speaker norm, and nonconformity with these norms renders them deficient (McKinney et al. 2015). More importantly, attempts to remedy the disparity between approaches to language in education and the multilingual reality of most South African learners tend to focus on the role of language as a resource for access to education that has the potential to advance socioeconomic stability, empowerment, and mobility. Hence, these teaching approaches take a cognitive approach to language learning and teaching that focuses on developing communicative competence and academic proficiency in the four basic language skills. This overlooks the vital sociocultural aspects of language. These aspects are essential in complex, multilingual, and multicultural linguistic landscapes. They involve significant issues such as preserving indigenous languages, which is crucial in maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity. This diversity is a defining characteristic of the fluidity, hybridity, and heterogeneity of South Africa (Rudwick 2018).

Complex nature of the multilingual South African learner

The linguistic landscape of South Africa is changing rapidly, with an increasing diversity of language preferences and identities. However, the current educational categorisation of languages does not capture this diversity, leading to ineffective responses to learners' language learning needs. The tension between moving towards English for socioeconomic advancement and preserving African languages underscores the need for educational strategies that recognise learners' unique and ever-changing linguistic circumstances. This section explores the complexities surrounding learners' intricately diverse language profiles, how current language pedagogies respond to multilingual learners, and whether these promote effective and inclusive language education practices.

Current language learning and teaching methodologies prioritise learner-centredness (Bremner 2021). However, this approach does not always lead to comprehensive ideas and practices where the individuality and complexity of the learner are taken into account. Instead, a simplified and diluted view of the learner as a 'neutral, non-individualised' person is commonplace (Piccardo & North 2019). To effectively cater to the needs of all learners in authentic learner-centred approaches to education, particularly in language learning and teaching, it is necessary to focus on the diversity and uniqueness of each learner (Bremner 2021). The South African context represents a unique linguistic, cultural and social context responsible for the complex diversity of learners.

The end of apartheid in South Africa introduced significant changes in the language environment and consequently, greater complexity and diversity in the learner language profiles. The move towards integration, the deracialisation of society and the emergence of a growing black middle class contributed to these changes (Luyt & Swartz 2023; Posel, Hunter & Rudwick 2022). However, this has led to new language dynamics, including language shift and loss among black learners and coloured learners (Luyt & Swartz 2023). A prominent trend is the increase in black Africans adopting English as their home language and parents enrolling their children in English-medium schools (Botha, Van Rooy & Coetzee-Van Rooy 2020; Mesthrie 2010). Mesthrie (2010) affirms that the socio-economic circumstances of the black middle class facilitated their increasing adoption of English as their primary language, precisely the variety used by the white middle class. This group's children generally attend private or ex-model C schools, which sets them apart from learners who attend public or township schools (Mesthrie 2010). However, achieving proficiency in English for some results in a deficiency, or in extreme cases, loss of their native language (Chakanetsa 2021). There has also been a greater preference for English as the language of learning and teaching, which impacts the attention given to African languages to varying levels (Gordon & Harvey 2019). However, the literature illustrates that the language 'shift' from African languages and Afrikaans to English does not imply language loss in all cases but mainly indicates growing bi/multilingualism. It further indicates that while English first-language speakers may have other languages in their repertoires, English remains their most significant language (Posel & Zeller 2019). Hence, the continued vitality of African languages inside and outside the home is not affected by English to the extent that justifies concerns for substantial language loss (Mbatha, Majola & Gumede 2023; Posel, Hunter & Rudwick 2022). Black learners often can speak multiple African languages and English to different degrees of proficiency. However, the current curriculum's classification of learner languages as either home language or additional language speakers fails to accurately represent or utilise this diverse linguistic repertoire.

Also, a significant proportion of the learners that contribute to diversity and sociocultural and linguistic complexity are children of immigrants. Black immigrant learners often speak English or French as a second or third language while keeping

their native languages. These learners are driven to learn indigenous South African languages, and in many cases, Afrikaans to better adapt socially and academically (Vandeyar & Catalano 2020).

Complex sociolinguistic realities and language

Non-standard language variations: Multilingual learners possess diverse linguistic repertoires, which encompass non-standard language variations. These variations are valuable for learning but are not acknowledged by the monolingual education system. Both translanguaging and plurilingualism advocate for recognising non-standard variations as valuable learning resources. South African linguistically diverse learners' use of languages goes beyond the standard varieties taught in schools. In addition to African Youth Languages (AYLs) and African Urban Youth Languages (AUYLs), which play a crucial role in the multilingualism of the context, other non-standard variations contribute significantly to the diversity of languages (Hurst-Harosh & Kanana Erastus 2018; Kanana Erastus & Hurst-Harosh 2020). Some AUYLs like Tsotsitaal and Sepitori are widely used by learners in school and other spheres of human activity (Hurst-Harosh 2020). Wagner, Ditsele and Makgato (2020) promote the value of such non-standard codes in their view that Sepitori should be acknowledged as a variation of Setswana and valued as a learning resource. Another issue is the number of English variations spoken in South Africa. South African English (SAE) is an umbrella term that includes various sub-variations, usually named for the cultural group in which they are most prominent, and they play a mediating role in developing a hybrid social identity (Avramenko 2020). Black South African English (BSAE) has received much attention in the literature for its pervasiveness. Non-standard variations are excluded from formal use in the English language classroom. These practices discard opportunities to take advantage of the multiple linguistic resources that learners bring to class.

Effect of social media: global community of practice, language change and hybridity: The widespread use of technology has expanded the resources available to learners and contributed to the significant changes in the language variations they use to communicate with their peers and individuals from different language communities, both locally and internationally. Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge these linguistic and cultural aspects to understand the linguistic and cultural resources available to learners. Like many other resources in South Africa, access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is subject to unequal distribution based on socioeconomic status. The digital divide between those with access, skills and knowledge to benefit from the affordances of ICT and those without adds a disparity to the knowledge and language resources learners bring to the class (Faloye & Ajayi 2022). Learners' language use and general knowledge are extensively influenced by their interaction with ICT, which significantly drives language change, especially among young people (Williams 2016). Technology, particularly ICT, brings together a multilingual, multicultural global community that creatively uses diverse languages to influence real-world actions and perspectives. Internet access has led African youth to be exposed to global influences that affect their language use and identities. Social media represents one of the most significant domains for language use for day-to-day communication outside formal educational settings. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and WhatsApp are most frequently used to express people's thoughts in preferred languages. Therefore, they influence youth language and their language ideologies and preferences profoundly. Some studies report that young South Africans prefer to use English for social media posts over their primary African language, primarily for convenience and inclusivity. Other studies show that African languages play a significant communicative role in establishing young people's identities, especially by using WhatsApp (Lesame & Malatji 2022). Hence, the youth's language is constantly changing and becoming more hybridised partially through their participation in global communities. These changes have significant implications for language learning and teaching.

Epistemic access and justice: Like many multilingual settings, the South African education system struggles with inconsistent application of language policies that create barriers to educational equity. Historically shaped by colonial and apartheid era policies, official monoglossic language ideologies privilege English and Afrikaans while marginalising indigenous African languages (Makalela 2016; McKinney et al. 2015). This creates a language hierarchy that perpetuates exclusion and linguistic inequality, leading to a critical barrier to learning for learners whose home languages are not acknowledged in the classroom. Monoglossic approaches to education create inequality by privileging learners more proficient in English to the detriment of those more proficient in other languages (Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele 2023). These practices position speakers of marginalised languages unfavourably, thus excluding, silencing, and marginalising them in the classroom (Guzula 2019). A more egalitarian pedagogy is needed to facilitate meaningful decolonial responses and empower learners and all their marginalised languages. Kerfoot and Bello-Nonjengele (2023) highlight that the distinction between epistemic access and epistemic justice is crucial in determining the most effective multilingual approach to language education in South Africa. While providing epistemic access that enables the use of marginalised languages in classrooms is essential, it is not enough. Approaches focusing on epistemic justice are needed to promote equitable access to education by normalising multilingualism. These approaches aim to transform existing hierarchies of knowledge, language, and values, unlike some translanguaging practices that affirm such hierarchies in monolingual educational settings.

Current language education strategies in South Africa prioritise the importance of English in accessing opportunities and resources, while acknowledging the significant role of African languages in facilitating learning and providing greater epistemic access. This creates a complex situation for

policy and practice, as prioritising English marginalises African languages, while focusing solely on African languages may deprive learners of the benefits of English language proficiency. A balanced approach that recognises the importance of English as a gateway to economic activities, and values linguistic diversity, is needed to ensure epistemic access and justice for all learners.

Approaches to language learning and teaching

The language curriculum: The current approach to language teaching and learning in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum is based on a monoglossic perspective, as highlighted by Probyn (2019). This means that languages are perceived as static codes acquired linearly, with English being the dominant language for learning and teaching (LoLT) at the top of the hierarchy. Languages are classified narrowly as a home language or a first or second additional language. However, given the cultural diversity and complexity that is associated with multilingual learners and research findings confirming that the literacy gap is partly due to the incompatibility of monoglossic pedagogical perspectives, it is unlikely that minor adjustments to the system would produce different results. Although the curriculum emphasises social aspects such as integration, justice, equality, and cohesion, it primarily focuses on the cognitive aspects of language learning and teaching. This is evident from the communicative, text-based, and process approaches to language teaching that are being adopted. These approaches are mainly centred on developing basic language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as learning language structures, conventions, and literature (DBE 2011). Although social cohesion is mentioned as a priority, it is not explicitly promoted in practice.

Learners are categorised into two groups based on their language background and requirements: Home Language (HL) learners and First/Second Additional Language (F/SAL) learners. These are based on the level at which a language is taught, with HL being higher than the First Additional Language (FAL) (DBE 2011). Makalela (2023) argues for merging the two categories into one in line with international benchmarks for an 'integrated graded' English language curriculum. This highlights a significant inconsistency in the rationale for two language categories that are not adequately differentiated to be meaningful to the South African context. However, there is a need for more significant differentiation or even personalisation in the approach to language teaching, which is evident from the super-diversity, complexity, and emerging nature of the linguistic profiles of learners.

The African languages curriculum follows the CAPS, providing guidelines for teaching and assessment. It aligns with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), promoting social justice, inclusivity, and respect for diversity. However, the CAPS has been criticised for being too rigid and prescriptive, leaving little room for teachers' professional judgement and learners' individual needs (Van der Walt 2018). Moreover, approaches to language learning and teaching in CAPS rely heavily on dominant language pedagogies, which may not be entirely suitable or relevant to developing English and African languages in the complex, multilingual, multicultural South African context (De Vos, Van der Merwe & Van der Mescht 2015). The CAPS document applies a generic language teaching approach in which all languages are considered the same without significant differentiation in the prescribed pedagogies to facilitate the sometimes-vast differences between languages. The text-based, communicative, and process-based approaches are applied to all languages (Van der Walt 2018). In this educational context, the focus is on developing communicative competence in the target language to achieve native-like proficiency. However, whether these approaches adequately address the complexities of the multilingual, multicultural educational context in South Africa, is debatable.

The current language learning approaches focus on teaching languages separately without considering the sociocultural aspects of individual learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds. These approaches assume that people are either HL or additional language (AL) learners and aim to develop native speaker proficiency in each language prevalent in a particular multilingual community. However, there is a need for a more comprehensive multilingual approach that considers the complexities of multilingual, multicultural contexts. This approach should go beyond the cognitive aspects of language learning and teaching and involve sociocultural emphases, valuing all languages in learners' repertoires and focusing on developing their linguistic competence to be responsive to the requirements of their educational and sociocultural contexts. This shift requires a reconceptualisation of language education, and a more balanced perspective, surpassing efforts to merely involve learners' HL in learning and teaching.

Incremental introduction of African languages: To tackle linguistic diversity and the marginalisation of African languages, the Incremental introduction of African languages (IIAL) initiative was launched in some schools nationwide. It recognises the importance of multilingualism as a means to promote social cohesion, and facilitate individual, social, and economic development. The initiative aims to bridge the social gap between speakers of different languages in the country, by requiring learners who do not speak an African language as a HL to learn one of the indigenous African languages as a school subject (DBE 2013). However, IIAL is based on the CAPS curriculum. Therefore, it subscribes to the very same approach to language teaching as the HL and FAL programme, by presenting African languages at the SAL level, which poses new challenges in addition to those that are inherent to the limitation of the CAPS 'parallel monolingual' approach. One of the challenges is that this increases the number of compulsory subjects at the Further Education and Training (FET) level to eight, which has significant implications for time constraints. A further concern is that this can potentially

deprive learners of learning foreign languages (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne 2017).

Current bi/multilingual approaches: There is a substantial body of research on multilingualism in the South African educational context at various levels, from the Foundation Phase to higher education. These include bilingual, multilingual, and translanguaging perspectives and practices in language learning and teaching. A distinction has to be drawn between those studies where more than one language is used in classroom instruction as a forced intuitive response – spontaneous translanguaging – to the 'developing' proficiency of learners in the target language, most often English, and those that are planned multilingual pedagogical approaches – pedagogical translanguaging (Heugh, Li & Song 2017). Both approaches report variable success levels (Maseko & Mkhize 2021). However, it should be considered that these studies were done in a monolingual linguistic milieu that encompasses monoglossic language ideologies, policies, curriculum, educator perspectives and language pedagogies. Hence, researchers report that the 'monolingual mindset' endured even after some training was provided to teachers in some studies (Maluleke 2023). Therefore, it is questionable whether effective multilingual language pedagogies are possible where minor incremental changes are made to some aspects of the monolingual system.

Translanguaging

This section highlights the need to reassess current approaches proposing the use of translanguaging theory and pedagogy as the primary method for researching and practising language learning in South Africa's multilingual, multicultural context. This re-evaluation is based on the limitations identified in the existing literature. Translanguaging has been widely applied to research the multilingual, multicultural educational context in South Africa, exploring the current language in education ideologies and language pedagogies in the predominantly monoglossic education system. Translanguaging is the practice where individuals use their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate, emphasising their dynamic and flexible language use over rigid, named language boundaries. It acknowledges the impact of socially constructed language categories and ideologies, particularly for minoritised language speakers, while prioritising the speakers' own fluid linguistic and semiotic practices (Otheguy, Garcia & Reid 2018). There is broad consensus among researchers that it is an effective way of involving learners' diverse linguistic repertoires in the learning process to achieve various goals, such as epistemic access, epistemic justice, social justice, and social cohesion. In these contexts, translanguaging promotes the use of indigenous African languages alongside English or Afrikaans (Charamba 2021, 2023; Makalela & Mkhize 2016; Maseko & Mkhize 2021; Mkhize 2016).

While a robust theoretical framework is claimed to inform translanguaging, translanguaging pedagogy is predominantly a teacher-initiated ground-up approach. Translanguaging pedagogy is a welcome break from conventional prescriptive perspectives that attempt to derive pedagogical practices from theory with little to no teacher involvement. However, applying theory to practice is a complex process that does not always result in effective language pedagogies. This has raised concerns about the gap between translanguaging theory and its application in practice (Canagarajah 2011). Therefore, there have been calls for more research to support rendering theory into practice (Prilutskaya 2021). Others call for more empirical research to substantiate claims of academic success and linguistic achievement resulting from translanguaging pedagogies (Huang & Chalmers 2023). Several systematic literature reviews of recent research on translanguaging have shown that less than half of the studies explicitly focused on social justice (Huang & Chalmers 2023; Prilutskaya 2021). This suggests that a weaker translanguaging form is more prevalent (Anderson 2024). This is particularly evident in studies conducted in South African contexts, where translanguaging strategies are primarily used to facilitate learners'understanding of the language of instruction in content subjects and language classes. These practices exclude definite emphases on the sociolinguistic aspects fundamental to the translanguaging theory, such as social cohesion, transformation, social justice and cultural awareness. In the South African context, efforts to facilitate African languages to the extent that they promote multilingual subjectivities, are inadequate. Consequently, little is done to valorise African language learning and teaching to build the repertoires of South Africans who do not speak indigenous languages. Hence, the dominance of English is maintained. These attempts to use languages other than English or Afrikaans in the classroom, seem to scaffold learners' engagement with these two dominant languages and not develop their diverse repertoires.

The literature affirms that translanguaging is commonly informally introduced into South African classrooms, as a spontaneous or planned reaction to the challenges faced by learners who are more proficient in languages other than English and Afrikaans, the languages of learning and teaching. However, these responses are as diverse as the contexts in which they are implemented. These commonly involve practices such as code-switching and translation (Guzula, McKinney & Tyler 2016). Other strategies involve a broad variety of practices such as group discussions in learners' HL, bilingual board work, multilingual materials, the use of multiple languages in learning activities, allowing written work in multiple languages, teachers using two languages to explain concepts, allowing learners to ask questions and responding in both English and their HL, interactive reading practices using English and an African language, reading activities using two languages with comprehension questions in a different language from the reading text, and using English and the learners' HL interchangeably while teaching (Charamba 2021; Sefotho 2022).

Despite the significant number of studies conducted here, their findings present a fragmented image, an incomplete mosaic of

pedagogical strategies. These studies are mostly small-scale research that report on teacher-initiated pedagogical practices based on qualitative data. In some instances, it appears as if these strategies can be categorised under earlier ideas that preceded the multilingual turn that calls for bringing the HL into the classroom.

Further, a bottom-up teacher-initiated approach, such as translanguaging pedagogy, could benefit from approaches based on explicit guiding principles derived from research to mitigate the limitations reported in the literature. These include, for example gaps where translanguaging is applied in multilingual classrooms where not all the learners share the same languages, only English and the most dominant HL are used, and other languages are rendered invisible (Galante 2020). Cummins (2021) emphasises the need for collaboration between teachers and researchers in translanguaging and plurilingual pedagogies to facilitate interaction between theory, research, policy, and practice.

Despite its popularity, translanguaging has been criticised for overly expanding its theoretical scope to the extent that it has become difficult to say exactly what it is, leading to the ambiguity that allows for a diversity of definitions (Treffers-Daller 2024). The unitary model of bilingualism posits that bilinguals cannot separate the languages in their repertoire and has been criticised as opposing research evidence that proves the contrary (Cummins 2021). Others question its ability to affect the extensive social and political transformation it claims to possess (Jaspers 2018). Hence, there is enough reason to reevaluate translanguaging as the sole approach to address the diversity of multilingual, multicultural language learning contexts such as the one in South Africa, and to consider a multiperspective approach that involves plurilingualism and other associated perspectives.

Plurilingualism

In South Africa, where there is significant cultural diversity, including racial identity, promoting social inclusion and equality through plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is crucial, particularly in the post-apartheid era. Plurilingualism is defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as 'a sociological or historical fact, as a personal characteristic or ambition, as an educational philosophy or approach, or – fundamentally – as the sociopolitical aim of preserving linguistic diversity' (Council of Europe [CE] 2020). It is a comprehensive perspective on linguistic and cultural plurality that involves a philosophical and theoretical perspective that informs pedagogical practices. Plurilingualism, like translanguaging, views language as an integrated proficiency comprising the variable competence in the diverse languages in the learner's repertoire, which is applied with other competencies and strategies to accomplish various tasks (CE 2020). The emphasis here is on the uneven language competence in the individual's repertoire that is used as a single resource. Further, there are fluid boundaries between languages in the repertoire as they act as a single resource along with other competencies and strategies to achieve communicative and learning outcomes. It emphasises the dynamic interplay between languages and cultures to promote effective learning, unlike multilingualism, which considers the number of languages an individual can speak (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne 2017). Plurilingualism aims to facilitate communicative competence, by embracing linguistic and cultural diversity while also considering the variety of forms of communication, cultures, and identities. Promoting this approach in the classroom, provides learners with an environment that encourages linguistic and cultural overlap, thereby promoting communicative competence (Galante et al. 2022). The similarities between plurilingualism and translanguaging are substantial enough to conclude that they share fundamental understandings of multilingual and multicultural diversity, and how education should respond to those.

The similarities between these two ideologies include that plurilingualism challenges conventional views of language, as a discrete and fixed system that can be easily categorised and measured. Instead, it views language as a dynamic and flexible repertoire that can be adapted and negotiated according to context and purpose. Plurilingualism also challenges the hierarchical view of language as a ranking system that assigns different values and functions to different languages. Instead, it views language as a complementary system that recognises the potential and contribution of each language (Lau & Van Viegen 2020; Ssentanda & Norton 2021). From a plurilingual perspective, the status of English in relation to African languages is more accurately explained as being part of the language repertoires of African language users, as it reflects the reality in South Africa rather than the prevalent view that these are disparate linguistic systems, and that either one or the other should be more prominent. It promotes an integrated perspective in which English is considered somewhat of a 'naturalised African language' and not an alien entity, as is often alluded to (Kamwangamalu 2019). It brings about a sense of language as a unified resource that relies on competence in all languages in the repertoire. To illustrate, a recent study focusing on the mixing of languages in the social network of a multilingual South African student, found that English was a crucial component in the composition of mixed language practices that contributed significantly to the identity as part of a range of languages that function in a variety of domains at various levels of prominence (Botha & Coetzee-Van Rooy 2021). It is acknowledged that English has been appropriated by speakers of indigenous languages globally, adapted for local purposes, and integrated into their identities (Mbithi, Diko & Mmotlane 2010). Hence, it challenges current ideas that view English and indigenous languages as competing entities that should be addressed in isolation. This raises the question, now that we promote indigenous African languages in the classroom, what do we do with English?

The preceding discussion illustrates the need for a radical paradigm shift in the approach to language in education and language education in the complex, pluralistic South

African context. There is a need to reassess the meaning of multilingual approaches to language in South Africa, and to explore the possibilities and benefits of adopting a plurilingual approach to language education. Such an approach would acknowledge and value the linguistic diversity and complexity of the South African context and aim to foster the development of learners' plurilingual competence and identity. More importantly, it has the potential to contribute positively to the need for social cohesion and integration, based on the idea of plurilingual competence rather than narrowly using the HL to develop competence in academic English at the expense of learners' HL. Plurilingualism offers a profound understanding of society's linguistic and cultural diversity. It emphasises the importance of an individual's linguistic repertoire as a dynamic resource for social inclusion and epistemic access. Therefore, it is potentially well suited to address the language in education approach and to rethink African language pedagogies in the South African context.

A distinguishing feature of plurilingualism is the plurilingual pluricultural competence (PPC), a complex ability that ties plurilingual competence to pluricultural awareness and plurilingual identities. This composite competence refers to the ability to use different languages in different ways and forms of communication, depending on the purpose, context, and interlocutor, which involves recognising and developing a plurilingual identity. Plurilingual identity refers to the sense of belonging and agency that emerges from the interaction and integration of multiple languages and cultures. People can express their identities, negotiate social roles, and position themselves using different languages or language variations (Van Viegen & Lau 2020). A plurilingual approach to language education would entail the use of multiple languages and modes of communication in the classroom, the recognition and support of learners' home languages and literacies, the promotion of cross-linguistic and intercultural awareness and skills, and the empowerment of learners to become active and critical participants in a multilingual and multicultural society (Lau & Van Viegen 2020; Ssentanda & Norton 2021). Language is also a tool of power. Dominant languages or language varieties often have higher prestige and power in society, while minority or non-standard varieties may be stigmatised or marginalised. Plurilingual pedagogies challenge these power relations and promote linguistic diversity and equality (Van Viegen & Lau 2020). Translanguaging on the other hand, has learners oscillate between two languages at a given time; this is despite its claim to facilitate learners' complete repertoires.

Plurilingualism extends beyond linguistic reality because it is a political and ethical necessity to acknowledge people's linguistic and cultural rights and dignity. It promotes social cohesion and improves the quality of education. The main objectives of plurilingual pedagogies are to recognise and celebrate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners, challenge language hierarchies and inequalities, and encourage student participation in societal progress. These goals signify that education involves not only knowledge transmission but also the transformation of society through political means. Achieving the aims of plurilingualism in South Africa requires a collaborative effort from policymakers, educators, parents, learners and communities. It is a creative and flexible process that involves critical thinking and evaluation. Language diversity and bi/multilingualism are seen as resources for learning and teaching. By leveraging learners' home languages and cultural knowledge, teachers can make the curriculum more relevant and engaging, facilitate comprehension and learning, and validate learners' identities and experiences (Van Viegen & Lau 2020).

Plurilingual pedagogies: implications for practice: Plurilingual education is crucial for creating a more inclusive and diverse learning environment that values learners' abilities and strengths. Incorporating learners' communication skills and translanguaging practices is key to creating effective learning opportunities that promote language awareness, multilingual proficiency, and intercultural understanding (Piccardo 2019). Therefore, the article suggests drawing on plurilingual pedagogies and insights from translanguaging pedagogies relevant to linguistic and cultural diversity in South Africa, to reconceptualise language pedagogies for plurilingual education. If language curricula aim to promote plurilingual and pluricultural competence rather than striving for native-like competence as is common in monoglossic approaches, then developing learners' complex linguistic repertoires should be the focus of the learning and teaching programme. This means that learners' variable levels of competence in the languages that make up their unique repertoires are recognised and given appropriate attention to meet their social and academic needs. Therefore, even learners' partial competence in any of the languages in their repertoire is an advantage rather than a deficit as in the monoglossic view, because they can use the complete repertoire or any part thereof to accomplish communicative or learning objectives (Payant & Maatouk 2022). In other words, learners do not need native speaker competence in every language in their repertoire. Instead, the importance and function of each language for the individual learner will determine the pedagogical approach used for that language. It thus follows that languages in the learners' repertoires are dynamic and may shift over time and across contexts in relation to the prominence of each language, in response to the sociopsychological linguistic demands at a specific moment in time. The diverse and dynamic languages in the repertoires of multilingual learners evolve over time; one may increase in prominence while another decreases in status at a given time; sometime it may flow effortlessly, or at other times, require conscious and deliberate effort to articulate ideas. All languages in the plurilingual repertoires occupy various roles ranging from informal communication to limited.

Paradigm shift

The disparity between learners' complex dynamic and evolving plurality of languages and cultures and the

inadequate present pedagogical response, makes a compelling case for a radical paradigm shift away from the prevalent pedagogies and the ideologies that inform them. It is clear from the critique of current approaches to the curriculum reported in the literature (Pretorius & Murray 2023; Sefotho 2022), that maintaining the current course of action is unlikely to bring about the profound changes needed to address the challenges responsible for the existing gaps in the education system, associated with poor learner achievement, ascribed in part to the lack of attention to their linguistic and cultural diversity. This situation begs the question, is it feasible to add new perspectives to the existing model adopted by CAPS, or is a substantial paradigm shift necessary? Further, can multilingual linguistic and culturally diverse educational responses be developed on current monolingual foundations? A paradigm shift is required to address the underachievement reported in South African schools, attributed to language in education ideologies and practices. Limited perspectives and pedagogical approaches do not readily address the complexity of multilingual and multicultural educational contexts, but rather a more comprehensive approach is required as a theoretical basis for multilingual and multicultural education, with clear pedagogical principles.

This article suggests a paradigm shift that involves integrating translanguaging and plurilingualism, based on the many similarities they share and the ability of each to buttress the limitations of the other. Despite their reported differences, plurilingualism and plurilingual pedagogy complement translanguaging theory and pedagogy (Chen et al. 2022). An approach allowing these two perspectives to merge into a hybrid would provide a more comprehensive perspective and effective pedagogies. According to García and Otheguy (2018), the perspectives of plurilingualism and translanguaging have become more similar over time. They state that 'plurilingual and translanguaging pedagogical practices sometimes look the same and have the same practical goals' (García & Otheguy 2020). However, they also highlight the conceptual distinction between translanguaging and plurilingualism. Similarly, proponents of plurilingualism subscribe to the common purpose of both these ideologies and other similar theories and their associated pedagogies. Piccardo & Payre-Ficout (2022) explain:

> The defense of one term against another impedes seeing that both plurilingualism and translanguaging, as well as other theories and concepts, aim to challenge ingrained monolingual visions of education, to value and build on the entire linguistic repertoire and trajectories of learners, and to transform the classroom into an open and positive learning space. (p. 37)

They further posit that translanguaging is a concept that fits neatly under the umbrella of plurilingualism (Piccardo & Payre-Ficout 2022).

However, the similarities between these two concepts are more extensive than their ability to challenge dominant monolingual pedagogical ideas and practices. They view language as a resource with fluid boundaries, unlike prevalent monolingual ideas of language as bounded entities. However, they differ in terms of the status of named languages. Both promote their transformative abilities to reform monolingual education and bring about significant change that involves building bi/multilingual learner identities, facilitating epistemic access, addressing social linguistic and cultural inequalities, facilitating social justice, and innovating more relevant pedagogical practices to effectively respond to the prevalent linguistic and cultural diversity of learners globally (Galante & Chen 2022; García & Otheguy 2020). Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that merging plurilingualism and translanguaging into an integrated approach is more effective in language learning and teaching within the multilingual and multicultural South African context. This approach is better suited to meet the diverse needs of learners and teachers than either method alone. South African researchers demonstrate a preference for translanguaging, which is evident from the fact that they rank third internationally for the number of studies conducted in this field from 2000 to 2020 (Xin, Ping & Qin 2021).

The application of an eclectic or multiperspectival approach is not uncommon in contemporary research to expand the theoretical framework to provide comprehensive insight into an extremely complex phenomenon that can usually not be effectively explained by a single theoretical perspective. Sil and Katzenstein (2010) state:

> It is an intellectual stance that supports efforts to complement, engage, and selectively utilize theoretical constructs embedded in contending research traditions to build complex arguments that bear on substantive problems of interest to both scholars and practitioners. (p. 1)

Similarly, eclecticism has been applied to language pedagogies that allow teachers to use principles from multiple language pedagogies to achieve language learning objectives (Al-Khasawneh 2022).

This concept is aligned with post-method pedagogy (PMP), in which teachers apply aspects of principle methods they are familiar with. They theorise based on their individual practice and then apply what they have theorised to their practice. This PMP supports a teacher-initiated practice, contrary to conventional language teaching practices that derive practice from theory. As such, theory is the focal point of practice, not the teacher (Kumaravadivelu 1994). Hence, there is a long-standing emphasis on teacher-initiated pedagogical practices in English language teaching contexts. However, this ground-up approach espoused by PMP derives from clearly defined, well-established language teaching principles. Therefore, teachers develop their practice within these principles and guidelines (Kumaravadivelu 2006). As with translanguaging, the PMP approach opposes the top-down approach of conventional language practice development, but it provides teachers with principles and descriptive guidelines, unlike translanguaging, which espouses a broader, more fluid approach. Translanguaging pedagogy has been critiqued by some for lacking clarity.

For example, it is unclear how much time should be spent using learners' dominant languages instead of the school's language, especially given the time-on-task hypothesis that postulates that more time spent on a task will result in more effective learning. Also, the number of languages allowed in classroom interactions is unclear and needs to be narrowed down (Treffers-Daller 2024).

Plurilingualism pedagogy is associated with the action-oriented approach (AoA) to language teaching. This pedagogical perspective has similarly developed as translanguaging pedagogy, emphasising the importance of practical application and challenging hierarchical relationships between research, theory, practice, and practitioners. It signifies the evolution of language pedagogy from a communicative focus to an emphasis on complex practical language use in everyday situations (Piccardo & North 2019). The AoA is predicated on the learner's status as an agent engaging in real-world activities with language, applying all resources available to them to achieve competence and not learning language as a subject. It does not subscribe to the linear approach to language learning but views that language learning occurs as learners engage with authentic real-life actions with language. Learner agency also means that it is essential for them to make their own decisions about their learning (Deboer, Leontje & Friederich 2023). The AoA aligns with the needs of multilingual, multicultural language learning contexts for the reasons mentioned above, and therefore, it has the potential to afford teachers guidelines to help them navigate the ambiguities of facilitating multiple language use in the classroom to achieve meaningful educational objectives. Adopting an eclectic approach that involves insights from plurilingualism would include taking advantage of the AoA to guide teachers in developing their multilingual pedagogical response to address the needs of the diverse learner population.

The nature of theories and pedagogical practices is widely understood to be influenced by the sociocultural, historical, and political context from which they originate. Applying theories to contexts vastly different from their origin can be challenging. This is particularly relevant in South Africa, where most language learning and teaching theories and pedagogical perspectives come from the Global North. Translanguaging and plurilingualism, for example have roots in European contexts, and much of the current research is conducted in these settings (Huang & Chalmers 2023; Xin et al. 2021). However, this does not mean these concepts cannot be applied to the unique South African context. They should be adapted to account for the sociocultural, linguistic, and pedagogical situations specific to this context. Ubuntu translanguaging, for instance adapted translanguaging to recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of African languages and peoples, addressing misconceptions about artificial divisions between these languages (Makalela 2016). It adds a clear conceptualisation of African languages that can form the basis for developing context-specific pedagogical principles for applying a viable multilingual approach to language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, this approach does not adequately address the exceptional position of English as both an unfamiliar outsider and an imposter at times and a local language, nor fully consider foreign language learning as part of the dynamic and fluid nature of learners' linguistic repertoires in a globalised world. Hence, despite the seminal contribution of this approach, a need exists to further adapt both translanguaging and plurilingualism to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework for application in the vastly diverse South African context.

Conclusion

The linguistic and educational landscape of South Africa poses a complex and dynamic challenge that requires a shift from monoglossic ideologies to more inclusive and equitable multilingual pedagogies. Integrating translanguaging and plurilingualism offers a promising path forward, allowing for an approach that values all languages in learners' repertoires. By embracing learners' linguistic diversity and sociocultural realities, educators can create an environment that not only provides access to knowledge but also promotes justice. This shift is essential for transforming the classroom into a space where all learners can thrive and their linguistic identities are affirmed. Through such practices, we can work towards a more just and inclusive education system in South Africa.

Furthermore, recognising and incorporating non-standard language variations and the linguistic resources learners bring to the classroom, is crucial for addressing the educational disparities that persist in the post-apartheid era. Educators must adopt pedagogies that acknowledge the sociocultural significance of language and its role in shaping learners' identities. By challenging the dominance of English and fostering the coexistence and cooperation of all languages, we can lay the groundwork for an education system responsive to the needs of the 21st-century learner. In doing so, we will not only bridge the gaps in academic achievement but also contribute to preserving linguistic and cultural diversity, which is the bedrock of South Africa's rich heritage.

Reconceptualising language pedagogies for plurilingual education is challenging but necessary. It requires a shift in mindset and practice from viewing language as a problem to viewing language as a resource. It also requires a commitment to social justice and cultural diversity in education. By drawing on insights from plurilingual language pedagogical principles, we can develop African language pedagogies responsive to the linguistic and cultural realities of the learners and society. We can also promote plurilingualism as an asset for communication, learning, and identity construction. Additionally, we can challenge the dominance and hegemony of English as a global language and promote the coexistence and cooperation of different languages. By doing so, we can contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable education system that prepares learners for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

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