Moving out of language boxes: Towards a pedagogy of integration in multilingual classrooms

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Outline

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Prologue

Language is like life. There is an aspiration for order, for control, for possession, driven by fear of the unknown, of the powers and sources of evil. But there is always the reality that language, like life, cannot be controlled. Language, like life, is bigger than any one of us. We can go through language, like life, we can be with language, like life, we can use it, but we cannot control it. We can try to create all kinds of controlling devices—rules, regulations, laws, correctness, categories, policies, impositions; in life, we also create ceremonies, anniversaries, prayers, ritual, insurances, and other devices, all through the desire to impose order; but it does not work (Shohamy, 2006: 165).
Introduction

• Multilingualism is often misconstrued as “multiple unilingualisms” with separated boundaries (hermetically sealed units).
• Influence from Eurocentric invented concept of “language” of the 1820s (e.g., Von Humboldt): one-nation-one language and then one classroom-one language under the pretext of “nation building” (cf. exclusion).
• Language teachers then became ‘enslaved’ as boundary guarders against cross-contamination of one language by the other.
• African languages became casualties of linguistic tribalization: linguistic tribes through Bantustan homelands system.
• 21st C reality: humans have complex identities that extend beyond myopia of linguistic units.
• My claims: (i) languages are embedded into one another (i.e., sociolinguistics of mobility that is spatio-temporally complex)
  (ii) language teachers need to build on plural and mobile communicative repertoires at students/learners’ disposal.
• Act 108 of 1996 enshrined 11 official languages, but the practice has gravitated towards unilingualisms.

• Fulfilled predictions: “artificial constructions” (Makalela, 2005) and “misinventions” (Makoni, 2003) that would result in wholesale adoption of monolingual practices.

• Educational consequences: (i) inherited monolithic practices, (ii) maintained language immersion policies, and (iii) dismal literacy rates.
Regressing literacy trajectories in primary schools
High school to university trends
Translanguaging framework: From fixity to fluidity

- Posits that languages should not be viewed as fixed systems capable of being placed in closed boxes.
- Accounts for heteroglossic situations where input: output is exchanged in different languages or modes in the process of meaning making.
- Critical to notions such as L1, L2, additive, diglossia as these suggest sequential view of multilingual development and favour monoglossic curriculum.
- Mode of operation: speakers soft assemble their language practices to fit their communicative needs.
- Unlike code-switching, the lens of orientation is speaker centred, not language-centred.
The story of indigenous African languages (and English L2 classes)

• Challenge: to broaden their standard varieties to include speech forms not traditionally associated with them (English teaching: to open doors for them).

• Methodologies are dated, less communicative and classrooms VERY monoglossic (vs. locus of plurality).

• Yawning disjuncture between permeable use in fluid multilingual settings and rigid classroom spaces.

• Currently: no pedagogical framework for teaching L2s.

• QUESTION: What are the effects of translanguaging as an alternative strategy for multilingual and biliteracy development?
EXPERIMENT 1: TRANSLANGUAGEING IN SEPEDI NEW LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

- Sepedi additional language student teachers at the Wits School of Education (n=21).
- Division of Languages, Literacies and Literatures (English, Sesotho, Sepedi, isiZulu and Afrikaans)
- Ensure that every student teacher masters at least 1 new language for multilingual classrooms
- No prior literacy in these languages.
- Should not be from same clusters (Nguni, Sotho).
Sepedi study cont...2

• Teaching approach: translanguaging to encourage isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele students to bring their home languages into the classroom.
• Communicative through functional notional syllabus
• Instructor’s role: directly calls for use of other languages to explicate concepts such as marking plurality vs respect.
• Strategy: contrastive elaboration.... criss-crossing between languages and multilingual spaces
• Extra multilingual spaces via technology (multilingual blogs).
Sepedi study cont...3

• Qualitative data: Reflective interviews
• Experiment: Progressive assessment of vocabulary and oral reading proficiency.
• Control vs experimental group in the pretest (P>0.05).
• Interrater reliability: 3 Sepedi mother tongue speakers (96%)
• Analyses: universal reductionist approach (interview data) and paired t-test (language proficiency scores).
Metalanguaging reflections: Students

• Excerpt 1: I realize that learning the language reminds of similar culture I have in my language. I can identify with Bapedi people better now. (identification with target language culture)

Excerpt 2: For greetings, we also use plural markers like sanibonani to refer to some one we respect or older and not necessarily many people. So Sepedi and isiZulu show me that as Africans we see people in totality...you and those around you. (Affirmed collective, ubuntu world view)
Excerpt 3:

I see connections between “botho” and “ubuntu” and realize that the concept of “I am because you are” is similar in both languages. During the course of the semester, I have come to see how close we are to Bapedi even though I had initially thought that they are different from us. I now feel motivated to learn their language and listen to radio Thobela.

(motivation, self-efficacy, removed stigmas)
Excerpt 4:
Now I also realize that Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho are not different. I was confusing words for each of these languages, but when I speak to any speaker of these languages, we just go along without them correcting me that I say, tš instead of ts for example. Now I can say I know three languages even if I still need to polish them (mutual intelligibility, normal dialect continuum-minor phonological variation)
Quantitative measure I: T-test on VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1 (C)</th>
<th>Group 2 (E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>86.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>$T^{obs}$</td>
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$T^{obs} = -10.09$; $df=20$; $P<0.05$
Quantitative measure II: T-test on ORAL READING PROFICIENCY

<table>
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<th>Group 1 (c)</th>
<th>Group 2 (E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>70.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>$T^{obs}$</td>
<td>-0.470*</td>
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</table>

$T^{obs}=-0.470; \ df=20; \ P>0.05$
Overall achievement scores: between and within groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BETWEEN</td>
<td>4420.6426</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2210.3213</td>
<td>10.0613</td>
<td>0.0002*</td>
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<tr>
<td>WITHIN</td>
<td>12741.7500</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>219.6853</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>17162.3926</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P&lt;0.05*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
EXPERIMENT II: READING LITERACY IN ENGLISH AND SEPEDI

• To investigate cognitive, contextual and motivational conditions in which high performing intermediate phase readers succeed in remote rural areas:
  – Reading habits and practices
  – Phonological, semantic, and graphological processing of high frequent words
  – Assess reading comprehension predictors in both Sepedi and English
  – **Home & classroom literacy events**
  – Correlations between English and African lang literacy trajectories
Biliteracy model

• Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis
  – Bi-directional transfer of L1 and L2 reading skills
• Biliteracy continua (ecological view point: breaking boundaries btw reading and writing, on the one hand, and L1 and L2, on the other hand)
• Mathew Effect in reading trajectories
Translanguaging approach

- Phonological awareness contrasts in L1 and L2 (e.g., syllabic structure, pseudo-words)
- Reading and writing input/output contrasts (language/s of reading and language/s of writing)
Multilingual PRINT: Populating classroom with L1 and L2 texts

Creating own texts
Owning text meanings: L1 & L2
Story-retelling: bilingual input-output

Moeno le setšo sa Bakgaga.
Koma ya Bakgaga.
Mixed output- Print rich environment

• Own stories at bilingual literacy corners
AT HOME: She now forces us to listen to her readings
We are back to the times of our grannies—listening to stories everynight.
She cried for this book: I had to use my pension money. Now she reads for me every evening before we sleep.
He’s an orphan: He now reads for sick people in the community in English and Sepedi.
## Reading comprehension gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
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<td>82.82</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>122.08</td>
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<td>Post-test</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>120.09</td>
<td>35.154</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>140.27</td>
<td>53.200</td>
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</table>

ENGLISH: $t_{obs}=5.13$; $P<0.05$  
SEPEDI: $t_{obs}=1.46$; $P>0.05$
Overall effects: between and within languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>22662.1577</td>
<td>11.2608</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>305896.2000</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>2012.4750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>373882.6731</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

P<0.05*
Discussions: Out of language boxes

- Both experiments question the validity of language boxing and monoglossic pedagogy in multilingual settings.
- Multilingual learners “shuttle” between languages in non-conflictual, but complimentary ways- they translanguate!
- Multilingualism is not monolingualism x 2 or 11.
- Languages and literacies are permeable and need to be socially embedded (Indexicality).
- Multiple identities reflected in expanded sense of self (“ubuntu” locus of being...a continuum ontology)
- Development of reading literacy requires “threshold” in both languages.
Discussions: Social incomes

• Significant gains in language and literacy skills can be attributed to translanguaging practices in the experimental classes.
• There were positive associations with the other languages and permeable cross-cultural ethos that are beyond discrete language units.
• “Experiential” mutual intelligibility between sister language varieties (social intercomprehensibility)
• Balanced literacy trajectories depend on conscious valorization of discursive social incomes (Focus on incomes, not just outcomes).
Concluding remarks:
Towards a Plural Vision

• Language is like life; attempts to police it are futile.
• Monolithic strategies are not consonant with the realities of the 21st Century (Sociolinguistics of mobility that is spatio-temporally complex).
• Teachers are called upon to allow multilingual spaces and antecedent genres and discursive resources learners bring with them to class.
• These social incomes ensure meaningful education and affirm identities of multilingual learners.
• Teachable translanguaging strategy should be infused in all multilingual/multicultural classrooms.
• This way we will diffuse negative stereotypes associated with African languages and multilingualism as a tower of babel.
• Instead, we RECOGNIZE MULTILINGUALISM AS THE POWER OF BABEL.
• More successful stories on this pedagogy of integration are needed at all levels of education.
Power of babel (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998)
Thank you!!!

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Thank you! Ke a leboga! Ngiyabonga! Baie dankie! Ke a leboha!