

Enhancing African Students' Learning Experience by Creating Multilingual Resources at a South African University of Technology

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Abstract : South Africa is a multicultural country with eleven official languages, yet most of the formal education at institutions of higher education in the country is in English. It is well known that many students, irrespective of their home language, struggle to grasp difficult scientific concepts and the same is true for students enrolled in the Extended Curriculum Programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), studying biomedical sciences. Today we are fortunate in that there is a plethora of resources available to students to research and better understand subject matter online. For example, the students often use YouTube videos to supplement the formal education provided in our course. Unfortunately, most of this material is presented in English. The rationale behind this project lies in that it is well documented that students think and grasp concepts easier in their home language and addresses the fact that the lingua franca of instruction in the field of biomedical science is English. A project aimed at addressing the lack of available resources in most of the South African languages is planned, where students studying Bachelor of Health Science in Medical Laboratory Science will collaborate with those studying Film and Video Technology to create educational videos, explaining scientific concepts in their home languages. These videos will then be published on our own YouTube channel, thereby making them accessible to fellow students, future students and anybody with interest in the subject. Research will be conducted to determine the benefit of the project as well as the published videos to the student community. It is suspected that the students engaged in making the videos will benefit in such a way as to gain further understanding of their course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, an enhanced sense of civic responsibility, as well as greater respect for the different languages and cultures in our classes. Indeed, an increase in student engagement has been shown to play a central role in student success, and it is well noted that deeper learning and more innovative solutions take place in collaborative groups. We aim to make a meaningful contribution towards the production and repository of knowledge in multilingual teaching and learning for the benefit of the diverse student population and staff. This would strengthen language development, multilingualism, and multiculturalism at CPUT and empower and promote African languages as languages of science and education at CPUT, in other institutions of higher learning, and in South Africa as a whole.

Keywords : educational videos, multiculturalism, multilingualism, student engagement

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