

Translanguaging as a Decolonial Move in South African Bilingual Classrooms

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Abstract : Nowadays, it is a fact that the majority of people, worldwide, are bilingual rather than monolingual due to the surge of globalisation and mobility. Consequently, bilingual education is a topical issue of discussion among researchers. Several studies that have focussed on it have highlighted the importance and need for incorporating learners' linguistic repertoires in multilingual classrooms and move away from the colonial approach which is a monolingual bias - one language at a time. Researchers pointed out that a systematic approach that involves the concurrent use of languages and not a separation of languages must be implemented in bilingual classroom settings. Translanguaging emerged as a systematic approach that assists learners to make meaning of their world and it involves allowing learners to utilize all their linguistic resources in their classrooms. The South African language policy also room for diverse languages use in bi/multilingual classrooms. This study, therefore, sought to explore how teachers apply translanguaging in bilingual classrooms in incorporating learners' linguistic repertoires. It further establishes teachers' perspectives in the use of more than one language in teaching and learning. The participants for this study were language teachers who teach at bilingual primary schools in Johannesburg in South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to establish their perceptions on the concurrent use of languages. Qualitative research design was followed in analysing data. The findings showed that teachers were reluctant to allow translanguaging to take place in their classrooms even though they realise the importance thereof. Not allowing bilingual learners to use their linguistic repertoires has resulted in learners' negative attitude towards their languages and contributed in learners' loss of their identity. This article, thus recommends a drastic change to decolonised approaches in teaching and learning in multilingual settings and translanguaging as a decolonial move where learners are allowed to translanguage freely in their classroom settings for better comprehension and making meaning of concepts and/or related ideas. It further proposes continuous conversations be encouraged to bring eminent cultural and linguistic genocide to a halt.

Keywords : bilingualism, decolonisation, linguistic repertoires, translanguaging

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