The Dilemma of Translanguaging Pedagogy in a Multilingual University in South Africa

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Abstract : In the context of international linguistic and cultural diversity, all languages can be used for all purposes. Africa in general and South Africa, in particular, is not an exception to multilingual and multicultural society. The multilingual and multicultural nature of South African society has a direct bearing to the heterogeneity of South African Universities in general. Universities as the centers of research, innovation, and transformation of the entire society should be at the forefront in leading multilingualism. The universities in South Africa had been using English and to a certain extent Afrikaans as the only academic languages during colonialism and apartheid regime. The democratic breakthrough of 1994 brought linguistic relief in South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa recognizes 11 official languages that should enjoy parity of esteem for the realization of multilingualism. The elevation of the nine previously marginalized indigenous African languages as academic languages in higher education is central to multilingualism. It is high time that Afrocentric model instead of Eurocentric model should be the one which underpins education system in South Africa at all levels. Almost all South African universities have their language policies that seek to promote access and success of students through multilingualism, but the main dilemma is the implementation of language policies. This study is significant to respond to two objectives: (i) To evaluate how selected institutions use language policies for accessibility and success of students. (ii) To study how selected universities integrate African languages for both academic and administrative purposes. This paper reflects the language policy practices in one selected University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa. The UoT has its own language policy which depicts linguistic diversity of the institution and its commitment to promote multilingualism. Translanguaging pedagogy which accommodates minority languages' usage in the teaching and learning process plays a pivotal role in promoting multilingualism. This research paper employs mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative research) approach. Qualitative data has been collected from the key informants (insiders and experts), while quantitative data has been collected from a cohort of third-year students. A mixed methods approach with its convergent parallel design allows the data to be collected separately, analysed separately but with the comparison of the results. Language development initiatives have been discussed within the framework of language policy and policy implementation strategies. Theoretically, this paper is rooted in language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource. The findings demonstrate that despite being a multilingual institution, there is a perpetuation of marginalization of African languages to be used as academic languages. Findings further display the hegemony of English. The promotion of status quo compromises the promotion of multilingualism, Africanization of Higher Education and intellectualization of indigenous African languages in South Africa under a democratic dispensation.

Keywords : afro-centric model, hegemony of English, language as a resource, translanguaging pedagogy