

Decolonial Subversions

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Translanguaging as Decolonial
Pedagogy: Investigating its efficacy
in the teaching of a trans-Atlantic
Julius Caesar

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Translanguaging as Decolonial Pedagogy: Investigating its efficacy in the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar*

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Abstract

In a multilingual country like South Africa, institutions of higher education are characterised by predominantly monolingual practices which perpetuate colonial objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation. As a South African from an historically advantaged background, I believe that it is imperative to find, and implement, pedagogies to subvert such colonial trajectories. This article discusses my case study of the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy. The investigation incorporated linguistic ethnographical methodologies and was conducted during the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* with students from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa and the University of Texas in the United States of America. It required the students to interpret any aspect of the play through their own linguistic and cultural lenses using video media. The study found that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power, but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English, as well as aspects of cultural assimilation. Based on these findings, I concluded that while translanguaging is insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy, it is valuable for raising students' awareness of linguistic and cultural plurality. To further the decolonial process, I proposed that translanguaging be followed by pedagogies of "(un)learning" – to use Laininen's (2019) term – that encourage students to reflect on their own language practices and the views embedded therein, to interrogate the origins and validity of such views, and to empower them to provide their own linguistic and cultural interpretations of texts.

Keywords: translanguaging, decolonial pedagogy, South Africa, Shakespeare, higher education, unlearning.

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Isizulu ukhumusha

Izindawo zemfundo ephakeme eNingizimu Afrika, zibukwa njengezithuthukisa ulimi olulodwa olugquguzela izindlela nemfundo yabokufika abangabacindezeli, nendlela yabo yokuphila. ENingizimu Afrika entsha kubalulekile ukwethula izindlela zokufunda ezizovikela ziqede indlela yokufundisa ngolimi olungelona olwasekhaya.

Kumbiko otholakele olanda ucubungulo ngabafundi befunda ngoShakespeare's Julius Ceaser abafundi beNyuvesi yaseWitwatersrand eNingizimu Afrika kanye neNyuvesi yaseTexas e-Amelika. Locwaningo luveza ukuthi abafundi kudingeka ukuthi bahumushe izigaba zomdlalo ngolimi lwabo kanye nendlela yekuphila besebenzisa nomkhakha wokubonwayo (video media).

Ucwaningo luthole ukuthi ukusetshenziswa kolimi lokuhunyushwa aluphumelelanga ukuphebeza nokugudluzela imibono namandla ngolimi lwabacindezeli kodwa konke lokhu kuphumelelise ukudlondlobala ngolimi lwesiNgisi nenqubo nenqubo yezokuphila kwabo.

Ucwaningo lukhuthaza ukundiswa kwezilimi ezinye nendlela yokufundisa "(un)unlearning" (Laininen, 2019) lokhu kukhuthaza abafundi ekubukeni ulimi lwabo nezindlela olusetshenziswa ngayo nokubapha amandlato ekhumusheni kwalo ulimi nokuqokethwe yilo.

Introduction

The South African education system has been plagued by linguistic inequalities since its inception. These inequalities can be traced back to the early nineteenth century when the British and Dutch colonists struggled for the dominance of their own languages, English and Dutch (which developed into Afrikaans), as the medium of instruction in formal schools. These power struggles continued into the apartheid era (1948-1994) during which language policies in education were used as tools of discrimination, of which the most obvious was the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which claimed to encourage indigenous instruction and the promotion of indigenous languages. However, the government's extremely limited allocation of resources to the development of African languages and curricula resulted in stark differences between the quality of education received by the colonists' children, and children of other 'races'.

The dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994 was heralded by admirable ambitions to transform the education system regarding equity and social justice. For example, the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa included several clauses that endorse the global recognition of freedom to use one's home language as a fundamental human right, such as Clause 29(2) which states that every individual has the right to be educated in the official language(s) of their choice at public educational institutions. However, Foley² (no date,

² As of 28 February 2023, teachenglish today website hosted the article: "Mother-Tongue Education in South Africa": <https://teachenglishtoday.org/index.php/2010/06/mother-tongue-education-in-south-africa-2/>.

footnote 1) points out that “this right is ... qualified by the consideration of reasonable practicability, which is defined in the Language in Education Policy of 1997 as occurring when 40 learners in a particular grade in a primary school, or 35 learners in a particular grade in a secondary school, demand to be taught in their mother tongue”. Also in 1997, the South African Constitution recognised eleven official languages, which included indigenous languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

Unfortunately, there is a sharp contrast between policy and practice in South African educational institutions. Of particular interest for this study is the fact that four of the top five South African universities³ use English as the medium of instruction⁴ and one uses Afrikaans and English⁵. Such practices perpetuate colonial ideologies of linguistic monopoly and ignore the multilingualism of the average South African who speaks 2.84 languages⁶ and the statistical findings that just over 80% of South Africans speak neither English nor Afrikaans as a home language – only approximately 8.1% of South Africans speak English, and 12.2% speak Afrikaans, as a home language⁷. The issue of decolonising higher education was foregrounded in 2015 when some students and academics began a campaign to end “the domination of Western epistemological traditions, histories and figures” (Molefe, 2016, p. 32). However, these actions did not make any significant changes to the linguistic landscape in higher education institutions.

Against this background of the negative impact of colonialism, the inclusion of Shakespeare in South African curricula is fiercely contested. The argument that the study of Shakespeare contradicts the aim of decolonising education is based on the “substantial body of scholarship on the relationship between Shakespeare in education and South Africa’s colonial history” (Thurman, 2020, p. 51)⁸. On the other hand, proponents for the inclusion of Shakespeare argue that the meaning of Shakespeare needs to be constructed (Distiller, 2005) and that “all knowledge is relevant to all people, and for that reason alone Shakespeare belongs to us as ‘he’ does to anyone else ... [and] has cultural capital that Africans are entitled to as anyone else” (Distiller, 2012, p. 7).

This notion of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991) has recently been explored by numerous African scholars, theatre producers and actors. For example, Khala-Phiri (2017, p. 90) foregrounded South African tertiary institutions as repeated locations for political protests

³ As of 5 September 2022, the Mastersportal website hosted the article “Best 11 universities & colleges in South Africa”: <https://www.mastersportal.com/ranking-country/191/south-africa.html>.

⁴ These universities are the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Durban University of Technology.

⁵ The University of Stellenbosch uses Afrikaans and English as media of instruction.

⁶ As of 21 February 2022, the South African Gateway website hosted the article “The 11 languages of South Africa”: <https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/11-languages-south-africa/#:~:text=A%20rough%20estimate%20based%20on,three%2C%20four%20or%20more%20languages>.

⁷ As of 19 January 2023, the statssa website hosted the article “General Household Survey 2018”: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182020.pdf>.

⁸ Scholars such as Wright (2008) and Willan (2012) expound on this relationship.

and positioned *The Tempest's* Miranda as “a first year student, in present day South Africa, ... on the island of a tertiary education institution during a terrifying storm of political instability”. Similarly, drawing from the significant challenges of life in South Africa, Meskin (2017) produced an enactment, based on *Julius Caesar*, in which students staged slam poetry to convey their dissatisfaction with contemporary South Africa to their fabricated leader, Caesar. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa produced the #lockdownshakespeare initiative in which actors performed and recorded extracts of Shakespeare’s plays in their own homes and oftentimes in their own languages. These performances inspired theatre companies in countries like Ghana to produce similar, culturally specific renditions of Shakespeare’s works⁹.

This study is positioned alongside such productions as a decolonial pedagogical initiative. It adopts Walsh’s (2009) understanding of decoloniality as the interrogation of, and endeavor to conquer, all types of control against people who have been subjected to systems of domination. Furthermore, it operates from the premise that colonial processes are embedded in language (Canagarajah and Liyanage, 2012) and argues that for decolonial pedagogy to be effective, it must subvert colonial ideas about language and power, such as the association of colonial languages with superiority and power, and other languages with inferiority and inconsequence. It also argues that decolonial pedagogy must subvert colonial cultural assimilation.

Based on these premises, the investigation explored the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy. To determine efficacy, it looked for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power, and the subversion of colonial worldviews. This evidence was obtained from the students’ responses to a task during the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* – one of Shakespeare’s historical tragedies that focuses on the assassination of the Roman general, Julius Caesar, by a group of senators (led by Brutus and Cassius), and the senators’ consequent battle with Caesar’s ally, Mark Antony.

The study employed translanguaging because research indicates this approach’s potential as decolonial pedagogy in (at least) three ways. First, translanguaging creates a more inclusive learning environment by providing opportunities for the use, acceptance, encouragement, and development of all languages (García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torrez-Guzman, 2006). Second, it validates bi- and multilingualism by creating a safe environment that serves to “liberat[e] the voice of language minoritized students” (García and Leiva, 2014, p. 200). Finally, it serves to ease potentially stressful transitions to new content by affording learners the opportunity to use their own languages to engage with new subject material (Duarte, 2016), which consequently facilitates more meaningful class discussions and greater cultural investment in the learning experience (Bisai and Singh, 2020).

⁹ As of 31 August 2022, the Conversation website hosted the article “Decolonising Shakespeare: setting Othello in Ghana and Pericles in Glasgow”: <https://theconversation.com/decolonising-shakespeare-setting-othello-in-ghana-and-pericles-in-glasgow-174166>.

However, translanguaging also has some limitations (as discussed by Escobar and Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015; Cenoz and Gorter, 2017; and Hamman, 2018). Of particular interest for this study is the observation by Pennycook and Makoni (2020, p. 98) – reiterated by Jasper (2018) and Meighan (2022) – that translanguaging can result in indigenous and minoritised languages “being treated as mere resources, important only for their exchange value rather than cultural significance”.

Within the context of South Africa’s political history, my position as researcher and one of the facilitators in the course on *Julius Caesar* is complicated and confirms Smith’s (2008, p. 37) view that there are “multiple ways of being both an insider and an outsider in indigenous research”. As a born and raised South African, I am an insider as I have lived in South Africa my entire life. However, my status as a South African from an historically advantaged background positions me as a privileged outsider to the South African experience of colonialism and apartheid, while simultaneously precluding me from the general outsider advantages of “objectivity and neutrality” (Smith, 2008, p. 37). Despite these obstacles, I believe passionately in the need for South African educators from advantaged backgrounds, like me, to contribute to subverting colonial trajectories in educational settings. This belief drives my research.

Conceptual framework

In this study, ‘translanguaging’ refers to the “planned and systematic use of two [or more] languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 3). As part of the study was conducted in South Africa – a good exemplar of “African situations of linguistic confluence” (Makalela, 2016, p. 190) – the term ‘translanguaging’ also encompasses “simple to complex multilingual encounters where speakers use more than one language for exchange of input and output” (Makalela, 2016, p. 190).

The investigation shares the socio-political context of scholars such as Setati et al. (2002) and Probyn (2015) on translanguaging pedagogy in South Africa. Furthermore, it aligns with the work by Makalela (2016) and Guzula, McKinney and Tyler (2016) on the use of translanguaging to address the prevailing monolingualism and linguistic injustices in South African classrooms.

Method

Setting

The case study formed part of a digital exchange between second-year English (literature) students at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and their peers at the University of Texas (UT) in the first six months of 2022. In both universities, English is employed as medium of instruction. The digital exchange consisted of a combination of shared online

classes and meetings in three small groups of approximately 10 students each, with roughly equal numbers of students from both universities. Each group had a facilitator – two from UT and one from Wits.

Participants

The number of students in the digital exchange was approximately 30. However, only 16 students (hereafter referred to as ‘participants’) responded to my questions on their language usage in the videos and only these responses are included in the study. In describing the participants, I deliberately avoid categories of ‘race’ in acknowledgement of the many inaccurate and oftentimes damaging associations of these categories, rather than from the historical tendency for racial discourse to ignore distinctions between races (Goldberg, 1993). Ethnic classifiers are also avoided, because my discussions with many of the South African participants disclosed the difficulty of assigning people to single ethnic groups. For example, a person may have a Zulu father, a Xhosa mother, and despite tribal traditions of adopting paternal lineage, may identify with both tribes or the mother’s tribe or, due to living in an urban area, with neither tribe.

Due to these factors, the discussion simply refers to the facilitators as “Facilitator 1” and so on, and to the participants as “Participant 1”, “Participant 2” and so on, and only supplies the languages they speak.

Table 1 indicates the languages spoken by the facilitators (abbreviated to “Fac.”) and the participants (abbreviated to “Part.”).

Table 1

Languages spoken by the facilitators and participants

	Afrikaans	Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian	Dutch	English	French	Hebrew	IsiZulu	Latin	Portu- guese	Sepedi	Sesotho	Spanish
Fac. 1				✓								
Fac. 2				✓								
Fac. 3				✓								
Part. 1				✓			✓					
Part. 2	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Part. 3				✓				✓				
Part. 4				✓			✓				✓	
Part. 5				✓		✓						
Part. 6		✓		✓								
Part. 7				✓			✓					
Part. 8	✓			✓								
Part. 9				✓								✓
Part. 10				✓								✓
Part. 11	✓			✓								
Part. 12	✓			✓								
Part. 13				✓								✓
Part. 14				✓					✓			
Part. 15	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Part. 16	✓			✓								

Table 1 shows that all the facilitators and participants spoke English. Furthermore, the three facilitators only ever communicated in English and of the sixteen participants, thirteen were bilingual, two were trilingual and one spoke six languages.

Experimental pedagogy

Prior to the study, there had been no focus on the multilingualism and multiculturalism of the participants, and the participants had not engaged in any translanguaging exercises. Translanguaging was introduced as an experiment to determine its efficacy as decolonial pedagogy. To this end, *Julius Caesar* was used for the study in keeping with the digital exchange's predetermined focus on two plays – *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* – that explore issues of republic and people's voice (rather than other Shakespearean plays that focus more specifically on colonial issues, such as *The Tempest* or *Othello*). Furthermore, to prevent the participants from adapting their responses to the focus of the study, they were not informed

of its exact focus, only of its interest in their use of different aspects of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the process of making sense of the play. The participants were also not given any information on translanguaging, nor the impact of colonisation and its educational objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation.

To determine whether, and to what extent, translanguaging subverts colonial educational objectives, the experimental pedagogy was therefore deliberately open-ended. The participants were instructed to 'work in their small groups and to produce video interpretations of an aspect, such as a scene or central idea, of *Julius Caesar* using their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds'. The experimental pedagogy was not assessed formally to avoid the possibility of the participants focusing on producing a 'video-that-will-get-the-best marks' rather than a more authentic exploration of their own interpretations of the play.

The groups met twice (for approximately 45 minutes each time) to discuss and consolidate their ideas, after which they had two weeks to produce their videos. The groups interpreted the task slightly differently. The UT facilitators' groups collaborated with each other, which resulted in both groups producing single video interpretations (one per group) – based on the plebians' responses to Brutus – of the responses of contemporary people to modern-day politicians. My group, on the other hand, chose to produce individual videos based on the assassination of Julius Caesar (Act 3). After explaining the task, the facilitators played very little role in the interpretations, as the participants assumed agency for producing their own videos.

Research design

The research design was qualitative and was influenced by Guzula, McKinney and Tyler's (2016) linguistic ethnographical study of translanguaging with English-isiXhosa bilinguals. As in Guzula, McKinney and Tyler's research, my study's understanding of linguistic ethnography was guided by Rampton, Maybin and Roberts' (2014, p. 2) definition that:

to a considerable degree, language and the social world are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity.

In keeping with the linguistic ethnography framework, I obtained data from my email exchanges with the participants: after the videos had been watched (and greatly enjoyed) by the class, I emailed each of the participants the following questions:

What language/s did you use in your contribution?

Why did you choose this/these language/s?

Could you please provide an English translation of the other language/s you used?

How did you experience translating Shakespeare's Early Modern English into this language/these languages?

What languages do you speak?

Where required, I asked the participants specific, follow-up questions to clarify my understanding of their responses.

I also obtained data from the participants' language usage in the videos, which I analysed for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power, and the subversion of colonial worldviews.

Ethical considerations

The facilitators and participants were informed of the study and provided their consent for their responses to be used in it. They were also assured of their anonymity.

Results

In the ensuing discussion, the translations of the different languages (provided in italics) reflect the translations supplied by the participants.

The first two groups based their presentations on Act 3, Scene 2 in which Brutus justifies Caesar's assassination and the plebians respond to his speeches. Both presentations were set in contemporary South African and American settings. In the first presentation, Brutus was played by Participant 8 who delivered all the lines in the original Early Modern English (hereafter referred to as 'EME'), and in the second presentation, Brutus was played by Participant 3, who alternated between EME and Latin. In both presentations, the participants playing the plebians responded to Brutus' speeches on a variety of social media platforms – such as Zoom chats and SMSs – in Afrikaans, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Dutch, English (both EME and Modern English – hereafter referred to as 'ME')¹⁰, French, Hebrew, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho and Spanish. However, despite the incorporation of a variety of languages, there was a telling difference in the number of plebian lines spoken in ME compared to the other languages, as displayed in Figure 1.

¹⁰ While acknowledging that there are minor differences between EME and ME, this study operates from the view that EME and ME are different versions of the English language.

Figure 1

Number of plebian lines spoken in the different languages

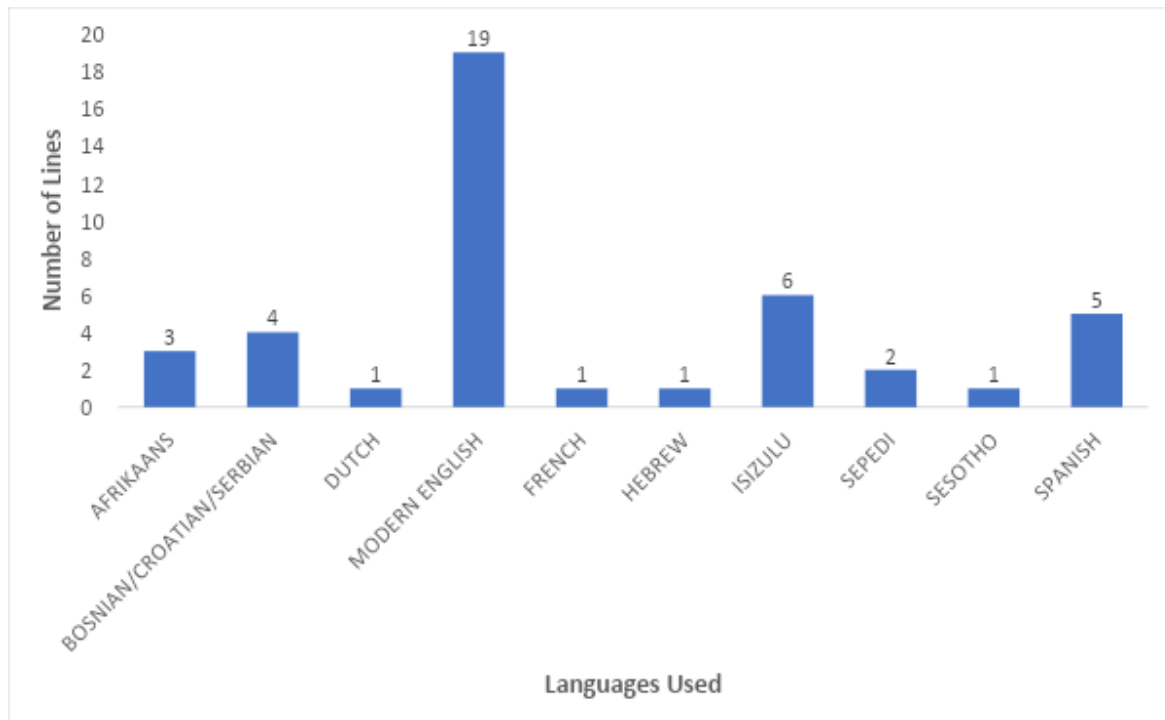


Figure 1 shows that of the 34 lines spoken by the plebians, 19 were delivered in ME. This result discloses two interesting issues. First, the finding that over half of the translanguaging occurred in a linguistic version of the original language suggests the dominance of the perception of Shakespeare as an ‘English’ text. A second, and perhaps related, issue is that the limited use of other languages suggests the restraint with which the participants approached the notion of translanguaging with a Shakespearean text.

Despite this restraint, the participants provided a range of rationale for translanguaging into different languages. Some languages were used for purposes of linguistic variety. For example, Participant 11, who used Afrikaans in the lines, “Stilte. Die edele Brutus is opgevaar” [*Quiet. The noble Brutus is ascended*] (3.2.11) and “Het hy, meesters? / Ek is bang daar sal erger in sy plek kom” [*Has he, masters? / I fear there will be a worse come in his place*] (3.2.113-114) commented that, “It’s my second language, and it seemed like there weren’t going to be any other students using it”. In another example, Participant 15, who spoke Spanish in “Shhh. Escucha, comienza a hablar otra vez” [*Listen. He is starting to talk again*] (3.2.119) stated, “I have been learning [Spanish] for three years now ... and I wanted to just showcase my interest in romance languages or languages in general”.

Another explanation revealed an embryonic awareness of the roles that can be played by different languages. This was evident in the response of Participant 2 who used French, “Qu’il soit César” [*Let it be Caesar*] (3.2.52) and Dutch, “Er is geen edeler man in Rome dan

Antonius" [*There is no nobler man in Rome than Antony*] (3.2.118). Participant 2 provided the following explanation for her linguistic choices:

A lot of this seminar taught me to challenge statements like 'French and English are the only two languages that are beautiful enough for literature', hence I chose French as well. In challenging these I chose Dutch to show the beauty in other culture[s].

Despite wanting to challenge such notions, it is interesting that this South African participant chose European languages – and not the indigenous languages of South Africa – as 'languages that are beautiful enough for literature'.

In addition to this embryonic understanding, some of the participants' explanations displayed a significantly deeper understanding of the importance of different languages for learning. Several participants noted how different languages facilitated understanding of subject content. For example, Participant 7, who used isiZulu in the lines, "Ngizomuzwa ekhuluma uBrutus" [*I will hear Brutus speak*] (3.2.8) explained, "I used Isizulu ... because ... I knew that most people would understand Isizulu better". Other participants commented on the role of different languages in making the subject content culturally relevant. Participant 5, who followed the line, "The noble Brutus is ascended" with the Hebrew word שקט [*Silence*] (3.2.11) and later used the Hebrew word שלום [*Peace*] (3.2.56) explained that using Hebrew helped "to connect to what I was saying. ... My message was to emphasise that through using different/modern languages, Shakespeare's plays can become more easily relatable and understood". Similarly, Participant 4, who used the Sesotho words, "Kgutso! Kgotso!" [*Silence! Peace!*] (3.2.56) explained, "[I]t's one of the languages I speak" and "I wanted to give the play my cultural feeling". Yet other participants, such as Participant 6 who spoke Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in "Plementi Brut se popeo. Mir!" [*Noble Brutus is standing up. Peace!*] (3.2.66) mentioned the role of different languages in elevating the visibility of different cultures: "Young people are ready to think bigger and manage not only to tolerate differences but also to accept them. Language is a perfect example for that". Finally, Participant 15 who spoke the Zulu lines, "Uzosifundela intando, funda intando kaKhesari" [*He will read us the will, Caesar's will*] (3.2.141) and Sepedi in "Go kaba kaone ge e le gore a re bolele ga mphe ka ga Brutus moo!" [*It would be better if he lets us talk about Brutus there*] (3.2.70) explained how translanguaging helped to "pay homage to the cultures that shaped me" and even "taught me more about my background than I thought I knew". A further reflection concerned the impact of this task on Participant 15's awareness of personal agency in the learning process:

The lecturers and facilitators gave us all a platform to define the work of Shakespeare through our own lenses, influenced by the diverse people we are. In high school, it was always about what the teachers wanted you to write and think about certain literature which meant I could not relate Julius Caesar/Coriolanus to Shaka¹¹ But I really enjoyed being challenged to change that perspective.

¹¹ Shaka (1787-1828) was a Zulu chief and the architect of the Zulu kingdom in Southern Africa.

The participants' reflections therefore affirmed other scholars' observations of the benefits of translanguaging (discussed earlier). Specifically, they indicated how translanguaging facilitated their understanding of the subject content, created cultural connections, served to acknowledge and elevate the visibility of different cultures, inspired a deeper understanding of their cultures, and raised their awareness of their own agency in learning.

The participants in the third group based their individual videos on Caesar's assassination (Act 3). However, unlike the first two groups, they deviated from the literal meaning of the scene and produced figurative interpretations in which the assassination of Caesar was used to represent societal issues that they would like to be eliminated.

Like the first two groups, the participants in the third group filmed their videos in their own South African and American settings, incorporated digital technology, and included languages other than EME. However, the third group displayed greater restraint in the use of languages other than English. Of the seven videos, five used only English, and two alternated between English, and Afrikaans and Spanish, respectively. While there was insufficient data to explain the participants' predominant use of English – I was unaware of this trend when I conducted the email interviews and did not specifically inquire about the participants' predominant use of English – this finding does indicate their reluctance to deviate from the original language of the play.

Despite this restraint, the third group was more successful than the other two groups in departing from Shakespeare's original plot and characters in their depiction of contemporary, ideological 'Caesars' that they would like to see fall. An analysis of these 'Caesars' disclosed a telling distinction between the choices of the UT and Wits participants. This distinction is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

UT and Wits participants' choices of ideological 'Caesars'

UT Participants	Wits Participants
Late-stage capitalism	Humanity's negative impact on climate
Wade versus Roe abortion debate	Unrealistic beauty standards
American Electoral College	Perfectionism
	Corruption in world leaders

Table 2 shows that the UT participants chose issues that are specific to the American context, while their Wits counterparts focused on global, rather than South African-specific, concerns. I would argue that this distinction suggests that the American participants perceived their national issues as worthy of attention in this trans-Atlantic setting, while the Wits

participants viewed global concerns as more important than those in South Africa. These differences indicate the perception that issues in the global north are more significant than those in the global south, and thereby lend support to Heleta (2016) and Molefe's (2016) argument of the ongoing prevalence of Western epistemologies in South African higher education.

Discussion

To determine the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy, the data from the participants' written interviews and videos were examined for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power and the subversion of colonial worldviews.

The data provided evidence that translanguaging succeeded in subverting colonial ideas about the exclusive use of colonial languages – in this case, English – in educational settings. This was displayed by the use of eleven languages in addition to English. However, translanguaging failed to subvert the participants' associations of English with positions of power. In all three presentations, English (and in one instance, Latin) were used for Caesar and Brutus, while the plebians spoke a variety of languages. These findings indicate British colonial notions of English (or a language associated with academia) as 'appropriate' for use by those in power and the (conscious or unconscious) perception of the languages of people with less power, as inferior in some way and therefore more easily alterable. In fact, the 'tokenism' in the use of languages other than English confirms Pennycook and Makoni's (2020) observation that translanguaging can lead to marginalised languages being devalued and treated as commodities. Furthermore, it is feasible (although impossible to prove from this study) that the participants' responses to the task were influenced, and possibly inhibited, by the fact that the facilitators represented the colonial stereotype of people in power, as all three came from historically advantaged backgrounds and only communicated in English. As Parvin (in this publication, p. 71) reflects, "well-intended White folks can unintentionally engage in subtle forms of racism".

The data also provided some evidence of the subversion of British cultural assimilation in the participants' choices concerning setting and plot. All three groups subverted the original setting of *Julius Caesar* from ancient Rome in 44BC to South African and American settings in 2022, which suggests that the participants were most comfortable in contemporising the setting of the play. However, they displayed more restraint in subverting the original plot of *Julius Caesar*, as only one group provided figurative interpretations thereof.

My analyses of the data suggest that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English and some of the secondary objectives of colonial education. Unfortunately, time constraints – due to sharing a course between two universities in different time zones and with different timetables – did not afford me the opportunity of presenting these findings to the participants and receiving their feedback on my interpretations of their language usage and

that of their peers. Such participant feedback could have significantly enriched the results of the study. This was a limitation of the study that I would seek to remedy in future research.

The findings therefore indicate that translanguaging was insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy and needs to be supplemented by other approaches. As a possible approach for furthering the decolonial process, I propose the implementation of what Meighan (2022, para. 3) – borrowing from Laininen (2019) – calls an “epistemic (un)learning of the western ‘epistemological error’ ... to enable equitable validation of all languages and knowledge systems, including those Indigenous and minoritized”. Such ‘(un)learning’ could involve class discussions that encourage students to reflect on why they used certain languages in certain contexts and their varying positionality (Parvin, in this publication) with these environments, and what these choices indicate about their perceptions of language usage by different members of society and in different contexts. Additionally, the class discussions could encourage students to interrogate the origins and validity of their views on language and power. Building on these conversations and to further challenge the dominance of English and to empower indigenous languages and cultures, the participants could then be tasked with writing and sharing summaries of aspects of the play in their own languages and/or reworking significant monologues or scenes from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Additionally, the class discussions could encourage students to interrogate the origins and validity of their views on language and power and to adapt Parvin’s call for White students to reflect on their positionality.

An investigation of the efficacy of such (un)learning activities after a task involving translanguaging pedagogy, as well as the participants’ responses to such exercises, could be some of the foci for further studies. The investigation also provides several other foci for future research. As it potentially represented many participants’ first exposure to translanguaging, studies could be conducted to investigate if repeated exposure to translanguaging serves to liberate and expand students’ incorporation of their own languages and cultures. Research could also be carried out to determine the impact of educators’ backgrounds and language practices on students’ responses to translanguaging.

Conclusion

Since the early nineteenth century, the formal South African education system has been plagued by linguistic power struggles between English and Afrikaans – the languages of the colonisers. The impact of these struggles is still evident in the majority of South African institutions of higher learning where English is the only medium of instruction, despite the multilingualism of most South African students. Since the dawn of South Africa’s democracy in 1994, the inclusion of Shakespeare in educational curricula has been fiercely contested due to the substantial evidence of the relationship between Shakespeare in education and colonialism. However, despite this controversy, Shakespeare continues to feature in most South African English curricula and it is therefore imperative to investigate decolonial pedagogies of Shakespeare.

This study is driven by my desire, as a South African from an historically advantaged background, to contribute to addressing the predominantly monolingual praxes in South African higher education institutions that perpetuate colonial objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation. The ever-growing field of research on translanguaging suggests the potential and limitations of this pedagogy for subverting such colonial trajectories. For this reason, I investigated the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy in the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* with students from the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Texas. The study found that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power, but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English, as well as aspects of cultural assimilation. Consequently, it concluded that translanguaging is insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy. To further the decolonial process, I proposed that translanguaging be followed by pedagogies of (un)learning that encourage students to reflect on their language usage in different settings, to interrogate the origins and validity of the views that inform such usage, and to create texts from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Although unable to successfully subvert the trajectory of colonialism in South African institutions of higher education, translanguaging can nevertheless play a helpful role in the decolonising process.

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