

Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC)

Volume: 5 No. 1, April 2016

pp. 22-40

ersc.nmmu.ac.za

ISSN: 2221-4070

Reflecting on Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms: Harnessing the Power of Poetry and Photography

Margie Childs

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

margie.childs@nmmu.ac.za

Abstract

There is often a disconnect between the dominant language of the classroom and the home language of South African learners. Consequently, this may lead to dehumanising experiences in classrooms. This article explores the possibilities of using translanguaging to bring about humanising experiences for learners and teachers. Translanguaging is a means of providing planned and systematic use of the home language of learners with the language of the classroom in order to foster learning and teaching. A poetic inquiry is used to explore and make meaning of my understanding of what I observe in multilingual classroom contexts. Poetry and photography are used as data to support an argument for using translanguaging as a pedagogic tool to enable teaching and learning. Researcher-voiced poems (vox autobiographia) and literature-voiced poems (vox theoria) are employed to encapsulate understandings of the complexities and possibilities of teaching in multilingual classrooms. This inquiry reveals that translanguaging practices allow for fluid movement between the home and school language. Instead of being dehumanised by traditional language practices, teachers and learners are encouraged to bring their languages to the classroom. In so doing, they are able to experience being human as social, thinking, transforming, individuals participating with others in the world they inhabit together.

Keywords: humanising pedagogy, multilingual, translanguaging, poetic inquiry, deficit

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Introduction

Students' humanity—its existence and expansion—is at the heart of a humanising pedagogy. All students and all teachers are human beings and equal in their humanity. We are all in the process of becoming. The purposes of education are to extend this humanity through opportunities for creativity, imagination, and interaction with others and the world (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, p. 87).

In this article, I argue that translanguaging can be used as a pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms to bridge communication in nuanced ways and bring about a more humanising experience for both learners and teachers. Translanguaging as a structured metacognitive language process enables epistemological access (Heugh, 2015) and the crafting of sociocultural identities (García & Wei, 2015).

Lack of acceptance of the languages and “ways of knowing” of learners can result in dehumanising experiences in classrooms (Salazar, 2013, p. 121) as certain children within a classroom are often viewed in a negative light (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Hertzog, 2011; Hornberger, 2002). Comber and Kamler (2004, p. 293) emphasised how “the poor, the wilful, the disabled, the non-English speaking, the slow, the bottom 10%” have been cast as deficient and insufficient. Learners who are not skilled in the dominant language of the classroom appear to be seen as less able and less worthy. When the “treasures” of language and culture are forced to remain outside the classroom door, this can result in a sense of humiliation at the rejection of vital aspects of being human (Salazar, 2013, p. 121).

Background

This research emerges out of my participation—as teacher educator—in a humanising pedagogy reflection process undertaken in 2011 at the South African university where I am employed. Students and staff were invited to take part in various activities to think and learn about what a humanising pedagogy might mean for them and the institution (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). The participants' stories were woven with understandings of humanising work and thinking (Freire, 1972, 2005). The “Statements of Awareness” developed from the process provided the impetus for further exploration and inquiry (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, p. 84).

The various insights regarding the concept of a humanising pedagogy emerging during this process extended my thinking about my own classroom and the classrooms of the student teachers I teach. The work of Bartolomé (1994), Huerta (2011), Renner, Brown, Stiens, and Burton (2010), and Salazar (2008, 2010, 2013) continues to provide a lens to consider teaching and learning practices. Visits to primary school classrooms and subsequent reflections have left me with the uneasy sense that many learners appear to be othered and dehumanised. Some of the classrooms where our student teachers learn to teach are environments that seem to privilege certain children and subordinate others. In many instances, I sensed a disconnect between the dominant language of the classroom and the home language of learners, confirming the assertions of Mda (2004) and Probyn (2001) that the primary language of learners is often not tolerated and use of this language in the classroom and on the playground is frequently forbidden.

In this article, the complex realities of primary school classrooms are considered. The term, *Home Language* (capitalised) will be used to refer to a level of teaching, while the use of *home language* will contain an understanding of the language coming from the home, as opposed to the language used predominantly at school for teaching. The terms *main language* and *mother tongue* will be used

as synonyms for home language to denote a primary or strong language that the child acquires in the home from an early age.

Language in the South African Schooling Context

South Africa has multifarious classroom language situations. Schools have to organise learning and teaching at a minimum of two language levels. These levels are described as Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL). There is also a possibility of offering a second additional language (SAL) within the current school curriculum. Many schools do not offer the home language (mother tongue or main language) of all of the learners. Thus the term, Home Language, has to be understood as a required “proficiency level,” rather than the main or strongest language of the learners (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011, p. 8). Some learners have the advantage of a match between their main language and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) of the school, but other learners do not have this privilege. While many learners are able to use their strongest language during the initial few years of schooling, most start using an additional language, usually English, in Grade 4 (DBE, 2011).

Although there are resonances between the South African language context and that of other countries, there are also important differences. As in many parts of the world, English is a dominant and dominating language. However, the impact of political and social history has meant that the language issues of the Global North and Global South should be considered carefully and not necessarily conflated. Heugh alerts us to this by alluding to:

The tension between rarefied views of language as hermetically sealed entities found in language policies and practices that emerged from the late 19th-century Europe on the one hand, and a recognition of the more fluid use of language in multilingual settings in Africa on the other hand (Heugh, 2015, p. 281).

This tension plays out in intricate ways in some South African classrooms. Teachers operating with an understanding of language as a bounded and pure system may struggle to accommodate learners who cannot use the target language required for learning and teaching effectively. Strategies such as translation, code switching, and other assistive language practices may be viewed as undesirable or even harmful to language development (Probyn, 2001, 2009; Setati, Adler, Reed, & Bapoo, 2002).

Several authors (see García, 2009b; García & Wei, 2015; Heugh, 2015; Probyn, 2015) promoted translanguaging as systematic and pedagogically sound means of connecting the LoLT and the languages of learners. Translanguaging is a practice used by multilingual individuals to move between the languages that they know in order to communicate in a range of social contexts. Their language repertoire is understood as one system, rather than as a collection of discrete languages. In situations where learners are encouraged to use insights gained from one language to help them use another language, as in the case of translanguaging, this can be an affirming experience and may facilitate more effective learning.

The value of this research lies in arguing for an approach, relevant for the South African context, that goes beyond a preoccupation with method fetish (Bartolomé, 1994) and is a planned and organised way for learners and teachers to “listen and learn” from each other (Bartolomé, 1994, p. 189). This reciprocal relationship of classroom participants is described as follows by Freire:

Teachers should be conscious every day that they are coming to school to learn and not just to teach. This way we are not just teachers but teacher learners. It is really impossible to teach without learning as well as learning without teaching (1985, p. 16).

The practice of translanguageing offers the opportunity for a disruption of typical power relations in the classroom where learners are encouraged to take ownership of their language practices and, in response, teachers surrender aspects of their authority role (García & Wei, 2015).

Research Question

The purpose of this inquiry is thus to consider the possibilities of using emancipatory and inclusive language practice such as translanguageing as a means of providing a more humanising experience in the classroom. The question that guides this article is: “How can translanguageing be used to provide humanising experiences for learners and teachers in primary school classrooms?” In order to make a cogent argument for translanguageing as a means of enacting a humanising pedagogy in multilingual contexts, it is necessary first to consider these concepts and some of the debates associated with them.

Conceptual Framing

Two conceptual departure points will be used to view the intricacies of multilingual teaching and learning contexts in South African primary schools, that is, the concepts of translanguageing and humanising pedagogy.

Translanguageing

Translanguageing fits within the spectrum of work on multilingualism. Included in this range of language activity are code switching, translation, and translanguageing. Code switching is usually a relatively short move from the LoLT to the home language of learners and then a switch back to the LoLT. Translation usually entails a repetition of an oral or written text in the more accessible home language of learners (Probyn, 2015). Both of these practices are responsive rather than planned strategies, usually regarded as temporary excursions from the monolingual ideal. In some cases, use of the learners’ home language instead of the LoLT is viewed as illicit or transgressive (Probyn, 2001, 2009, 2015). Translanguageing on the other hand can be used as a pedagogically sensitive tool to systematically promote learning (Heugh, 2015; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Probyn, 2015). Both languages are used in an organised manner to mediate understanding and learning (Baker, 2011; García & Wei, 2015; Heugh, 2015).

The definition of translanguageing by García suggests the emancipatory nature of this practice and its facility to disrupt the power imbalances of languages:

Translanguageing in education can be defined as a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include all the language practices of students in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality (2014, p. 3).

A range or continuum of practice is possible in translanguageing work including oral to written, receptive to expressive, and encouraging the movement of understandings of one language to inform understandings of another (Cummins, 1979; Hornberger & Link, 2012). Two or more

languages are used in a systematic and integrated way to mediate understanding and grasp metacognitive languaging processes (Lewis et al., 2012). The way that languages are used will depend on the specific classroom environment and the language repertoires of learners and the teacher.

Translanguaging is, however, a contested practice because it challenges views of languages as separate entities (García, 2009b; García & Hesson, 2015). Those operating essentially with a monolingual orientation often reject translanguaging (Heugh, 2015; Probyn, 2009, 2015). These could be teachers who require the LoLT, as target language, to be used exclusively. They may regard a language the learner brings as unwanted or even prohibited. To highlight the phenomenon of resistance to language the learners bring from home, Probyn referred to the practice of “smuggling the vernacular into the classroom” (2009, p. 123). Teachers with a bilingual orientation could find it easier to acknowledge the value of translanguaging (García, 2012). The main language of the learner would be seen not as a threat, but as a resource to assist in the acquisition of the new language of the school. The advantages of translanguaging extend beyond the recognition of language and include recognition and acceptance of learner identities:

Translanguaging supports the ability of bilingual students to have multiple identities that are not exactly like those constructed in monolingual contexts or in other contexts. It actually buttresses the multiple and fluid identities of bilingual students. (García, 2012, p. 3)

Appreciation of the authenticity of translanguaging as a discursive practice depends on the perspective of the individual and the understanding of how identities and cultural meanings are produced and understood. In South African classrooms, this would imply making more provision for learners’ languages in various curriculum activities. This could be facilitated through the use of multilingual materials such as multilingual glossaries (Madiba, 2014). This strategy would assist learners in accessing content knowledge. Multilingual fiction and other resources are available in many South African languages (Bloch, 2009; McIlwraith, 2015). Various organisations produce materials in a range of South African languages. Free distribution and open access furthermore make materials such as those from Nal’ibali easily available. Nal’ibali is a project that promotes reading for pleasure (<http://nalibali.org>). Biblionef is another such organization; it makes books available in all official languages for reading pleasure and for information (<http://biblionefsa.org.za>). Having texts available in the various languages represented in the school classroom could go a long way to raising the status and use of the languages learners bring to the classroom. Zinn and Rodgers (2012), in their “Statements of awareness” of a humanising pedagogy, alluded to the importance of learners and what they bring, being accepted in school classrooms:

Learners need to be recognized, appreciated, acknowledged, and seen. As human beings, all learners and teachers benefit from appreciation of who they are and the capacities they possess. These must be seen in order to be appreciated and acknowledged. (p. 87)

Encouraging and making place for the language capacities of learners by means of translanguaging is a means of enacting transformational and humanising practice in school classrooms.

Humanising Pedagogy

The concept of a humanising pedagogy emerged from the work of Freire and is a pivotal aspect of Freire’s understanding of the world (Salazar, 2013). Freire (1972) emphasised the aspect of dialogue with reference to a humanising pedagogy. There is a shift from the image of a teacher as a powerful

knowledge holder and “bank clerk” to that of a problem poser. The teacher is no longer one who merely deposits knowledge. The learner moves from “receiving, filing and storing the deposits” (Freire, 1972, p. 72) to a more active role. The power balance shifts. There is a quest for “critical thinking” and “mutual humanization” (1972, p. 75). In the discussion of a humanising pedagogy, Bartolomé called for “rigorous, student-centered teaching strategies” (1994, p. 181). At the same time, we are offered a reminder that learners, viewed with a deficit lens and perceived as having limited cultural capital, are often not required by teachers to access and use their existing knowledge and language strengths (Bartolomé, 1994). Bartolomé thus called for a “humanizing pedagogy that values the students’ background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers” (1994, p. 182). Bartolomé emphasised that it is not the particular teaching strategy but, rather, the orientation of the teacher that is the critical issue. The key emphasis is a requirement to treat learners with “respect and dignity” (1994, p. 190).

In this regard, Huerta (2011) identified several humanising practices required of teachers. As a departure point, Huerta indicated that teachers need adequate sociocultural awareness. Teachers are required to craft “instructional practices based on students’ realities, history, and perspectives in order to connect the subject matter to their students” (Huerta, 2011, p. 38). Humanising practices in a South African classroom context would require an acknowledgement that “learning requires teachers and learners to have a respect for, a genuine interest in and curiosity about themselves as learners and the act of learning” (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, p. 87). A humanising pedagogy would enable learners to make their own connection to subject matter by understanding what they are able to do with the cultural and language strengths they bring to the classroom (Salazar, 2013). Salazar has distilled several principles and practices of humanising pedagogy, two of which are of particular relevance within the context of translanguaging as a strategy to enable humanising experiences:

- Students’ sociocultural resources are valued and extended.
- Mainstream knowledge and discourse styles matter (2013, p. 138).

It is vital that the language and sociocultural treasures that learners bring are valued and included in classrooms in order to facilitate humanising engagement. However, the balance of this is that learners should also be helped to gain access to the powerful language and cultural practices that are valued in the school setting.

In order to explore how translanguaging can be used to provide humanising experiences for learners and teachers in primary school classrooms, an arts-based approach has been employed. Poetic inquiry allows for an expression of deep understandings of the ways language can be used to enable learners and teachers to be more fully themselves.

Methodology and Method

Poetic inquiry has been chosen as a means of analysing and representing my understanding of humanising and dehumanising experiences of learners who are not skilled in the dominant language of the classroom. This qualitative method necessitates a creative initiative on the part of the researcher to rework and craft data into a poetic form that enables the reader to have a close perception of the understanding and meaning making of the researcher (Grbich, 2013). There is an explicit effort to work towards proximity, intimacy, and involvement regarding the data. Poetic inquiry offers the researcher a means of coming close to the data and taking it to heart, rather than standing at an objective distance as one might in more conventional research approaches. Brady alluded to this propinquity as follows:

Poetic methods are qualitative and call for self-conscious participation. Instead of being inverted like a telescope for a distancing effect, poetics turns it back around for magnified encounters with life as lived, up close and personal, and sets it in a mode where everything reported is proprietary, overtly as the authors write about their presence in the research or implicitly on the strength of always claiming the representations as a personal product (interpretation) of sorts (2009, p. xi).

There is little space to evade the realities and consequences of dehumanising classroom practices when poetry is employed to convey the essence of these experiences. Poetic inquiry therefore resonates with work that aims to promote more humanising practices. Prendergast and Galvin (2012, p. 5) explained that poetic inquiry provides “new ways of being in dialogue with research findings and new ways of working with people in vulnerable situations to name ‘what it is like’.” As a teacher educator, it is essential that I interrogate my own practice in order to ensure that I make room for students to name their experiences as we engage with each other. English operates both as a powerful liberator and warder in my classroom. Poetic reflection offers the opportunity to consider, in a disciplined and intricate manner, how I view the languages and culture students bring to my class.

I generated data, in the form of poetry and photographs, in response to my own reflective notes based on engaging with student teachers in the field and also on engaging with specific literature. Prendergast (2009, p. 545) outlined three general categories of poetic inquiry. These are *vox autobiographia/autoethnographia* (researcher-voiced poems), *vox participare* (participant-voiced poems) and *vox theoria* (literature-voiced poems). For the purposes of this inquiry, *vox autobiographia* and *vox theoria* are drawn on in an attempt to encapsulate my own deep understandings of the complexities and possibilities of teaching in multilingual classrooms.

Vox autobiographia—my own researcher-voiced poems—allow me to share personal meaning making of understandings of my field notes of humanising and dehumanising instances in the multilingual classrooms where I teach. Complementing my own researcher-voiced poems is the *vox theoria*—literature-voiced poems—the poetic inquiry of the work of Salazar (2013) on a humanising pedagogy, as well as García and Wei (2015) and Heugh (2015) on translanguaging. The poems I wrote in response to my field notes and the work of others seek to offer an affective meeting of theory and the stark realities of practice.

In addition to the poetry, I use photographs that I composed and captured to intensify the representation of my understanding of dehumanising classroom practices in the context of a multilingual classroom. Harper outlined the power of images to enhance communication and experience, suggesting that the

parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words (2002, p. 13) .

I have therefore used poetry and photographs to augment and sharpen my understanding and to provide thinking and feeling spaces to consider how language practices such as translanguaging can be used to create humanising experiences in multilingual classrooms.

While the concepts of *vox autobiographia* and *vox theoria* are used to explain the *what* of poetry making, further clarification is necessary regarding the *how* of crafting the poetry that has been included. I drew on both found poetry and generated poetry. Butler-Kisber (2005) indicated that found poetry is created when words are extracted from written texts and moulded into a poetic representation, while generated poetry is crafted when the researcher uses her own ideas and words to capture her own and others' experiences. Thus, my found poetry arises from consideration of ideas from my field notes and particular literature related to translanguaging and a humanising pedagogy. A more organic process is involved regarding generated poetry. The poem grows from a particular stimulus. Butler-Kisber offered a procedure that I find useful in creating evocative poetry:

I have found it helpful to re-imagine a pivotal memory or event as vividly as possible, recalling the visual and auditory context, and then to brainstorm a series of words, phrases and metaphors that become the kernels for a poem (2010, p. 91).

Given that my article explores translanguaging as a means of realising a humanising approach to teaching and learning, it is essential that both thinking and feeling are included; and as such, poetry uses words in a succinct and redolent manner and provides an ideal fusion of the cognitive and the affective (Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009).

Findings: Poetic Moments

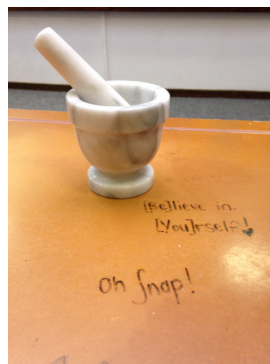
In this section, I present five poems as poetic moments, focusing on key aspects of the realities of school classrooms, reflecting both humanising and dehumanising experiences in multilingual contexts. The poetry, complemented by visual images, are used to represent my own understanding and insights, which I then recontextualise in literature to deepen the discussion on how translanguaging can be used to provide humanising experiences in multilingual classrooms.

Weaving Words

Having one's language and culture excluded from the curriculum and classroom activities can be a particularly alienating experience. The following poem arises out of reading Maria Salazar's (2013) school experiences and reflecting on the resonances of her story with that of many children in the primary school classrooms I visit.

Hidden Curriculum

(Found poem I crafted from Salazar, 2013)



Deficit notions shrouded in the Maths lesson,

Slyly controlling thought and action in Reading time,
 Crushing hope and joy
 With pestle power in Science.
 Notions of inferiority are neatly packaged in the guise of good teaching.
 Messages of worthlessness slipped into sought after schooling.
 The hidden, hurtful curriculum dehumanises,
 Sucks the marrow out of naïve learners
 Renders them shells of themselves.

It takes significant effort to meet the language needs of all learners in the class. However, instead of judging schoolteachers, it is important for me think about my own practice and to consider how I meet the needs of the student teachers I encounter as a teacher educator. The poem below is a response to this awareness

Complicit

(Found poem I crafted from Salazar, 2013)



Deficit notions fuel intolerance and prejudice.
 Students without a First Class English ticket are burned and bombarded.
 The hidden curriculum whispers messages of their inferiority.
 Their difficulties and struggles are attributed to their culture and language.
 Often compelled and coerced into a white way of being.
 Expected to act, speak, and behave like the pale middle class.

School learners and university students who have the freedom to express themselves in their home language in learning contexts may have a particular educational advantage (Heugh, 2008; Simkins & Patterson, 2005) The language and practices of the home and family are a crucial support and resource for individuals as is evidenced in the following photograph and poem.

Mother Tongue Comfort

(Generated poem, in response to personal experience)



My language is like a warm, soft blanket.
 Stitches hooked together in gentle wool,
 Tell a story of childhood comfort and care.
 I am truly me when wrapped in my words and my ideas.

The comfort of a familiar language is a courtesy that can be extended to others. In school classrooms, learners could be permitted to use their own language at certain points in the lesson. Engaging with learners in their own language offers a bridge to understanding lesson content and relationship construction between members of the classroom. This connection can enhance teaching and learning. The joy of student teachers who are proficient in the languages learners bring to school resonates in the poem below.

On Being a Multilingual Being

(Found poem I crafted from my field notes)



I have an edge:

- Confidence zings
- Competence swells.

Three languages slide from my tongue,

Snaking skillfully and fluidly.

Wrapping around my learners

Drawing them in

Connecting us.

In South Africa, colonial and apartheid histories continue to impact on what happens with respect to language use in classrooms (Alexander, 2012; Makoe & McKinney, 2014). A series of curriculum revisions have been used as a means working towards the ideals of the South African Constitution (DBE, 2011). These repeated curriculum changes have taken their toll on teachers (Balfour, 2015).

A Cry from the Classroom

(Found poem I crafted from Heugh, 2015)



Oh help me please!

How do I make sense of all of this?

Bludgeoned and bruised!

Curriculum demands buffet me,

Bashed and broken,

I lay with my head on my desk.

Sliced and slashed!

Learners' needs tear at me,

Scarred and scratched,

I cringe ashamed of my inadequacy.
 Mangled and mashed!
 Language practice pressures me,
 Mutilated and mute,
 I am silent and stilled.
 Oh help me please!
 How do I find my Teacher Self again?

Curriculum reform in South Africa has proved challenging in many respects. With reference to the school curriculum context, Hugo referred to the “turbulent history of curriculum transformation” (2005, p. 5). Teachers may be left feeling inadequate when they cannot cope with the demands of the curriculum that they see as “imposed and unmanageable” (Samoff, 2008, p. ix). Translanguaging practice can be accommodated within the current curriculum to enable a more humanising experience for both teachers and learners.

More Fully Human

(Found poem I crafted from Salazar, 2013)



Treasures of language,
 Sparkling jewels of custom,
 Golden history,
 What makes me – ME!

Come with me into the classroom
 Your rich assurance
 Makes me strong
 And happy
 And whole.

At this point, it is important to gather emerging understandings about the interplay between the possibilities of translanguaging and the realisation of a humanising pedagogy.

Discussion: Complex Classrooms Considered

Translanguaging offers a means of working towards good use of the LoLT while allowing the home language to continue to grow. Instead of switching to English in Grade 4, as most South African learners do currently, maintaining the home language for longer, possibly throughout the years of primary schooling would assist in developing and consolidating the home language (Alexander, 2012; Heugh, 2013). Excluding or diminishing the place of a main language or home language positions many learners at a disadvantage (Probyn, 2001, 2009). In some cases, the message of the hidden curriculum is that certain learners do not belong, and are not as welcome as others are, in school. Bartolomé (1994, p. 176) referred to the deficit view of “subordinated students.” Non-English speaking, working class children would typically have a lower status, according to Bartolomé (1994). “Hidden Curriculum” provides a reminder that it is not just overt curriculum activities that can be disempowering, but covert practices too. It might seem pedagogically sound to exclude the languages learners bring from home in order to focus on the school language. However, difficulties in acquiring the school language can impact on academic progress (Benson, 2004). Individuals learning through the medium of an additional language rather than a home language can be labelled as incompetent or slow. In “Complicit” we are reminded that deficit notions fuel intolerance and prejudice (Salazar, 2013). Instead of acknowledging the impact on learners of learning in an additional language, their difficulties and struggles are attributed to their culture and language (Salazar, 2013).

When a learner’s home language is not the same as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), it could impact teaching and learning. The majority of learners in South African schools learn in their home language in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3), but do not do so in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) and beyond (DBE, 2010). While 80% of children in the Foundation Phase have the advantage of learning in their home language, fewer than 30% are learning in their home language in the Intermediate Phase and in subsequent phases (DBE, 2010, p. 19). Mda (2004, p. 177) acknowledged that language “is key to learning” and highlights the strong link between the recognition of language and essential human rights. Language rights feature in the Constitution of South Africa (1996) and the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) is informed by the views on language captured in the Constitution (Mda, 2004).

When the language, culture, and history of an individual are not acknowledged in the school context, this experience can be dehumanising. In this regard, Bartolomé (1994) argued that a humanising pedagogy can be enacted by taking into account the contexts, background, and world views of learners. “Mother Tongue Comfort” reminds of the delight of being able to use the home language: I am truly me when wrapped in my words and my ideas. Zinn and Rodgers (2012) suggested that both learners and teachers benefit from acknowledgement of who they are and what they are able to do. As pointed out earlier, most learners and teachers in South Africa use their main language in Foundation Phase contexts, which enables them to negotiate language and conceptual competences with relative ease. The switch after Grade 3 to learning and teaching in another language snatches the blanket of the familiar language away.

Translanguaging could provide a means of extending the use of the mother tongue or main language purposefully and systematically into the Intermediate Phase. The main language can thus be used as a bridge to the required school language. The goal would thus be one of bilingualism rather than foregrounding competence in the LoLT. Bilingual or multilingual individuals have a particular way of

connecting with others who understand the same languages. They are able to listen and respond in a graceful way that is a far cry from the more limited communication of monolingual counterparts (García, 2009a, 2009b). “On Being a Multilingual Being” expresses the smooth connection that is possible as languages skillfully and fluidly glide from the tongue. The praxis of a humanising pedagogy indeed requires “listening closely, being present, communicating and paying attention” (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, p. 87). Translanguaging as a multilingual tool can promote being more fully present in interpersonal engagement.

Yet, enacting emancipatory language practices in school classrooms is not without complications. Heugh cautioned that, “multilingualism, particularly in education, means different things in different contexts” (2015, p. 280). Hence, an understanding of the social context in which languages are being used is crucial (Hoadley, 2011). Teachers, rather than curriculum policy makers, determine what happens in classrooms and their realities have to be considered closely. In “A Cry from the Classroom” the challenges teachers experience are expressed with images portraying brutality—bludgeoned and bruised; bashed and broken; sliced and slashed; scarred and scratched—pointing out how teachers are rendered weak and lacking. The identity of the teacher fades in the face of inadequacy in meeting the demands of the needs of learners and the demands of the curriculum.

Although researchers have long acknowledged the value of translanguaging, schoolteachers are often less enthusiastic about the use of translanguaging. Apart from issues related to time pressures, particular conceptualisations of language practice also give rise to resistance to translanguaging. When languages are viewed as being solid structures with fixed boundaries, it is difficult to accept a fluid movement between languages. The impact of language understandings from the Global North still holds considerable sway in our curriculum documents and in teacher practice. Conceptions of language, as discreet and separate entities, derived from Europe in the late 1800s still impact on language practice today. These understandings are challenged by more a sinuous understanding and use of language that developed in Africa (Heugh, 2015). Traditional language teaching holds languages apart to avoid corruption of the pure form of the language (García, 2009a; Makalela, 2015). More recent language pedagogies resist the stark separation of languages (García, 2009b; García & Wei, 2015; Heugh, 2015; Hornberger, 2006; Hornberger & Link, 2012). Conceiving of languages as Home Language, First Additional Language, Second Additional Language as in the current South African school curriculum sets languages carefully apart. Learners are expected to learn languages as parallel systems rather than understanding languaging as an integrated process. Yet, in the daily lives and communities of learners and teachers, languages often intersect in useful and purposeful ways.

Salazar (2013) reminds us poignantly of the experiences of learners who are forced to forsake their language as they enter the classroom, by recounting her own story of early education:

I went to school with all of my treasures, including my Spanish language, Mexican culture, familia (family), and ways of knowing. I abandoned my treasures at the classroom door in exchange for English and the U.S. culture; consequently, my assimilation into U.S. society was agonizing. One of my earliest memories is of wishing away my dark skin; I wanted desperately to be White, and I abhorred being la morena, the dark-skinned girl. I came to associate whiteness with success and brownness with failure. I was overwhelmed with feelings of shame over the most essential elements of my humanness. As a result, my experience in the U.S. educational system was marked by endless struggles to preserve my humanity (Salazar, 2013, p. 121).

In Salazar's work we read of learners' anxiety at having their own language stripped away to be replaced by the language of the classroom (Salazar, 2010, 2013). Antagonism and disconnection may result when learners feel that they and what they hold dear is being marginalised (Bartolomé, 1994; Salazar, 2013). In work imbued with uncomfortable resonances with the current schooling environment in South Africa, Salazar indicated that:

Students and educators are constrained from finding meaning in the current educational system as a result of the tension between educators' pedagogical practices and systemic constraints, such as high-stakes standardized tests and district-mandated instructional curriculum. Such restrictive educational policies limit educators from developing humanistic approaches (2013, p. 124).

Interestingly, Salazar noted that a humanising pedagogy is important for both teacher and learner achievement, well-being, and resilience (Salazar, 2013). This pedagogy, inspired by the ideals of Freire (1972), allows both teacher and learners to become more fully human as social, thinking, transforming, individuals who participate in the world (Freire, 1972). "More Fully Human" provides a reminder that when the language, culture, and history of an individual are welcomed in the classroom it is possible to be happy and whole. Translanguaging practices allow for fluid movement between the home and school language. Learning is supported and nurtured by this emancipatory process.

Conclusion

In considering a means of providing humanising experiences for learners and teachers in multilingual primary school classrooms, as teacher educator, I have considered some of the complexities of multilingual classroom contexts. Translanguaging is argued to be a means of providing planned and systematic use of the home language of learners and the language of the classroom in order to foster meaning making and learning.

Both the teacher and the learners are able to experience being more fully human when their language, culture, and history are recognised and welcomed in the school classroom. Arts-based methods in the form of poetic inquiry, complemented by photographs, were used to strengthen the argument for the incorporation of a translanguaging approach within the school and teacher education curriculum. Skillfully wrought photographs and text are able to move the audience in the domains of the heart and the head. The value and contribution of this inquiry thus lies in the recrafting, challenging, or confirming of essential elements of the experience of teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms. The poetry presented in this article showed that an innovative language practice—such as translanguaging—is not an easy quick fix. The poetry and images also provided stark reminders that not accommodating learners, and their ways of being, dehumanises learners and reduces them to remembrances of themselves.

This context-specific work invites all who will, to take away what resonates with their experiences and use the insights to enrich educational practices in other spaces and places. Specific insight regarding the possibilities of translanguaging offer a practical means of working towards more humanising teaching and learning opportunities in multilingual classrooms. Translanguaging is offered as a pedagogical device to realise the rich language and cultural treasures learners and teachers bring to school classrooms.

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Please reference as:

Childs, M. (2016). Reflecting on Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms: Harnessing the Power of Poetry and Photography. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 5(1), 22-40.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2016/v5i1a2>