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TRANSLANGUAGING IN SUMMARIZING SKILLS: THE NEED TO DEVELOP BILITERATE STUDENTS

Abstract

Summary writing is an important skill for university students to possess as they have to use it in their studies and future employment. Yet, many students struggle in mastering this skill, especially when it is taught solely through a second language (L2). This article reports on a study that sought to develop this skill among first-year African students through the use of both their first language (L1) and L2 as informed by translanguaging theory. Working in groups, students were guided on how to summarise texts in L1 and L2 by moving from one language to another. Their produced work was then

analysed using a marking rubric as a tool developed to assess the quality of their summaries in both languages. The research tool was a summary writing rubric. The findings indicated that the majority of participants have satisfactory levels of competency in L2 as opposed to the summaries produced in their L1. It is recommended that biliteracy skills should be developed as part of students' training in South African higher education.

Keywords: African languages; biliteracy; translanguaging; summary writing; scaffolding; multilingualism.

1. Introduction

Summarising is a commonly used and valuable skill for everyone in life. The summarising skill is even more important to students as they have to use it throughout their studies. They use it when recording lecture notes and when shortening read information. Moreover, summarising techniques can prove to be useful in the work place for many of the graduates because “the ability to communicate effectively is a skillset that is often required by employers” (Larkin, 2015: 12). However, summarising is a challenging task for most students learning English as a second language (ESL) due to their limited vocabulary which affects their ability to paraphrase passages (Choy & Lee, 2012; Idris, Baba & Abdullah, 2011). It is under these circumstances that the authors recommend the importance of taking advantage of students’ background knowledge. In a multilingual society, where English is a second language, Choy and Lee (2012 citing Orellana & Reynol, 2008) encourage the adoption of students’ language of common use outside school and with families as a teaching and learning tool. Failure to do so, as noted by Mwindi and van der Walt (2015: 101) means that ESL becomes an additional barrier to both teaching and learning for the previously academically disadvantaged groups who become even more disadvantaged. Consequently, ESL learners experience high levels of anxiety due to the continued use of single medium of instruction (Madonsela, 2015; Saranraj & Meenakshi, 2016).

In South African tertiary institutions, the plight of the previously disadvantaged is confirmed by a report released by the Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2013) which reveals that equity has not been achieved. The completion rate for white students who study in their own language is on average 50% higher than that for African students who are taught in ESL. It is in consideration of these factors that the adoption of bi-/multilingual programmes in education has nationally and globally been encouraged because of their potential to promote language learning and the development of literacy skills that can be transferred across languages. It is believed that bi-/multilingual programmes will not only enable learners to read and write in more than one language (Baker, 2001; Benson, 2000; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2000; Hornberger, 2002), but to also provide learners with the opportunity to develop a number of bilingual linguistic resources (Flores, 2016: 32). These include the development of communication skills and multicultural competencies that can be utilised when working among multilingual communities such as in South Africa. The benefits are even better when this type of education is provided to all races as it elevates the status and usefulness of previously marginalised languages in the eyes of both speakers and non-speakers which in turn improves social relations and political participation, particularly in post-colonial countries (Benson, 2002: 309).

This resonates with Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa’s (2014) view in which they caution against the exclusive use of European languages in South Africa. Their argument is that such an approach excludes the vast majority of citizens in their own country and makes democracy an elusive ideal and a violation of human rights. Similarly, Childs (2016: 27) asserts that it is vital for the language that the learners bring to be valued and included in the classroom as a way of facilitating humanising engagement whilst

also providing them with “access to the powerful language and cultural practices that are valued” in the educational setting. Such an approach is apt because the assumption that less time spent studying through English will yield lower levels of language and academic skills in English has not been supported by findings from comparative studies (Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014: 173). Moreover, García and Lin (2016) note with dismay that the complaints about L1 (African language) often crop up when it is to be used by L2 students, whereas, the same does not occur when the mixing of languages (code-switching) is used by teachers to make meaning comprehensible to students who are taught through a colonial language. García and Lin (2016) attribute this attitude to the fact that some bilingual teachers suffer from monoglossic ideologies on language and bilingual instruction. The authors assert that students’ languages cannot be maintained as if they were museum pieces; instead they should be sustained and developed in functional interrelationship within the communicative context in which they are used by bi-/multilingual speakers.

This article is directed towards the realisation of language education policies in SA higher education through the development of summary writing skills in English by using ALs as a scaffolding tool. Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014: 27-28) and Kaschula and Maseko (2014: 28) observe that many South African (SA) universities appear to be experiencing challenges in their implementation and monitoring of language policies that would benefit the usage of African languages (ALs) in education. Webb (2013: 179) asserts that this continuing devaluing of ALs is concomitant with low levels of educational development. As a possible solution, Tshamano (2017: 234) recommends that the implementation of the Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) (DoE, 2002) be declared a national priority in South Africa because of the worryingly low levels of English proficiency among African tertiary students. The LPHE is of interest in this article as it identifies the sole use of English or Afrikaans as a barrier to access and success in education for the majority of South Africans to whom these are additional languages. The LPHE then calls for the promotion of multilingualism whereby different languages of the country can be used together in the academia so that languages of tuition do not act as a barrier to access equal education. The implication of the policy is that the adoption of ALs as teaching tools alongside L2 will allow African students to perform better in their studies. The theoretical framework of this article equally subscribes to this notion of multilingualism in which different languages are used together in education, as discussed below.

The research question is: What are the literacy levels of university students in summarising skills in both ESL and their African languages (ALs)? The approach of this article is prompted by Esquinca’s (2011) observation to the effect that while there have been numerous investigations of bilingual students’ performance on word problems in the second language, this has, however, not been paralleled by studies that have considered how bilinguals use their first language to construct meaning when writing in the second language. Esquinca (2011: 150) argues that the analysis of students’ authoring of meaningful communicative tasks is essential as it provides information about their genre knowledge because bilingual students draw on unique meaning-making resources. Moreover, when teachers and institutions of higher learning conduct

an assessment of students' skills they would be able to establish whether their students possess "core proficiencies consistent with both course and institutional goals" (Larkin, 2015: 13). As a response to this call, this article attempts to understand the extent to which bilingual students are able to construct meaning when writing across both their first and second language in what has come to be known as translanguaging (Esquinca, 2011; García, 2016; García & Lin, 2016; García & Kleifgen, 2011; García & Li Wei, 2014) (see below for full discussion). Student output is assessed using a developed summary writing rubric.

2. Theoretical framework

Ortego (2014) asserts that the bi-/multilingual approach is a natural way of knowing, doing and learning language. What appears to be lacking is a research paradigm that seeks to examine and understand whether students are able to function in two or more languages in education (Ortego, 2014; 2012). An area of language skill that could be examined is the students' ability to summarise in two or more languages for one to obtain a valid representation of bilinguals' abilities (Esquinca, 2011). Such research has the potential to bring to light a fuller understanding of the communicative repertoires students bring to the educational context (Hornberger and Link, 2012). Similarly, assessing the practices of students across two languages with regards to summary writing is worth exploring as it appears to have been neglected in research. In cases where students are found lacking, efforts should be made to develop their communicative multicompetence within a multilingual society (Paquet-Guathier and Beaulieu, 2015).

In multilingual contexts such as South Africa where certain languages are still held in higher esteem than others, this would mean that the African languages are to be used meaningfully alongside English second language (ESL) in universities (Gumbi, 2014; Webb, 2013). This meaningful use can be ensured through the undertaking of more research projects that could provide clarity on the role of and problems underlying the use of African languages in education (Webb, 2013). Hence, examining whether university students are able to summarise across languages in a bi-/multilingual South African society is vital.

Hornberger and Link (2012: 262) present their vision of a conceptual framework that might help "re-orient educational policy to build on students' rich and varied language practices to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement." The authors refer to their conceptual framework as translanguaging and transnational literacy practices. Awareness of this can provide "teachers, and researchers with a fuller understanding of the resources students bring to school and help us identify ways in which to draw on these resources for successful educational experiences" (Hornberger & Link, 2012: 264). One of these resources would be the students' first language for use in contexts where a second language is the dominant medium of instruction. This is where learners are provided with the opportunity to shift across different languages in their preparation for writing a text in another language (García & Kleifgen, 2011).

In this sense, the concept of biliteracy comes in as it refers to “all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger, 1990: 213). García (2009: 44) postulates that “[t]ranslanguaging, or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is centred not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable”. The investigation of summarising skills provides an opportunity for the use of two or more languages in writing. In turn, students would be equipped with one of the essential academic literacy skills that can promote academic access and success in higher education.

Views on what constitutes translanguaging activities vary among researchers. On one hand, Childs (2016: 25) addresses areas of confusion by first clarifying that translanguaging fits within the spectrum of work on multilingualism which entails language activities such as code switching and translation. Childs (2016) then argues that code switching and translation language activities are often pursued as temporary excursions from the monolingual ideal. This is unlike the translanguaging activities that involve planned teaching strategies that are employed as pedagogically sensitive tools intended to “systematically promote learning” (Childs, 2016: 25), citing Heugh (2015), Lewis, Jones & Baker (2012) & Probyn (2015). The fact that the translanguaging strategies are planned implies that they are executed as part of daily classroom practices without any adherence to institutional boundaries that dictate which language must be used as the dominant medium of instruction. This is essentially what distinguishes translanguaging from other languaging practices as a transformative pedagogy because it attempts to wipe out the hierarchy of languaging practices that deem some languages more valuable than others (García & Leiva, 2014: 2000; García & Li Wei (2014: 92). Canagarajah (2018: 32) describes such an act as involving the use of semiotic resources in order to transform social structures wherein the use of language is determined by existing contexts of power relations. It is in this spirit that García and Lin (2016, citing Flores 2014) note that translanguaging goes beyond a plain response to globalisation and declare it as “a political act”. In the same vein, Mwindu and van der Walt (2015: 102) regard translanguaging strategies in a multilingual South African context as critical in “giving low status languages a voice in education” as it allows teachers to move away from ‘English-only’ classroom practices.

On the other hand, Mwindu and van der Walt (2015: 103) differ from Childs’ (2016) view on what translanguaging strategies entail by arguing that they can include code switching, co-languaging and translation as a means to “encourage learners to use their stronger language to develop proficiency in their weaker language” (citing Baker, 2006: 297). This view of translanguaging as also entailing code switching is shared by García and Lin (2016) who explain that this is because the practice disrupts the traditional isolation of languages in teaching and learning. Research conducted by Mwindu and van der Walt (2015) among grade seven learners in a Namibian primary school found that the English to Rumanjo translation text that was produced by learners showed richness because of the learners’ good command of Rumanjo. It, however, remains to be seen as to how tertiary students would fair in similar activities.

Mwinda and van der Walt (2015: 116) concur with García (2016) that the translanguaging strategies work better in multilingual contexts as they have a good chance of succeeding. This would include an environment where the teacher shares the same first language as students. In circumstances where the teacher is not familiar with students' first language they would need to be prepared to be a co-learner and to organise the classroom activities such that the learners are able to engage in collaborative groupings that are constructed according to home languages (García, 2016). Esquinca (2011: 152) refers to collaborative writing as scaffolding by drawing from a sociocultural theory of writing. Esquinca (2011), citing Vygotsky (1978), explains that a sociocultural theory highlights the social relationship in which writers co-author texts with assistance from others. This scaffolding in a difficult writing genre would be promoted by teachers not as an end in itself but with the hope that the individual learners would eventually be able to perform the task alone, especially during examinations.

Kwon's (2014) study that was conducted in Thailand explored this notion of collaborative writing. According to Kwon (2014: 98), student-participants reported that sharing ideas was pleasurable in a collaborative environment as it helped them to improve accuracy in their writing. They also found their use of L1 during group discussions more beneficial than detrimental to both grammatical accuracy and the overall task completion. Kwon (2014: 114) concludes that L1 should be permitted particularly in English-medium classrooms in which students are not fluent enough to use only the L2 in discussions.

South Africa appears to be a fertile ground for the exploration of translanguaging strategies. In this respect, Ngcobo (2014) illustrates how written code switching in English and isiZulu is a common phenomenon in a multilingual South Africa that is exploited by different structures of society such as government, businesses and media. Ndimande-Hlongwa and Ndebele (2017: 77) posit that additive multilingualism promotes social cohesion amongst different groups of people in a society such as that of South Africa where there has been racial segregation. Moreover, there are positive attitudes towards education provided in two languages because of students' associated socio-cultural experiences in their environment (Ngcobo, 2017: 29). If students are to operate successfully in different South African contexts they would need to be familiar with switching between and across different languages. Appropriate training in this respect would develop students to become an efficient future workforce. A ground-breaking work in this regard was carried out by Esther Ramani and Michael Joseph in 2003 at the Limpopo University in South Africa. The two scholars initiated a bilingual degree in Contemporary English Language Studies (CELS) & Multilingual Studies (MUST) in which Sesotho sa Leboa (SsL) and English were used as resources for each other. Of note is that they worked with teachers of this degree to gradually develop the teaching materials in SsL through translation from English (Ramani, et al. 2007). In the South African multilingual educational contexts there has since been experimentation by various teachers with indigenous African languages on their own and alongside English (Makalela, 2015). Encouraging success stories are also noted from other parts of the African continent, such as in Tanzania where Mutembei (2014: 342) notes that KiSwahili has throughout the years managed to break the myth attached to African languages' incapacity to engage in meaningful philosophical, social, economic and political discussions at national and international

level. Yet, Mwindi and van der Walt (2015: 116) are of the view that there is still room for “making choices and attempting specific translanguaging strategies”. This observation suggests that there is a research gap that still needs to be filled in South Africa. There is therefore a need to engage students in translanguaging strategies in order to examine their efficiency and, if need be, recommend mechanisms to develop students’ literacy skills across languages. While these efforts have mainly been on the teaching of content subjects such as science (Madiba, 2014; Nomlomo, 2014) and psychology (Mkhize, Dumisa & Chitindingu 2014) there appears to be limited research on the teaching of academic literacy skills associated with writing in L2. One such literacy skill that requires attention is summary writing.

3. Summary writing challenges

Buyuknarci, Hennes, Rietz and Grunke (2015: 2) present three categories into which summaries are subdivided. The first is the informative type in which students are required to present all relevant information in a shorter form. The second is called argumentative because students’ presented main points are used to make a convincing case for the texts’ validity. Lastly, a judgemental summary is used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the writing product. The relevant form of summarising for this study is the informative type because this is the kind of writing the students would conduct as part of their studies and in the work place.

Several authors (Buyuknarci, et al., 2015; Choy & Lee, 2012; Hashimoto, Fukuda, & Okazaki 2015; Idris. Baba & Abdullah, 2011) make the observation that summarising is a highly complex and challenging task. Buyuknarci, et al. (2015) and Choy and Lee (2012) concur on three factors that hinder successful summarising from students. The first complex area is the ability to identify the most important points in a text. Students struggle with this from school level until their college years. Choy and Lee (2012) report that Malaysian ESL university students had difficulty picking out the main idea from the passage and paraphrasing it without altering the original meaning of the text. In other cases they would simply lift the sentences that carried the main ideas without making an effort to paraphrase. This challenge is attributed to students’ limited vocabulary and higher order thinking in ESL. Yet, as Dehkordi and Shafiee (2016: 70) argue, vocabulary is an essential component to determine how much a student is able to communicate effectively. This can be developed through meaningful tasks that require students to use known words. Dehkordi and Shafiee’s (2016) study found summary writing exercises to be effective means of providing a context for vocabulary meaning, form and use enhancement. However, determination of known words should not be limited to ESL. Rather, the employment of translanguaging strategies provides an opportunity for students to share their vocabulary knowledge across languages instead of simply lifting the sentences that carry the main idea in the original language.

Secondly, students perceive summarising as a daunting formal task that they cannot relate to their context and real life. This is because African languages, such as IsiZulu,

tend to be culturally long-winded to get to a point. Thirdly, lack of explicit instruction accompanied by demonstrations on how to restate the main points have proved to cause problems (Buyuknarci, et al. 2015; Choy & Lee, 2012; Hashimoto, Fukuda, & Okazaki 2015). The participants in this study would have been exposed to summary writing skills at school in both English and their first language. The skill is also assessed in their final examination of both languages. The difference in this study is that the skill is assessed in two languages within one subject. The texts they have to summarise are carefully selected to ensure that their content relates closely to students' social lives and future work activities. To reduce the perception of the task as daunting, students are provided with the option to work collaboratively. It is also not taken for granted that they would have been exposed to the skill at school, especially because not all of them would have come straight from school to tertiary. As a result, the importance of summary writing skills in social life and work environment is discussed during the provided instruction. They are then exposed to examples of how to summarise using both L1 and L2 and provided with notes for their own reference. The approach is informed by Hashimoto, Fukuda, & Okazaki's (2015: 232) study results which showed that L1 support kept students interested, explicit instruction made the task manageable and the provided examples promoted deeper understanding.

4. Methodology

This empirical study was conducted over two semesters drawn from two different years. This allowed for the piloting of the study and the development of materials and the research tool. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institution that forms the context of the study. It was finally conducted among thirty-six first-year university of technology (UoT) students that were registered for a diploma qualification. The selection of the participants was based on the fact that they were studying towards a secretarial programme in which summarising features prominently in their profession. This would be in the form of taking telephone messages and taking minutes of meetings. In performing these duties it is likely that they would have to, for example, converse in isiZulu over the phone but record the message in English since English is the dominant language of recording business activities. This was a method of engaging the participants in translanguaging activities (see Appendix 1).

The approach of the study is qualitative and descriptive since it is associated with transcripts and written words from participants (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014). It is inductive in that the collected qualitative data is analysed for patterns that would assist in providing an understanding of participants' summarising skills across languages. The research design was such that the participants were first taught how to summarise before being engaged in activities that would enable them to apply gained knowledge. One of these activities was a transcript of a telephone conversation that they were asked to shorten as a telephone message (see Appendix 1). The transcript was in isiZulu and purported to be a call from an isiZulu speaker conversing with a secretary who is isiZulu-speaking. However, the message was intended for an English speaking person and as such the

secretary would be expected to record the message in English.

The extended text considered for the purpose of this article was on the dangers of alcohol. The selection of this text was influenced by the fact that it represented a type of lengthy information participants would have to summarise as part of their studies. The text was originally in English and the students were instructed to summarise it in both English and an African language of their choice. In evaluating the students written work a developed marking rubric (Appendix 2) was utilised. The focus areas to be examined in the produced summaries were literacy skills in relation to the following: main idea identification, paraphrasing and sufficient vocabulary knowledge to enable effective communication. The findings that follow display the outcome on the text that was on the dangers of alcohol.

5. Findings

One of the summarised works from the students reads as listed below in different languages that were available in class. The most common African language among the participants was isiZulu. The researcher was only familiar with English and isiZulu. For the analysis of data, the focus was on the students' ability to summarise across languages with a focus on their practices particularly in their African languages. The idea was to understand if the use of their African languages, particularly isiZulu, shows a better development of the summarising skill or not, using the above-mentioned developed rubric as the criteria. The extended text used as a sample in this article was titled: *Dangers of alcohol* (as per the extract below). The instruction on the task required the students to first summarise in English and then in their African language which was stated as follows:

Write a summary of the text below by stating five (5) points that you could give to students about the dangers of alcohol. Once done, restate the same points in IsiZulu or any African language.

Alcohol advice for students

A fantastic social life is all part of the university experience and a good night out involves alcohol for many students, in part thanks to cheap booze offered by many college bars.

A few drinks now and then can help you let off steam - but drinking too much can seriously harm your health and put your personal safety at risk. Before you blow your food budget at the student bar, here's what you need to know to help you stay safe and well.

Your body can only process one unit of alcohol in an hour, which means drinking a lot in a small period of time can lead to alcohol poisoning,

requiring hospital treatment. Symptoms include confusion, vomiting, seizures, irregular breathing, blue-ish or pale skin, low body temperature and loss of consciousness. Enjoy a drink or two – but slow down!

Part of the problem with alcohol is that the more you have, the less sensible you are about stopping. One way to combat binge drinking is to intersperse each alcoholic drink with a soft one, or opt for a spritzer instead of a straight glass of wine. You'll still have fun ...

The information below represents the answers provided by the students in both English and their African languages.

Dangers of alcohol (English)

- Over consumption can lead to body poisoning.
- Alcohol can be addictive/not easy to stop.
- It can damage your liver/health/risk of cancer/can cause disease.
- It can put your life in danger/crime victim.
- It can affect your mental health.

Ubungozi botshwala/ Isexwayiso ngophuzo oludakayo/ Ukwaluleka abafundi ngamanzi amphonjwana (isiZulu)

- Utshwala benza ubufune njalo/abuyekeki.
- Ukuphuza uphindelela kungabanga ushevu emzimbeni
- Ungaphathwa izifo ezimbi/eziningi/umonakalo esibindini/umndlavuze/thikameza noma kumoshe impilo/ ubuhixihixi kwesibindi
- Kungafaka impilo yakho engozini/engcupheni/ udlale izigila mkhuba/izigebengu/ izingqinamba.
- Kungaholela ekuphazamisekeni/ekukhubazekeni komqondo.

Ubungoti bokunatsa (siSwati)

- Kunatsa kakhulu kwenta ubufune njalo.

- Kungakwenta ube nashevu wetshwala.
- Kungatsikameta impilo yakho /kumoshe sibindzi sakho/ ube nomdlavuzwa
- Kungakufaka etingotini
- Kungaba nemtselela lomubi engcondweni yakho.

Ngozi ya byala (Xitsonga nkomiso)

- Byala byi vavisa rihanyo ra wena
- Byala byo tala hi nkarhi wu ntsongo swi endla ongo ilo cheleriwa
- Byala loyi vangela swiphinqo emirhini wa wena na mavabyi.
- Byala byo hindisa mpimo byi vangela cancer navuvabyi bya swi vindi.
- Byala byi endla u hleketa futa utlhela unga tihleketeleli wena nwinyi

In keeping with the three areas of assessment in the rubric that were informed by the questions of the study, the findings are reported in the form of a discussion (below) that pays attention to these three sections.

6. Discussion

The general finding was that the majority (+90%) of participants were able to identify main ideas in the text after instruction, sampling of the summarising skill and encouraging collaborative writing in which ALs were used. The examples provided above are those of summaries that were considered appropriate and as a result received good grades when assessed. The very few (+10%) weak summaries were penalised based on failure to identify the main ideas of the text.

The fact that students had to identify the main ideas and then present them in their African language appears to have influenced their success. This would in all likelihood have forced them to consider in what way the point selected was relevant when looked at in both languages. Using their African languages enabled students to display their linguistic richness and provided them with a humanising experience (Childs 2016; Mwindi & Van der Walt 2015) as they tried to paraphrase the information. For example, students displayed richness in their own languages when they came up with different words to state the same information, as indicated with the use of a slash sign (/) in the above sample. The richness of students' African languages first emerged in their translation of the title. In isiZulu these included "Ubungozi botshwala", "Isexwayiso ngophuzo oludakayo" and "Ukwaluleka abafundi ngamanzi amphonjwana" to mean the

same thing (Dangers of alcohol) in different words. In isiSwati the provided title was “Ubungoti bokunatsa” and in Xitsonga nkomiso it was “Ngozi ya byala”. The students’ creativity and performance in ALs also enabled the teacher-researcher to be a co-learner as he discovered other ways of saying the same thing (García, 2016). The broad level of creativity resonates with the findings made in other contexts (Kwon, 2014; Childs, 2016; Hashimoto, Fukuda, & Okazaki, 2015). The use of different words to express the same idea displayed students’ good knowledge of their own languages and the fact that they had understood the meaning of the original. This observation was taken as an indication that the intellectualisation of ALs is receiving increased momentum and support in South Africa (Madiba and Finlayson, 2002). The findings are also in line with the observation made by Wildsmith-Cromarty and Turner (2018: 3) to the effect that African students who experienced the use of their languages at school level do well at university when they also experience their use as media of instruction. As explained above, the university context of this research was rich in the use of isiZulu. However, it is worth noting that this richness in the use of AL’s was not quite evident in English usage as students tended to generally limit themselves to the words used in the original example.

There were selected cases where it was evident that the skill of identifying the correct main ideas in the first instance appeared to still need further development among some of the students. This was not a surprising finding because it has been established that the identification of important points in a text is something that many students find highly complex and struggle with it from school level until their college, if not beyond (Buyuknarci, et al., 2015; Choy & Lee, 2012; Hashimoto, Fukuda, & Okazaki, 2015). It is, however, encouraging to note that those who still struggled despite the support provided by their AL were fewer in number. Weaknesses were evident when it came to points that appeared to be as complex as the following:

Your body can cope with a small amount of alcohol, but too much can cause serious problems for your liver. Heavy drinkers are at greater risk of developing fatty liver disease, alcoholic hepatitis, and potential cirrhosis, which is not only irreversible but can be fatal. Be kind to your liver, and have at least two or three alcohol-free days each week. It’s not just your liver. Research shows a link between heavy drinking and an increased risk of mouth, throat, esophageal, breast and colorectal cancer, while too much booze puts you at greater risk of developing blood clots that could cause a heart attack or stroke. Reduce your risk by not binge drinking, avoiding spirits and opting for lower-alcohol beer and wine.

As indicated in the above section, this information was largely and correctly summarised in English as:

It can damage your health/liver/risk of cancer/can cause disease.

Weak responses on the same main idea would read as:

Alcohol can cause liver disease, alcoholic hepatitis and potentially cirrhosis.

It was observed that if the students did not identify the main idea well and paraphrased it meaningfully by using relevant vocabulary, they would not produce a satisfactory response in either language. The areas of concern would be long sentences that would be influenced by the fact that they would have been lifted from the English text as they were without making any effort to paraphrase them. These difficulties resonate with the findings and observations made by Choy and Lee (2012). On the whole, the findings indicate that translanguaging involves translation that is directed at promoting learning, as shown in the preceding section.

It is recognised that the findings cannot be generalised across all participants and higher education institutions in SA. For example, not all isiZulu first language speakers are proficient in its written form due to the fact that they would have attended schools where it was either not taught or taught as a second language. In other tertiary institutions students might prove to be too diverse for a lecturer to even contemplate engaging students in a translanguaging activity. The challenge could be how to go about assessing the tasks, unless tutors are utilised.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this article point to a need to intensify transformative pedagogy in higher education. Literature revealed that African languages such as KiSwahili have proven their value in prestigious domains of society. There are also strong indications of the growing use of African Languages in South Africa on their own and alongside English. However, the concern noted is that universities are not doing well when it comes to implementing language policies and actively promoting the use of AL in education. This is more concerning in light of the period that has elapsed since democracy in the country. This shows a lack of political will on the part of educational administrators to transform their institutions. As universities burn down it is hoped that students' demand for Africanisation or decolonisation of higher education will finally sink into the minds of those in the executive management of higher education. It is disappointing though that we have to wait until such dramatic and destructive measures are taken by students. The 2015 and 2016 events in SA higher education institutions seem to suggest that it would take the repetition of history, as happened during the infamous 16 June 1976 events of the Soweto Uprisings, for transformation to swiftly take place in education.

The reviewed literature suggests that there is a need for higher education institutions to acknowledge the multilingual resources that students bring with them when they enter tertiary institutions. These multilingual resources are relevant for the societies the students come from and those which they are being prepared to serve in their multilingual country. The development of biliteracy skills in writing is essential as the majority of citizens are not fluent in the dominant L2 that continues to be used for recording official documents. Universities should therefore strive to develop a multicompetent future workforce. Further studies could investigate the extent to which the use of different languages is required in the job market, particularly for reporting purposes.

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APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY ACTIVITY

In order to take a telephone message one must use one's summary skills. This means that only the relevant information must be noted. Study the conversations below and see how the caller's message can be summarised to include important information. Work in pairs and use the message pad provided at the end of these two activities.

Activity 1

(Write this message for Mr Booyesen in English.)

Dudu: Good afternoon. Sawubona. Ndosini Engineering. How can I help you?

Cele: Sawubona ndodakazi. Ubaba u Cele lo okhulumayo. Unjani kodwa?

Dudu: Ngiyaphila baba, ngingakusiza ngani?

Cele: Bengifuna uMnu. u Booyesen, kodwa ngoba sengithole umuntu okhuluma ulimi lwami ngicela ukuchaza kuwena bese udlulisa umlayezo. Uma isilungile inkinga yami ngiyocela ukuthi bathume wena futhi ukuze ngiqonde kahle yonke into.

Dudu: Yebo, baba. Ngilalele.

Cele: Kwenzeka kanjena ke ndodakazi. Ngangikade ngisebenza kuleyo nkampani kusukela kudala isabizwa ngo Booyesen Engineering. Kwathi ngelinye ilanga wathi u Booyesen angimuphe igama lesiZulu engingaqala ngalo inka mpani yami. Wase ethi angisayine amaphepha athizeni. Sengiyezwa kamuva inkampani isabizwa ngo Ndosini. Mangimbuza wathi wenzela ukuthola amathenda kahulumeni.

Dudu: Yebo, ngisalalele.

Cele: Kwathi ngelinye ilanga sathusana ngokomsebenzi wase engixosha. Inkingake isivela uma sengithola izincwadi zentela ezithi ngiyakweleta. Uma sengibuzisisa ukuthi kanjani, bathi inkampani yami uNdosini Engineering sekuphele iminyaka emibili ingakhokhi kodwa ibe iwuthola umsebenzi.

Dudu: Manje ke baba ufuna enzenjani u Booyesen?

Cele: Akakhokhe intela nami anginike ingxenye ye profit ayenzile ngegama lami. Futhi angibuyise emsebenzini ngibe omunye wabaphathi.

Dudu: Ngizomazisa baba bese ngiyakufonela. Ngicele ungiphe inombolo yocingo kanye nekheli uma kudingeka apose isheke lemali.

Cele: Ekamakhala ekhukhwini ithi 020 1010 235. Idilesi ithi number 3 Sikhona Rd, Section E, Umlazi.

Dudu: Ngizokwenze njalo. Ube nosuku oluhle.

Activity 2

(Write this message for Mr Dube in isiZulu or any African language)

YOU: Dube Generators, good afternoon and how can I help you?

CALLER: My name is Landie van Zyl of Toyota in Prospecton. May I speak to Mr Dube, please?

YOU: I'm afraid, he's in Tshwane today. Can I take the message?

CALLER: Yes please, as you might be aware, we have a number of freezers where we store hundreds, actually thousands of rand worth of frozen food for our canteens. We have been having a few power cuts lately, and we are worried that these may cause our stock to go bad so we need a standby generator. We were thinking in terms of a Perkins Diesel Automatic Mains Failure Start 3 Phase.

YOU: Yes, what capacity?

CALLER: 25 K.V.A.....but before ordering.....when can you deliver and install it?

YOU: I'll have to ask Mr Dube. Is there anything else?

CALLER: Yes, I wish to ask Mr Dube what the cost is now, as VAT has just gone up.

YOU: Could I have your number please, so that Mr Dube can ring back when he returns.

CALLER: Yes, it's 031-94603488. I look forward to hearing from him. Goodbye.

YOU: Goodbye, and thank you very much for calling.

TELEPHONE MESSAGE PAD

FOR:

FROM:

Company/Address:..... **Tel. No.**

check with me		will call again		please phone
---------------	--	-----------------	--	--------------

MESSAGE:

 (Do not repeat the information already provided above.)

TAKEN BY: **DATE:** **TIME**

Appendix 2

Summary Rubric

a – excellent; b - good; c - average; d - below average; e – weak

Summarising Informational Text	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>
1. Have the key points/main ideas in the reading been included in the summary?					
2. Have these key points been paraphrased appropriately/use of own words instead of trying to match the source word for word?					
3. Is vocabulary knowledge sufficient to enable effective communication?					

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- Buka ya Thuto ya Puo - Jenale ya Thuto ya Dipuo - Ijenali
Yekufundzisa Lulwimi - Jena?a ya u Gudisa Nyambo
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