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# Translanguaging as Transformative Pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African Secondary Schools

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*ABSTRACT*

Despite the historical tendency to use the teaching of Shakespeare to perpetuate British colonial educational objectives, the study of a Shakespeare play remains a prerequisite for obtaining a school-leaving certificate, with English Home Language as a subject, from each of the three largest examination bodies in South Africa. Against this background, I propose the implementation of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African secondary schools. This proposal is based on the results of practitioner-based research I conducted with a class of Johannesburg-based, multilingual, Grade 10 learners during the study of *Macbeth*. My research showed that translanguaging facilitated learners' comprehension of *Macbeth*, while simultaneously empowering them to interpret the play from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Although the study was limited in participant numbers and duration and needs verification by further research, its results suggest the potential of translanguaging to transform the pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African schools by equipping learners to contribute to global discourses on Shakespeare with authentic and uniquely (South) African interpretations of Shakespeare's plays.

## Introduction

Since British colonisers' introduction of Shakespeare to the formal South African education system, the pedagogy of Shakespeare has largely been used to promote the British colonial educational objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation. In writing this article, I acknowledge the influence of this history in post-apartheid South Africa and my purpose is not to argue for the continued inclusion of Shakespeare in South African school curricula. On the other hand, I also recognise that it is arguably impossible, and educationally questionable, to attempt to remove all British aspects from the pedagogy of Shakespeare, as South African learners typically study Shakespeare as part of the subject, English Home Language,[1] of which the English language and British culture form an integral part. Furthermore, since English is widely perceived as a global language, knowledge of it provides South African learners with linguistic access to the rest of the world. My aim is therefore to offer a practical response to the fact that, despite the problematic historical trends in the pedagogy of Shakespeare, the study of a Shakespearean play remains (at the time of writing) a prerequisite for obtaining a school-leaving certificate in English Home Language by the three largest examination bodies in South Africa: the National Curriculum Framework, the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), and the Cambridge International Advanced

1 The subject 'English Home Language' is aimed at the proficiency level of English home language speakers.

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Subsidiary (AS) levels. To address this reality, I advocate the use of translanguaging to transform the pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African secondary schools.

The notion of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy has been highlighted by numerous scholars. García and Li describe translanguaging as being "capable of calling forth bilingual subjectivities and sustaining bilingual performances that go beyond one or the other binary logic of two autonomous languages".[2] Canagarajah also alludes to the transformative potential of translanguaging in his observations regarding the pedagogy's ability to challenge "understandings of language as regulated or determined by existing contexts of power relations".[3] Additionally, Anwaruddin argues for the likelihood of translanguaging to transform power relations between teachers and learners and to empower students to "articulate and critique different worldviews".[4]

This article aligns with the views of these scholars and is based on the results of a practitioner-based study I conducted during the teaching and learning of *Macbeth* at a secondary school in Johannesburg. It advocates for the potential of translanguaging to transform the pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African schools, providing learners with a global point of reference by facilitating their understanding of Shakespeare's Early Modern English (EME), while simultaneously suggesting a more progressive approach that encourages learners to interpret the plays from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives.

**Historical background: Shakespeare in South African schools**

One way to understand the impact of British colonialism on the pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African schools, more than 25 years since the dawn of democracy in 1994, is to explore the impact of historical and political factors on the teaching of Shakespeare from its introduction to the South African education system to the present day. For this purpose, I explore the pedagogy of Shakespeare in three historical time periods: pre-apartheid (from introduction to 1948), apartheid (1948–1994), and post-apartheid (1994–present). Despite this focus, I concur with Mangan's observation that it is "difficult, if not impossible, to assess the way in which the messages in school materials [were] transmitted by teachers ... [because] the curriculum proposed is a long way from the curriculum implemented".[5] The pedagogical approaches discussed therefore indicate documented trends only, as there were and are many teachers across South Africa whose pedagogical practices differ from these trends, but remain undocumented.

Shakespeare was introduced to the formal South African education system by British colonisers. In the first half of the nineteenth century, powerful members of settler communities advocated for Shakespeare's importance to the aims of 'public education', and administrators of the Cape Colony prioritised Shakespeare in the education of White children.[6] Rosman observes how the missionaries elevated Shakespeare "above more 'mundane' and 'debased' forms such as the novel".[7] The administrators of mission schools adopted a similar view of the supposed superiority of Shakespeare as a literary text, which resulted in Shakespeare being introduced into Black South African education.[8]

Scholars such as Distiller argue that the pedagogy of Shakespeare in these mission schools was used to promote colonial agendas. She contends that there was a version of liberal humanism in these mission schools which "helped make Shakespeare a tool of colonialism", and that Shakespeare's

2 O. García and W. Li, *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp.92–93.

3 S. Canagarajah, "Translingual Practice as Spatial Repertoires: Expanding the Paradigm beyond Structuralist Orientations", *Applied Linguistics* 39.1 (2017): 32.

4 S.M. Anwaruddin, "Translanguaging as Transformative Pedagogy: Towards a Vision of Democratic Education", *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada* 18.2 (2018): 303.

5 J.A. Mangan, *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.18.

6 See Laurence Wright, "Cultivating Grahamstown: Nathaniel Merriman, Shakespeare and books", *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 20 (2008): 25–37; and David Johnson, *Shakespeare and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

7 D.M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1985), p.177.

8 See Brian Willan, "Whose Shakespeare? Early Black South African Engagement with Shakespeare", *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 24 (2012): 3–24.

association with "both humanism and liberalism" shielded the British from their complicity in oppression and colonialism.[9] She expounds on this problematic association by explaining that Shakespeare was presented as depicting a "universal identity", which resulted in Africans aligning themselves with his work. However, in reality, this identity reinforced British norms and ideals, serving the British empire's drive to establish linguistic and cultural dominance in the pre-apartheid era.

According to Johnson, Shakespeare's early association with humanism and liberalism prior resulted, during the apartheid era, in an overly simplistic binary of "English-liberal-Shakespeare and Afrikaans-racist-apartheid", which ignored the fact that all White people enjoyed benefits due to apartheid and due to British colonialism.[10] Jonas eloquently describes the "ambiguous and at times duplicitous position" that Shakespeare was made to occupy during this time due to being "co-opted to speak simultaneously for 'universal' humanist values, and also the inhumane objectives of an oppressive state".[11] Writing during the late-apartheid era, Orkin pointed out that the distinction between Shakespeare's supposedly universal values and life under apartheid resulted in a different danger of identity formation. He argued that the pedagogy of Shakespeare encouraged learners to believe that their identities were "independent of social process and [did] not involve, for instance, the particular position [they occupied] in the established system of domination or subordination ... [and] reinforce[d] in students the tendency to submission".[12]

Contrary to the use of Shakespeare to perpetuate British values, there are also examples in the 1950s and early 1960s of the apartheid government allowing and even encouraging the use of translations of Shakespeare's plays into African languages in Black schools. This resulted, directly and indirectly, in the publication of Mdledle's three isiXhosa translations of *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Twelfth Night*, and more than a dozen translations into isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, and Xitsonga.[13] However, rather than promoting African languages and cultures, this action by the apartheid government served to further their political agenda of separate racial development and to provide thinly-veiled threats to people opposed to their rule. Recalling his experience of learning Mdledle's translation of *Julius Caesar* in isiXhosa, John Kani relates his teacher's explanation that the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* were like terrorists trying to overthrow the government, and their banishment from Rome indicated the treatment such terrorists deserve. Fortunately for Kani, however, his teacher "taught [them] differently" that "Caesar was ambitious and did not care about the rule of the majority; he was a dictator and would fall, just like the apartheid government of the Afrikaners would".[14] Yet, despite this stance, Kani's teacher still submitted – to some extent – to the educational authorities' agenda with the pedagogy of Shakespeare, as displayed in his instructions to his learners that, "during the examinations, [they] must follow the syllabus as prescribed by the Department of Bantu Education".

While Kani's experience provides anecdotal evidence to the contrary, the pedagogy of Shakespeare during apartheid for second-language learners did not appear to promote independent thought. Rather, as noted by Johnson, it emphasised rote-learning and memorisation. Mahood, Walters and England also conducted studies of the quality of Shakespeare teaching in Black South African schools in the mid- to late 20th century and concluded that if the Shakespeare classes they observed depicted typical pedagogical practices, Shakespeare should be removed from South African schools.[15] These studies

9 Natasha Distiller, *South Africa, Shakespeare, and Post-colonial Culture* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2005), p.50 and p.77.

10 Johnson, *Shakespeare and South Africa*, p.159.

11 Siphokazi Jonas, *Behind the Desk: Encountering Shakespeare in South African Education* (Masters Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2014), p.41.

12 Martin Orkin, *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1987), p.10.

13 See Chris Thurman, "Shakespeare.za: Digital Shakespeares and education in South Africa", *Research in Drama Education (RiDE)* 25.1 (2020): 49–67.

14 John Kani, "Shakespeare Lives", *Kunene and the King* theatre programme (Stratford-upon-Avon: Royal Shakespeare Company, 2022), p.3.

15 See P.S. Walters and V. England, "The Teaching of English Literature in Black High Schools: Notes Towards an Empirical Study", in *Teaching English Literature in South Africa: Twenty Essays*, ed. L. Wright (Grahamstown: ISEA, 1990), pp.204–31; and M. Mahood, "A Preliminary Report on the Teaching of Shakespeare in Black Secondary Schools", *Occasional Papers and Reviews* 3.1 (1988): 1–4 and 3.2 (1988): 1–5.

led Wright to describe the pedagogy of Shakespeare in the late apartheid era as a "dismal travesty", characterised by "no joy, little inspiration" and with "hardly anything of educational value".[16]

The documented evidence on the pedagogy of Shakespeare during apartheid therefore indicates that it generally promoted a nominal or implied opposition to the oppressive Afrikaans government, reinforced the 'universality' of British values, marginalised African identities, and disempowered learners as independent thinkers. While there were some accounts of the pedagogy of Shakespeare being used to oppose colonial objectives, its use as a form of protest was restricted to the classroom and did not infiltrate learners' responses to externally set examinations.

Despite constitutional changes in education in the post-apartheid era, Distiller comments that "old interpretations of Shakespeare remain entrenched in schools", as the emphasis is on people and cultures remaining the same over time.[17] For example, there is evidence of Shakespeare's plays being taught as colonial artifacts, with a focus on – among other things – knowledge of the play's geographical location, historical contexts, and traditionally accepted themes.[18] This focus continues the colonial status quo and counters any critique of established political and social systems. Furthermore, Distiller points out that post-apartheid attempts to make Shakespeare's plays relevant "encode the potential to use the play, and Shakespeare's authority, to rehearse a defensive politics in the name of a universal standard of values".[19]

Despite the prevalent use of the pedagogy of Shakespeare to promote British language and culture, there is also some documented evidence of educators assuming agency in their teaching and adopting different approaches. For example, Bloom and Bates advocate "horizontal, instead of hierarchical, dialogue within classrooms and between secondary educators and Shakespeare scholars".[20] To this end, they produced "Blood will have Blood", which consists of lesson plans and assessments based on some of the violent scenes in four plays that are frequently taught as school setworks: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. "Blood will have Blood" includes *Play the Knave* – a "mixed reality video game that enables virtual design and performance of dramatic scenes from Shakespeare" – and encourages secondary school learners to experiment with Shakespeare's plays.[21]

The documented evidence reveals that, apart from a few instances, the pedagogy of Shakespeare in the formal South African education system has been and remains complicit in promoting colonial educational objectives. As one way of facilitating South African learners' understanding of Shakespeare's plays, while simultaneously empowering learners to provide their own interpretations of them, I advocate the implementation of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy of Shakespeare.

## Concept, development and implementation of Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging in this article refers to a pedagogical approach that deliberately incorporates and validates all learners' languages and denotes the strong version of translanguaging which views speakers' linguistic repertoires as single, integrated entities that include a range of modalities. The term is used primarily to describe planned, teacher-directed translanguaging conducted with the aim that, as learners become accustomed to using their home languages in the study of Shakespeare, some spontaneous, pupil-directed translanguaging will occur.

Translanguaging pedagogy originated in the field of bi- and multilingual education. The term "translanguaging" was coined in 1994 by Cen Williams and his colleagues in their study of Welsh-

16 Laurence Wright, "Three decades of the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa: 1986–2016", *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 31 (2018): 49.

17 Natasha Distiller, *Shakespeare and the Coconuts: On post-apartheid South African culture* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), p.105.

18 Mary Laban, "Teaching Shakespeare: Exploring the Pedagogical Content Knowledge and beliefs of teachers of English" (M.Ed. dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2016).

19 Distiller, *Shakespeare and the Coconuts*, p.238.

20 Gina Bloom and Lauren Bates, "Play to Learn: Shakespeare games as decolonial praxis in South African schools", *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 34 (2022): 7.

21 Play the Knave, "Shakespeare for a Gaming Generation", n.p. Online: https://www.playtheknave.org

English bilinguals in Bangor, north Wales.[22] These scholars used the word to describe the "planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson".[23]

The concept of translanguaging has developed in at least two significant ways since its inception. First, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis shifted the original understanding of languages as distinct linguistic entities (which some scholars refer to as the "weak version of translanguaging") to the view that speakers' entire linguistic repertoires are single, integrated entities (referred to by some scholars as the "strong version of translanguaging").[24] Canagarajah explains the strong version of translanguaging as "the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system".[25] In a South African context, Makalela developed a strong version of translanguaging called "Ubuntu translanguaging" to explain African multilinguals' fluid utilisation of languages in everyday communicative exchanges.[26] The second shift in the concept of translanguaging, evident in work by scholars such as García and Lin, concerns the perception of speakers' linguistic repertoires.[27] This understanding expanded from limiting linguistic repertoires to languages only to the inclusion of other modalities – such as spatial, visual and spoken modes – in the learning process.

With the expansion of research on translanguaging, the understanding of the use of this pedagogy has been refined, become more nuanced, and in some instances, been contested.[28] While it is not the purpose of this article to provide a detailed review or critical analysis of such theories and debates, there are two aspects of the research on translanguaging that are relevant for my study. The first is the distinction between spontaneous translanguaging pedagogies and planned translanguaging pedagogies.[29] As the terms suggest, the former refers to teaching approaches that allow translanguaging to occur naturally, while the latter describes teaching approaches that deliberately incorporate and encourage learners to move between their home languages and the medium of instruction. Given the monolingual practices that are typically employed in the teaching of Shakespeare, my study's experimental pedagogy (discussed below) consists largely of planned translanguaging pedagogies. The second, related, aspect is the distinction between teacher-directed translanguaging (when translanguaging is planned by the teacher) and pupil-directed translanguaging (when translanguaging is planned by pupils).[30]

I advocate the implementation of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy because research on translanguaging indicates its suitability for facilitating comprehension of subject content and empowering learners to interpret subject content from their own perspectives. Studies on translanguaging reveal three advantages of this pedagogy that support my proposal. The first is the creation of a more inclusive learning environment that fosters a sense of linguistic and cultural pride in multilingual

22 Cen Williams, *Arfarniad o Ddulliau Dysgu ac Addysgu yng Nghyddestun Addysg Uwchradd Ddwyieithog, [An evaluation of teaching and learning methods in the context of bilingual secondary education]* (PhD thesis, Bangor University, 1994).

23 G. Lewis, B. Jones and C. Baker, "Translanguaging: developing its conceptualisation and contextualisation", *Educational Research and Evaluation* 18.7 (2012), p.658.

24 García and Li, *Translanguaging*, p.126. See also J. Cummins, "Linguistic Interdependence and the Educational Development of Bilingual Children", *Review of Educational Research* 49.2 (1979): 222–51. Although the theory of the interrelatedness of languages is not the central concern of this article, it is noteworthy that Cummins now opposes the notion that languages are stored in a single unitary repertoire: see "Teaching Minoritized Students: Are Additive Approaches Legitimate?", *Harvard Educational Review* 87.3 (2017): 404–25.

25 S. Canagarajah, "Codemeshing in Academic Writing: Identifying Teachable Strategies of Translanguaging", *The Modern Language Journal* 95.3 (2011): 401.

26 See Leketi Makalela, "Ubuntu translanguaging: An alternative framework for complex multilingual encounters", *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 34.3 (2016): 187–96.

27 O. García and A.M.Y. Lin, "Translanguaging in bilingual education", in *Bilingual and multilingual education*, ed. O. García, S. May and N. Hornberger (Cham: Springer, 2017), pp.117–30.

28 See J. Jaspers, "The transformative limits of translanguaging", *Language & Communication* 58 (2018): 1–10; and T.M. Wlosowicz, "The Advantages and Limitations of Translanguaging in Teaching Third of Additional Languages at the University Level", *Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education* 9.1 (2020): 135–69.

29 See J. Cenoz and D. Gorter, "Pedagogical translanguaging: An introduction", *System* 92 (2020) and "Pedagogical Translanguaging and its Application to Language Classes", *RELC Journal* 53.2 (2022).

30 See F. Bonacina-Pugh, I. da Costa Cabral and J. Huang, "Translanguaging and education", *Language Teaching* 54 (2021): 439–71.

learners.[31] The second advantage is the creation of a safe environment that serves to "liberat[e] the voice of language minoritized students", frees multilingual speakers to take risks with language, and affirms learners' thoughts and opinions.[32] The third advantage is that translanguaging eases potentially stressful transitions to new content by reducing learners' anxiety and facilitating more meaningful and complex class discussions and greater investment in the learning experience.[33]

In addition to these advantages, I propose the implementation of translanguaging because the difficulties of comprehending Shakespeare's EME necessitate a form of translation.[34] While this translation typically occurs in Modern English (ME), I propose that it can and should be expanded to include all learners' home languages. In this way, translanguaging can be used to facilitate learners' understanding of Shakespeare's EME and the plots of his plays, while encouraging them to make sense of the plays using their own experiences and languages as a starting point.

Research on translanguaging also reveals several disadvantages of this pedagogy that I consider when analysing the results of my study. The use of translanguaging does not always result in complete acceptance of all languages in the class; it highlights differences between first and second language speakers and "further[s] inequities" by allowing speakers of the target language to "dominate in the classroom"; finally, translanguaging may be perceived as a threat for minority languages as, in some contexts, it has resulted in speakers of minority languages using more of the majority language and less of their own languages.[35]

## Research method and other details

### *Setting*

The study was conducted at a private, co-educational, secondary school in Johannesburg. The medium of instruction in the school is English and, while the school's language policy does not explicitly prohibit languages other than English in the classroom, there is little use of any other languages outside of the Afrikaans and isiZulu First Additional Language[36] classes.

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31 See O. García, "Education, multilingualism and translanguaging in the 21st Century", in *Multilingual education for social justice*, ed. A.K. Mohanty, M. Panda, R. Phillipson and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009), pp.128–45; O. García, T. Skutnabb-Kangas and M.E. Torres-Guzman, *Imagining Multilingual Schools: Languages in education and glocalization* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2007); A. Creese and A. Blackledge, "Translanguaging and Identity in Educational Settings", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35 (2015): 20–35; and S. Bisai and S. Singh, "Bridging the Divide: Collaborative Learning and Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms", *Fortell: A Journal of Teaching English Language and Literature* 39.2 (2019): 46–57.

32 O. García and C. Leiva, "Theorizing and Enacting Translanguaging for Social Justice", in *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*, ed. A. Creese and A. Blackledge (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), p.200. See also D.K. Palmer, R.A. Martínez, S.G. Mateus and K. Henderson, "Reframing the Debate on Language Separation: Toward a Vision for Translanguaging Pedagogies in the Dual Language Classroom", *The Modern Language Journal* 98.3 (2014): 757–72.

33 M. Martin-Beltrán, "'What Do You Want to Say?' How Adolescents Use Translanguaging to Expand Learning Opportunities", *International Multilingual Research Journal* 8.3 (2014): 208–30; A. Carstens, "Translanguaging as a vehicle for L2 acquisition and L1 development: students' perceptions", *Language Matters* 47.2 (2016): 203–22; R.A. De Los Reyes, "Translanguaging in multilingual third grade ESL classrooms in Mindanao, Philippines", *International Journal of Multilingualism* 16.3 (2018): 302–16; and J. Duarte, "Translanguaging in the context of mainstream multilingual education", *International Journal of Multilingualism* 17.2 (2018): 1–16.

34 These difficulties arise from differences in spelling, capitalisation, punctuation, pronunciation of certain vowels, a freer word order, and greater flexibility and creativity in vocabulary; see Dirk Delabastita, "'He shall signify from time to time': *Romeo and Juliet* in modern English", *Perspectives* 25.2 (2016): 189–213.

35 L. Hamman, "Translanguaging and positioning in two-way dual language classrooms: A case for criticality", *Language and Education* 32.1 (2017): 38. See also C. Fallas Escobar and E. Dillard-Paltrineri, "Professors' and Students' Conflicting Beliefs about Translanguaging in the EFL Classroom: Dismantling the Monolingual Bia", *Revista de Lenguas Modernas* 23 (2015), online: https://doi.org/10.15517/rlm.v0i23.22355; and J. Cenoz and D. Gorter, "Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: threat or opportunity?", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38.10 (2017): 901–12.

36 In South African schools, the proficiency level of 'First Additional Language' is aimed at learners who do not speak the language at home.

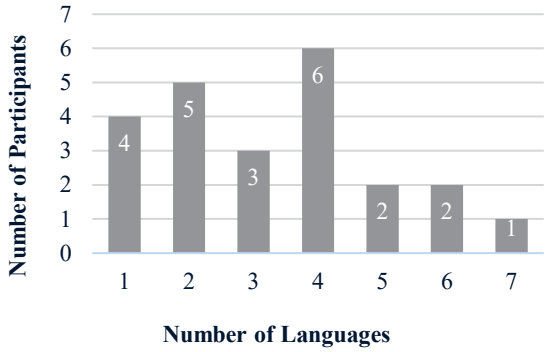



**Figure 1. Number of languages spoken by the participants**

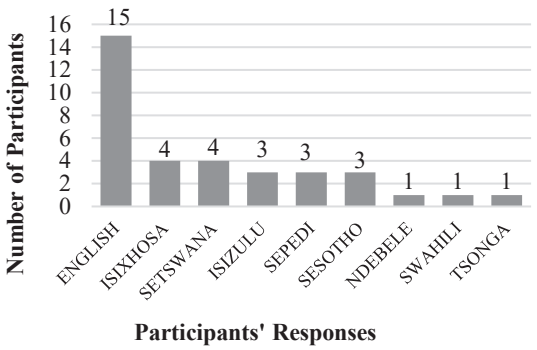



**Figure 2. Home languages of the participants**

### *Participants*

The participants consisted of a Grade 10 class of 23 multilingual learners (hereafter referred to as "the participants"). Of these participants, 15 were Black, one Coloured, two Indian, and five White.[37] Responding to one of the questions in an 'Introductory Language Questionnaire' ("What is the first language you learnt to speak?")[38], four participants described themselves as monolinguals, five as bilinguals, and 14 stated that they speak three or more languages. The participants' responses are displayed in Figure 1. Furthermore, the participants speak nine different home languages, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that, in terms of home languages, fifteen participants indicated that they speak English; four that they speak isiXhosa and Setswana, respectively; three that they speak isiZulu, Sepedi, and Sesotho, respectively; and one participant speaks Ndebele, Swahili, and Tsonga, respectively. The participants' responses indicated that 65% speak English as a home language and 61% are multilingual.

### *Time frame*

The study was conducted over a period of five consecutive weeks in May and June 2021. This period was followed by approximately 10–15 sporadic, informal oral discussions and written conversations on Microsoft Teams[39] with some of the participants to obtain clarity on some of their linguistic choices, as well as the literal and figurative meanings of some of their linguistic choices.

### *Experimental pedagogy*

The experimental pedagogy consisted of 23 lessons of approximately 50 minutes each. At the outset of the study, I raised the participants' awareness of the different home languages represented in the class by asking them to name the languages they speak at home. I then discussed the participants' perceived understanding of Shakespeare's EME with them by screening one of Macbeth's speeches (1.3.127–142) on a data projector. I asked the participants to indicate, through raising their hands, what percentage of the speech they understood, offering them options in increments of 10 ("nothing", "10%", "20%", through to "90%", or "all of it"). Using the variety of home languages represented in the class and the participants' reported struggles with understanding EME, I introduced the notion of translanguaging and how it could facilitate the participants' understanding of *Macbeth*.

Interspersed with other activities such as reading through selected scenes and viewing the 2020 Shakespeare's Globe production of *Macbeth* (staged as part of the "Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche

37 I am here employing the commonly used South African terminology for race 'groups', although these terms are contested.

38 In some of my discussions with the participants prior to the study, they revealed that they use the term 'first language' to refer to the language or languages that they acquired as babies. Therefore, to obtain the information I required concerning the language or languages that the participants speak at home and in which they are presumably most proficient, I used the term 'first language' in this question. As shown in Figure 1, despite being phrased as requiring the participants to name only one language, many of the participants name several languages in response to this question.

39 Microsoft Teams was introduced by my school for online schooling when schools closed due to the rising number of Covid-19 infections. The questions-and-answers in these online conversations resemble phone text conversations.

Bank" partnership) as well as South African #LockdownShakespeare videos of speeches from the play,[40] I engaged the participants in four translanguaging activities. These activities included a collaborative "Themes Poster" for *Macbeth*, home language group discussions on the plot of the play, posters on main characters created in small, mixed home language groups, and multimodal presentations on self-selected aspects of *Macbeth.*

### *Research design*

The study is an example of practitioner-based research as I simultaneously performed the role of researcher and teacher. It employed a mixed-method design consisting mostly of qualitative inquiry with a small quantitative component. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires to create a linguistic biography of the participants and to determine their quantifiable responses to various aspects of the experimental pedagogy. Five qualitative data collection methods were also used: observation of the participants, focus group discussions in the form of class discussions, oral and written online interviews, written questionnaires, and the multilingual posters and multimodal presentations produced by the participants. Triangulation was used to counter the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.

To analyse the data, I employed a method derived from three points of intersection between a pedagogy of multiliteracies and translanguaging pedagogy: the inclusion of the home languages of learners in meaning making processes, the facilitation of translation between different languages, and the empowerment of learners to provide their own interpretations of the subject content. I used these intersecting aims to formulate three analytical foci. The first analytical focus examines the data for evidence that translanguaging results in the inclusion of the participants' home languages. The second focus investigates the data for indicators that translanguaging facilitates translation between Shakespeare's EME and the participants' home languages. Finally, the third focus explores the data for indicators that translanguaging enables culturally specific interpretations of the play.

### *Ethical considerations*

The study considered and accommodated the issues of participant anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent, as well as the potential impact of my dual role of researcher and teacher on the participants.

## Results

The first activity was the participants' collaborative creation of the Themes Poster for *Macbeth.* This activity was conducted in the sixth lesson of the experimental pedagogy. By this stage, the participants had been introduced – through a class discussion – to the concept of translanguaging and its potential for facilitating their understanding of *Macbeth*, and they had watched the "Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank" version of *Macbeth* and some of the #LockdownShakespeare scenes from the play. For this activity, the participants brainstormed their understanding of the main themes of *Macbeth* in ME, during which a volunteer wrote the proffered themes in ME on a large piece of yellow cardboard. Volunteers then translated the themes on the poster into any languages of their choosing. Figure 3 depicts the final version of the Themes Poster.

The data were collected from the participants' written discourse on the poster. This discourse shows that the participants identified themes such as "Morally right vs Morally wrong", "Are prophecies self-fulfilling?", "Lies/Deceit", "The influence of women on men", "Is manipulation part of love?", "Ambition" and "Ambition vs consequences". The participant-identified themes all reflect frequently documented interpretations of *Macbeth*.

The data from this activity therefore suggest that the form of translanguaging from EME into ME in the class discussions on *Macbeth* that followed the screenings of the play, together with other

40 These videos were shot by South African actors in their homes during the national Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 and collected by the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa for "#LockdownShakespeare" (Online: http://shakespeare.org.za/lockdown-shakespeare). The study participants watched the following excerpts: Act 1, Scene 5 with Liatile Mohale as Lady Macbeth; Act 1, Scene 7 with Oarabile Ditsele as Macbeth (in English and Setswana); Act 2, Scene 3 with Jeremy Richard as the porter and Act 5, Scene 1 with Ayanda Nxumalo as Lady Macbeth.

modes such as the visual and spatial, facilitated the participants' understanding of the play's themes. However, there is no evidence that this pedagogy enabled the participants to provide their own interpretations of the play. This finding could be due to one or more flaws in the design of the activity, rather than the inefficacy of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy. The first flaw is that I asked the participants to think about, and provide, their understanding of the themes of *Macbeth* in ME first, and then to supply the same themes in their home languages. This approach may have prohibited them from interpreting the themes through the lenses of their own languages and backgrounds. The second possible flaw is that I did not incorporate any scaffolding of the participants' knowledge in the activity.[41] Although I (mistakenly) thought that this activity would only require the participants to use their home languages to express the English themes, in hindsight I realised that it also required them to use their home languages to frame their knowledge of the play in relation to their own cultures. This lack of scaffolding may have hindered the participants' ability to interpret the themes from their unique linguistic and cultural perspectives.

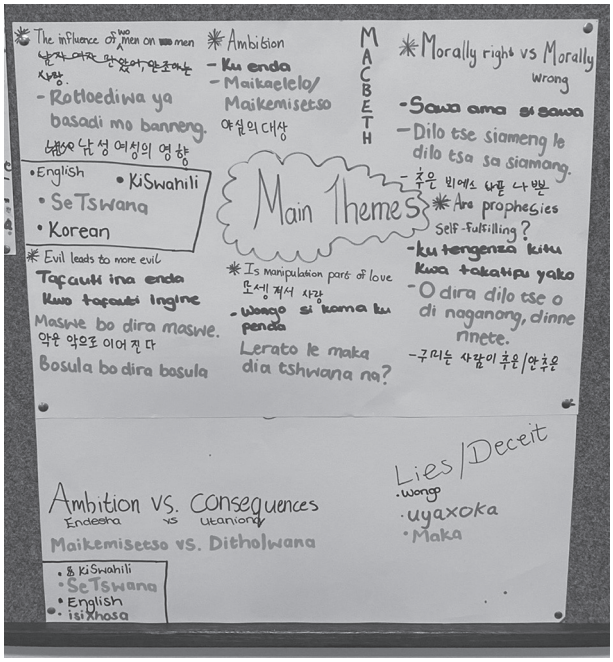



**Figure 3. 'Themes Poster' of** *Macbeth*

The second translanguaging activity was the participants' engagement in home language group discussions on the plot of *Macbeth*. The participants divided into groups of English, Sepedi, Shona, Setswana and isiXhosa speakers, as well as a Kenyan languages group in which one participant spoke Kikuyu (as an additional language) and the other, Swahili. I collected the data from the participants' verbal reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of this activity that were communicated in the interviews I conducted while the activity was taking place.

The participants' reflections indicate that the exercise of discussing *Macbeth* in their home languages helped them to make linguistic and cultural connections with the play. In the participants' words, it gave the play "a kind of home feel", made it "more relatable" and made it "sound better". Their responses also reveal that translanguaging facilitated learning in two ways: by aiding understanding (the activity "clarifie[d] gaps" and made *Macbeth* "easier to interpret") and by aiding memory of the play (it helped them "to remember things better").

The only perceived disadvantage of this activity was offered by a few of the participants who conversed in languages other than English. These participants stated that they struggled to find comparable words in their home languages, and commented that the double act of translation – from EME into ME, and then from ME into other languages – was time-consuming. However, I would counter these views with the argument that, although time consuming, the process of finding suitable terms in their home languages and the exercise of double translation aided the participants' learning by necessitating their careful consideration of the text and its connections with their own backgrounds. The data from the second translanguaging activity therefore indicate that translanguaging facilitated the participants' understanding and memory of the plot of *Macbeth* and enabled them to engage authentically with the play.

41 For the importance of scaffolding in translanguaging pedagogy, see: S.M. Daniel, R.T. Jiménez, L. Pray and M.B. Pacheco "Scaffolding to make translanguaging a classroom norm", *TESOL Journal* 10.1 (2017), online: https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.361; P. Gibbons, *Bridging Discourses in the ESL Classroom Students, Teachers and Researchers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); and R. Tyler, "Discourse-shifting practices of a teacher and learning facilitator in a bilingual mathematics classroom", *Per Linguam* 32.3 (2016), online: https://doi.org/10.5785/32-3-685.

| | |
|---|---|
| Group 1 – *Lady Macbeth*<br>English *(West Germanic)*<br>isiXhosa *(Nguni)*<br>Sepedi (*Niger-Congo)*<br>Setswana (*Niger-Congo)* | Group 2 – *The Three Witches*<br>English *(West Germanic)*<br>isiXhosa *(Nguni)*<br>Sepedi (*Niger-Congo)*<br>Swahili (*Niger-Congo)* |
| Group 3 – *Banquo*<br>English *(West Germanic)*<br>Setswana (*Niger-Congo)*<br>Swi (*Niger-Congo)* | Group 4 – *Macduff*<br>English *(West Germanic)*<br>French *(Romance)*<br>Setswana (*Niger-Congo)* |
| Group 5 – *Malcolm*<br>English *(West Germanic)*<br>isiXhosa *(Nguni)*<br>isiZulu *(Nguni)* | |

**Figure 4. Linguistic composition of the groups tasked with creating posters of the characters in** *Macbeth*

The third activity was the participants' creation of posters on *Macbeth*'s main characters in small groups of mixed home language speakers. I deliberately assigned the participants to create groups that consisted of speakers of home languages from different language families. Each group was then given a character to describe. The linguistic composition and assigned character of each group is displayed in Figure 4.

To provide an example of what was required for the activity, I created a sample poster on Macbeth. This poster is shown in Figure 5.

My intention with the poster was to provide the participants with an example of how to create a poster that incorporates the home languages of the group members. However, on reflection, I believe that the design of the poster is flawed in three ways: it does not incorporate any indigenous South African languages; the repeated use of English as the first word for every group of adjectives suggests (albeit unintentionally) that English is more important than the other languages, and the use of English for the initial or key words possibly places an interpretive limit or constraint on what could be said on that subject. Fortunately, the first flaw did not deter the participants from incorporating their home languages in their posters (displayed below). However, the second and third flaws are reflected in most of the posters which show that the participants also positioned English before the other languages on their posters which, in turn, may have narrowed or restricted their exploration of different character traits.

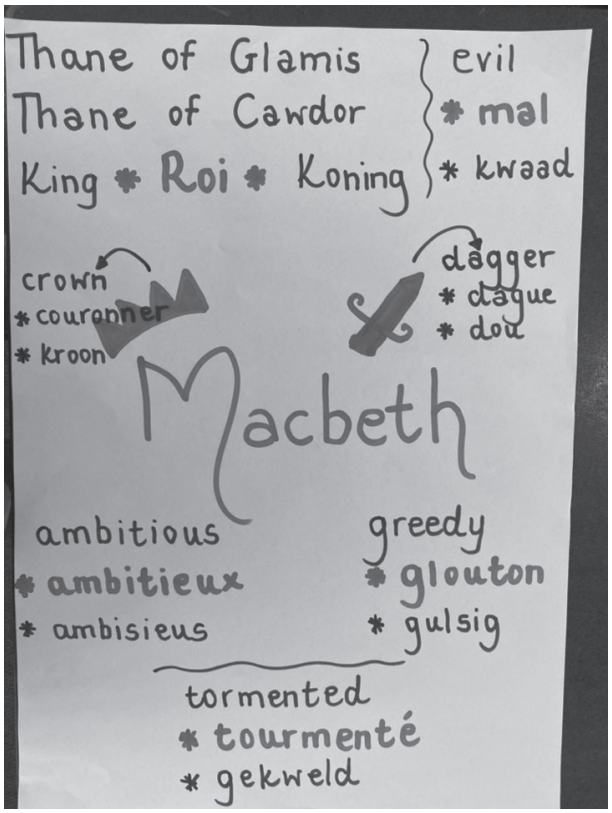



**Figure 5. Sample poster on *Macbeth***

The participants' posters are shown in Figures 6–10. To protect the participants' identities, their names have been blacked out.

The data from this activity, taken as the written discourse on the posters, reveals several interesting examples of how translanguaging enabled the participants to provide culturally specific interpretations of the characters. This is apparent in the description of Banquo as a "warrior" (Figure 8). In *Macbeth*, Banquo is described as a "captain", as in, "Dismay'd not this / Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo"

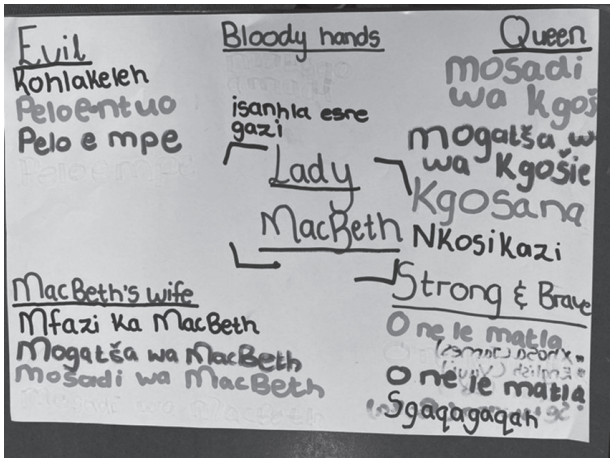



**Figure 6. Poster on Lady Macbeth**

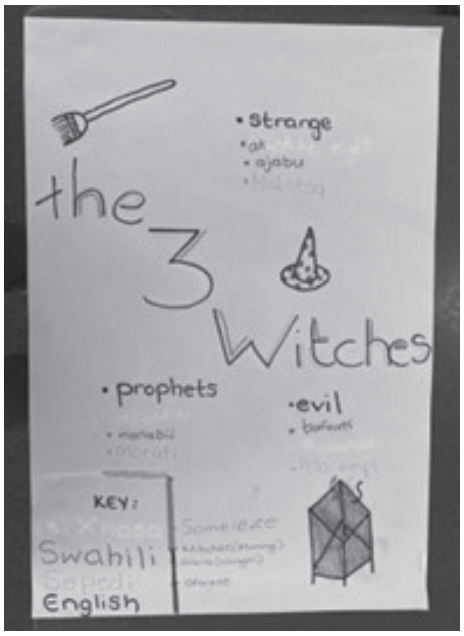



**Figure 7. Poster on the three witches**

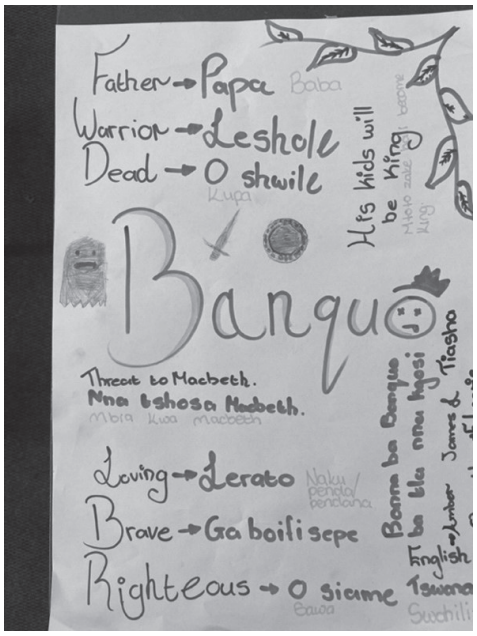



**Figure 8. Poster on Banquo**

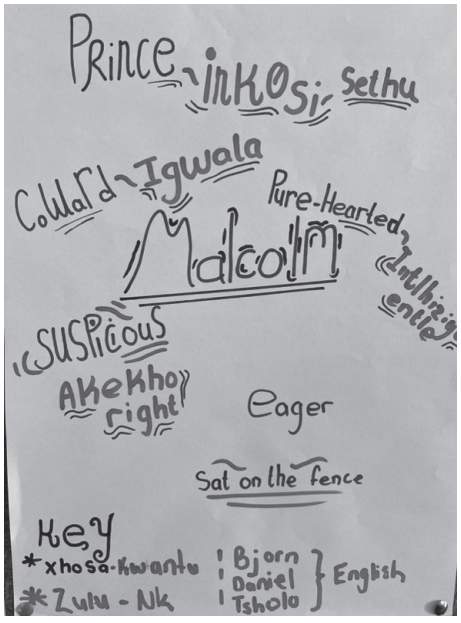



**Figure 9. Poster on Macduff**

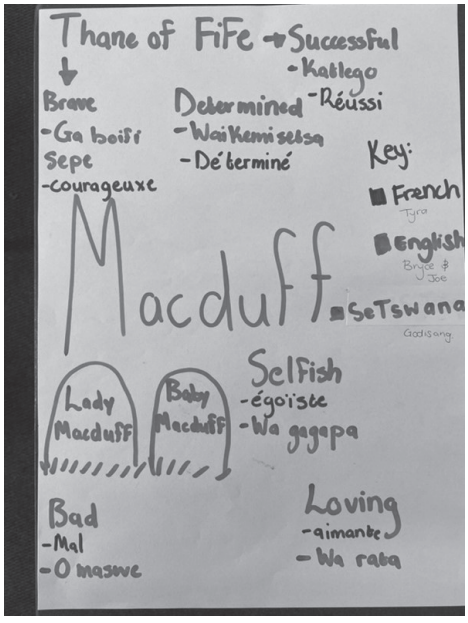



**Figure 10. Poster on Malcolm**

(1.2.34–35), but he is never referred to as a "warrior". In many traditional African cultures, the term for "warrior" denotes a brave and experienced soldier, and is associated with manliness and masculinity. Regarding Banquo's brave actions in the war at the start of the play, his description as a "warrior" suggests the participants' connection of this attribute of Banquo with their cultural understandings of a brave soldier. Other examples of culturally driven interpretations are suggested in the description of Lady Macbeth as a "Queen" (Figure 6) and Malcolm as a "Prince" (Figure 10). While these are the titles of both characters in the play, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* does not foreground them: there are only two references to Lady Macbeth as a "queen" ("The queen, my lord, is dead" (5.5.16) and "This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" (5.6.108)) and Malcolm is only referred to as "the Prince of Cumberland" twice (both times in 1.4). However, the history of many traditional African cultures (including the amaZulu, Batswana, amaXhosa, Basotho, Bapedi and amaNdebele) is defined by powerful royal families. The participants' use of royal titles to describe Lady Macbeth and Malcolm may reflect their attempts to reclaim a disempowered aspect of their heritage in the process of understanding these characters. These descriptions of Banquo, Lady Macbeth and Malcolm suggest that translanguaging facilitated the participants' understanding of these characters and empowered the participants to provide culturally and linguistically specific interpretations of the characters.

The fourth translanguaging activity was the participants' multimodal presentations of one or more scenes or aspects of *Macbeth* in any modalities of their choosing but that had to include at least one language (other than EME), dialect or slang. The participants could choose to work alone or in groups of their choosing. The activity yielded seven presentations that included a PowerPoint presentation, four dramatic enactments featuring an app-generated language, singing, rap, hip-hop dancing and narration, a talk show, and an audition for a talent show.

For these presentations, I obtained data from the participants' non-verbal, verbal, and written discourses. Apart from a PowerPoint presentation that depicted Macbeth's murder of Duncan using drawn images and written words in EME and Norse, 96% of the participant group incorporated at least one of their home languages in their presentations. Furthermore, four of the presentations used home languages other than English, namely Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana. This finding suggests that translanguaging facilitated the participants' comprehension of *Macbeth* by encouraging them to engage with the play in the languages in which they are most proficient. The analyses of the presentations also disclosed that translanguaging enabled the participants to use contemporary South African English and home languages other than English to express culturally specific interpretations of the characters' emotions, the play's protagonist and the power dynamics between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

An example of the participants' translanguaging-facilitated translation to interpret the characters' emotions is evident in the presentation (referred to as "Presentation 1") that features a dramatic enactment of Lady's Macbeth's famous "Out damned spot" monologue (5.1), in which the participant alternates between Shakespeare's EME and her home language, Setswana. Figure 11 shows the participant's original script of this presentation, complete with stage directions.

Presentation 1 reveals how translanguaging-facilitated translations into Setswana help the participant to express her understanding of Lady Macbeth's emotions in this monologue. This is evident in the lines, "Fie, modimo waka, fie my lord fie! A soldier and afeard?". The participant uses translanguaging to translate Lady Macbeth's emotions in the EME phrase "Fie" (an expression of annoyance or mild disgust) into the Setswana phrase "modimo waka" (my god) to convey her culturally specific understanding of Lady Macbeth's frustration with Macbeth's torn loyalty regarding Duncan.

Additionally, the participants used translanguaging to convey culturally specific interpretations of *Macbeth*. This is displayed in the presentation (referred to as "Presentation 2") which depicts a talk show in which the host interviews Macbeth and some of the other characters (not specified in the presentation or its accompanying script) who attended the banquet at which Banquo's ghost appears. The opening five lines of the participants' script for this presentation are displayed in Figure 12. To protect the participants' identities, their names have been replaced with "XXX".

Presentation 2 opens with the talk show host's words: "The man the myth the legend, Macbeth, big mac". The participant's choice of words reveals her understanding, in colloquial ME, of Macbeth as a person of social stature and renown. This example reveals how translanguaging-facilitated translation

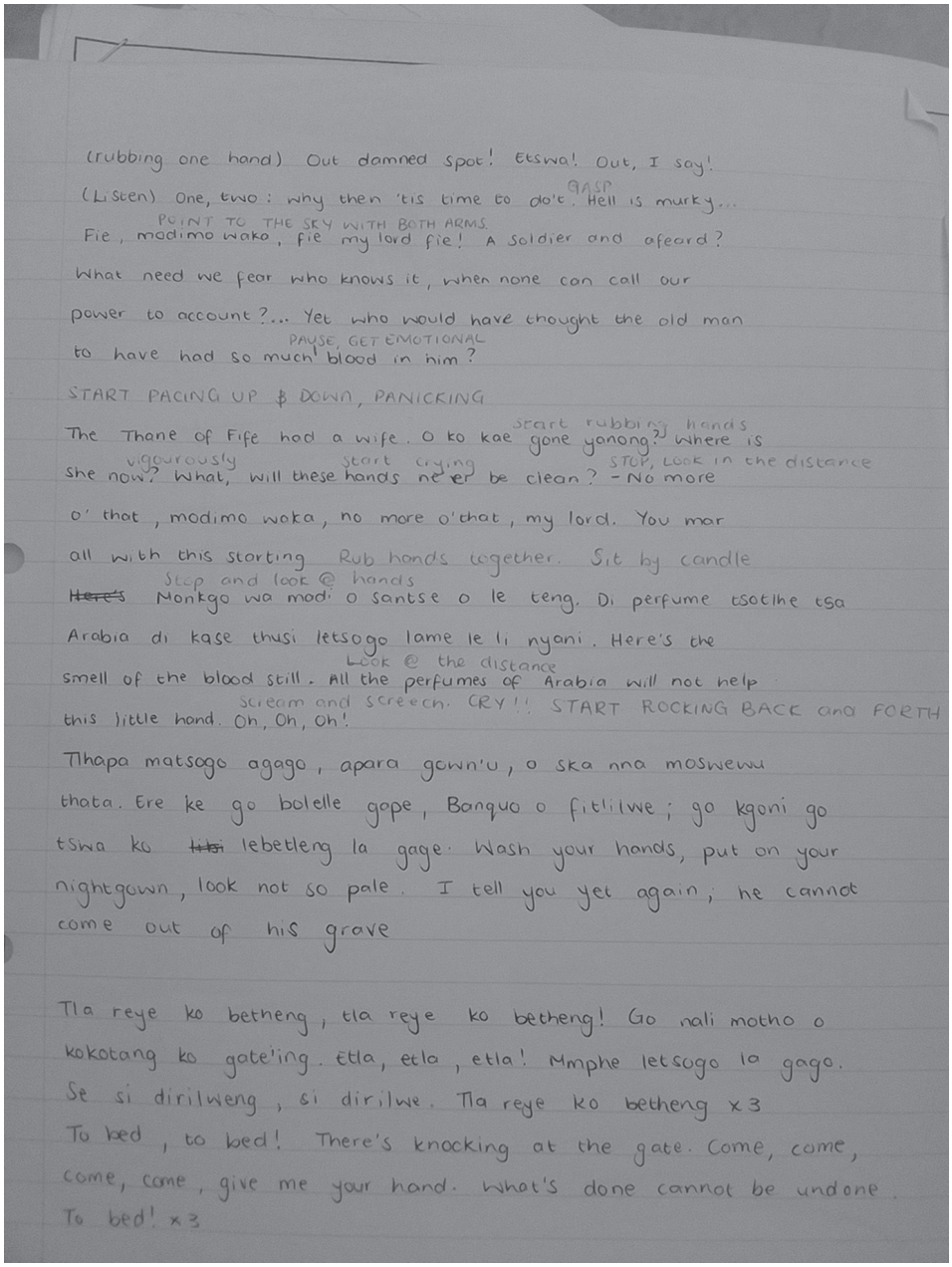



**Figure 11. Presentation 1: Participant's script of EME and Tswana enactment of Lady Macbeth's "Out damned spot" monologue**

| | |
|---|---|
| XXX: | The man the myth the legend, Macbeth, big mac |
| XXX | Haazit chyna |
| XXX: | And the fries to his burger, lady Macbeth |
| XXX: | eyy hallo man |
| XXX: | today, we're gonna spill the tea about what happened at the table |

**Figure 12. Presentation 2: Transcript of the opening lines of the talk show**

into colloquial ME helped the participant to express her understanding of Macbeth as the play's protagonist from her perspective of a South African teenager.

The analysis of Presentation 2 also reveals how the participants in this group used translanguaging to express their understanding of the power dynamics between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In line 1, the talk show host refers to Macbeth as "big mac" and in line 3, a different participant describes Lady Macbeth as "fries to his burger". These lines use an extended metaphor to compare Macbeth to McDonalds' Big Mac hamburger and Lady Macbeth to the fried chips that usually accompany this burger. Drawing on their cultural backgrounds as urban teenagers for whom McDonalds is a well-known fast food brand, the participants use the comparison to show their understanding that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth go together, just like a hamburger is typically paired with fries, but in this pairing, Macbeth is the main dish and Lady Macbeth is the side dish.

The analysis of another presentation shows how participants conveyed an opposite power dynamic between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth using translanguaging. This is evident in the presentation (referred to as "Presentation 3") that depicts the scene where Macbeth informs Lady Macbeth that he killed Duncan. Figure 13 displays the participants' original script of this presentation. Although not clear from the image, according to the participants' script, the participant playing Macbeth (who speaks first) speaks Setswana, followed by the participant playing Lady Macbeth, who speaks Sesotho.

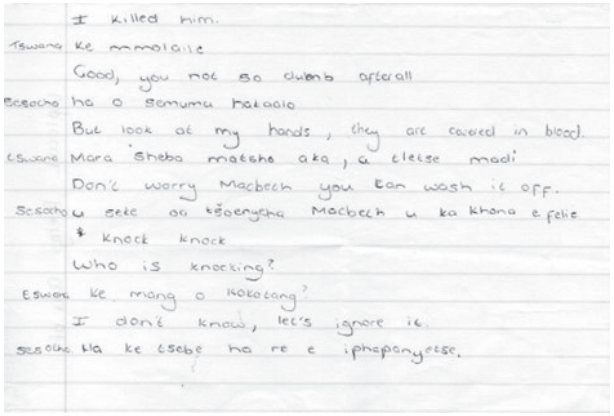



**Figure 13. Presentation 3: Original script of the dialogue between Macbeth speaking Setswana and Lady Macbeth speaking Sesotho**

The analysis of Presentation 3 discloses how the participants used their home languages to communicate their understanding of Lady Macbeth as the dominant person in the relationship. This is conveyed through their translation of her line "Ha o semuma hakaalo?" (You not so dumb after all), delivered in a sarcastic tone, as well as her authoritative tone in the command, "Ha ke tsebe ha re e iphapanyetse" (I don't know, let's ignore it). The participants' perception of Lady Macbeth's dominance is further communicated when she offers assurance to her husband using the words "U seke oa tsŏenyeha Macbeth u ka khona e felie" (Don't worry, Macbeth, you can wash it off). In contrast to Lady Macbeth's authority, the participants portrayed Macbeth as weak through the panicked delivery of the line "Mara sheba matsho aka, a tletse madi" (But look at my hands, they are covered in blood), conveying his dismay over murdering Duncan.

The analyses of the participants' multimodal presentations indicate that translanguaging facilitated most of the participants' understanding of *Macbeth* by enabling them to engage with the play in their home languages and allowing them to provide linguistically and culturally specific interpretations of the characters' emotions, the play's protagonist and the power dynamics between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

## Discussion

The analyses of all the translanguaging activities – the participants' collaborative creation of the Themes Poster, their engagement in home language group discussions on the plot of *Macbeth*, their creation of posters of the main characters of the play in groups of mixed home language speakers, and their multimodal presentations on self-selected aspects of *Macbeth* – revealed that translanguaging facilitated learners' comprehension of the play. Furthermore, only one translanguaging activity, namely the collaborative creation of the Themes Poster, did not provide any evidence that translanguaging enabled the participants to provide their own culturally specific interpretations of the play. However, this may be because this activity was the participants' first encounter with translanguaging and they were therefore not used to incorporating their own cultural perspectives in the learning process, or, as discussed, it could be due to some flaws in the design of the activity. The analyses of the other three activities

indicated that translanguaging empowered most of the participants to provide their interpretations of *Macbeth*'s characters and the characters' emotions, their understanding of Macbeth as the protagonist, and their perception of the power dynamics between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

The incorporation of most of the participants' home languages in the translanguaging activities support the research that suggests this pedagogy creates a more inclusive learning environment and "liberat[es] the voice of language minoritized students".[42] Furthermore, the participants' nuanced interpretations of *Macbeth* confirm the findings that translanguaging affirms learners' thoughts and opinions and facilitates more meaningful and complex class discussions and greater investment in the learning experience. The data does not appear to corroborate any of the aforementioned disadvantages of translanguaging.

Additionally, the findings of my study provide insights into the composition of the participants' linguistic and cultural identities. The participants' ability to move effortlessly between two languages is indicated, for example, in Presentation 1 where the participant alternated between EME and Setswana in the enactment of Lady Macbeth's "Out damned spot" monologue, and in Presentation 3, where the participants alternate between Setswana and Sesotho in the dramatisation of Lady Macbeth's response to Macbeth's admission to killing Duncan. These examples support Makalela and McKinney's arguments for the porousness of linguistic boundaries and indicate the complexity of the most of the participants' linguistic identities as consisting of two or more (sometimes unrelated) languages between which the participants move effortlessly.[43] Additionally, the participants' interpretations of *Macbeth* indicate a similar porousness in their cultural identities. This is evident in Presentation 1 in the line "Fie, modimo waka, fie my lord fie!" where the participant transitions seamlessly between culturally specific expressions in Shakespeare's EME ("fie") and Setswana ("modimo waka") in convey emotions of exasperation and disgust. Another example is evident in Presentation 2 where the participants – urban South African teenagers – use their knowledge of the American-based fast-food chain, McDonalds, in their pairing of a Bic Mac and fries to convey their understanding of the power dynamics between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. These examples suggest the complexity of the participants' cultural identities as consisting of a melting pot of African and Western (British, American, and possibly other) influences.

The study's findings therefore indicate that translanguaging pedagogy provided the participants with access to Shakespeare as a global point of reference by facilitating an understanding of the language and plot of *Macbeth* while simultaneously empowering them to provide interpretations of the play which were arguably richer and more nuanced than those that are typically achieved through predominantly monolingual pedagogies. Although the study's design employed planned translanguaging, the participants' spontaneous multilingual presentations in the fourth activity suggest the potential of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy to equip learners to incorporate their rich linguistic and cultural resources in their interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, and in so doing, empower learners to participate authentically in global discourses on Shakespeare. However, as the study is limited in size and scope, these findings represent suggestions and not conclusive evidence. Further research needs to be conducted to verify (or counter) its results.

## Conclusion

The study of a Shakespeare play remains a prerequisite for obtaining a school leaving certificate, with English Home Language as a subject, from each of the three largest examination bodies in South Africa – despite the problematic history of Shakespeare's presence in the formal education system. As one means of addressing this, I propose the implementation of translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy. This proposal is based on the results of practitioner-based research that I conducted with a multilingual, Johannesburg-based, Grade 10 English Home Language class during the teaching and learning of *Macbeth*. Translanguaging facilitated the participants' understanding of the themes, plot and characters of the play, while simultaneously empowering the participants to interpret the play from their

42 García and Leiva, "Theorizing and Enacting Translanguaging for Social Justice", p.200.

43 See Leketi Makalela, "'We speak eleven tongues': Reconstructing multilingualism in South Africa", *Language and education* 29.3 (2015): 200–17; and Carolyn McKinney, *Language and Power in Post-Colonial Schooling* (London: Routledge, 2016).

own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Although further research is needed to verify these findings, the study suggests the potential of translanguaging to transform the pedagogy of Shakespeare in South African secondary schools by equipping learners to contribute their own authentic and uniquely (South) African voices to Shakespearean dialogues on the world stage.

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