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Trajectories of the effects of translanguaging on reading comprehension among IsiXhosa-English multilingual learners

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THESIS

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of translanguaging techniques on the reading abilities of bilingual IsiXhosa (L1) - English (L2) learners in Grade 4. It focused on the influence of the techniques on the learners' ability to recall information, their text reorganisation skills, and their ability to make prediction and draw inferences when reading texts. In this study, the linguistic interdependence and the threshold hypotheses, in comparison with translanguaging techniques, have been used as the framework. The study adopted a Solomon four quasi-experimental design in which a total of 215 learners from 4 different primary schools participated. Data were collected through a battery of tests written by the learners from the 4 schools.

The findings demonstrated that translanguaging techniques in which two languages are used simultaneously in one lesson have a positive impact on the reading comprehension skills of the learners. The findings also indicated that reading comprehension is determined by a number of factors, which include the reader's familiarity with the content, the context of the reading text, the vocabulary used therein, and the reader's writing skills in general. Thus, the text and the reader's knowledge of the word, the world and the language ought to match. In other words, comprehension may be hampered by the reader's lack of relevant background, linguistic knowledge, or when the task demands exceed the readers' available pragmatic knowledge.

It is recommended that teacher training institutions, curriculum designers and educators in South Africa and elsewhere should create an enabling environment for learners to freely use their tongues and minds. It is only when the linguistic barriers are removed that bilingual education can truly enable multilingual learners to acquire knowledge and express the same using various languages and semiotic repertoires.

Keywords: inferencing; information recall; text prediction; text reorganisation; translanguaging; reading comprehension; New Literacy Studies