

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the academic reading of first-year students at a South African university. Its purpose was to investigate the efficacy and value of translanguaging strategies in educational spaces, to enhance reading comprehension development and critical thinking in linguistically diverse, university students in a first-year university module. The research explored whether it is reasonable, practicable, and viable to use translanguaging strategies and practices in literacy pedagogy to enhance academic reading comprehension and epistemic access. The focus was on translanguaging strategies that harness the socio-historically shaped cultural and linguistic communicative resources of students to improve academic reading and text engagement. An alternative sociocultural-based translanguaging model to progress the academic reading skills of first-year university students is proposed.

The entire study was conducted among a total sample of 90 first-year students between the ages of 18 and 25 registered for the Communication Management 1 (Comm 1AA1) module in the Faculty of Humanities at a South African urban and multilingual university. The investigation adopted a “Sequential Exploratory Design” of mixed methods, in which the quantitative methods took the form of a quasi-experimental design. The overall results show that the use of translanguaging techniques facilitated by students’ own linguistic, cultural, and multimodal discursive resources in reading processes across languages, created abundant contexts and rich ground for growth and advancement in academic language proficiency improving academic reading comprehension gains. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge about translanguaging reading pedagogy. It also formulates and provides an alternative translingual reading model for multilinguals, informing academic literacy practitioners on transformative new literacies in this field.

Keywords

English-as-an -Additional Language readers; dialogic pedagogy; first-year university students; contrastive rhetoric; academic reading, New Literacy Studies, translanguaging, linguistic, and cultural communicative repertoires.