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Strategies for Reading Development among Sesotho-English Bilinguals: Efficacy of Translanguaging

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at testing the effectiveness of translanguaging strategies in developing reading in bilingual classroom settings. In order to do this, the study tested reading proficiency in its categories of vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension of Grade 5 bilingual learners from two experimental and two control schools. This study was centred within translanguaging practices in bilingual classrooms in Gauteng province and was based on three frameworks: Linguistic interdependence hypothesis, the continua model of biliteracy and translanguaging framework, as the main framework. The study used quantitative and qualitative designs in analysing data. It was found that learners from experimental groups outperformed those from control groups in all the variables that were used. This meant that the translanguaging intervention that was offered to experimental groups had a positive effect on developing bilingual learners' reading skills through the use of their home language, Sesotho and English as an additional language. Translanguaging did not only help learners to improve in different areas of reading proficiency, but also served as a tool that helped them make sense and meaning through the use of two languages. From these findings, I agree with the concept of 'Ubuntu translanguaging' which advocates for the idea of one language not being complete without the other, 'I am because you are'. The study also showed that teachers in bilingual classrooms still consider languages as separate entities that 'contaminate' each other. As a result, they do not allow their learners to concurrently use both languages even though they themselves use both languages to enhance comprehension. This study therefore considers translanguaging as a pedagogy for meaning making. I therefore argue that when learners are allowed to use their linguistic resources in classrooms, they develop in reading and perform better academically as reading is the backbone of learning. The concurrent use of languages in bi/multilingual classrooms can be an approach that is used to help learners make meaning of their world and lives as true bi/multilinguals. I therefore recommend translanguaging as an effective pedagogical practice in developing Sesotho - English bilinguals' reading.

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KEY WORDS

Translanguaging; Reading proficiency; Bilingualism; Monolingual bias; Home language; Additional language; Linguistic resources; Comprehension; Experimental & Control groups.