

Ubuntu translanguaging: a decolonial model for the Global South multilingualism

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Abstract: Global South education practices remain at large monolingual, despite the rich repositories of local ways of knowing and being. Translanguaging, as a field of study, has come a step further towards decolonising language classrooms and offering teachers agency and learners deeper access to knowledge. However, interpretations of this phenomenon are still linguistic based on traditional bilingual education programmes. In this paper, we explore what translanguaging means for Brazil and South Africa, aiming to draw together an account of multilingualism based on the local cultural competencies. By considering African sociolinguistic and Brazilian contexts that predate European colonialism, we draw on the indigenous cultural repertoires of these countries to counter colonial and unquestioned assumptions pertaining to multilingual education in both countries. We apply and reposition the theory of ubuntu translanguaging to make a case for decolonisation within and outside of translanguaging discourses. Additionally, useful pedagogic recommendations for teaching literacy from the ubuntu perspective are provided for adaptation in related contexts.

Keywords: Ubuntu translanguaging; Decolonial model; Global South multilingualism.

Título: Translanguaging Ubuntu: uma proposta decolonial para o multilinguismo no Sul Global

Resumo: As práticas educacionais do Sul Global permanecem, em geral, monolíngues, apesar dos ricos repositórios de formas locais de conhecer e ser. A *translanguaging* como campo de estudo deu um passo adiante para decolonizar as salas de aula de línguas e oferecer agências aos professores e um acesso mais profundo ao conhecimento aos alunos. No entanto, as interpretações desse fenômeno ainda são linguísticas baseadas em programas tradicionais de educação bilíngue. Neste artigo, exploramos o que significa *translanguaging* para o Brasil e para a África do Sul a fim de elaborar uma proposta de multilinguismo baseado nas competências culturais locais. Levando em conta os contextos sociolinguísticos africanos e brasileiros anteriores ao colonialismo europeu, recorreremos aos repertórios culturais indígenas desses países para combater as suposições coloniais e inquestionáveis relativas à educação multilíngue em ambos os países. Reposicionamos

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criticamente a teoria da *translanguaging ubuntu* para defender a decolonização dentro e fora dos discursos de *translanguaging*. Recomendações pedagógicas úteis para os eventos/práticas de letramentos na perspectiva *ubuntu* foram fornecidas para adaptação em contextos relacionados.

Palavras-chaves: Translanguaging Ubuntu; Proposta decolonial; Multilinguismo no Sul Global.

Introduction

It goes without doubt that multilingual education practices and policies in most of the Global South often rigidly follow Western-based epistemologies and pedagogies. These include exogenous notions of plurality that are not aligned with the ways of knowing and the cultural competence of the local people. Gatsheni Ndlovu (2017) refers to this way of encroachment as epistemicide, with consequences that are negative for sustainable development in the Global South. Research is replete with the findings that the monolingual bias found in the Global South context is derived from the European Enlightenment period, during which the ideology of ‘one nation – one language’ influenced socio-political thinking. Noteworthy, however, is that rapid changes in the 21st century have made it possible to encounter more complex linguistic encounters driven by immigration in the Global North, while the Global South is simply awakened to linguistic practices that have always defined their ways of being, acting and knowing. Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy has, in this connection, shifted orientation to what speakers do with languages rather than what languages look like.

Translanguaging emphasises a case for use of translingual communication that transcends boundaries between languages. Brazil and South Africa, prototypical Global South countries, have always experienced waves of multilingualism that include a blend of Indo-European languages and indigenous languages that typically fall within the Bantu language group. In Brazil, indigenous languages include languages of African slaves, who were transported from Mozambique and other Lusophone countries in Africa. Based on Northern theories and perspectives of language, the Global South countries experienced a wave of counting errors or miss inventions of multitudes of languages (MAKONI, 2003) and an entrenchment of a monolingual bias that favoured the exclusive use of ex-colonial languages for educational success, political activity, and upward social mobility.

While many studies on translanguaging have critiqued imposition of linguistic landscape and realities from the West/Global North, there are few frameworks developed to account for ontological, epistemological, and methodological framing relevant to Global South discourses and epistemologies. In the view of a categorical Southern theory to explain translanguaging, we question the validity of using Global North’s worldviews to describe local ways of sense-making. Thus, we use the cultural competence of *ubuntu* – a humanist approach to complex co-existence (I am because you are and you are because I am) – and apply tenets of what Makalela (2016, 2018, 2022) coined as ‘*ubuntu translanguaging*’, as an alternative conceptual framework to understand the disruption of orderliness and the simultaneous recreation of new ones in languaging practices among the majority of the Global

South citizens. In the end, we show how the reinterpretation of multilingualism from a Global South theory has implication for dynamic language policy formulation and implementation. Additionally, recommendations for using ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy are considered at the end of this paper for adaptation in comparable Global South contexts.

Temporal fluidity – pre-colonial Brazil and South Africa

Both Brazil and South Africa have a long history that predates the voyages of discovery and the interface between indigenous and exogenous peoples in these geographical spaces. To understand the revival of historical consciousness, we borrow from the ancient Ghanaian mythical bird called Sankofa, which means ‘going back to fetch’ (MAKALELA, 2016). The image of this bird depicts as a complex duality – a movement of the head looking back while the legs stretch firmly forward. Because of this ‘going back to fetch’ in the past while ‘going into the future’ integrates activities into a timeless frame, we refer to the unbounded and versatile ways in which socially distinguished frames of time, such as the past, present, and future, merge into a temporal fluidity that defines the worldview and cosmology of the ancient East Bantu language speaking Africans.

Makalela (2016) shows that temporal fluidity defines the lived experiences of many speakers of Bantu languages, equally in the Southern African territories beyond the current nation-state borders. Accordingly, the Iron Age Bantu-speaking people who had settled in several parts of the Southern African community, such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, and Mozambique by the 4th century, displayed more features of fluidity, unboundedness, and versatility in their cultural demeanours. At this period, the kingdoms of Monomotapa, Congo, Lozi, and Malawi all successfully traded gold and agricultural products and transported these through the Indian Ocean. For the purposes of this paper, particular attention is paid to the natural confluence of the Limpopo and Sashe rivers, which created the Limpopo Valley – a symbolic representation of the cosmic orientation that exhibits what has become the cultural competence of fluidity that emerged in the kingdom of Mapungubwe in the 11th and 12th centuries. According to Khosa, “[a]t Mapungubwe, a thousand years ago, late Iron Age metal-workers produced astonishing artefacts like the golden rhino and other jewellery of rare quality (KHOSA, 2013, p. 159)”.

It is worth noting here that the collaboration of many groups in the creation of the artifacts, such as the rhino made of gold, existed through the use of linguistic repertoires that were porous and versatile and transcended traditional language boundaries (MAKALELA, 2016). The multilingual inhabitants of Mapungubwe, including the Khoe and the San people, lived side-by-side in a ‘potpourri’ of languages, cultures, and competences that cut across a wide spectrum of communities that are relatively distinct (MAKALELA, 2015b). Archaeologists have shown that trade between the city of Mapungubwe, Egypt, India, China, among others (FOUCHER, 1937), occurred through the use of more than one language. Variants of Shona or Kalanga, Sotho, Khoe-San, and Nguni languages were fluidly used in the kingdom. This

confluence of languages and subcultures is supported by evidence from ceramic pots and indigenous games such as morabaraba (see, e.g., CARRUTHERS, 2006).

This level of fluidity allowed for inward and outward mobility between various ethnic or tribal communities – a language continuum which was enabling for deeper thoughts that ushered in civilisation in the area. Here, we highlight the African value system of ubuntu as a heuristic for linguistic and cultural dispositions that predate colonialism. Makalela's (2015, 2016, 2018, 2022) work has aptly made connections between the ubuntu value system and relevant linguistic discourses that predated colonisation. Ubuntu is best understood through the injunction: *motho ke motho ka batho* or *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means 'a human is a human because of others' or 'I am because you are; you are because we are'. This philosophy stresses fluid co-interdependence that allows for a complex co-existence of the empirical 'I' and 'We'. While there was a desire to develop a nation-state in Europe (DAVIDSON, 1992), Southern African tribalism was endowed with ubuntu, which encouraged cohabitation and interdependence between people of different tribes and their languages (MAKALELA, 2016). Khosa (2013) observes that the people of Mapungubwe practised ubuntu – their humanist approach to life – where it was believed that human beings come from the reed and that they, logically, belong together. It was repeatedly illustrated that the 'I x We' logic permeates the philosophical orientation of most speakers of Bantu languages in sub-Saharan Africa, with versions of this saying available in almost all the Bantu languages (MAKALELA, 2014, 2015a, 2015b). When framed in this light, it is evident that the cultural competence of confluence and interdependence is rooted in this ancient multilingual city-state and underpins ways of knowing and making sense of the world (CARRUTHERS, 2006).

Like African countries, Brazil has had a long history of complex multilingualism that predates the Portuguese colonialism (see, e.g., CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017). Although much of the pre-Columbian history is not sufficiently documented, except for archaeological evidence, it is without a doubt that Brazil had always been a multilingual and multicultural country before the Europeans arrived in the territory. The country displayed a complex contact and conflict between European and African languages with indigenous languages, which have eventually influenced the variety of Portuguese spoken today.

By the time the Portuguese arrived, about 200 tribes had inhabited the territory and lived side-by-side as hunters and agriculturalists. It is instructive to note that the Tupia and the Tupi, among other groups, exhibited a similar type of fluidity reminiscent of the ubuntu logic we described above. Research demonstrates that the native inhabitants of Brazil showed a lot of curiosity and interest in others in way that shows humanism (SHAW, 2019). Later contact with speakers of African Bantu languages as slaves from the African countries, such as Mozambique, placed Brazil within a spectrum of complex multilingual and multicultural encounters where coexistence and fluidity defined the sociology of the languages spoken in the territory. It is in this connection that we extend the notion of ubuntu 'I am because we are; we are because you are' as an apt description of Brazilian multilingualism with its trifocal roots: indigenous African languages, Portuguese, and native languages. Southern Africa and

Brazil thus share both temporal and linguistic fluidities, which offer an impetus for epistemologies that are pertinent for the Global South communities.

From fixity to translanguaging

Research on the linguistic struggles in Brazilian and Southern African countries shows that European notions of monolingualism were used to balkanise and dominate these countries into colonial states (RICENTO, 2000). In Brazil, monolingual bias in favour of Portuguese dominated the colonial expedition that began with the voyages of discovery (CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017). The Berlin Convention of 1884, on the other hand, was used to ensure that newly founded colonies were divided based on the linguistic boundaries so that they reflected European divisions of states, eventually defining these colonial states with concepts such as anglophone, francophone, and lusophone for most of the Global Southern countries. At most, these monolingual descriptions reflect the outsider points of view and the monolingual ideologies of the ex-colonisers. It is in this connection that many colonial states have not fully expressed their multilingual competence. Instead, they experienced a systematic exclusion of local languages in places of high prestige under the oneness ideology of 'one nation – one language', 'one classroom – one language' – a practice that still dominates national dialogues and classroom practices today. Many of these countries still educate their children through ex-colonial languages not fully understood by both teachers and students, despite evidence showing the contrary (BAMGBOSE, 2000; BROCK-UTNE, 2000, 2015).

The early part of the 21st century has witnessed an increased movement of people within and between nation-states and the fast-paced movement of information across nations, resulting in the creation of a sociolinguistic of super-diversity, hyper-diversity, and mobility (BLOMMAERT, 2010). In this new dispensation, languages are not fixed to space and time; they overlap (MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2007) and leak into one another. Researchers have then questioned the validity of viewing languages as static entities that are bounded and capable of being placed in boxes (MAKALELA, 2015b; PENNYCOOK, 2012; JORGENSEN *et al.*, 2011). Studies by Makoni (2003), Makoni and Pennycook (2007), García (2009, 2011), Li Wei and García (2022), Hornberger and Link (2012), among others, have shown that notions of additive bilingualism and stable diglossia have become obsolete due to their monolingual and separatist bias towards socially named languages. This is where translanguaging fits in as a theory and practice to account for complex multilingual encounters, where speakers use more than one socially named language in the process of meaning-making.

Translanguaging has been studied as a transformative pedagogy, where linguistic input and output are alternated in different languages (GARCÍA, 2009, 2011; CREESE; BLACKLEDGE, 2010; GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). More contexts in the Global South have shown that alternation is complex when involving more than two socially named languages in the same communicative event. We can state for a fact that the indigenous communities in Brazil and South African simultaneously in both vertical and horizontal translanguaging practices in classrooms (NKADIMENG; MAKALELA, 2015). For example, teachers who teach different subjects have a

tendency to use languages of their preference with a similar group of learners who interact and respond in any of the languages the teachers prefer. In other words, six teachers who choose six different languages are giving input in these languages, but the classroom interaction dynamics require them to respond to questions that may come in any of the learners' preferred languages. At the same time, learners share information and discuss the content using a variety of languages, giving input and receiving outputs in different languages. This is a typical school where complex translingual interactions are a norm, and this is the way these learners and teachers make sense of the world and of who they are.

Viewing multilingualism from a complexity perspective allows for an epistemological shift from what languages look like to what speakers do with languages. The former perspective had negative consequences in South Africa, where approaches to languages resulted in situations where varieties of the same language were encoded as separate languages and a multitude of languages were 'misinvented' (MAKONI, 2003). An example from the Sotho language group in South Africa is instructive. Three different missionary groups working in various parts of South Africa founded three different languages originally referred to as Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, and Western Sotho. Although there is a high degree of mutual intercomprehensibility, the focus on forms results in these varieties being counted as three different languages in the current language policy prescription.

Brazil, on the other hand, completely neglected the official recognition of all indigenous languages in favour of Brazilian Portuguese as the only official language of the country (CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017). Even here, the form-focused approach to languages has created an attitude where a particular variety of Portuguese is preferred and promoted directly and indirectly by policymakers. The attempt to obliterate local varieties is oblivious to the fact that the current Brazilian Portuguese is a 'potpourri' of a number of local languages that had a direct influence on its evolution as distinct but related to mainland Portuguese.

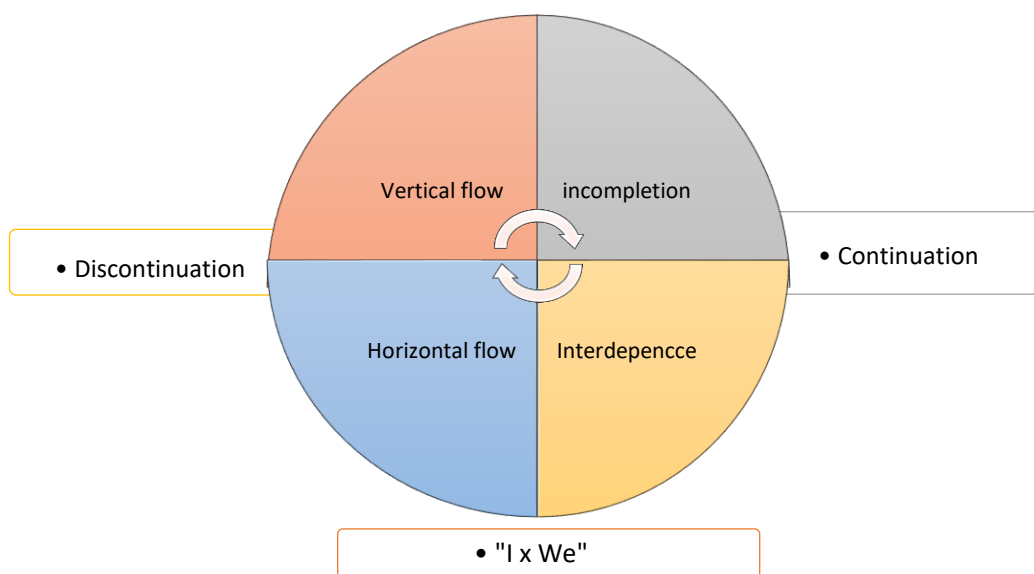
The application of the translanguaging approach in the context of ubuntu practices provides policymakers with a cultural measure to question the validity of language boundaries and redraw linguistic boundaries from a more fluid position. Within the logic of ubuntu translanguaging, the idea that there are more than 200 languages in Brazil (CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017) and 12 languages in South Africa is questioned, as it does not account for complex translingual discourse practices of multilingual speakers from both countries. For example, it is common that children with indigenous language backgrounds to acquire and use a considerable number of socially named languages before the age of six. In this context, numerical counting of first and second language is not applicable, nor it is accurate to use the notion of mother tongue. When used in education, these notions suggest a sequential view of language acquisition (i.e., one language at a time) and they tend to favour a monoglossic curriculum and Western-based *lingua francas*. García (2009) avers that neither additive bilingual nor subtractive bilingual programmes are useful ways for multilingual children to be educated. There is therefore a need for a more dynamic form of language policy direction to account for the actual use of linguistic repertoires. Below, we describe how translanguaging

use anchored on the humanist approach of ubuntu resolves monolingual bias seen in both countries' language policies and prescribed practices.

Ubuntu translanguaging framework

A translanguaging model based on ubuntu principles, referred to here as ubuntu translanguaging, shifts the gaze from language divisions to complex repertoires that are fluid in everyday meaning-making interactions. More importantly, it reflects on a dialectic disruption of linguistic boundaries and the simultaneous recreation of new ones, as represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Ubuntu translanguaging



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The ubuntu translanguaging (UT) model shows a confluent, fluid, and porous existence of language entities, which operate within the logic of 'I x We', described above. It has to be repeated here that this mode of existence is translated from the African value system of ubuntu that is understood within this frame of reference: *I am because we are; we are because I am*. This saying reflects a state of being which depends on the co-existence of the entities of 'I' and 'we', which may not have a separate existence individually. There is also no sense of competition for space as these entities are cosmologically intertwined and invariably tied to have a complete state of being. Understood from this logic is that speakers of languages with the 'ntu' or 'tho' root have a complex identity matrix of unboundedness, confluence, and overlap, which is embedded in the typology of the languages they speak. It is useful here to consider that the cultural competence of ubuntu is found in the way speakers make sense of their world through languages. In the same way that one human entity is not complete without the other, one makes similar deductions about the languages spoken: *a language is*

because another language is. In this connection, languages are a representation of the human cultural logic of being, and they are therefore inseparable from the soul of their speakers. When framed in this light, African languages' endowment with ubuntu allows for fuzzy processes of simultaneous disruption of orderliness and recreation of newness. Within this dialectic process, there is a natural overlap of one entity into another, blurring linguistic codes, while meaning-making and complex information flow are elevated above what the languages look like (structure). The UT represents an epistemological shift from what languages look like to what speakers do with the languages in the process of making meaning and the sense of who they are.

The next point illustrated in this framework is the notion of *incompletion*. Here, one sees ubuntu as a heuristic for infinite relations of complex dependency. This means that entities have to relate without a logical end point; they need each other to the point that each is incomplete on its own. For speakers in complex multilingual zones, all language entities become present and they are used simultaneously for meaning-making and engagement in deeper thought processes. The dialectic process of discontinuation, on the one hand, and continuation, on the other hand, renders any form of linguistic fixity impossible, but creates spaces for fluidity of expression. In this way, it is this constant desire to be complete that makes linguistic entities gravitate towards one another.

The third aspect of ubuntu translanguaging is *interdependence*, which proceeds logically from incompleteness. Here, one sees a consistent state of being incomplete that becomes a prerequisite for completing the cycle of meaning-making. This means that multilingual speakers have to use repertoires from different varieties to make sense of the world and have a deeper understanding of the realities around them. Both aspects of incompleteness and interdependence relate to the mobile status of the 21st century and the resultant view of languages as being in a constant state of transition. The languages of the world have responded to this new sociolinguistic reality of interdependent multilingualism as opposed to monolingual multilingualism of separated language entities. Interdependence is, therefore, a logical outcome in the cycle of infinite relations of dependency.

The fourth tenet of the UT shows the complexity of information flow where both horizontal and vertical mobility of information in communicative events takes place *simultaneously*. Whereas it is common worldwide for interlocutors to hear input in one language and give a response (output) in a different language, many African sociolinguistic realities allow for input in more than one language and output in more than one language in speech events. As reported earlier, the multilingual classroom encounters in South African townships like Soweto, Tembisa, Alexandra, and Katlehong (NKADIMENG; MAKALELA, 2015) offer a unique space to define complexities of how information flows between the learners and their teachers, on the one hand, and between the learners themselves where input and output are exchanged in at least six languages by the end of the school day. Most children growing up in these contexts will have communicative proficiency in more than three languages by the time they are 6 years old (an optimal age for full mastery of one's home language).

By the time they are 13 years old, they can move fluidly between six languages in a single speech event – a practice that is transferred to their classrooms. As stated earlier, the notions of mother tongue and first language are problematic since they do not reflect the real proficiency levels and status of these contexts. Teachers who grow up in these contexts also develop similar linguistic abilities, where they choose at any given point to give output in more than one language while teaching. In both indigenous classroom contexts, teachers assigned to a variety of subjects often use different language varieties to the extent that each teacher may be associated with two to three language varieties for their classroom communication. Learners, on the other hand, communicate with one another in a variety of language forms to make sense of the content, just as they would normally communicate in their communities, however surreptitious some of these practices may be – especially in Brazil (CAVALCANTI; MAHER, 2017).

The teachers talking to students in a variety of languages represents the vertical flow of information, while students talking to one another, cross-pollinating the ideas learned through a variety of language, represents the horizontal flow of information. Either stream of information flow is incomplete for a multilingual speaker in these complex encounters and will depend on each other for a complete sense of meaning-making and self-affirmation. It is in this connection that the pillars of ubuntu translanguaging, namely *incompletion*, *interdependence*, *vertical*, and *horizontal* pillars, create a discontinuous continuation axis: constant disruption of language boundaries and the simultaneous re-creation of new ones as a way of life and a cultural competence that resonates with the ubuntu logic of ‘I x We’.

Ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy

The ubuntu translanguaging framework discussed above has direct relevance to classroom teaching and learning in complex multilingual encounters. The nature of translanguaging described requires an alignment with the step-by-step procedures for using this perspective on multilingualism in pedagogy. The notion of dynamic bilingualism as proposed by García (2009), among others, is instructive for approximated situations where schools only allow at least two languages for learning and teaching. She confirms:

What is needed today are practices firmly rooted in the multilingual and multimodal language and literacy practices of children in schools of the twenty-first century, practices that would be informed by a vision starting from the sum: an integrated plural vision (GARCÍA, 2009, p. 8).

This view of an integrated sum fits in well with the ubuntu framework, as well as its pedagogical strategies where more than one language is used for learning and teaching. We have shown elsewhere what the ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy (UTP) process is (MAKALELA 2014, 2015a, 2015b; MAKALELA; SILVA, 2023):

- a) Turn and talk partners: learners listen to a voice of an adult reader and then respond by speaking in a different language from the language of input during mini-lessons or group work;
- b) Phonological awareness contrasts in L1 and L2 (e.g. syllabic structure, pseudo-words);
- c) Read aloud contrasts;
- d) Word/sentence walls in different languages: vocabulary and syntax develop in more than one language, side-by-side;
- e) Writing sections in different languages for scaffolding;
- f) Reading and writing input/output contrasts (language/s of reading and language/s of writing);
- g) Developing multilingual literacy corners where texts are produced in different languages.

These activities are not unique or new; rather, they provide creative opportunities for the systematic use of multilingual practices as a norm for all classrooms. A plethora of studies conducted on the effectiveness of this pedagogy has shown that this practice improves access to knowledge and affirms students' identities (e.g. MADIBA, 2012; WEI; GARCÍA, 2022; MAKALELA, 2013). One of the reasons translanguaging practices succeed in classrooms is that multilingual learners are already involved in the process of linguistic exchange, despite the fact that their curriculum materials are biased towards monolingual outputs. It is evident, however, that most multilingual teachers do not admit that they use more than one language, despite the evidence showing otherwise. García makes this salient point explicit:

Despite curricular arrangements that separate languages, the most prevalent bilingual practice in the bilingual education classrooms is that of translanguaging. Because of the increased recognition of the bilingual continuum that is present in schools and communities that are revitalizing their languages, or schools where more than one language group is present, linguistically integrated group work is prevalent in many bilingual classrooms. Here, students appropriate the use of language and although teachers may carefully plan when and how languages are to be used, children themselves use their entire linguistic repertoires flexibly. Often this language use appropriation by students is done surreptitiously (GARCÍA, 2009, p. 304).

It is important to note that even though some classrooms may police language use and punish children for using more than just the language of learning and teaching, the languages co-exist in the learners' mental space, i.e., the phonological loop. In other words, translanguaging is a representation of cognitive linguistic fluidity where language repertoires co-exist during speech interactions for a deeper understanding. It has been shown that the cognitive benefits of translanguaging surpass those of monolingual readers and writers in literacy assessments. Baker (2011) puts this in perspective as follows:

It is possible, in a monolingual teaching situation, for students to answer questions or write an essay about a subject without fully understanding it. Processing for meaning may not have occurred. Whole sentences or paragraphs can be copied or adapted out of a textbook, from the internet or from dictation by the teacher without real understanding. It is less easy to do this with 'translanguaging'. To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and 'digested' (BAKER, 2011, p. 289).

Current research on translanguaging points to the successful use of translanguaging strategies to improve traditional and academic literacy, as well as to dispel myths that there are multiple languages that are unintelligible (MAKALELA, 2022; WEI; GARCÍA, 2022). It has also shown the social literacy benefits in affirming identity positions of the students in many parts of the world. The translanguaging approach, based on the humanistic world view 'I am because we are', has greater advantages in transcending colonial boundaries between languages and reorientating language policy proscription that still follow the one-ness ideology of the Enlightenment period (RICENTO, 2000; MAKALELA, 2022). It is in this connection that we see it as a de facto Southern theory providing a base for decolonisation in the Global South discourses.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to assess ubuntu translanguaging as a model for decolonisation of language policies and practices in Brazil and South Africa. We sought to review language use the context of complex multilingual encounters and to use the local perspectives of multilingualism to develop a framework for fluid multilingualism as a norm to decolonise. Contrary to this sociolinguistic reality, we have pointed out that monolingual bias still dominates official language practice in Brazil and South Africa and creates tensions between the expected policy proscriptions and the real language practices of the local people. Having an ethnographic account of the past linguistic predisposition of Southern Africa and a brief glimpse of Brazilian history, this paper has shown that fluid and dynamic multilingualism is a cultural competence that can be explained through the value system of ubuntu: *I am because you are; you are because I am*. To disconnect monolingual narratives and ideologies of oneness, it was necessary to look back at this value system of ubuntu to offer a historical consciousness model for decolonisation.

Grounding translingual practices as indigenous to Brazil and South Africa, we are able to support developing a theory of interdependent multilingualism under the model of ubuntu translanguaging. Here, the pillars of incompleteness and interdependency, on the one hand, and the vertical and horizontal flow of information, on the other hand, epitomise complex multilingual encounters found in many complex sociolinguistic spaces. There is, therefore, an argument that an alternative system based on the ubuntu translanguaging model and its attendant ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy as conceptual frameworks can guide language planning and literacy development for knowledge access and identity affirmation.

It is important to repeat that *ubuntu translanguaging* allows educators and policymakers to discover a plural vision of interdependence in the language systems and their fluid, overlapping, and discursive nature to match the everyday ways of communicating where the use of one language is incomplete without the other. In particular, there is a need to shift from monolingual multilingualism to the fluid and porous worldview and the logic of 'I x We', consonant with complex multilingual cultural competence. Taken together, there is a need for empirical research to explore various modalities of the ubuntu translanguaging framework for adaptation in comparable contexts of complex multilingual encounters.

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