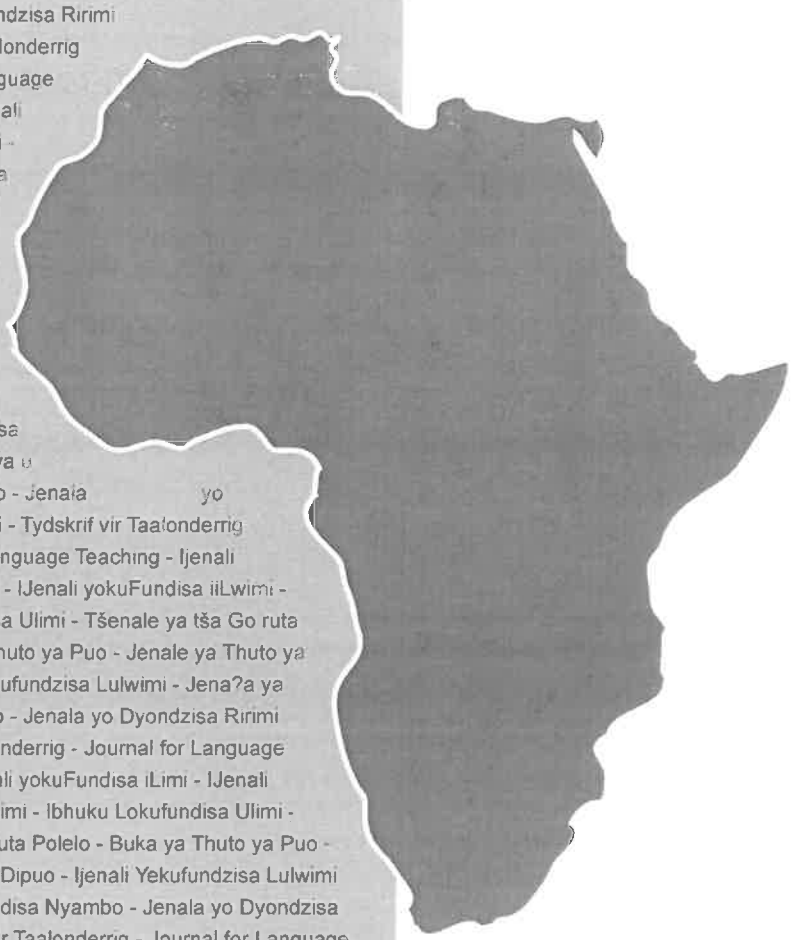
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Is isiZulu a 'problem or a 'resource'? Engineering students' perceptions of teaching and learning in a multilingual context.

Abstract

Research and praxis in the field teaching and learning in the South African higher education context has been characterised by calls to expand the languages of teaching and learning through the inclusive use of African languages in higher education. Such calls are based on the realisation of the critical role that students' home language can play in cognitive and linguistic development, among other things, in education. The focus of this paper is to ascertain the perceptions of students about the inclusive use of isiZulu, an African language, as a language of teaching and learning. Data were gathered through a survey which employed a questionnaire targeting 120 students from a Faculty of Engineering at a South African university of technology. The study found that students' understanding of the use of isiZulu for teaching and learning conflated issues of language as 'problem' and 'resource'. The study also discovered elements of language ambivalence. The paper argues that helping students to shift their perceptions from a 'problem' view of language to a view of language as a 'resource' could enhance their learning.

Keywords: African languages; IsiZulu; Teaching and learning; Higher education; South Africa

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Introduction

This paper seeks to explore student perceptions about the extent to which isiZulu is perceived as a 'problem' or 'resource' for teaching and learning in a multilingual context. The discourse on the language of teaching and learning in South African higher education has been characterised by calls for the inclusion of African languages as languages of instruction. Such calls are based on the realisation of the critical role that the home language plays in the learning process by facilitating the development of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom and through engaging texts, and the expression of their understanding of acquired knowledge (Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2004). Failing to use more than one language in the classroom, particularly one that is not the language most familiar to the learner, means the language can potentially become a barrier to their teaching and learning process (Brock-Utne, 2010; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The level of comprehension of the medium of instruction can therefore negatively affect performance because students may experience difficulties in grasping the underlying basic concepts that are taught in academic disciplines.

The main research question that guided this paper is as follows: To what extent do students understand bi-/multilingual based education as a problem or resource? Multilingual education refers to the use of two or more languages for teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2003: 17). In responding to this question therefore, this study draws from Ruíz's (1984; 2010) framework of language as a problem, as a right and as a resource. The main argument of the paper is that shifting students' perception from a 'problem' view of language to a view of language as a resource could enhance learning.

Language dynamics in South African Higher education

The post-apartheid era has witnessed slow progress and limited transformation from the administrative structure of apartheid-based education. During the colonial and apartheid era, South African Higher education was characterised by official bilingualism, which however limited the choice of medium of instruction to only English and Afrikaans. A new education system, which prioritises, at least on paper, the linguistic needs of African language speakers was introduced at the advent of democracy in 1994. African languages were given an official status at the dawn of the democratic dispensation in 1994, but, more than two decades later after the dismantling of the apartheid system, the functional status of the nine indigenous African languages in education remains unchanged when compared to English and Afrikaans. In the context of education in Africa, many observers have argued that there is a very large gap between policy and implementation in language management efforts (Gumbi & Hlongwa, 2015; Ndebele & Zulu, 2017). It has been argued by some scholars that the dramatic development of Afrikaans during the apartheid era coupled with the enlightenment it has brought for Afrikaners should bring an understanding of the significant role of language to social transformation in the post-1994 South Africa (Prah, 2007). In other words, some scholars

argue that the development of African languages for all levels of education are possible, and that the success of the development of Afrikaans is proof of this possibility.

Most South African Higher Education institutions in the post-1994 context have become multilingual when one considers that African language speakers constitute the majority of the entire student population. The percentage of black African students enrolled at public universities was estimated at 55% in 1994. These figures escalated to 80% in 2010 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). Success rates, however, remain a major point of concern in the South African Higher Education system, more specifically for the majority of black African students. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) reports that almost 50% of black contact students drop out in their first year and that less than half of the remaining students graduate within the regulated time (CHE, 2013). The CHE Vital Statistic report acknowledges that although racial disparities in students' performance have reduced, the completion rate of African students is approximately 50% less than that of other groups in South Africa (CHE, 2019). Cooper (2015) points out in his study of student full-time equivalents by field of study 'that African undergraduate enrolments were concentrated outside the sciences, engineering, commerce and medicine' (Cooper, 2015: 247). Thus for many students from poor and working class backgrounds, successful graduation in technical and professional engineering fields remains elusive.

While acknowledging that various other factors contribute to the high dropout and low success rates of African home language speakers at university in South Africa, such as poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, maladjustment, poor programme choices, socio-economic circumstances, finances, the teaching and learning environment and access to institutional student support structures (Fraser and Killen, 2003; Chetty and Pather, 2016), the language of teaching and learning also has a significant impact. Du Plessis and Gerber (2012) reported high levels of student failure and increasing drop-out rates in their study on academic preparedness of students. This study indicates that lack of English proficiency is a contributing element in the general under preparedness of students in South Africa.

In support of the above, the Ministerial Committee Report on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Department of Education, 2008) firmly states that the education system has failed to consider the knowledge production of African language speakers, who constitute the majority of the school population. Scholars have, therefore, argued for the transformation of the curriculum and content through the incorporation of indigenous African languages alongside English as languages of education (Lekgotla & Ramoupi, 2011; Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2015). In particular, Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014) argue that most institutions in South Africa are yet to attain institution wide support regarding the embedding of indigenous African languages and the associated indigenous knowledge systems in language and curriculum transformation. They further assert that the transformation of the curriculum and the intellectualisation of indigenous African languages are fundamental components in facilitating a transformative, critical and emancipatory role of Higher Education institutions in society.

Theoretical underpinning

The language as a 'problem', as a 'resource' and as a 'right' framework was developed by Ruiz (1984) in order to provide a way of engaging with and examining language policy in education. For the purpose of this article, the focus is on two dimensions of Ruiz's framework, namely language as problem and language as a resource. The language as a problem approach has gained prominence in multilingual contexts, in particular, in English dominant countries where a lack of English is seen as a challenge that should be overcome (Ruiz, 1984). This approach represents a set of values that are linked to a monolingual ideal and assimilationist notions (Hornberger, 1990; Ruiz, 1984). In this particular approach, multilingualism is viewed as problematic and a threat to national unity, which is believed to be achieved and maintained through the use of a single common language (Ruiz, 1984). Speakers of other languages, which are not the dominant language, are viewed from a deficit perspective that puts emphasis on their lack of competence in the dominant language as opposed to their bi/multilingual repertoires (Ruiz, 1984). Educational programmes that adopted this particular orientation seek to remedy students' deficits in the dominant language through a subtractive approach to language teaching, while emphasising transition to the dominant language (Hult, 2014).

The language as a resource approach is the antithesis of the language as a problem approach. Multilingualism and cultural diversity are valued and viewed as fostering national unity (Hornberger, 1990; Ruiz, 2010). This orientation views language as a community asset that is useful in the creation of social and economic bridges among different communities (McNelly, 2015:13). Language as a natural resource is deemed important in the cultivation of economic, commercial, cultural, spiritual, political, and educational benefits (Baker, 2011; Ruiz, 1984). Bamgbose (2000) therefore argues that this particular approach provides an understanding of what a country would benefit or lose by employing an indigenous African language as opposed to a foreign language as its national language. The language as a resource orientation promotes the development and expansion of new multilingual resources and the maintenance and conservation of existing ones (Hornberger, 1990; Ruiz, 1984). Educational programmes ascribing to this approach acknowledge and seek to expand the linguistic capital and repertoires that students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds bring to the classroom in order to promote an effective learning environment.

Literature review

The South African higher system has formulated a plethora of language policy frameworks emphasising multilingualism and equity of access and success for all students in higher education. In particular, the democratic constitution (RSA, 1996) entrenches the fundamental rights of every South African through an emphasis of values that underlie an open democratic society, namely human dignity, equality and freedom. Furthermore, the constitution explicitly recognises the importance of diversity, adopting a pluralist vision of nation-building. Other important documents in this regard include the

Higher Education Act (1996); Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) (DHET, 2018; MoE, 2002); the Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Development of Indigenous African Languages as Mediums of Instruction (DoE, 2003); the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation in Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2008), the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) and the Report on the use of African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education (DHET, 2015). (For a detailed discussion of the above language legislative provisions, see Maseko, 2014 and Maseko & Wolff, 2017).

In order to realise multilingual education, it is important that indigenous African languages are included as mediums of instruction. Given the linguistic diversity of student populations in South African higher education institutions, more particularly the increased number of African language mother tongue students, the importance of bi-/ multilingual education that embraces African languages as languages of instruction for mother tongue speakers of these languages can never be over-emphasised. Research in both South Africa and internationally reveal that mother tongue education is important for a learner's cognitive development, development of a positive self-concept, promotion of originality of thought and expression, and promotion of learner centred effective learning (Batibo, 2014; Bloch, 2014; Hameso, 1997; Masau, 1999; Trudell, 2005; Webb, 2004). The promotion of multilingual education is well aligned with stipulations of the Language Policy for Higher Education (MoE, 2002), which notes the marked disadvantages faced by students speaking African languages. This policy clearly states that indigenous African languages have been deliberately side-lined in teaching and learning, culminating in a lack of their development as academic and scientific languages. Cognisant of the widely accepted role of universities in research, and the historical backlog in the development of African languages, the policy recommends that universities should take a leading role in the use and development of African languages. On a similar note, The Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Development of Indigenous African languages as Mediums of Instruction (DoE, 2003) states that while declaration of African languages as official languages is commendable, practical implementation of policy is required in order to improve the functional status of these languages in higher status domains. The report recommends, among other things, that universities should ensure sustainability of all indigenous African languages and their development as mediums of instruction in higher education, and the formulation of medium and long-term implementation frameworks according to region (DoE, 2003).

Institutions of higher learning in South Africa have thus formulated different models in an effort to implement African languages as mediums of instruction. For example, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, two language management models that seek to promote African languages as mediums of instruction have been developed, namely the isiZulu-English parallel model, whereby separate classes in isiZulu and English are conducted, and the isiZulu only model in which the language of teaching and learning is isiZulu only. The English-isiZulu parallel model has been used for selected modules in disciplines such as psychology, education, history, philosophy and social work. The isiZulu only model has been used to teach all mother tongue modules in the discipline of African languages (see Ndebele & Zulu 2017 for a detailed discussion of these models). Another

example is Rhodes University where isiXhosa has been developed as a meta-language to teach courses such as Translation studies, Literature and Media studies, Orthography and Writing skills, Human Language Technology and Socio-linguistics (Kaschula & Maseko, 2017). In this regard, Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh (2004) argue that it is only by teaching African languages as first languages (L1) that their scientific status will improve so that they are ultimately developed and used as languages of instruction.

The teaching of African languages is also a critical component in the advancement of multilingual education. Some higher education institutions in South Africa have devised models to introduce an African language as a compulsory requirement for all Degree courses as recommended by the *White paper on post-secondary education and training* (DoHET, 2013). The White paper, recommends, among other things the inclusion of African language proficiency as a requirement in professional qualifications, the development of a curriculum that includes an African language course (DoHET, 2013). Vocation specific second language courses have been and continue to be developed in this regard at various South African universities such as the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, among others. For example, medical students at the University of Cape Town cannot graduate without undergoing Afrikaans and isiXhosa on-site clinical examinations, which empower students with required language skills for patient examination in the relevant province where these languages are used widely in the community (Reynecke & Claasen, 2015). The University of KwaZulu-Natal has introduced isiZulu as a compulsory course for all non-mother tongue isiZulu speakers. Rhodes University has also incorporated isiXhosa in various degree programs such as Pharmacy, Education and Law (Kaschula & Maseko, 2017). The incorporation of indigenous African languages in various degree programmes could be a major stride towards curriculum transformation, the enforcement of social cohesion and the promotion of indigenous African languages as sources of knowledge production (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014; Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2014).

Translanguaging has also been employed as one of the strategies to promote multilingual education. For instance, Hornberger and Link (2012: 241) describe translanguaging as a strategy to promote bi-literacy in the classroom, meaning it does entail using separate languages in education, but it is instead 'the flexible and meaningful actions through which bilinguals select features in their linguistic repertoire in order to communicate appropriately' (Velasco and García, 2014: 7). Hornberger and Link (2012: 242) concur with the above and argue that translanguaging is not only a multilingual practice but also a pedagogical strategy that is vital in enhancing language and literacy growth. Other scholars such as Madiba (2010: 2014), Makalela (2014), Joseph (2015), and Carstens (2016), among others, allude to the importance of translanguaging as a valuable language and pedagogical support strategy for bilingual students in universities.

An example of a higher education context in which translanguaging has been employed as a pedagogical approach is the BA program in contemporary English and Multilingual studies at the University of Limpopo (Hornberger and Link, 2012). Although the founders of this program are not fluent speakers of Sepedi, an African language, they and their students practice a translanguaging approach in which students are encouraged to

use both spoken and written Sepedi and other local language varieties in their learning (Hornberger and Link, 2012). Research has illustrated that students in this programme attain higher levels of academic achievement in this programme when compared to other monolingual English programmes at the university (Hornberger and Link, 2012: 242). Translanguaging practices in the classroom are also said to have the potential to "explicitly valorize all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, and development," thus allowing students and their lecturers an opportunity to access knowledge through the different communicative repertoires they bring to the classroom and further acquire new ones (Hornberger and Link, 2012: 245). Examples of other institutions that have adopted translanguaging as a bilingual model of teaching and learning include the University of Cape Town (Madiba, 2014), the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Childs, 2016), the University of Witwatersrand (Makalela, 2014) and Mangosuthu University of Technology (Ngcobo, Ndaba, Nyangiwe, Mpungose & Jamal, 2016), the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Nomlomo and Katiya), Rhodes University (Hurst and Mona, 2017), University of Pretoria (Carstens, 2016), among other institutions.

The commitment to the realisation of bi-/multilingual education has also seen the development of multilingual terminologies and glossaries in most institutions of higher learning in South Africa. This responsibility of improving African languages through extensive development of multilingual glossaries in various fields in South Africa was given to the National Language Services within the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). In this regard, various terminology lists have been published by the Department of Arts and Culture (Morapa, 2013). Various higher education institutions have also followed suit by engaging in a plethora of terminology development projects in African languages in order to facilitate the understanding of concepts by mother tongue African language speaking students. For example, the University of Stellenbosch has developed isiXhosa terminology in a variety of fields that include sociology, psychology, economics accounting and others. These terminologies were developed to help first year isiXhosa mother tongue speakers understand new concepts (Morapa, 2013). Another example is at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, which has produced a bilingual handbook for English-isiXhosa economic terms (see Dyubhele, Guzana, Duze & Mkonto, 2007). This project was initiated from the realisation that some students found economics difficult and removed from their daily lives (see Dyubhele, Guzana, Duze & Mkonto, 2007). The Cape Peninsula University of Technology is also involved in systematising terminology glossaries across faculties and departments and providing translations and descriptions of such in isiXhosa and Afrikaans with the goal of developing accessible teaching and learning material (CPUT, 2012: 8-9). This initiative is part of the institution's language management goals aimed at formulating a language development strategy and policy implementation (CPUT, 2012: 8-9).

All of these above examples from the literature are specific illustrations of how Ruiz' (1984) concepts of language as a problem and language as a resource have been translated and implemented into South African higher education practice by university managers and language policy practitioners. These views and activities should be complemented by an understanding of the student's voice in relation to multilingual teaching and learning strategies.

Methodology

This study's main research question was to establish the extent to which student perceptions of bi-/multilingual education reflects the conceptualisation of language as a problem and/or language as a resource. The site of this particular investigation was a Faculty of Engineering at a South African university of technology, which is strategically situated in a historically disadvantaged black South African community. This university draws its pool of students mostly from the surrounding schools and other rural schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, largely dominated by first language speakers of isiZulu. In terms of language demographics at this particular university of technology, in 2017, approximately 88% of the entire student population were first language speakers of isiZulu while less than 2% were English speakers and the remaining 10% were speakers of other African languages spoken in South African and on the continent (MUT, 2019). The above demographics are similar to the 2011 South African census data which show that most of the population in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal speak isiZulu as a mother tongue (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Two-thirds of the population in this particular province, which translates to more than 7.9 million people (78%), have isiZulu as their first language. English is the second-largest spoken language at 13% of the provincial population (Statistics SA, 2011). Interestingly, as is common practice in education systems in Africa, the university's language policy recognises English as its main language of teaching and learning, whereas isiZulu and other official South African languages are relegated to the function of reinforcement, where possible (MUT, 2013).

The investigation targeted first year bridging students in the Department of Chemical Engineering. This particular sample was chosen for two major reasons. Firstly, the researcher observed the language challenges experienced by this particular group of students, in particular their use of English for academic purposes, through the students' academic literacy course. Secondly, research on the South African higher education context has illustrated that Engineering students take a prolonged period of time when compared to other degree students to complete their qualifications (Fisher, 2011; Pocock, 2012; Council for Higher Education, 2013). These trends are exacerbated by the disparities in educational attainment across socio-economic and racial lines and thus point to issues of inequality and social justice, affecting mostly black African students, in South African higher education (Spaull, 2015; Rarieya, Sanger & Moolman, 2014).

To respond to the study's research question, a questionnaire was used to collect data. The data were collected in the first semester of 2018, using a questionnaire that included both closed-ended and open-ended items. The intention was to achieve both coverage across the student population as well as depth in the form of written responses. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to first year Chemical Engineering pre-tech students. Of the 120 questionnaire distributed, 80 completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 67%.

The questionnaire was composed of both closed-ended Likert scale belief statements and open-ended questions that were grouped into different sections. The first section,

containing closed-ended Likert scale belief statements, had 14 different questions that sought to understand student preferences with regard to English only, isiZulu only and the English-isiZulu dual medium of instruction. The second section, which contained seven open-ended question, sought to solicit students' qualitative perceptions on multilingual education. A surveys methodology was selected for this particular study, because it enables the researcher to obtain information that is inclusive of the types and number of variables that can be studied from a large population sample of the population, which allows for making relatively easy generalizations (Creswell, 2009). In addition, information about perceptions that are otherwise difficult to measure using observational techniques can be easily collected through the use of surveys (Creswell, 2009).

The study used thematic analysis to make sense of the findings. Specifically, three major themes were examined that reflect Ruiz's (1984; 2010) framework, as discussed above, which is language as a problem, as a resource, and as a right.

Findings

In the following sections, findings from the questionnaire data are presented under the categories in Ruiz's conceptual framework—'language as a problem' and 'language as a resource'.

Language as a problem

From the responses to different belief statements on a closed-ended Likert scale, it is clear that some students did not view isiZulu as a language that could be used to enhance learning in the classroom. For instance, 55% of the students did not agree or were unsure as to whether bilingual teaching material could enhance learning. In addition, 22% disagreed with the view that isiZulu first language speakers would better understand concepts if bilingual glossaries were provided, while another 22% were unsure. When asked about whether they would prefer to study some things in isiZulu and learn how to translate their knowledge English, rather than learning everything in English, 53% were either unsure or disagreed with the statement. It is important to note that students' view of isiZulu as a problem could be a result of misconceptions associated with most indigenous African languages in South Africa and other countries in the African continent. As such, these misconceptions were clearly reflected in open ended questions of the questionnaire.

> Some students felt that using isiZulu as a language of learning was a problem in terms of disadvantaging those who were not proficient in isiZulu, such as Student 2:

1) South Africa has nine official languages and English is the most language of communication therefore using Zulu and English would disadvantage the lecturers and students who do not understand IsiZulu (Student 2).

Student 3 similarly felt that using isiZulu for teaching and learning was problematic because the university was a multilingual site which needed to accommodate speakers of different languages equally:

2) I don't think using IsiZulu is a good idea because [the university] is not ... for Zulu speakers only therefore other people should be accommodated by using English only (Student 3).

Student 16 also argued that using isiZulu "will promote biasness and discrimination against races and languages so it is better to use English only" [3].

The above assertions by students reflect a negative view about using one African language (in this case isiZulu) as a language of teaching and learning in a context where linguistic diversity is prevalent. Students are concerned that the use of isiZulu only would exclude speakers of other languages; or at the same time, ghettoise the students of the institution into an "isiZulu" institution akin to that of the apartheid times. Their fear is not entirely grounded, because as reported earlier, the majority of the students at the institution use isiZulu as a home language. The discourse of linguistic diversity in this case is important to interpret as part of the history of South Africa that included racial apartheid often defined along linguistic lines. Even in a case of the lack of typical urban South African linguistic diversity, the discourse of linguistic diversity and the divisive history of language in the apartheid time makes it impossible for the participants to see how homogenous their setting is and how easily one could implement isiZulu-English pedagogies in this context. The students therefore assume linguistic diversity at the institution which is not supported by the empirical data. In support of this, Ruiz (1984) states that in contexts where language is viewed as a problem, linguistic diversity is viewed as a threat to national unity which is achieved through the use of a single common language, which is usually English. The use of indigenous languages in high status domains, such as education, is therefore viewed as weakening the functional status of the national language through competition in high status domains.

The use of isiZulu as a medium of instruction is also viewed as disadvantageous in that it will lower educational standards and limit future socio-economic opportunities. For example, when Student 6 was asked if he thinks a bi-lingual isiZulu-English approach could improve teaching and learning, he responded by stating that:

5) It will decline the standard of teaching and learning and no one will be interested in studying at [the university] because the standard will be poor as compared to other universities who uses [sic] English as a language of teaching and learning (Student 6).

Similarly, when asked whether he wanted isiZulu to be used alongside English for teaching and learning, a participant stated that:

> 6) No. because I think if we don't want to get used to English this will become a barrier in the future. Rather the languages should be used for those at risk students who don't really understand English (Student 16).

From the above statements, it is also clear that isiZulu and other indigenous languages are viewed as lacking the capacity and capability to express academic concepts. As such, they are despised, discouraged and even feared because they are viewed wrongly as shallow, inadequate and even divisive (Ndebele & Zulu, 2017). The existence of these misconceptions is also confirmed by Kioko *et al.* (Kioko, Ndungu, Njorogo & Mutiga, 2014) who state that African languages are often viewed as an impediment to effective learning because of their presumed inability to communicate complex meanings that characterise academic discourse (Kioko et al., 2014). Such a perception has often been used as a scapegoat to avoid the promotion of these languages, on the one hand, and the perpetuation of their marginalisation, on the other hand (Bamgbose, 2011; Maseko, Nosilela, Sam, Terzoli, and Dalvit, 2010). In addition to the above, some scholars have argued that the choice of a language is also directly linked to the economic benefits associated with its use (Ndhlovu, 2008; Gumbi & Hlongwa, 2015). In most cases, the English language is associated with more economic benefits such as employment, access to resources and opportunities, and ultimately, association with the privileged.

Language as a resource

In contrast to the above discussions from students about language being a problem, the findings also illustrated that a significant number of students also demonstrated an understanding of language as a resource. For example, 57% of the students felt that their competence in isiZulu was adequate to cope with university study, when compared to 26% of the students who disagreed. On a similar note, 62% of students felt that both IsiZulu and other African languages should be developed to the point where they could be used for teaching and learning at the university, as opposed to 19% who were against this activity, and 18% who were neutral. On whether isiZulu speaking students would understand concepts better if bilingual glossaries were made available, 55% agreed, while 22% disagreed, and the other 22% were unsure. In addition, 66% indicated that they would like to study all their courses using both isiZulu and English, while 78% felt that bilingual isiZulu-English assessments would help them understand questions better as opposed to disagreements of 20% and 10% respectively.

> Students' understanding of language as a resource were also explicitly revealed in response to various open-ended questionnaire items. For example, in response to the question: 'Do you think that using both English and isiZulu as languages of learning and teaching at [the university] is possible?', Student 1 clearly saw bilingualism as a resource:

7) Yes, it is possible because the university is dominated by the Blacks so it will be easier to understand subject when both languages are used in learning and teaching (Student 1).

Student 4 felt that if isiZulu was used alongside English as a language of learning and teaching it would improve the quality of learning, "because understanding is most important so no one will have an excuse of failing to understand in their mother-tongue" (Student 4). When asked if his English was good enough to deal with university studies, Student 7 replied that his '...English is good enough for [him] to cope at [the university] but that [did] not mean that [he was] able to do everything in English.' On whether they would like isiZulu to be used alongside English for teaching at the university, student 14 responded as follows:

8) Yes, because most students in this university didn't get a privilege to go to model C schools so they don't understand better English so if most of the things are explained in Zulu it will be easy for them to also understand (Student 14).

These students' perceptions of language as a resource counter the other students' perceptions of language as a problem, as they highlight the potential benefits students feel they can experience by using African languages for teaching and learning. It is evident from the preceding excerpts that respondents acknowledged the value of using isiZulu, which is their first language, to enhance their understanding of disciplinary concepts thus aiding their disciplinary knowledge. In support of the above, scholars have argued that cognitive development and literacy are best fostered in a language familiar to the learner, and the design of the South African curriculum which is largely delivered mainly through English, effectively burdens the African student both linguistically and conceptually (Nobles, 1986; Mugane, 2006). In addition, it is argued that the home language of a learner is the only language which is best suited to achieve originality in thought and expression (Sathiaseelan, 2013). This language is particularly significant for the learner's development of a positive self-conceptualisation and well-being (Hassanzadech, Kamal and Farideh, 2011). As such, the cognitive effects of using the first language as a medium of instruction include the ability to construct schemes for learning and the availability of prior knowledge in learning new content (Bloch, 2014; Benson, 2000). Such cognitive effects may be difficult to obtain through the use of an additional language, and thus impede the student's learning process (Motala, 2013; Trudell & Piper, 2014).

Language ambivalence

The term ambivalence is commonly used in psychology to refer to the simultaneous existence of differing evaluative attitudes in relation to the same person, object or situation (Smirnova and Tolochin, 2018). Thus, ambivalence can be characterised by "... a state of mind in which the existence of those two feelings are in opposition to one another—a state of mind that would presumably make it difficult for a person to evaluate

the object" (Albertson, Brehm & Alvarez, 2005: 29). In the context of this study, language ambivalence is viewed as a form of confusion that learners experience when they are confronted with a choice between two languages. There are a few instances of language ambivalence as reflected in qualitative responses to different questions. For example, when asked about their perceptions of using English only for teaching and learning, Student 15 stated the following:

> 9) Eish, it is a bit difficult to say which language is the best to use because there are advantages and disadvantages on both sides. You know that you can [not] go [any]where without English, you need to grow and get used to using English and [English] is very important. On the other side, sometimes you need the lecturer to switch to your own language so that you can understand everything but you don't use your language to get a job.

In the above extract, the student is aware of the importance of English as a global language, but also feels that isiZulu is important for facilitating understanding of disciplinary concepts. However, the student does not commit to a particular position. Similar confusion is also evident in Student 5's assertion as they express confusion about how a bilingual approach could be both beneficial and detrimental to their learning:

> 10) [Teaching and learning] will improve in other subjects but when it comes to English it will decline because English is important [for] people of different races [to]... communicate. [T]therefore it will be difficult to use isiZulu every time because the content of the subject would be delivered [in]correctly and even those Zulu speaking students won't understand (Student 5).

What is particularly confusing to Student 5 is the idea that English could be taught through the medium of isiZulu. For Student 5, using isiZulu in this particular regard would diminish the opportunities of developing English skills. However, the student acknowledges that using both languages for teaching and learning has benefits but still expresses some form of uncertainty about the practicability of using isiZulu to teach academic concepts. In support of the above, a study on ambivalence in the process of language learning process by MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clement (2009: 17) revealed that "ambivalence of the learner's psychological experience stems from several processes running simultaneously, often without the learner's explicit awareness." What is interesting to highlight is that the student's view contradicts research illustrating that if a learner, whose mother tongue is not a high-function language, is submerged in an L2 (serving as the LOLT), such a learner is left without a basis for learning the second language well enough to attain the threshold level in it (Cummins, 1996; 2010). In this regard, Boughey (2000: 288) argues that the major challenge with the South African education system is that it has denied L1 African language students '...ways of knowing about and looking at the world that are already "academic'; neither have they fully acquired the "surface" forms of the language to express meanings'.

Conclusion

This article explored students' views about the inclusive use of isiZulu as an additional language of teaching and learning through the lens of Ruiz's (1984; 2010) language as a 'problem', as a 'resource' and as a 'right' framework. The study's findings illustrate that some students conceptualised language as a problem, while others perceived it as resources in relation to teaching and learning in a multilingual context, but none of them saw it as a right. Students' perception of language being a problem or a resource is not necessarily a new finding in the research. Yet, what is interesting is that the students tended to conflate their understanding of isiZulu in terms of it being both a problem and a resource, resulting in their ambivalence towards the language of learning. For example, in their conceptualizations of language as a problem, isiZulu was understood to be less effective in dealing with the demands of academia, an impediment to future socio-economic opportunities, an obstacle for social cohesion in a multiracial and multicultural community, and a recipe for poor standards of education. Such notions of language can stem from the hegemony and power of English globally. On the other hand, isiZulu as a resource was understood in terms of the available opportunities and benefits of the home language. The inclusive use of isiZulu for teaching and learning was viewed as a possible tool to help students understand concepts, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and an instrument to assist with cognitive development.

In applying these findings to teaching and learning, it is important to not forced students to learn in either English or isiZulu, because it is a polarizing position that could perpetuate monolingual tendencies of using English as a sole resource for teaching and learning in higher education. In addition, institutions of higher learning should consider implementing initiatives that can assist students to shift their perceptions from a 'problem' view of language to a view of language as a resource. Future studies can investigate whether the shifting of such student perceptions about language can then enhance their learning of disciplinary knowledge in their respective fields of study.

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