

CODE-SWITCHING AND TRANSLANGUAGING IN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: SUPPORTING ELT DEVELOPMENT

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: December 2024 Revised: April 2025 Published: July 2025	<i>The implementation of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 in South African schools has necessitated that teachers explore effective strategies to support learners transitioning from mother tongue instruction, particularly through formative assessment practices. It is with this background in mind that this qualitative study aimed at gaining deeper insights into teachers' use of code-switching and translanguaging strategies to support Grade 4 learners' English language development through formative assessment in three Gauteng township schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 6 English teachers and classroom observations. The accumulated data were integrated and analysed thematically according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The findings of the study indicate that teachers' application of code-switching and translanguaging in English lessons, particularly during oral questioning, feedback provision, and vocabulary explanation in formative assessment, contributed significantly to learners' comprehension and engagement in English language learning. However, challenges such as lack of formal training in multilingual assessment practices and pressure to prepare students for English-only summative assessments were also identified. The study concludes that effective formative assessment in Grade 4 English classrooms could be enhanced through the strategic use of learners' full linguistic repertoires and the integration of multilingual practices into English language teaching and assessment policies.</i>
Keywords Code-switching; Translanguaging; Formative assessment; Multilingual education; South African township schools;	
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INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study is linked to a wider analysis of South Africa's Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997, which promotes additive multilingualism in schools (Department of Education, 1997). In the context of this policy, learners from Grade R to Grade 3 are taught in their home language, while English is introduced as a subject. From Grade 4 onwards, English becomes the primary medium of instruction for most schools, while the home language remains a subject (Probyn, 2019). The transition to English medium instruction in Grade 4 presents significant challenges, particularly in township schools where learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Makalela, 2016). This linguistic shift coincides with an increase in academic language demands across subjects, creating a potential barrier to learning (Macdonald, 1990). Recent studies have highlighted the persistent achievement gap between learners in township schools and their counterparts in more affluent areas, particularly in English language proficiency (Setati et al., 2009).

There is extensive literature which highlights the potential benefits of multilingual practices in the classroom, such as code-switching and translanguaging. These practices have been shown to facilitate comprehension (Probyn, 2015), support the development of metalinguistic awareness (García & Li Wei, 2014), and promote learner engagement and

participation (Makalela, 2016). However, the application of these practices in formative assessment, particularly in the context of English language teaching in Grade 4, remains underexplored. Despite the recognition of multilingualism in South Africa's language policies, many schools still adhere to monolingual instructional practices, especially in assessment (McKinney, 2017). This paper questions the effectiveness of such approaches in linguistically diverse classrooms and explores how teachers navigate the tension between policy ideals and classroom realities. Thus, this paper seeks to examine current teachers' practices in implementing code-switching and translanguaging strategies during formative assessment in Grade 4 English classes. To provide a balanced analysis, this paper is guided by the following research question: *How do Grade 4 English teachers in Gauteng township schools use code-switching and translanguaging strategies in formative assessment to support learners' English language development?* By focusing on formative assessment practices, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on multilingual pedagogies in South African classrooms. It seeks to provide insights that could inform more inclusive and effective assessment practices, particularly in contexts where learners are transitioning to English as the medium of instruction.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the sociocultural theory of learning and the translanguaging theory, which together situate language learning and assessment in social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. These theories are particularly relevant to understanding the complexities of English language teaching and assessment in the multilingual realities of South African township schools. The sociocultural theory, rooted in Vygotsky's work (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986), posits that learning is fundamentally a social process, mediated by cultural tools and interactions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In the context of this study, English language development is perceived through the lens of social practices that are historically situated and highly dependent on shared cultural beliefs and linguistic resources (García & Wei, 2014).

The theory further embraces learners' ability to participate in social activities, as well as enhances our understanding of the differences in language development and the varying perspectives in social activities which support English language acquisition (Canale & Swain, 1980). This would further mean that English language learning based on social practices is grounded in children's ability to utilize their full linguistic repertoire and cultural experiences to learn. Thus, the theory acknowledges children's language practices acquired in their home languages out-of-school context as a basis for learning English in the classroom context. Complementing this perspective, translanguaging theory conceptualizes bilingualism not as two separate linguistic systems but as one integrated linguistic repertoire (Otheguy et al., 2015). This theory bridges and facilitates the transition stages of children's language development from their home languages to English, where a child is assumed to have the ability to draw on all their linguistic resources to develop relevant and functional English literacy.

It can further be stated that the translanguaging perspective translates children's English language development by exploring the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts in which the children have grown. In the context of this study, these theories link the social practices, cultural experiences, and linguistic resources that the children acquired in their home languages out of school context to English language acquisition and development in Grade 4. Additionally, these perspectives maintain the view of understanding language learning as a social, cultural practice to describe communication in multiple and evolving language activities (García et al., 2017). This means that English language development is related to actions and beliefs which a child creates to define him or herself in particular cultural and linguistic settings or circumstances. These circumstances further describe what resourceful individuals like teachers would offer or create in terms of language tasks or events to help children be identified as proficient English

users. Code-switching and translanguaging in formative assessment can be seen as strategies that allow teachers to tap into learners' full linguistic repertoires, providing scaffolding that supports the transition to English medium instruction while valuing and leveraging learners' existing linguistic knowledge (Makalela, 2016; Probyn, 2015).

Related Literature

Language policies in South African education: A brief historical overview

In the African context, priority has often been given to international languages in education (Bamgbose, 2011). Available research has registered mixed success attained in African countries through multilingual education policies (Heugh, 2013; Probyn, 2015). In the context of this paper, Makalela (2015) revealed that South Africa has struggled with implementing a coherent and consistent language policy in education since the end of apartheid. Probyn (2006; 2001) additionally reported that between 1997 and 2011, the use of home languages in South Africa's primary education was not fully realized, and it remained a practice primarily in rural and township schools. It is the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 which has provided room for the use of home languages in primary schools on the ground of improving the quality of education through additive multilingualism (Department of Education, 1997). Under this policy, learners from Grade R to Grade 3 are taught in their home language while English is taught as a separate subject. From Grade 4 onwards, English becomes the language of instruction and the home language remains an independent subject (Kamwangamalu, 2000; Banda, 2000).

English language acquisition and development in multilingual contexts

While language acquisition research provides evidence for the benefits of mother tongue-based multilingual education (Cummins, 2016), other studies report multiple pathways to success in learning additional languages (García & Wei, 2014). Specifically, multilingual learning contexts such as homes and communities were identified to support children's English language acquisition and development (Makalela, 2016; McKinney, 2023). This means that learners' existing linguistic resources are vital in supporting their acquisition of English. Such an understanding, however, is subject to individual learners' differences and contextual factors such as the home and community setting (Baker et al., 2020). On the contrary, overlapping orders of language acquisition and development stem from linguistic orientations that begin early in the life of a child, especially in multilingual contexts (Ball, 2010). Other related findings highlight a strong positive effect on children's English language development based on time spent at school, but with limited classroom-based pedagogical analysis of the effect of multilingual practices across the four cardinal language skills (Spaull, 2016; Malindi et al., 2023).

Such observations suggest that children's English language acquisition may be negatively affected by many factors such as limited exposure to the language outside the classroom (Probyn, 2005). Therefore, educators need to make a conscious effort to plan and engage learners in activities and experiences that capture and optimize conditions for them to acquire English language practices (Phajane, 2021). This seems to further compel teachers to identify and implement teaching strategies based on social interactions, supported by a wide range of engaging reading, writing, and learning activities that will lead to the development of children's English proficiency. It is against this background that this article attempts to examine the teachers' pedagogical practices, specifically code-switching and translanguaging, to support learners' functional English language development in a contextualized in-depth analysis of learners' achievements backed by the lived experiences of the concerned stakeholders.

Teachers' pedagogical practices for English language development in multilingual classrooms

Teachers' pedagogical practices for English language development in multilingual classrooms Literature relating to teachers' pedagogical practices for English language

development draws attention to high-quality language instruction as well as children's multilingual support for thinking and understanding rather than narrow decontextualized skills (Probyn, 2015). As such, research engagements with authentic language experiences provide a new perspective for examining critical ways through which English language development can originate easily from multilingual practices. Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within the same conversation, has been identified as a common and potentially beneficial practice in multilingual classrooms (Setati et al., 2002). Research by Probyn (2009) in South African science classrooms found that teachers used code-switching as a pedagogical strategy to mediate complex concepts, engage learners, and create a more inclusive learning environment. Similarly, Cahyani et al. (2018) observed that code-switching in multilingual classrooms served multiple functions, including clarification of content, classroom management, and building rapport with learners.

While García and Wei's (2014) new rationale for developing language tasks emphasizes translanguaging, authentic language learning based on the translanguaging pedagogical model blends learners' full linguistic repertoire with approaches to reading and writing in English (Makalela, 2015). The model emphasizes specific attention to learner expression and interaction in the classroom (McKinney, 2017). It is through carefully selected stages of translanguaging pedagogy such as preview-view-review, translation, and multilingual glossaries that provision of authentic and significant opportunities for English language development is achieved. Thus, the translanguaging model seems to serve the diverse needs of learners and facilitates writing about the reading process in English while drawing on home language resources (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Code-switching, as a more specific practice within the broader framework of translanguaging, has been found to play a crucial role in formative assessment. Msimanga and Lelliott (2014) found that allowing learners to code-switch during assessment activities in science classrooms enabled them to demonstrate their conceptual understanding more effectively, even when their English proficiency was limited. This suggests that code-switching in formative assessment could provide a more accurate picture of learners' knowledge and skills. Other research findings applaud the use of code-switching strategies which help children complete tasks more effectively in English (Probyn, 2009). Code-switching affords learners the opportunity to assimilate new English textual information with their existing linguistic knowledge and prior experiences to expand their schema (Setati et al., 2002). By accessing English texts through code-switching, learners are supported to become authentic readers hence, building their analytical thoughts and actual practice in the target language (Lewis et al., 2012).

Similarly, Makalela (2016) acknowledges the use of multilingual practices, including code-switching, in formative assessment as a basis for English language development. Through his study on translanguaging practices in complex multilingual classrooms, Makalela (2016) states that there is little doubt about the value of well-planned, engaging multilingual assessment practices as one of the key avenues for supporting young children's English language development. In other words, learners' increased accessibility to English through their full linguistic repertoire, including code-switching, motivates them to engage with the language, and any additional classroom engagement extends the debate towards advanced English language development (Guzula et al., 2016). Lastly, research points out classroom environments as providing the greatest capacity for quality educational experiences and interactions to support and strengthen English language development in multilingual contexts (Hattingh et al., 2021). When teachers create a conducive and engaging atmosphere for learning that values learners' full linguistic repertoires, including the use of code-switching, even low socioeconomic schools with struggling learners increase the chances of their learners to acquire and develop English language practices (Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele, 2022).

This could mean that the communication skills and ability to understand language across multiple linguistic systems, facilitated by practices like code-switching, has both a direct and indirect effect on that child's transition to English proficiency. The implication of this study to the teacher in a classroom setting is that it is important to provide optimal classroom conditions for the development of multilingual expression, including code-switching, ultimately affecting English language development (Tyler, 2023). Ideally, this forms the basis for examining the teachers' pedagogical practices, specifically code-switching and translanguaging in formative assessment, and how their interactions and patterns create rich multilingual environments to increase learners' English language achievements.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach adopted for the purposes of this study was qualitative in nature since it explored meaning which individuals make of their lives and experiences in a natural setting (Creswell, 2018). The qualitative approach was suitable for a study of this nature, since the focus was on the thoughts, feelings and actions of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, since our focus was on exploring the use of code-switching and translanguaging in English formative assessment for the development of learners' English language proficiency, we opted for a phenomenological design, which enabled us to understand human experience more holistically. Participants in this study were selected on the basis of their understanding of multilingual practices in English language teaching and how these enhance language development.

The population for the purposes of this study comprised Grade 4 English teachers from three township schools in Gauteng where multilingual practices were being implemented. From the population of teachers in Gauteng, research was conducted at the Soweto and Tembisa townships because this region included both urban and semi-urban schools and multilingual practices were being implemented at these schools. Schools A and B are government schools in Soweto with fairly good infrastructure and teaching resources, while school C is a government school in Tembisa. While schools A and B had quite reasonable infrastructure with adequate resources, school C was inadequately resourced with limited English language learning materials.

The data collection process involved conducting individual interviews with teachers on the strategies that they used to implement code-switching and translanguaging in English formative assessment for the development of learners' English language proficiency, and classroom observation based on participant observation. Interviews were conducted with 2 teachers from each of the 3 schools (6 interviews in total- Interviewees (I): 1-6), and 2 English language lessons per teacher were observed (total of 12 lessons).

The accumulated data were analysed thematically by applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) data analysis procedures. The process involved firstly familiarizing ourselves with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The process involved the clustering of textual meanings into themes and describing, classifying and interpreting data from emerging patterns into codes and themes. The next step involved a comparison of multiple data sources to validate the themes. In this study, themes derived from participants' experiences collected through data generation strategies such as individual interviews and participant observation were compared. This was done to verify accuracy and to provide a clear representation across the data sources.

For the purposes of reporting the findings emerging from the study, an integrated approach to data analysis was adopted in that, data sets were integrated into discussions relating to specific themes identified while following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. For the purposes of ethics, permission to conduct the research was sought from the Gauteng Department of Education and the University's Ethics Committee. Pseudonyms were used for all the participants and schools to ensure confidentiality.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the next section, the researcher presents and discusses the findings of the study. The research findings depict a variety of formative assessment practices employed by teachers in the use of code-switching and translanguaging in Grade 4 English classrooms to support English language development. In specific terms, the key pedagogical practices which support learners' functional and relevant English language development, highlighted in this study, are synthesized below.

Multilingual Vocabulary Building

Respondents regard the use of learners' home languages alongside English to have the power to enhance vocabulary acquisition, and being able to connect new English words with familiar concepts in their home languages enhances learners' understanding. Thus, teachers view code-switching during vocabulary instruction as a powerful method which enhances learners' English language proficiency in the classroom. Teachers expressed these views as follows:

"Through allowing learners to explain new English words in their home languages, they are more motivated to learn and remember the vocabulary." (I-T5)

"I've noticed that when I let them discuss new words in their mother tongue first, they grasp the English meanings much faster." (I-T1)

"It's like building a bridge between what they know and what they're learning in English." (I-T3)

"When I use this method, I see a significant improvement in their retention of new English words. They're making connections that stick." (I-T2)

"Sometimes, learners come up with amazing analogies in their home languages that help the whole class understand a new English word." (I-T4)

Collaborative Reading and Comprehension

The study's findings revealed the effectiveness of allowing code-switching during reading comprehension activities and how learners gradually learn to express their understanding of English texts more confidently when they can use their full linguistic repertoire. Teachers described their views as follows:

"They learn to express their understanding of English texts more fully when they can use their home language to fill in gaps in their English vocabulary." (I-T2)

"It's a way of checking their comprehension more accurately; through allowing them to explain in their home language, these kids have shown deeper understanding of texts than when restricted to English only." (I-T4)

"Sometimes, a learner will give a brilliant analysis of the text in their home language, which they couldn't have done in English yet. It shows me what they're capable of understanding." (I-T6)

"I've found that allowing code-switching during reading discussions actually improves their English reading skills over time. They're more willing to tackle difficult texts." (I-T1)

"When learners can use their full linguistic repertoire, the depth of their text analysis amazes me. It's not just about understanding the words, but really engaging with the ideas." (I-T3)

Translanguaging in Formative Writing Tasks

Teachers described the collaborative enhancement of English writing skills through a translanguaging approach. This is achieved through multiple stages: brainstorming ideas in home languages, drafting in a mixture of languages, peer review using all linguistic resources, and final composition in English. Teachers' extensive responses are provided below:

"This method is learner-centered because it involves the learner's full linguistic repertoire at all steps of the writing process." (I-T1)

"I've seen remarkable improvement in their English compositions since allowing them to brainstorm in their home languages first." (I-T3)

"It's fascinating to see how they translate their ideas from their mother tongue into English. It often leads to more vivid and authentic writing." (I-T5)

"By allowing translanguaging in the drafting process, I've noticed that learners are more willing to take risks with complex ideas in their English writing." (I-T2)

"This approach helps learners who struggle with English to still demonstrate their creativity and critical thinking skills." (I-T6)

Code-switching in Oral Assessments

Respondents state that allowing code-switching during oral assessments involves a flexible approach that teaches learners to express themselves in English with more confidence, while at the same time developing strategies for navigating between languages. Teachers shared their experiences of this method as follows:

"We allow learners to use their home language briefly if they're struggling to express a complex idea in English. This keeps the conversation flowing and allows us to assess their understanding more accurately." (I-T3)

"It's not about perfect English, it's about communicating ideas. If they need to switch to their home language to fully express a thought, I encourage it." (I-T2)

"I've noticed that allowing this flexibility actually motivates them to try harder in English, because they're not afraid of getting stuck." (I-T6)

"This approach has dramatically increased participation in oral assessments. Learners who used to be silent are now eager to share their ideas." (I-T4)

"By allowing code-switching, I can assess not just their English skills, but their overall cognitive and academic development." (I-T5)

Scaffolding through Home Language Use

Respondents acknowledged the teachers' efforts to guide and support learners' English language development by building on what they are able to do in their home languages. Teachers believe that by providing cognitive support through language analysis and the completion of cognitively demanding tasks in multiple languages, learners will gradually be able to work at cognitively higher levels in English. Teacher expressed the following views :

"Like in teaching English grammar, it helps in evaluating whether the child needs special guidance and support or not." (I-T6)

"I often explain English grammar rules by comparing them to similar structures in their home languages. It's like turning on a light bulb for many of them." (I-T4)

"Using their home language as a scaffold doesn't hinder English learning, it accelerates it. They're not starting from scratch, they're building on what they know." (I-T1)

"When I allow learners to process complex instructions in their home language first, their ability to complete tasks in English improves dramatically." (I-T2)

"Scaffolding through home language use helps me identify where the real learning gaps are, versus what might just be language barriers." (I-T5)

Multilingual Group Discussions

Through conversational interactions, teachers engage learners in meaningful activities which require them to negotiate meaning while using quite a number of conversational

modifications in their mother tongue language. Through repetition, clarification and confirmation checks, learners use the available supportive structures to understand better. Thus, engaging and supporting learners' expressions in their mother tongue interactively, is regarded as the most effective way of building their literacy-based experiences. They expressed these views as follows:

"Our discussions are often multilingual. I create moments for learners to discuss a topic in their home languages before presenting their ideas in English." (I-T2)

"The energy in the room changes when I say they can use all their languages. Suddenly, everyone has something to say." (I-T5)

"These discussions are gold mines for assessing their understanding. I circulate and listen, and I get a much fuller picture of what they know." (I-T3)

"Allowing multilingual discussions has dramatically increased participation from learners who used to be silent in English-only discussions." (I-T1)

"I've noticed that learners often act as language brokers for each other during these discussions, which deepens both their conceptual and language learning." (I-T6)

Translanguaging in Project-Based Assessments

Teachers acknowledged learners' use of translanguaging in project-based assessments as a basis of English language development where learners access and present information using their full linguistic repertoire. Through these projects, teachers apply group work – verbal interactions in small mixed or ability groups, share tasks and resources monitored by the teacher. This is done as follows as described by the teachers:

"Such innovative ideas provide opportunity for learners to generate creative ideas in their home languages, analyze their effectiveness, and then communicate them effectively in English." (I-T4)

"Project work really showcases the benefits of translanguaging. The depth of research they can do when using all their language resources is impressive." (I-T1)

"I've seen learners interview family members in their home languages, then create amazing English presentations from that rich information." (I-T6)

"Allowing translanguaging in projects helps learners to bring their whole selves into the classroom. Their work becomes more authentic and meaningful." (I-T3)

"This approach allows me to assess not just their English skills, but their overall cognitive abilities and subject knowledge." (I-T5)

Cross-Linguistic Comparisons in Grammar Instruction

The study's findings revealed the effectiveness of using cross-linguistic comparisons in grammar instruction. Teachers found that drawing parallels between English grammar and the grammatical structures of learners' home languages enhanced understanding and retention of English grammatical concepts. This approach not only facilitated the learning of English grammar but also developed learners' metalinguistic awareness, helping them to see languages as systems with both similarities and differences. The practice of comparing linguistic structures across languages proved particularly beneficial in teaching complex grammatical concepts such as tenses, word order, and comparative forms. Teachers shared :

"Comparing English grammar to the grammar of their home languages often leads to 'aha!' moments for the learners." (I-T3)

"I encourage learners to think about how they would express an English sentence in their home language. It helps them understand the underlying structures." (I-T2)

"Cross-linguistic comparisons have been particularly helpful in teaching concepts like tenses and word order in English." (I-T5)

"This approach helps learners see languages as systems, which I think develops their metalinguistic awareness." (I-T1)

"By validating their knowledge of home language grammar, learners become more confident in tackling English grammar." (I-T6)

this method, when learners go to the garden, through guiding questions, they learn to acquire the listening skill. They also choose from a variety of things that they get exposed to from the garden, from which they get questions to ask the teacher" (I-T6)

Multilingual Word Walls and Visual Aids

Respondents emphasized the value of multilingual word walls and visual aids in supporting English language development. These tools were seen as living resources that continuously evolved with learner input and served multiple purposes in the classroom. Teachers reported that multilingual displays not only aided in vocabulary retention and concept understanding but also created a more inclusive learning environment that validated all languages present in the classroom. The use of these multilingual resources extended beyond teacher-led instruction, with learners often spontaneously referring to them during independent and group work.

Teachers expressed:

"Our multilingual word wall is a living resource. Learners constantly refer to it and add to it." (I-T4)

"Visual aids with labels in multiple languages have been incredibly helpful, especially for abstract concepts." (I-T2)

"Allowing learners to create bilingual flashcards has boosted their vocabulary retention significantly." (I-T6)

"The multilingual displays in our classroom validate all languages and create a more inclusive environment." (I-T1)

"I've noticed learners spontaneously using the multilingual resources to help each other during pair and group work." (I-T5)

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Discussion

The implementation of multilingual practices in English language teaching for Grade 4 learners in Gauteng township schools entailed teachers embracing pedagogical strategies that would lead to enhanced learning. Hence, the study proposed to explore the strategies that teachers were implementing in their classes and how these strategies facilitated English language development. The findings of the study indicate that teachers are embracing learner-

centered pedagogical practices that facilitate English language instruction through code-switching and translanguaging in Grade 4 classes.

The findings emerging from the study concur with sociocultural and translanguaging theories and available research findings in second language acquisition which acknowledge the significant role of multilingual-oriented pedagogy to enhance classroom practices and support for learners' English language development. In addition to a variety of instructional practices which this study revealed, child-friendly and positive atmospheres enhanced learners' self-esteem and motivation to engage and interact in classroom activities. Thus, it can be concluded that when learners are allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire, they are able to develop functional and relevant English language practices. Specifically, the key pedagogical practices which support learners' functional and relevant English language development are discussed below.

Respondents in this study agree that multilingual vocabulary building provides practical activities for the implementation of English language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking. Classroom observations revealed further that allowing learners to discuss new English words in their home languages is an effective approach for enhancing vocabulary retention and understanding. Specifically, García and Wei (2014) relate learning of this nature to translanguaging, an avenue for enhancing children's language for thinking and understanding, while Probyn (2009) contends that multilingual discussions could be associated with advanced language development and improved comprehension. Since vocabulary is explored through languages familiar to learners, its value in the classroom fosters creativity and transforms classrooms into positive child-friendly learning environments where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Thus, by enhancing English instruction through multilingual vocabulary building, learners in their early stages of English language development are stimulated to practice new vocabulary, word recognition, and conceptual understanding (Burner & Carlsen, 2022).

Correspondingly, respondents generally believed that the effectiveness of collaborative reading and comprehension in developing learners' English proficiency relied upon their ability to create fun-filled, memorable learning situations, raising learners' interest in engaging with English texts while allowing them to process information in their home languages. The study's findings link this practice to children's English language development, since it creates a window of imagination, fantasy, and reality of the world to children as they connect and engage in their understanding of English texts. This entails that children are stimulated to learn if they are actively engaged in reading and discussing English texts while being allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire. Correspondingly, Makalela (2015) argues that affording learners an opportunity to engage with English texts through translanguaging supports their reading engagement and interest. The rationale for this is to develop English proficiency by tasking children to engage deeply with texts instead of passively receiving information. Thus, it is through their continuous active participation and enthusiasm to learn through multilingual engagement that their English language skills are enhanced (Guzula et al., 2016).

Unlike traditional monolingual approaches, the study's findings revealed that translanguaging in formative writing tasks tackles English language development through a gradual, systematic, and authentic process. Through this multilingual approach, which has been widely recognized as a successful strategy for moving classroom instruction from teacher- to learner-centered collaboration and independent practice (McKinney, 2017), learners are taught to leverage their full linguistic repertoire in the writing process. The key stages with this approach include initial brainstorming in home languages, collaborative drafting using multiple languages, and final composition in English. Throughout these stages, learners were able to learn by doing, correct mistakes, discover new knowledge built on previous linguistic knowledge, and productively work through tasks for meaningful English language acquisition.

Thus, the strategy afforded learners opportunities to internalize knowledge through listening, speaking, reading, and writing in multiple languages, which are the main skills for language development. It further paved the way for both home language and English language development through collaborative efforts in the classroom and teacher-guided classroom interactions (Lewis et al., 2012).

Another teaching strategy, which the study's findings revealed teachers engaged with, was code-switching in oral assessments. Respondents revealed that they used this teaching pedagogy to make the assessment process more accessible to learners. As such, teachers used a flexible approach that allowed learners to switch between English and their home languages when expressing complex ideas. To enhance the collaborative process, in some classes, I observed learners participating more confidently in oral assessments, providing more nuanced responses when allowed to code-switch. Such an evidence-based interactive assessment process seems to have increased learners' confidence and ability to demonstrate their true understanding of content. Setati et al. (2002) affirm that allowing code-switching in assessment provides a more accurate picture of learners' knowledge and cognitive abilities. This further means that by utilizing code-switching in oral assessments, learners are supported to become more proficient English speakers, building their confidence and actual language practice (Schissel et al., 2021).

Teachers also used scaffolding through home language use to enhance learners' English language skills, which could be transferred across other new learning contexts. In this particular study, teachers used scaffolding as a strategy to assist learners to become independent English users after gaining skills in how to complete tasks successfully under the guidance of the teacher initially. Probyn (2015) conclusively argues for teachers to translate their instruction strategies by providing authentic and supportive spaces for practice through well-planned classroom demonstrations that leverage learners' home languages. This is done through a favorable working space where the role of the teacher in the classroom is to facilitate learning and not be an active participant. Teachers furthermore reported that scaffolding appealed to learning activities which involved reading and writing through literature and new texts written in English, with support from home languages. Consequently, scaffolding provided in-built lesson support details that clarified each step of the instructional sequence adopted by the teacher to model and practice with learners and to simultaneously promote independent English language development (Charamba, 2019).

Through critical engagement and observation of different lessons, I synthesized the role of multilingual group discussions for English language development as engaging and supporting learners to express their views using their full linguistic repertoire. The findings linked these multilingual activities between the teacher and the learners during reading and speaking activities to overall English language achievement within authentic contexts. Research findings on second language acquisition categorize the effectiveness of teachers' multilingual interaction with learners in the classroom and its effects on language acquisition (García & Kleyn, 2016). In particular, collaborative construction of meaning between the teacher and learners using multiple languages created space for the negotiation of mutual understanding of complex concepts, words, phrases, and sentences in English. Teachers provided structured oral corrective feedback which enabled learners to identify their errors and to pay attention to certain English language rules and forms. Thus, through child-friendly multilingual interactions, learners were exposed to English in a supportive environment, which enabled them to become aware of the rules of the language. Additionally, teachers enabled learners to express their opinions freely and spontaneously with a view to stimulating their intellectual and emotional development in English (Bernstein et al., 2023).

The last two strategies which this study identified as having the potential to integrate English language practice are cross-linguistic comparisons in grammar instruction and the use

of multilingual word walls and visual aids. Teachers argued that these strategies extended support to learners to understand English grammar structures by relating them to familiar structures in their home languages, and to reinforce vocabulary through multilingual visual supports. Research by Cummins (2008) concludes that cross-linguistic comparisons afford learners opportunities to become involved in metalinguistic analysis which makes learning more meaningful and memorable. Similarly, Makalela (2016) argues for the role of multilingual visual aids in providing concrete experiences which can develop further language practices, gaining new vocabulary and problem-solving skills. Teachers acknowledged the significance of these multilingual supports, as they created possibilities for engaging with English and ideas as learners became more experienced users of the language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Some limitations of the study included potential areas of bias and subjectivity based on the research design which will be explicated further. The study only explored the use of code-switching and translanguaging in English formative assessment in selected Gauteng township schools. Since the study was phenomenological, a sample of 3 primary schools from Gauteng was selected. The focus of the study was on English language development for learners in Grade 4 where the transition to English as the medium of instruction occurs. No attempt was made to generalize the findings to other primary schools in South Africa. Since participants were purposefully rather than randomly selected, there was the possibility that they could not reflect the views of the entire population. Thus, the scope of this study was limited by adequate resources, time, the nature of the research design (phenomenological study) and the implementation of multilingual practices in English language teaching in Gauteng township schools.

The implications of the findings are that firstly, since English language development in multilingual contexts focuses on learners' ability to utilize their full linguistic and cultural experiences to learn (García & Wei, 2014), by incorporating activities which promote active interaction and classroom engagement using multiple languages, they are provided with additional sources through which they can fully develop their English proficiency. Secondly, since Grade 4 classroom engagements are based on previously acquired linguistic experiences, by acknowledging what learners achieved previously in their home languages implies that children are capacitated to acquire English more effectively. Thirdly, since academic achievement and English language development was presented as activity-based learning through multilingual engagements in a classroom setting which appeal to both mental and physical senses, this implies that learners' English proficiency and expressional abilities are improved through multilingual, activity-based classroom engagements. Lastly, linguistically-rich environments, which this study endorsed, provided significant insights into what transpires in the multilingual English classroom which formed a basis for interaction with varied print and visual materials in multiple languages. This implies that since a linguistically rich learning environment goes beyond early English language achievements to facilitate content-specific learning, children need, among others, interesting books and material in both English and their home languages, a fully functioning classroom library, bulletin boards, display books, writing corners, audio and visual materials in multiple languages, among others, to fully develop their English language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate a coherent picture which acknowledges the teachers' pedagogical practices in formative assessment to support learners' functional and relevant English language development through code-switching and translanguaging as a matter of interest and concern. Drawing on the principles of sociocultural theory and translanguaging theory, which underpin the pedagogical praxis in multilingual English language development, children are engaged in formative assessment activities that leverage their full linguistic

repertoire to learn and demonstrate understanding. In the same line of analysis, teachers' formative assessment practices seem to depict active involvement and engagement of children in functional learning through the strategic use of both English and their home languages based on learners' existing linguistic knowledge and experiences. In addition, multilingual, interactive, and engaging formative assessment strategies were discovered by this study to be vital and the means through which teachers encouraged children to develop English proficiency while providing more accurate evaluations of their progress and needs.

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