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# Translanguaging: Perceptions of Stdudents, Teachers and School Manager Where Portuguese and Xichangana Are Spoken

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***Abstract:*** ***This research aims to pave the way for using translanguaging as communicative and pedagogical strategy where Portuguese and Xichangana are spoken. In order to achieve this aim, we have posed this question, as follow: how can the use of translanguaging in context where Portuguese and Xichangana are spoken impact the teaching and learning of English?***
***This is a qualitative research based on non-structured interviews and classroom observations, analysing data collected at Xikanyanini Secondary School, which involved 3 teachers, one school manager and 36 students.***
***The results show that the use of translanguaging makes learning and teaching process of English dynamic, flexible, participative and interactive.***
***Keywords: Translanguaging, perceptions, teaching and learning of English, Portuguese and Xichangana, CLT.***

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although [26] encourages teachers to use communicative language teaching (CLT), studies in the teaching field of English in Mozambique point out that the use of this strategy is detrimental to the learning of bi/multilingual students ([5], [29]). The students who conclude grade 12 in public secondary school lack communicative competence, since they cannot read, write, speak and not even listen to a conversation if taken solely in English language. “Reference [29] goes further to say that there is no a single student which complete grade 12 with communicative competence in those schools.”
Contrary to Ussene, [27] considered that about 7 students have the desired competence after finishing the same level. What's more, it is reported that CLT fail to activate bi/multilingual students’ metalinguistic awareness, as well as the students learning strategies. Therefore, there’s no communication between teacher and students even after doing grade 12, because the students cannot understand the teacher when he/she speaks only in English [5], [29].
Trying to look for solution for this problem, we have asked the following question: to what extent the use of translanguaging, as a communicative-pedagogical strategy, can ameliorate learning opportunities of English in secondary schools? While the main goal of this research is to investigate the impact of using translanguaging in the teaching and learning process of English in contexts where Xichangana and Portuguese are spoken; the specific purpose is to describe the perceptions of students, teachers and school manager regarding to the use of translanguaging in English classes.

## II. TRANSLANGUAGING

Translanguaging is a term, first used as a Welsh word ‘*trawsieithu*’, in schools in Wales in the 1980s, by Cen Williams (1994), as quoted by [24]. The emergence of pedagogical translanguaging was fuelled by the decline in the belief that being bilingual caused mental confusion, triggered by the studies which equated monolinguals with bilinguals in term of intelligence, and the publication of Pearl & Lambert (1962) research results, which showed some cognitive advantages of bilinguals over monolinguals [2].
In fact, bilingualism had many different misinterpretations. One of them was that bilingualism represented the loss of languages (subtractive). It was also believed that being bilingual would delay language acquisition, mix languages, and have negative effects on children development [21]. Parents started to accept that their children would be educated in two languages (English and Welsh), due to general understanding that being bilingual brought mutual advantages for both languages [24].
According to [3], “translanguaging is a process of making meaning, shaping experiences, acquiring understandings and knowledge through the use of two languages.” Likewise, [18] define translanguaging as the “dynamic and functional use of two or more languages to organize and mediate mental process to understand, to speak, to studying and mainly to learn a language”.

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That is, the use of whole linguistic repertoire from learners to gain communicative competence or proficiency in a language, as the whole student's multilingual resources are activated. During this process, two or more languages help each other in a reciprocal way in order to learn another language, not as two monolinguals in one person, but as a whole [20]. "Reference [6] considers translanguaging as to move from one language to another, treating languages as an integrated system that coexists in the bilingual mind." That's to mean, navigating in two or more integrated languages which helps a student to learn a language.

## III. MONOLINGUAL VS MULTILINGUAL PRINCIPLES

Monolingual Principles advocate the banning of using L1 in bi/multilingual English classes, as it is thought to be harmful for students and for teaching and learning process, as well.

These principles support the maximum use of Second Language (L2) so that the First Language (L1) cannot interfere in the L2 learning [11], since every single moment without exposure to English counts.

With regard to the target language exposure, Dickson (1992), as cited by [9] referred that it is not the exposure span which counts, but the quality of input in which the students are which enable learning. This view is also shared by Guthrie (1994), in [9] which denote that there's no evidences which support that the exclusive use of L2 result in the target language learning. Furthermore, monolingual theorists would like to know *how much* of the L1 is useful for learning. Despite the fact that it is not "one-size-fits-all" [13], due to the fact that individual issues must be taken into consideration, and the context in which the learning process takes place as well, "most studies require a minimum of 25-30% exposure to each language" for a child to be considered bilingual [21].

According to this perspective, languages should be kept separate to avoid L1 interference in the target language. As a result, the L1 is always viewed as hindrance in the learning and teaching process, as referred by [14], "L1 use has been viewed mainly as a source of interference and even a hindrance to second language acquisition". Although the ban of L1 use in L2 classrooms, it "creeps back in, no matter how many times you throw it out with a pitchfork" [11], since where bi/multilingual students are, there are their languages as well, and they are put to use [13].

In addition, monolingual theories defend that students should learn to think in target language and find the meaning of words in context, but never by means of students' L1 [4].

Although it is a primary goal when learning a language, even when the L2 is in action, the L1 is also activated and it can play a role in L2 language learning, mainly when the tasks are complex ones. Relying on this view, [7] argue that the multiple language repertoires that students bring to the classroom play an important role in learning and it can help the students achieve language proficiency in the target language.

The monolingual approaches are today challenged by authors who propose multilingual approaches to teaching and learning processes. As a matter of fact, heteroglossic approaches approve the use of students' L1 in L2 classrooms. Although this approval, the use of L1 is differentiated, hence there's minimum and maximum use.

In minimum use, there's an acceptance of using L1, but students and teachers are recommended to avoid the L1 usage. The fear is overdose of L1 and too much reliance on students' languages in detriment to L2, hence it is thought that L1 can come outside of control to the point to harm the target language. As a result, the L1 usage is not encouraged in the L2 learning [11], [28].

Contrary to minimal use of L1, the maximum use takes all students home languages as important to teaching and learning process, and they are viewed as one linguistic repertoire which help learner achieve communicative goals [19]. Looking the languages in this spectrum, there's cross-linguistic transfer between hybrid languages (L1 and L2), and so they function to assist the students during L2 learning [15], [2]. In this view, the L1 is taken as scaffolding to teaching and learning process which can support learner when trying to convey information in target language [10], and it can boost the sense of identity and pride for their languages, as those languages will be used in new domains.

The students' linguistics repertoire makes learning be flexible, dynamic and allow the students' participation by opening multiple spaces of participation through translanguaging [12]. It is in this perspective that [22] denotes that bi/multilingual students maximized their learning when teachers allow the students to use all their language skills in two or more languages. More to the point, [12] claim that both L1 and L2 are simultaneously necessary to transmit information and negotiate meanings in the classroom. Therefore, teachers must use two or more languages from the students' repertoire to involve them in the class tasks.

This makes teaching and learning dynamic and flexible, as students not only can participate and interact without fear, but can also convey their ideas or opinions without interruptions or pauses resulting from lexical search or lack in the target language. That is why [30], calls translanguaging "linguistics of participation", because teachers and students can co-participate in the knowledge production.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research is based on ethnographic technique, namely, non-structured interviews and classroom observations. It analyses data collected, in a rural area, at Xikanyanini Secondary School, in Ressano Garcia. The students were doing grade 12 and the data were collected in two trimesters (first and second), from 25 May to 09 July 2021. It involved 3 teachers, 1 school manager and 36 students, all of them Xichangana and Portuguese speakers. As for data analysis, we relied on Content Analysis as a model. Xikanyanini Secondary School is a pseudonym. We did this for ethical reasons.

In qualitative research, one can explore people's point of views, their experiences as well as their feelings [16], through ethnographic techniques. Ethnographic techniques were developed to study culture and society in the area of Anthropology [17]. In the education realm, ethnographic researchers carry out studies focusing on schools, different teaching practices, pedagogical organization, teacher-student interaction, among other things [1].

Being teachers in Ressano Garcia, at Xikanyanini Secondary School, we chose this school to carry out our investigation. Apart from that, in their speech, people from Ressano Garcia have translanguaging in English language, as a result of frequent contacts with South Africa. Grade 12 was chosen because it is the last class in secondary school where is possible to observe whether students have achieved good command of English with the use of CLT or not, as prescribed by [26].

We selected two teachers of grade 12 who have as principle using and allowing the students to use translanguaging in their lessons, and one teacher who does not use this principle and forbid the students to utilize their linguistic repertoires, for comparison. Accordingly, we had information of what was going on when teachers and students used translanguaging, as well as when this pedagogical strategy was not put into action.

There were interviewed 36 students divided in focal points (FP) of 6 students each group. These groups were numbered following the order in which they were interviewed. The interviews were all carried out in Portuguese language and interviewees chose the following pseudonyms: Marta, Maria and Polyglot for teachers and Marven Descartes for the school manager.

## V. STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL MANAGER PERCEPTIONS

### *A. Better Students' Participation and Understanding with the Use of All Linguistic Repertoires*

The teachers, students and school manager reported that participation and interaction increased when teachers and students used Translanguaging. This was because all the students could grasp the meaning of what was being transmitted by the teachers, as shown in the following extracts:

"We use English and Portuguese because there are cases that the teacher starts to explain and she can ask us a certain question and we don't answer because we don't understand, but if she asks that question again in Portuguese or in Xichangana, we already have the answer" (students of FP1, 05/25/2021).

"(…) using Portuguese and Xichangana we managed to bring all students participation, they can express themselves in these languages" (teacher Marta, 05/25/2021).

"The student understands better what the teacher is teaching and assimilates better the English language when teachers use and let the student use Portuguese and Xichangana" (manager Marvin Descartes, 06/30/2021).

"I noticed that children participate more (…) when you translate into Portuguese (…) the majority of students engage more when the lesson is in Portuguese or when I use it" (teacher Maria, 05/25/2021).

Students can all understand the message transmitted by the teacher and they can participate and interact with the use of Portuguese and Xichangana. It shows how comprehension is cornerstone for the students learning. This does not happen with the solely use of target language, as the message is not effectively transmitted. Thus, the students need Portuguese and Xichangana to help them learn the English language. In this case, Portuguese and Xichangana play a role as a resource, which is there to scaffolding the students [10]. As shown by [12], both language is reciprocally necessary to convey information and negotiate meanings in the classroom. Hence, teachers should use and let the students use two or more languages from the students' linguistic repertoires in order to involve them in the classroom activities. This makes teaching and learning dynamic and flexible, since students not only can participate and interact without panic, but they can also express their ideas or opinions without interruptions or pauses in the target language. This occurs due to the fact that students are able to transfer knowledge stored in L1 into L2 [15].

### *B. Students Feel Comfortable and Motivated with the Use of Translanguaging*

Teachers and students assumed that, when they used translanguaging students felt more comfortable and motivated than when they used exclusively English language, as presented in these extracts as follows:

"Students feel more comfortable (…) and they are always motivated" (teacher Marta, 05/25/2021).

"We can speak without fear of making mistakes" (students of FP4, 05/25/2021).
"We feel comfortable when we speak in Portuguese or Xichangana and we are not afraid to make mistakes" (students of FP5, 07/01/2021).
Students feel relaxed and interested in the lessons when translanguaging is put to use as there is absence of affective filter [23]. That's to mean that, students are not nervous and they are eager to participate in the lessons. They are free to speak and interact and do not care about mistakes because they can appeal to their languages when needed. It is this way that [22] defend that bi/multilingual students maximize their learning when teachers let them use the languages that they bring from home. Corroborating this idea, [2] indicate that, when students use pragmatically two or more languages, they maximize their understanding, they linguistic performance and their academic gains.

*C. Less Student Participation and Interaction with the Exclusive Use of English*

Teachers and students said that, when they used exclusively English language a smaller number of students took part in the lessons, as revealed in these excerpts:
"When we use English solely, we only, yeah …! have few students participating" (teacher Marta, 05/25/2021).
"When the teacher asks a question in English, we do not respond, or few students answer" (students of FP4, 05/25/2021).
"I used to use exclusively English, but less students participated" (teacher Maria, 05/25/2021).
"It is difficult for us to reply in English (…) a small number react" (students of FP6, 07/01/2021).
"When I go and watch the teachers' lessons, I see few students participating - mainly the smart students - when they are asked to speak only in English" (manager Marven Descartes, 06/30/2021).
"(...) students may feel in their comfort zone. It brings laziness because they know that we cannot make any effort (…) the students will not practice English. They have already said what they wanted to say in Portuguese or Xichangana without sweating, so they won't make any effort to say it in English. I learned that anyone who wants to learn a language has to think in that language" (teacher Polyglot, 05/26/2021).
Teachers and students made it clear that, when they applied solely English in their lessons only few students participated in the classes. This point of views is similarly shared by the school manager. In fact, he said that "he saw few students participating (…) when they were asked to speak only in English" (Manager Marven Descartes, 06/30/2021). It occurs because students cannot cope with a communication exclusively in English when their "linguistic crutches" are removed. They need these crutches (Portuguese and Xichangana) to help them learning English, but monolingual theories promote the banning of L1 by establishing semiotic boundaries between L1 and L2 [11]. As matter of fact, it is believed that L1 will hamper L2 learning when languages are integrated [14], but, has seen before, L1 aids the students to understand complex issues. In addition, teacher Polyglot is concerned that the students may feel in their comfort zone, as a result they may not make any effort to learn English. He goes further to suggest that students should think in the target language. It is still monolingual beliefs that using other languages is detrimental to L2 learning, because the exposure span will dwindle. However, [7] claim that language repertoires that students have play an important role in the L2 learning and it can be useful for the students on their way to proficiency.
Using translanguaging for English learning turned something which seemed difficult into something easy for the students, which was not happening with the solely use of the English.

*D. Drills and Repetition Ways of Students Participating and Collaborating*

Although teacher Marta and Maria were using translanguaging, a pedagogical strategy which seemed to be productive and dynamic for English language learning, teacher polyglot was merely using oral drills and repetition, as it can be seen in the following excerpt:
"(...) students say and the others repeat (…) I ask them to repeat (…) I can even ask a student to show an object, say it, and then have them repeating" (teacher Polyglot, 06/30/2021).
Students were forced to participate in oral drills and repetition without the use of translanguaging. There were no way students could participate, because they were not skilled enough in English, for that reason they did not benefit from their multilingual spectrum [10]. Multilingual students have richer trajectory, which makes them be different, from monolingual ones. In this participation and interaction in oral drills through repetition, some students did not participate, as they pretended to do so. Perhaps the students would have participated if the teacher had allowed the use of Portuguese or Xichangana, but he was afraid of too much reliance on these two languages. In their research, in Mozambique, [25], [9], [8] found the same results. These authors reported that when the students exclusively used L2 in the classroom there were only oral drills and repetition and students' answers were merely yes or no.

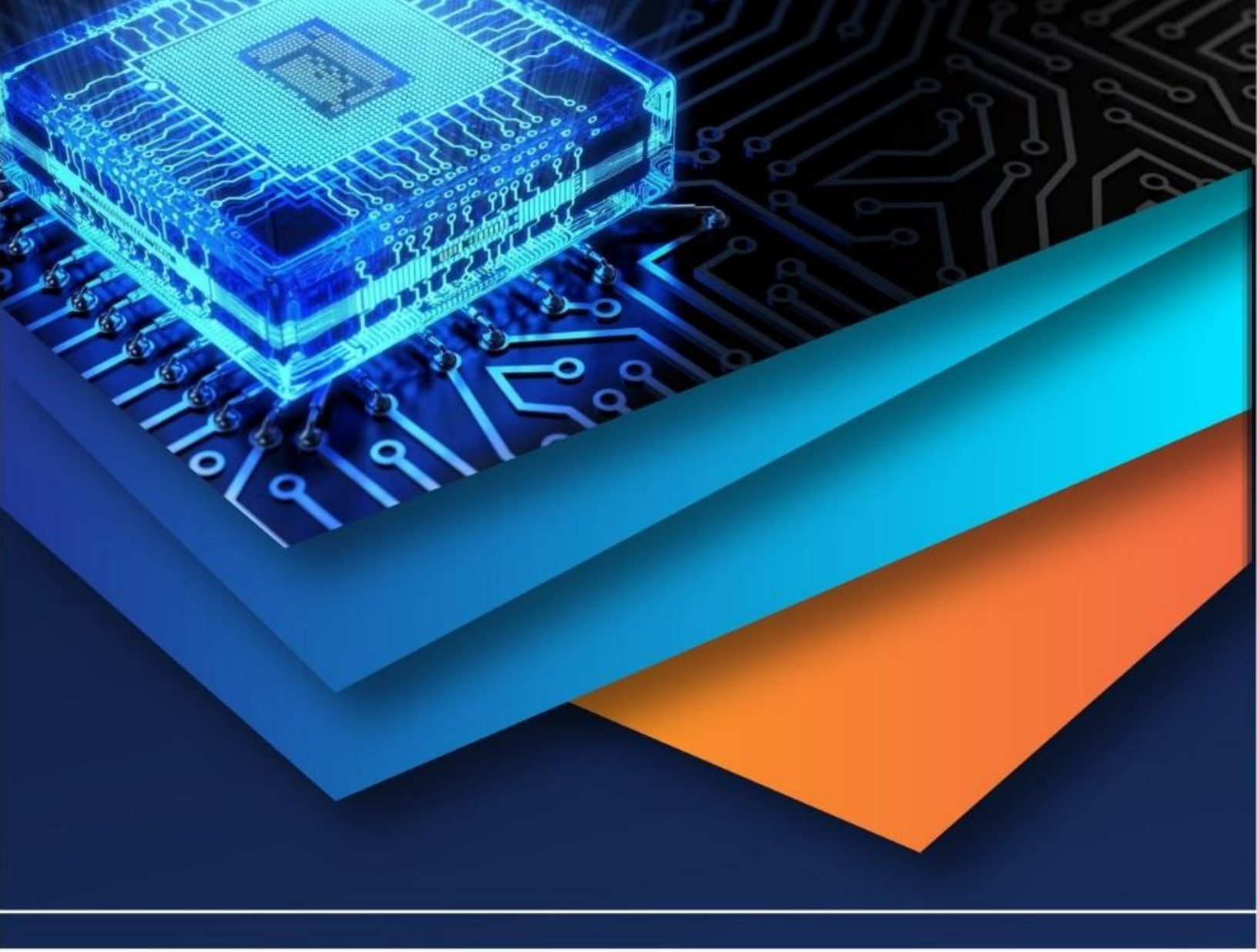
These evidences demonstrate that in contexts were Portuguese and Xichangana are spoken translanguaging should be put into practice, so that teachers and students communicate in the classroom. Despite this fact, the teachers and the students should be careful when using L1, so as not to jeopardize L2 learning.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The perception of students, teachers and the school manager of Xikanyanini Secondary School indicate that the use of translanguaging pedagogy makes the teaching and learning of English language dynamic, flexible, participatory and interactive, which facilitate the learning of this language, as students can understand what the teachers say when using Portuguese and Xichangana. For further work in this field, it would be interesting to learn about the students' performance in tests, when teachers and students use translanguaging in Mozambique.

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