



International Journal of  
**MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION**

**ISSN: (Print)** ISSN 1987-9601

**(Online)** E ISSN 1512-3146

**Journal homepage:** <http://multilingualeducation.org/>

---

## **Exploring the use of translanguaging pedagogy to enhance epistemic access for History learners**

**Kagiso Thapelo Lekhethe**  
University of the Free State

**Boitumelo Benjamin Moreeng**  
University of the Free State

**Pfuraai Chimbunde**  
University of Zululand

Email: [oussama.ahmedgaid@univ-msila.dz](mailto:oussama.ahmedgaid@univ-msila.dz)

To cite this article: Kagiso Thapelo Lekhethe, Boitumelo Benjamin Moreeng, Pfuraai Chimbunde (2026), Exploring the use of translanguaging pedagogy to enhance epistemic access for History learners:

International Journal of Multilingual Education, volume 27, issue 1. pp. 75-96.

To link to this article:

<https://doi.org/10.22333/ijme.2025.9077>

**Kagiso Thapelo Lekhethe<sup>1</sup>** 

*University of the Free State, South Africa*  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3972-7592>

**Boitumelo Benjamin Moreeng**

*University of the Free State, South Africa*  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3644-3140>

**Pfuraai Chimbunde**

*University of Zululand, South Africa*  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3423-2163>

## Exploring the use of translanguaging pedagogy to enhance epistemic access for History learners

### ABSTRACT

Translanguaging, espoused by Williams and expanded by scholars such as Garcia, Tai, and Wei, has become necessary to enhance history learners' epistemic access. It has been demonstrated how it can be implemented to strengthen epistemic access. However, no systematic literature review has focused on how translanguaging pedagogy can enhance learners' epistemic access. Therefore, this literature review aims to explore how translanguaging pedagogy can enhance learners' epistemic access in History by rigorously looking into existing literature on the topic and providing robust results. The study's findings are divided into three themes that discuss the learners' use of their entire linguistic repertoire, the implementation of semiotic resources and multimodal resources to learn and teach History in a way that gives learners epistemic access, and the sense of equality was recommended. The use of the mentioned translanguaging pedagogy elements had different views; other scholars vouched for it, and others were against it. This paper follows a specific structure; it commences with an introduction, followed by methodology, where the Prisma is outlined. I have indicated that out of 25 articles identified, only 10 were used. The findings were thus presented, analysed, and interpreted, and the conclusion, suggestions, and acknowledgements were followed. The conclusion, suggestions, and statements of open data, ethics, and conflicts of interest were detailed afterwards.

**Keywords:** *Translanguaging pedagogy, Epistemic access, History, Language.*

### Introduction

Epistemic access in the learning and teaching of History for learners has been a challenge in the Senior Phase because of the Language of Learning and Teaching – English (LoLT – English) serving as a barrier to learners' comprehension, meaning creation, knowledge construction and active participation and contribution of knowledge in history learning and teaching. In this study, translanguaging

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: *Kagiso Thapelo Lekhethe, kagithapelo@gmail.com*

pedagogy is a relevant tool for mitigating the challenges vis-à-vis learners' epistemic access in History. Treffers-Daller (2025) indicates that translanguaging pedagogy was developed by Williams in Wales back in 1994 during his research at a school. He found that the teacher and learners used their home language - Welsh, and the target language - English, from time to time during their lesson, which led him to coin the term *trawsieithu* (Treffers-Daller, 2025).

Scholars like Garcia, Xing, Ping, Qing, Tai, Wei, and others have expanded extensively on translanguaging as a theory and a pedagogical method. Garcia (2024) emphasises dismantling the idea of having the first and second languages, asserting that languages are not different and each does not necessarily need to be individually used in particular spaces and others. She advocates for naturally allowing the flow of accessing and using the entire linguistic repertoire to communicate, and she coined translanguaging (Garcia, 2025). Makalela (2022) calls it Horizontal Multilingualism, where individuals naturally communicate fluidly, moving between various languages to create meaning, enhance comprehension and construct knowledge. Tai (2025) and Xin et al. (2024) joined in emphasising that translanguaging is not limited to the use of named languages, but goes as far as including non-verbal resources such as semiotic and multimodal resources to create meaning, enhance understanding, construct knowledge and communication. Ndhlovu and Makalela (2021) and Wei and Garcia (2022) argue that translanguaging's effective implementation will disassemble the hierarchy in language, conscientising learners of their identities amid their diversity.

Despite the challenge that has been identified by scholars such as Labenko and Shabunina (2024) that learners whose home language is not English find it challenging to learn History effectively, perform well in it, comprehend content, create meaning, construct knowledge and articulate themselves proficiently because they have to do all that in English (Mcwango & Makhathini, 2021); very few research has been conducted on how translanguaging pedagogy can be implemented to enhance learners epistemic access in History. Tai (2024) is one of the scholars who directly inferred in one of his studies that translanguaging pedagogy through using the entire linguistic repertoire, semiotic resources such as videos and pictures and multimodal resources such as gestures can be used to enhance history learners' epistemic access. However, no peer-reviewed systematic literature review has looked at how translanguaging pedagogy can improve learners' epistemic access in History while conducting this study, which makes this study unique. Within this mind, this study aims to explore how translanguaging pedagogy can enhance learners' epistemic access in History.

## **Methods**

This paper presents a systematic literature review on how teachers can implement translanguaging pedagogy to enhance history learners' epistemic access. A systematic literature review follows a very systematic process, whereby the current literature is assembled, arranged and assessed in-depth to provide results that are more lucid, comprehensive and unbiased (Paul et al., 2023). Karunarathna et al. (2024) add that the type of systematic literature review used for this study is a domain-based conceptual systematic literature review, which will focus on a particular topic to steer the review. Equally important, Bandara and Syed (2024) indicate that a domain-based conceptual systematic literature review makes exhaustive research on a subject, engaging analytically with numerous literatures through following a strong structure that will guide it in extracting data, accentuating gaps and providing advice for future research. Therefore, the main question this systematic literature review seeks to answer is "how can translanguaging pedagogy be used to enhance history learners' epistemic access?" It will be followed by sub-questions (SQ) listed below:

SQ 1: How is translanguaging pedagogy used to enhance learners' epistemic access in History?

SQ 2: What are the challenges of implementing translanguaging pedagogy?

SQ 3: What are the pros and cons of translanguaging pedagogy?

Therefore, this systematic literature review is structured by presenting the methodology, which entails planning, research method, findings, discussions, and conclusion.

### ***Planning the review***

Before conducting the review, I identified the relevant and appropriate articles to answer my research questions. Secondly, I assessed which are the most relevant to answer the research questions and thus analysed the relevant articles to infer the answers to the research questions. The following string was used to search for relevant sources:

(translanguaging AND History teaching; history teaching AND language; history education AND English; teaching History in English)

After using the above strings to search, I figured they were all relevant in giving me the sources that I needed. All relevant electronic articles were identified; the leading databases and e-journals shown hereunder helped provide relevant articles.

- JSTOR journals
- Scopus
- Taylor & Francis
- Research Gate

---

From these databases, the articles that are relevant and used are the ones that include:

### **Timeline 2020 – 2025 (5 years)**

- Discussing the influence of translanguaging in the learning and teaching of school subjects
- How teachers and learners use translanguaging to teach history learning and teaching
- And talks about how translanguaging enhances learners' epistemic access, especially in history education.

The articles that will **be excluded from** the selection are the ones that:

- Do not talk about History,
- Do not talk about the influence of the English language on History.
- Do not talk about translanguaging.
- Do not talk about History learning and teaching at the school level.

Equally important, this systematic literature review will use only peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025. Only articles written in English, Southern/Northern Sotho, Tswana and Xhosa will be used in this literature because those are the only languages the researcher understands.

Therefore, to avoid bias, I will present the articles I have selected to my supervisor to determine whether they are appropriate for this systematic literature review; he will assess me regularly to ascertain that I am fair and neutral in my study.

### ***Research Method***

This systematic literature review will look into the perspective of teaching on translanguaging pedagogy.

Only peer-reviewed articles and conference articles will be used to further this literature. Only sources within the past 10 years will be employed in this study to ascertain the credibility and relevancy of this systematic literature review.

This literature seeks to identify, assess and analyse the academic literature on the practice of translanguaging in history education through:

- Divulging a critical view of translanguaging in the history education status quo,
- Giving perspectives from empirical studies conducted vis-à-vis translanguaging pedagogy in history education.
- Serve as a conduit to the perspective that should be taken for further research vis-à-vis translanguaging pedagogy.

Varsha et al. (2024) advised that a systematic literature review was conducted by selecting and utilising relevant academic articles and conference articles, following a structured method to conduct the research as demonstrated below.

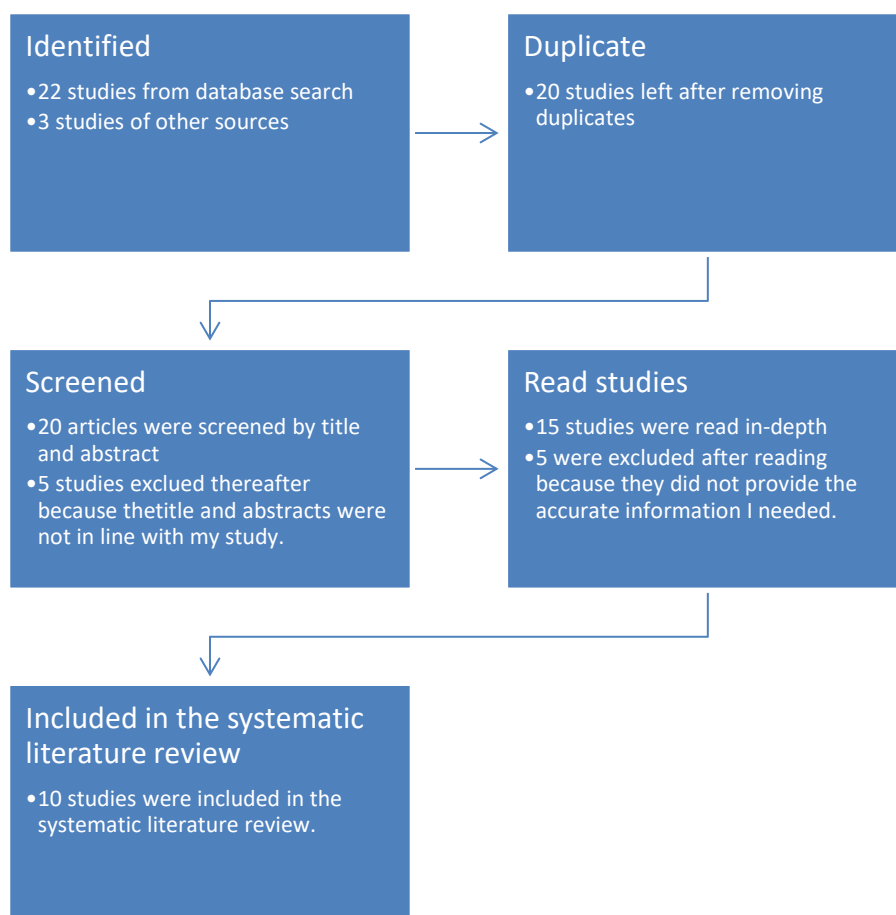
### ***Conducting the review***

I started searching for publications in February 2025, using strings like the ones I mentioned above. I found that strings about English Medium instruction provided the results I sought. What is more, I used four databases to get the publications.

Through searching, I identified 22 publications which were journal articles. From the accumulated 22, two articles were duplicates and removed, leaving me with 20 articles. Further, five articles with titles, abstracts and texts irrelevant to my study were excluded, leaving me with 15 articles.

With the 15 articles remaining, I read them in-depth, seeking to extract relevant information. Thus, I excluded five with no direct information I needed to steer my study and found the remaining 10 beneficial information. I only sought to utilise sources that spoke about translanguaging in teaching content other than languages, especially History, not translanguaging in teaching language subjects.

The flow diagram (Prisma Chart) in **Figure 1** depicts how this process unfolded. **Table 1**, on the other hand, presents the articles that are used to steer this systematic literature review.



**Figure 1. Prisma Chart.**

## Results and Discussion

### *Overall review of selected studies*

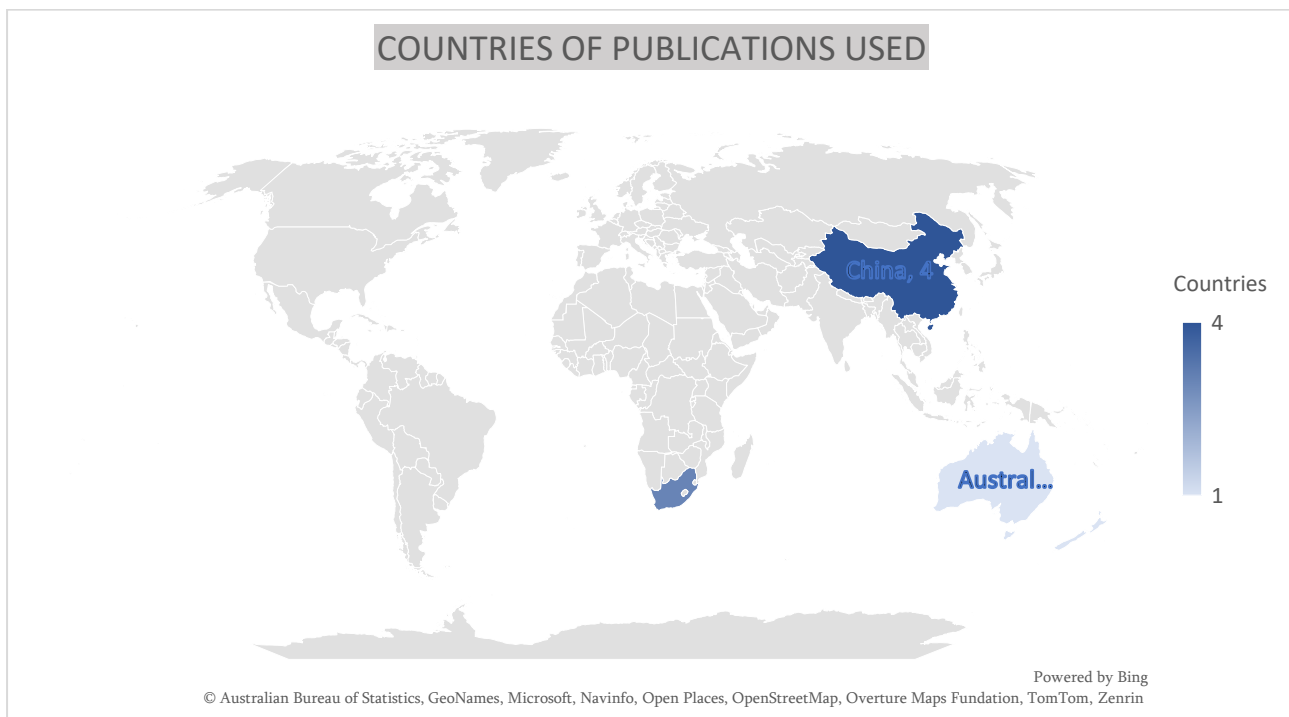
I have come to steer this literature review with 10 articles that I found most suitable. The graph indicates a decline in translanguaging pedagogy research from 2021, while it had reached its peak from a steady but gradual increase in 2020, as depicted by the blue bars. Various factors like COVID-19 could have influenced that. The red line indicated the constant increase in the need for translanguaging pedagogy, despite the fluctuation of its publications.

**Figure 2**, on the other hand, shows that different parts of the world have the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy in common. The figure does not show the countries that publish the most about translanguaging, but it shows the countries from which the publications I used are from. However, it is noteworthy for me to underscore that having three from South Africa is significant as this study will attempt to contribute to the implementation of translanguaging in South Africa's schools, as mother tongue as the language for learning and teaching is being ushered in in schools (Singh, 2024). Implementing translanguaging pedagogy is essential in most parts of the world, as no country speaks only one language (Brown & Kim, 2025).

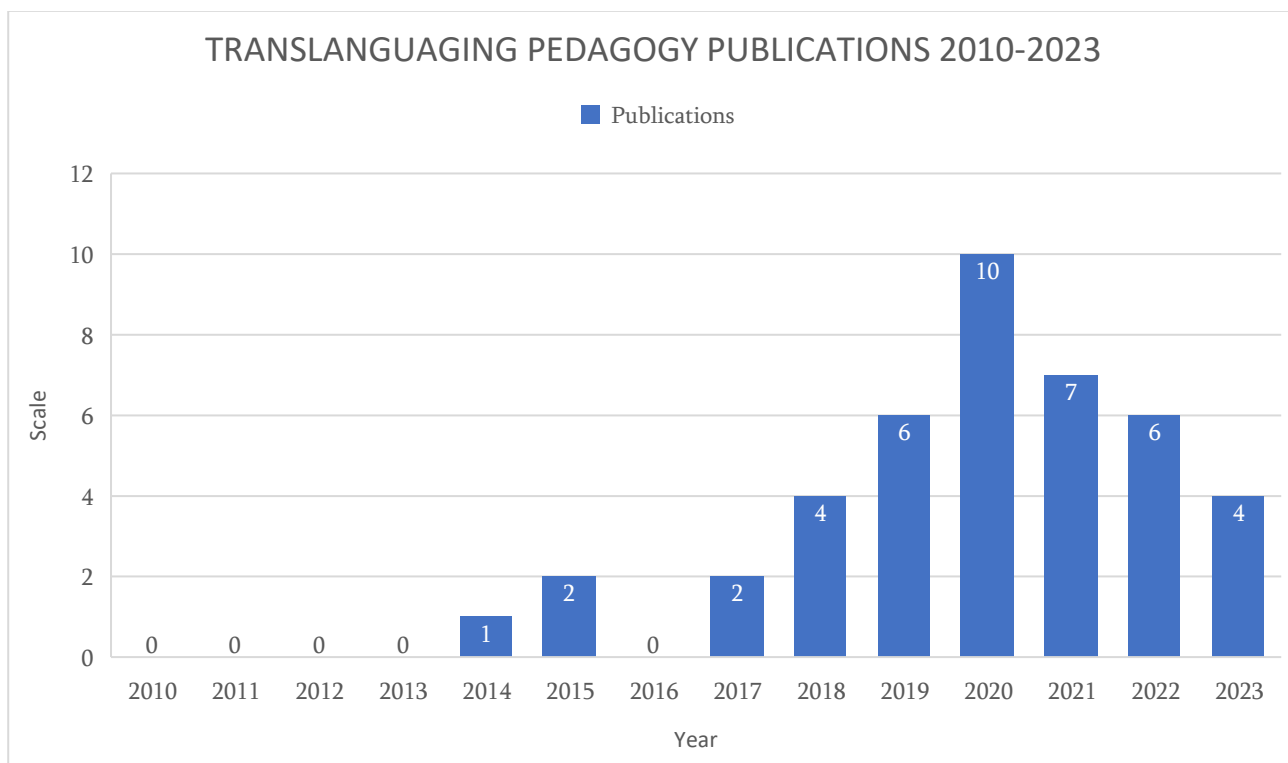
### *Sample groups of participants*

All the articles used to steer this systematic literature review are by scholars with good credentials, ranging from honours to master's. 60% are university lecturers, 20% are college teachers, and the other 20% are university students. The calculations include both authors and co-authors. The results may be conducive for implementation as the studies used are both empirical and desktop.

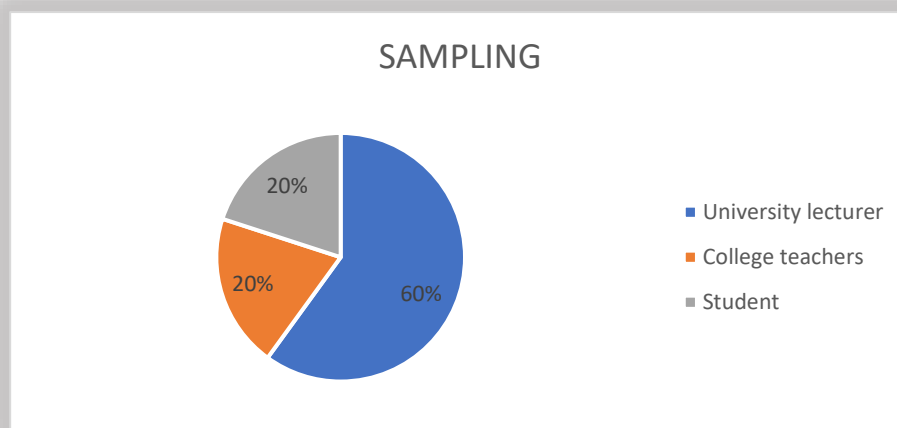
Therefore, as depicted in **Figure 4**, 8 out of 10 report the good aspects of translanguaging pedagogy while only two report otherwise. This could mean that translanguaging benefits many, as discussed in the discussion section. Furthermore, succinct details of the analysed articles have been given in **Table 1**. Some technological resources were used to identify articles necessary to steer this review.



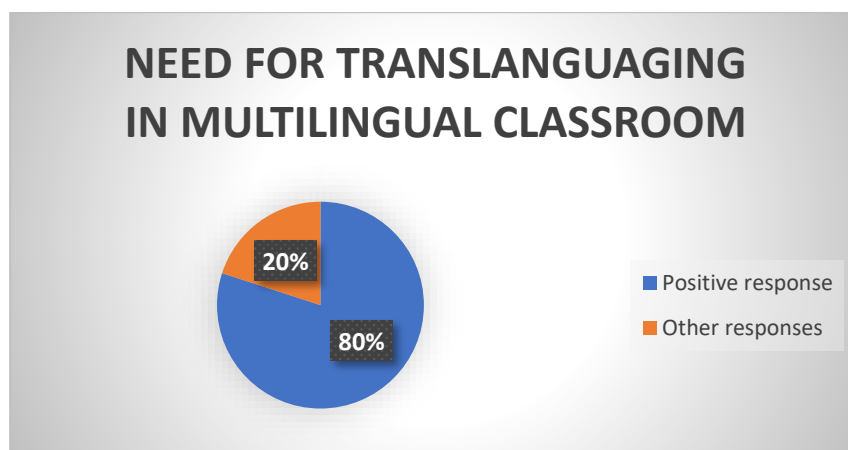
**Figure 2. Number of articles used per selected countries**



**Figure 3. Translanguaging pedagogy publications.**



**Figure 4. Percentage of participants based on occupation**



**Figure 5. Need for translanguaging in multilingual classrooms**

**Table 1. Details of the articles used.**

Author(s)	Title	Study design	Participants	Intervention	Outcome measures
Tai et al. (2025)	Enhancing students' content and language development: Implications for researching multilingualism in CLIL classroom context.	Literature review.	Sixty-two publications were used, with 50 different scholars.	Linguistic repertoire, multimodal resources and technological resources.	Literature Review
Chang (2024)	Developing preservice bilingual teachers' transformative agency.	Qualitative Research Design	11 English as a Foreign Language student teachers.	Pictures and body language.	Interview, document analysis and observations.
Lu & So (2023)	Translanguaging in scientific practices: a study of high school teachers in English Medium Instruction	Enquiry-based science teaching	Four secondary-school-level science teachers.	Moving fluidly between different languages.	Interviews and observations.

	inquiry-based science classrooms.				
Abdulatief & Guzula (2024)	Crossing the frontier from oral to written translanguaging for epistemic access in natural science.	Ethnographic	One Senior Phase (Grade 7-9) Natural Science teacher.	Moving from oral translanguaging to written translanguaging.	Interviews and observations.
Tai (2025)	Translanguaging in Multilingual Education.	Literature review	37 published papers were used, with 26 different scholars.	Fun talk learning, integrating everyday knowledge with content knowledge, and using technology in class.	Literature Review
Heugh (2015)	Epistemologies in multilingual education: Translanguaging and genre-companions in conversation with policy and practice.	Literature review	22 Published papers whose authors recognise mismatches between what seem to be policies and practices borrowed from the north and realities of the contemporary south.	The use of the entire communicative repertoire.	Literature review
Makalela (2016)	Ubuntu translanguaging: An alternative framework for complex multilingual encounters.	Sequential, linear and positivism	Learners.	Ubuntu translanguaging.	Observations and interviews.
Mabule (2015)	What is this? Is it code switching, code mixing, or language altering?	Observations	20 participants from Limpopo	Using different languages spontaneously.	Observations
Seals et al. (2019)	The use of translanguaging to bridge sociocultural knowledge in a puna reo.	Kaupapa Maori and school-based ethnography	Teachers, learners and parents from a puna reo.	Naturally, using different languages.	Interviews and observations.
Pakeerathy & Karunakaran (2023)	Epistemologies in multilingual education: Translanguaging and genre-companions in conversation with policy and practice.	Mixed Method and Experimental Analysis	4 participants. One teacher and three learners.	Learners use language of their choice to communicate, use visuals, and demonstrate the knowledge acquired kinetically.	Interviews, observations and document analysis.

Ten published articles about translanguaging pedagogy were used to conduct this study, as shown in **Table 1**. Three were literature review articles, while seven were empirical studies. Various data collection methods, such as interviews, observations and document analysis, were used to conduct the empirical studies. At the same time, various literature on translanguaging pedagogy were also used to

conduct literature review studies. The results divulge that fluidly moving between different languages when communicating, using semiotic resources such as visuals and audios, and multimodal resources such as gestures are effective strategies for epistemic access.

**Table 2. Objectives derived from the literature used for the study.**

Authors	Objective 1: To explore how translanguaging pedagogy enhances history learners' epistemic access.	Objective 2: To determine the challenges of implementing translanguaging pedagogy.	Objective 3: To examine the pros and cons of translanguaging pedagogy.
Tai et al. (2025)	Teachers are encouraged to enable learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire, multimodal resources, and technological resources to enhance their epistemic access to History.	The language barrier makes it challenging for learners to learn History in English.	Translanguaging pedagogy has limitations, such as fostering social injustice and language hierarchy.
Chang (2024)	History teachers use pictures and body language to create meaning and understanding (epistemic access).	Incompetency of history teachers and learners in English, translating from English to Taiwanese and vice versa, hampers epistemic access for history learners.	
Lu & So (2023)	Moving between learners' home language and English and using visuals during lesson presentations helps history learners understand the lesson. When history learners can articulate themselves in any language of their choice, they become active participants in creating meaning.		
Abdulatief & Guzula (2024)	Moving from oral translanguaging to written translanguaging. Teachers' translanguaging on the board and encouraging learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire to jot down notes enhance history learners' comprehension and participation in knowledge construction. History learners can present or act out the knowledge they have acquired through visuals.	It has been figured that teachers creating new words for content concepts such as mathematics, science, and History may be challenging and misleading, as the mother tongue-generated terms might not convey the same message.	
Tai (2025)	History learners' meaning creation, knowledge construction and comprehension are enhanced through engaging in fun talk learning, integrating everyday knowledge with content		

---

	knowledge and using technology in class.		
Heugh (2015)	Translanguaging encourages history learners to use their entire communicative repertoire to enhance comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction.	Translanguaging pedagogy may be foreign and irrelevant to South Africa.	Fluidly using different languages to communicate is a standard practice in South Africa.
Makalela (2016)	Ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy makes communication, comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction easy.		Translanguaging is a natural process in South Africa. It also places value on the identity of history learners, enriching is one of the aims of History teaching in South Africa.
Mabule (2015)		.	Using more than one language to communicate spontaneously in South Africa. This method of communication is used for various reasons, like elaborating, emphasising and making other groups of people understand what is being communicated. It can effectively be used in history education for elaboration, emphasis and comprehension enhancement.
Seals et al. (2019)			People use translanguaging to exclude others who may not understand the home languages of others. Fluidly moving between various languages when communicating is normal in New Zealand. This may give history learners not proficient in either language the confidence to participate actively in meaning creation, knowledge construction, and comprehend lessons.
Pakeerathy & Karunakaran (2023)	Translanguaging in this regard – allowing history learners to use the language of their choice to communicate, using objects such as visuals or acting out their knowledge to demonstrate their knowledge acquisition has rendered positive results.	Some non-native English-speaking history learners may find it challenging to participate orally and in written form in classrooms and comprehend lessons presented in English. Translanguaging should not go as far as allowing learners to write assessments in any language or communicative form of their choice.	

---

**Table 2** shows three objectives that drive this study, and each published article contributes to one or some of the objectives. The findings demonstrated here are narrowed to how translanguaging pedagogy influences learners' epistemic access in History. Out of 10 articles, eight address the first objective; five address the second, and five address the third.

### ***Main findings***

The main findings of this research are exploring ways in which learners' epistemic access can be enhanced through translanguaging pedagogy. Translanguaging pedagogy has been a burning issue for many decades, although I will focus on the last five years' research. In the diverse societies we live in, where there are dozens of languages spoken and the language of learning and teaching has been limited to only one dominant language – mostly English – translanguaging pedagogy has come in handy in facilitating effective communication, comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction. Hereunder, we will look at the viewpoint of different scholars on translanguaging pedagogy to teach content – History. Only a few scholars focus on teaching History through translanguaging pedagogy.

### ***How translanguaging pedagogy is used to enhance History learners' epistemic access***

According to Tai (2024b), when History is taught in a way that allow various named languages to be used, learners may find it easy to understand and critically engage with the content to construct knowledge (Tai, 2024b). This will give history learners' the freedom of using their languages to help each other make sense of the content they are learning, engage with the content and in discussions that will help them create meaning and construct knowledge. Additionally, Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) concert trans-register, i.e., explaining concepts in an academic language using the everyday English language, can also be used as a method that helps learners with comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction.

Similarly, Lu and So (2023) articulate that when teachers translate new content concepts, such as historical concepts, to learners' home languages, explaining them as transcending between English and their home language, learners get to understand the content and engage with it. For example, when the concept of consciousness is explained in English as "... the awakening of blacks ... recognising one's inherent dignity and taking pride in it," in the textbook, the teacher naturally explains using the mother tongue that it means "*Ho tsoha! Ho lemoha seriti sa tlhaho sa motho le ho ba motlotlo ka sona / Ho ba aware ka dignity ya tlhaho ya motho ebile o ba proud ka yona.*" Sotho native learners will understand it in-depth as words like "*seriti sa tlhaho*" have a profound meaning that hits home personally to native Sotho. As the late president Nelson Mandela said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, it goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

Heugh (2015) supports that translanguaging may help learners with comprehension by encouraging them to utilise their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate in the classes, which I find relevant to the history classroom. Similar to what Tai (2025) said, Heugh (2015) aver that translanguaging encourages the use of learners' everyday language in the academic space, whereby the learner will fluidly move among various languages like their home language and the academic language. This may benefit history learners greatly in understanding historical concepts and content, which is in accord with what Pakeerathy and Karunakaran (2023) aver that translanguaging pedagogy advocates for the use of home languages and vernaculars to help learners comprehend the content and become active participants in meaning creation and knowledge construction.

Likewise, Makalela (2022) elucidate that translanguaging pedagogy encourages learners to utilise their entire linguistic repertoire unlimitedly; whereby they engage in a communication where different languages are used – the learner may receive information through listening or reading in a particular language and respond verbally or in writing in another language. Seals et al. (2019) concord with Makalela (2022), supporting the scholars as mentioned earlier, stating that integrating English with home-languages and other preferred languages to communicate helps learners still learning the foreign language comprehend the lesson and create meaning. In Mabule's (2015) article, we see participants using three languages in one sentence to communicate, and the purpose for that was to ascertain comprehension through emphasis. This may be part of accessing the linguistic repertoire in the translanguaging definition, enhancing learners' understanding, meaning creation and knowledge construction.

Consequently, Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) advocate for implementing and incorporating learners' mother tongue dictionaries to help enhance learners' comprehension. Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) argue that it is pivotal for epistemic enhancement to include learners' indigenous language and encourage learners to do their multilingual glossary, where they would use their entire linguistic repertoire to explain what academic concepts mean. Absolute translation and transliteration are advised as they help learners easily comprehend the concepts spoken and their definitions.

Chang (2020) divulges that some teachers are not competent and proficient in English, thus introduces semiotic and multimodal resources in this section. He indicates that using flash cards with pictures of what the teachers are referring to when teaching and demonstrating body language helps learners comprehend what the teachers imply (Chang, 2020). Pakeerathy and Karunakaran (2023) elaborate that textbooks, videos, and practical work help learners understand the content and contribute to meaning creation and knowledge construction.

Tai et al. (2025) congruently add to non-linguistic communications, divulging that technology

enables the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy as well, as it can serve as a multimodal resource to enhance learners' meaning creation, comprehension and participation in the history classroom. iPads have been found to increase learner participation, content and language learning (Tai et al., 2025). Likewise, virtual reality has allowed learners to visually, kinetically and tactically learn, create meaning, gain comprehension and practice what they have learned without being limited by a named language (Tai et al., 2025). Tai (2025) adds that applying technology in the classroom enables the teacher to use semiotic resources such as pictures, videos, and audio.

Moreover, Luh and So (2024) indicate that using multimodal resources such as gestures and writing on the board enhances learners' meaning creation, knowledge construction, comprehension and active participation. Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) further reveal bridging from oral translanguaging to written translanguaging, whereby teachers are encouraged to demonstrate translanguaging on the board, writing academic language in English and having its translations in the home language of learners, which is IsiXhosa in this case. Learners are also encouraged to write notes using their entire linguistic repertoire (Abdulatief & Guzula, 2024). Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) further encourage teachers to use posters to present their work because it helps learners understand the content and its concepts, create meaning, construct knowledge and participate actively in class. Further, Tai et al. (2025) argue that assessments are often done in one language – English, which results in poor performance of learners who are not proficient in English. He indicates that the challenge may also be beyond named languages. Therefore, it should be considered for learners to be given the liberty of answering assessments in a multimodal manner, through semiotic resources, including technological resources. They believe that allowing learners to articulate themselves as they see fit would enable them to demonstrate real content knowledge acquired during learning and teaching.

### ***The challenges of implementing translanguaging pedagogy***

Chang (2024) indicates that it is challenging for non-native English learners and teachers to comprehend, create meaning and express themselves in English. The first challenge he identified was the challenge teachers themselves had of accurately translating from Taiwanese to English, which may hinder learning should the teacher not have the ability to use the learners' home language to explain concepts such as "consciousness". Direct translation from Taiwanese to English may alter the original meaning of what was said. Emphatically, Chang (2024) states that teachers may have challenges presenting lessons in a way that learners can easily understand. Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) concur with Chang (2024) and Tai et al (2025) through underscoring that it is a challenge for learners to learn content using English. It has been figured that teachers creating new words for content concepts such as mathematics, science, and History may be challenging and misleading, as the mother tongue-

generated terms might not convey the same message.

Further, Heugh (2024) aver that as much as translanguaging pedagogy may have the potential of enhancing learners' comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction, it could be referred to as a northern method of countering linguistic barriers in learning and teaching, and not be of much relevance in most of the South African context. Heugh (2024) raises this because translanguaging pedagogy is already a natural communication process in South Africa; however, implementing it in a class with learners with many different home languages can be challenging. This is where Tai et al.'s (2025) assertion come in, that translanguaging pedagogy has limitations, which are fostering social injustice and language hierarchy, whereby the most common language in the society is the one spoken in class to cater for translanguaging and the other home languages that are a minority in class are not used. Mabule (2015) notes that different people use translanguaging to exclude others who may not understand the home languages of others. It is essential to highlight that translanguaging should be inclusive.

Pakeerathy and Karunakaran (2023) argue that translanguaging should not go as far as allowing learners to write assessments in any language or any communicative form of their choice. This statement seems to limit the lengths to which translanguaging can go. The lengths may differ from country to country.

### ***The pros and cons of translanguaging pedagogy***

According to Tai et al. (2025), translanguaging pedagogy breaks the barrier between different languages, showing that no language is efficient on its own. Still, all languages may become more effective in building comprehension, meaning creation and knowledge construction when fused with other languages and forms of communication. Tai et al. (2025) emphasise that translanguaging pedagogy seeks to dismantle the language hierarchy. Lu and So (2023) concur with Tai et al. that arguing that when learners are given the liberty to engage with learning in their home language, the tension created by language barriers that exist between the learners and the teachers – not understanding each other, not following instructions, etc. – gets to be eased.

In the same vein, Heugh (2015), Mabule (2016) and Makalela (2016) indicate that translanguaging is embedded in the way language is naturally used in Africa, even before colonial rule. Similarly, Seals et al. (2019) maintain that fluid communication between various languages is a natural process in New Zealand. This is evidence that translanguaging is subconsciously practised in some, if not most, parts of the world. Mabule (2015) indicates that code-switching, code-mixing and code-alternation – which I will use interchangeably with translanguaging in this context because of the explanations given by

Mabule (2015) – spontaneously happenS in other parts of the world because it is used daily to ascertain comprehension in conversations, elaborate emphatically on what is being communicated. It is also used because certain words and phrases may not have direct translations of what they mean in other languages. For example, some Sotho words may not have a direct translation into English and vice versa.

Tai et al. (2025) reiterate that educators should know the type of learners they have – their home languages and cultures- to understand how to address the language barrier they may have in the classroom. The teachers should be aware that implementing translanguaging pedagogy can potentially accommodate learners in their diversity; it enhances learners' confidence to participate in class, meaning creation and comprehension of the content (Tai et al., 2025). Makalela (2016) also divulges that translanguaging, which occurs in the African context, is the Ubuntu Translanguaging, conscientising learners of their African identity, gives value to their identity and emphasises respect for diversity in languages, and that languages are equally important and need each other to enhance understanding, create meaning and construct knowledge (Makalela, 2016).

Mabule (2015) also alludes that code-switching, code-mixing and code-alternation affirm the speaker's identity and create a sense of belonging. Seals et al. (2019) found that learners get a sense of belonging and inclusion when using their entire linguistic repertoire to express themselves. Seals et al. (2019) assert that translanguaging pedagogy gives learners who are not competent in either language the confidence to actively participate in class because all languages are allowed to be used. The learner can identify with their language. Seal et al.'s (2019) statement upholds the aim of history education stipulated in the CAPS document: to instil national pride that will help learners identify with their personal, family and local History (CAPS, 2011).

### **Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation**

English as the language of learning, teaching and assessment has been a challenge in most schools in South Africa, it has also been a challenge in China and some other parts of the world. The English history learners may use outside the classroom, which is different from the historical academic English, making history learners find it challenging to comprehend. Some history teachers may also lack the English competency and proficiency, which will also serve as an impediment to facilitating learners' comprehension of History, meaning creation and knowledge construction. This is why translanguaging pedagogy has been advised.

Regarding utilising the entire linguistic repertoire, I will concentrate on how it may help enhance History learners' epistemic access. Given the above-mentioned sources, history learners may improve their comprehension, ability to create meaning, and knowledge by employing the whole linguistic

repertoire. For example, allowing history learners to use their preferred languages, such as their home languages, to acquire knowledge and disseminate it, introducing a dictionary of indigenous languages, and transliterating and translating historical concepts help learners enhance their epistemic access. When learners do oral research, they often acquire knowledge in their preferred languages, which allows a lot of comprehension, and academic concept words are transliterated if they do not have exact translations. Therefore, this versatility encourages the learners to engage with the content to create meaning and construct knowledge with minimal challenges posed by language.

Moreover, the relevance of the use of gestures in the history class can be demonstrated when teaching topics like the scramble for Africa, where learners and the teacher can role play the event by dividing learners in 8 groups and making them choose among the seven countries the ones they prefer, and the last group will represent Africa. After that, you set them up in a summit of 7 European countries, prepared to talk about sharing Africa amongst themselves in the absence of Africa in the summit. Kinaesthetic learners and possibly most, if not all, learners would benefit from this experience (Burhanuddin & Sritharen, 2024; Tai, 2024a). Documenting students' conceptual understanding of second language vocabulary knowledge: a translanguaging analysis of classroom interactions in a primary English as a second language classroom for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Tai, 2024b). Writing on the board also helps learners learn how to write words; using various languages on the board to accommodate learners may also be effective for comprehension. Additionally, there are different historical games such as *Africa Empire* and *Ms. Information - The Constitution* that learners could play on their devices, which will educate them on the events that took place in the past and engage with those events head-on through games. Playing *Africa Empire*, which iGindisGames created on virtual reality games, will be more interesting as learners will feel like they are in the events (Pérez Fernández, 2024).

Additionally, history education also values the identity of all humankind, as it is through History that human rights were established, and people can establish their identity from History. What makes an individual a proud native is the historical journey of his people. When learners recognise that their History, language and identity are valued in the history classroom, it will give them confidence and encourage them to partake in history learning and teaching by contributing everyday knowledge and indigenous knowledge in the lesson. The teachers may also localise or make History more relevant to learners so that they can easily comprehend it, create meaning, and construct knowledge.

Furthermore, as much as translanguaging has proven beneficial, it also has cons. In a history classroom with learners of many different languages, teachers may find it challenging to implement effectively because if they use one language, the learners who speak other languages will be disadvantaged. As mentioned above, scholars differ in their perspectives on using learners' preferred languages, semiotic resources and multimodal resources in assessments. As much as the majority

advocate for it, averring that it will improve learners' performance as it helps them demonstrate their actual acquired knowledge, few argue that it should not go as far as allowing learners to implement translanguaging in that manner for assessments. For those who disagree with assessments being conducted semiotically and multimodally, allowing the use of the entire linguistic repertoire seems exclusive, excluding those learners who can only use those methods to respond to assessments. Using scribes to help such learners also seems to undermine and disregard how other learners can effectively articulate themselves.

## **Conclusion**

Tai et al. (2025) reveal that implementing translanguaging pedagogy is beneficial to learning and teaching History, but also has limitations. It benefits history learners by allowing them to employ their entire communicative repertoire – their linguistic repertoire, semiotic resources, and multimodal resources – to construct meaning and understanding in History. Therefore, teachers should employ various translanguaging strategies such as translation, multimodal, semiotic and technological resources to make the benefits effective (Tai et al., 2025). Equally important, Tai (2025) divulges that translanguaging pedagogy may help history learners in meaning creation, knowledge construction and comprehension. It ought to encourage fun talk in learning, whereby learners and teachers will engage in historical conversation in a friendly manner, even controversial topics; it also ought to integrate learners' everyday knowledge and background knowledge with the new content knowledge, to make new content knowledge to relate learners' and bring equality in meaning creation and knowledge construction between the learners' and the teachers. The teacher could hold conversations about the History of the learner's hometown. In conjunction, Heugh (2024) emphasises that translanguaging encourages using all communicative methods to create meaning and construct knowledge and comprehension. Heugh (2016), Mabule (2015), Makalela (2016), and Seals et al. (2019) (although from a different context – New Zealand) reiterate that the use of more than one language to communicate in South Africa and New Zealand is a regular activity that transpires almost daily, so it would not be very challenging to infuse it in the history classroom. However, Seals et al. (2019) only focus on the linguistic advantage of translanguaging; they do not expand to its semiotic and multimodal advantages. Therefore, translanguaging pedagogy is essential in facilitating smooth learning and teaching in History. With all that being recognised, it is equally critical for future research to expand on how History can be taught and used in assessments such as examinations and formal projects using translanguaging pedagogy to enhance learners' epistemic access.

### **STATEMENTS OF OPEN DATA, ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The articles used in the systematic literature review were extracted from journals and are open access.

No ethical clearance was needed to conduct this study. Only articles were used; no human participants participated in the study.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The first author constructed this systematic literature review, while the second and third author read and approved the final version of this systematic literature review for publication. This article forms part of the first authors' thesis.

### **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY**

Since this study is a systematic literature review, the data used is available on public domain and can be retrieved from the following the reference directives.

## References

- Abdulatief, S., & Guzula, X. (2024). Crossing the frontier from oral to written translanguaging for epistemic access in natural science. *Reading & Writing - Journal of the Literacy Association of South Africa*, 15(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v15i1.507>
- Bandara, W., & Syed, R. (2024). The role of a protocol in a systematic literature review. *Journal of Decision Systems*, 33(4), 583-600. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12460125.2023.2217567>
- Brown, L., & Kim, S. (2025). Intercultural im/politeness: perceptions of language choice and translanguaging in the Korean community in Australia. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 21(1), 193-220. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2023-0079>
- Burhanuddin, N. A. N., & Sritharen, S. T. (2024). Learning History: Are All Students Learns the Same? *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(3), 1932-1947. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v13-i3/20115>
- Chang, S. (2024). Developing preservice bilingual teachers' transformative agency. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 137, 104405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104405>
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011). *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Grades 7-9*. Department of Basic Education.
- García, O. & Uysal, H., 2024. A Conversation with Ofelia García: Critical Perspectives on Translanguaging and Adolescent English Learners. *RELC Journal*, 55(1), pp.274-284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882241229249>
- Heugh, K. (2015). Epistemologies in multilingual education: Translanguaging and genre—companions in conversation with policy and practice. *Language and Education*, 29(3), 280-285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.994529>
- Karunarathna, I., Bandara, S., Jayawardana, A., Alvis, K. D., Gunasena, P., Hapuarachchi, T., Ekanayake, U., Rajapaksha, K., Aluthge, P., & Gunathilake, S. (2024). *Creating value through literature reviews: Techniques for identifying research gaps. Technical Report: TRO 9 786249 2372108uvaWU784*. Uva Wellassa University.
- Labenko, O. & Shabunina, V. (2024). *English as Medium of Instruction in History education: problems and challenges. {Навчання Англійської Мови У Воєнний Час: Розмаїття Голосів Стійкості Та Снівчуття}*: Матеріали Міжнародної, P.62.
- Lu, C., & So, W. W. M. (2023). Translanguaging in scientific practices: a study of high school teachers in English Medium Instruction inquiry-based science classrooms. *International Journal of Science Education*, 45(10), 850-871. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2023.2175628>
- Mabule, D. R. (2015). What is this? Is it code switching, code mixing or language alternating. *Journal*

- of Educational and Social Research*, 5(1), 339-350. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2015.v5n1p339>
- Makalela, L. (2016). Ubuntu translanguaging: An alternative framework for complex multilingual encounters. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 34(3), 187-196. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2016.1250350>
- Makalela, L. (2022). *Language and institutional Identity in the Post-Apartheid South African Higher Education: Perspective on Policy and Practice*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85961-9>
- Mncwango, E. M., & Makhathini, F. N. (2021). Language-related Barriers to Learning in a Rural English as a Second Language Classroom in South Africa. *Language Education Forum*, 2(1), 15-19. <https://doi.org/10.12691/lef-2-1-3>
- Modisane, M. (2025). *Formal Access vs. Epistemological Access: A Critical Examination in the South African Education System*. University of Cape Town. Retrieved [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389356055\\_Formal\\_Access\\_vs\\_Epistemological\\_Access\\_A\\_Critical\\_Examination\\_in\\_the\\_South\\_African\\_Education\\_System](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389356055_Formal_Access_vs_Epistemological_Access_A_Critical_Examination_in_the_South_African_Education_System).
- Ndhlovu, F., & Makalela, L. (2021). *Decolonising Multilingualism in Africa: Recentering Silenced Voices from the Global South* (Vol.26). Multilingual Matters.
- Pakeerathy, S., & Karunakaran, T. (2023). *Facilitating Teaching and Learning process by using translanguaging in a Bilingual Science Classroom*, Carmelight - Uncanny Explorations: An International, Multi-disciplinary Conference on Delineating the Borders of the Uncanny, 22, I(B), 71-83.
- Paul, J., Khatri, P., & Duggal, H. K. (2023). Framework for developing impactful systematic literature reviews and theory building: What, Why and How? *Journal of Decision Systems*, 33(4), 537-550. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12460125.2023.2197700>
- Pérez Fernández, L. M. (2024). *Translanguaging in Multicultural Societies: Beyond Borders*. Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-74145-6>
- Seals, C. A., Pine, R., Ash, M., Olsen-Reeder, V. I., & Wallace, C. (2019). The use of translanguaging to bridge sociocultural knowledge in a puna reo. In C. A. Seals & V. Olsen-Reeder (Eds.), *Embracing multilingualism across educational contexts* (pp. 39-68). Victoria University Press.
- Singh, K. (2024). Mother tongue teaching and learning to be introduced in Grade 4 in 2025. *iOL*. Retrieved from <https://iol.co.za/mercury/news/2024-05-24-mother-tongue-teaching-and-learning-to-be-introduced-in-grade-4-in-2025/>
- Tai, K. W. (2024a). Documenting students' conceptual understanding of second language vocabulary knowledge: a translanguaging analysis of classroom interactions in a primary English as a

- 
- second language classroom for linguistically and culturally diverse students. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 15(6), 2775-2822. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2023-0181>
- Tai, K. W. (2024b). Shaping student responses into academic expressions: Analysing an English medium instruction history classroom from a translanguaging perspective. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 27(4), 550-580. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2023.2232089>
- Tai, K.W.H. (2025). Translanguaging in Multilingual Education. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics (Bilingual and Multilingual Education)*, C.A.Chapelle & A.Gao (Eds.). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal20391>
- Tai, K. W., Wei, L., & Loh, E. K. Y. (2025). Enhancing students' content and language development: Implications for researching multilingualism in CLIL classroom context. *Learning and Instruction*, 96, p.102083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2025.102083>
- Treffers-Daller, J. (2025). Translanguaging: What is it besides smoke and mirrors? *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 15(1), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.24015.tre>
- Wei, L., & Garcia, O. (2022). Not a first language but one repertoire: Translanguaging as a decolonising project. *RELC Journal*, 53(2), 313-324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221092841>
- Xin, S., Ping, W., & Qin. (2024). Twenty years development of translanguaging: A bibliometric analysis. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 21(1), 209-235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2021.2007933>