

Impact Case Studies Submission

Title of the Impact Case Study: “Realising Multilingual Education for isiXhosa and Kaaps speakers in our schools and universities: a CMDR case study”

Submitting University: University of the Western Cape

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Summary of the impact:

Several national departments and bodies, provincial departments, schools and parents, academic groups have benefited from the impact advanced by the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR). The research on translanguaging, linguistic citizenship and broadly decolonial multilingual education has given the National Department of Basic Education the scientific language to logical plot mother tongue-based bilingual education and by extension multilingual education. In the Western Cape alone, teachers and learners in grade 4 at 176 schools are now living, learning and dreaming of alternative futures through mother tongue-based bilingual education. Principals can plan and develop strategy to make space for the practices of isiXhosa and Kaaps at their schools. Teachers can update their pedagogical skill set and validate their own practices and that of the learners. Parents have additional choices of instruction for their children. isiXhosa and Kaaps learners feel included and unburdened by the cognitive load of foreign sounding, colonial and standard languages such as English and Afrikaans. At universities, isiXhosa and Kaaps are being implemented as part of language policies.

Underpinning academic work:

Field: Humanities and Social Sciences

Sub-Field: Multilingual Education, Mother tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)

Research: Conducted by Dr Robyn Tyler, Dr Margaret Probyn and Prof Quentin Williams in the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR)

The CMDR is one of four centres in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at UWC, and the work of the fellows and researchers engages in a broader project of intellectual reorientation, with the focus on a significant rethinking of multilingualism and the development of a new discourse with which to approach interdisciplinary work in the humanities and the education sciences. Our work also involves interrogating contemporary and historical African intellectual heritage through a critical review of the role of language and multilingualism in the colonial archive and in the light of critical framings of multilingualism and diversity. In this regard, the centre seeks to provide an intellectual space to further a critical rethinking of what kinds of questions we should be asking of language, literary and cultural study, especially questions about what it means to participate in a post-apartheid, decolonial humanities.

It is in this space, pathbreaking research has been conducted that has impacted the basic and higher education contexts of the Western Cape province, for example. The research conducted and published from the centre, within the Humanities and Social Sciences, have developed and incorporated the notions of translanguaging (see Probyn, 2015; 2019) Tyler, 2023, McKinney

and Tyler, 2024; linguistic repertoire (Stroud and Kerfoot, 2013; Tyler and McKinney, 2024), linguistic citizenship, multilingual literacies (Williams, Deumert and Milani, 2022; Probyn, 2024), and multilingualism and decoloniality (Guzula and Tuyler, 2025; Stroud and Williams, 2017; Bock and Stroud, 2021) with the explicit focus on improving the multilingual education conditions of historically marginalised languages such as isiXhosa and Kaaps (Williams, 2021).

References

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- Review of Robyn Tyler's book: <https://meridian.allenpress.com/her/article-abstract/94/2/315/501259/Book-Notes?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
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 - Tyler, R. & McKinney, C. (2024) Crossing the text frontier: teachers resisting African language texts for learning. *Reading and Writing*, 15 (1) <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v15i1.5011-9>
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 - Probyn, M. 2019. Pedagogical translanguaging and the construction of science knowledge in a multilingual South African classroom: challenging monoglossic/post-colonial orthodoxies. In *Classroom Discourse: Special Edition edited by Li Wei & Angel Lin* 10 (3-4) 216-236.
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 - Bock, Z and Stroud, C. 2021. *Language and Decoloniality in Higher Education: reclaiming voices from the South*. London: Bloomsbury Press: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/au/language-and-decoloniality-in-higher-education-9781350049093/>
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 - Williams, Q. 2021. Dai signs van osse future is hie: ways to raise the functions of Kaaps in our universities. *Signals Magazine*. Issue 4, UWC. See here: <https://www.uwc.ac.za/study/research-and-innovation/publications-and-reports/signals-fourth-edition-november-2021>

Narrative description of the impact:

Since 2021, the CMDR implemented three catalytic projects that spearheaded the improvement of isiXhosa and Kaaps in terms of its prestige and functions in multilingual contexts of the Western Cape. These projects are: the Languaging for Learning (L4L):

transforming classroom practices, the Bilingual Learning Materials Project, and the codification of Kaaps project.

L4L

The L4L project was an in-service teacher professional development programme aimed at Gr 8 and 9 Science, Mathematics and English First Additional Language teachers to address the challenges of teaching and learning through the medium of English in low-resourced schools where the majority of learners had limited opportunities to acquire the necessary proficiency in English in order to thrive academically.

The L4L programme aimed to build on teachers existing translanguaging skills which had been regarded as illicit by both education authorities and teachers themselves; and to develop planned, systematic, coherent and explicit multilingual pedagogies in line with the notion of Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE).

The L4L programme was implemented in 10 schools in Metro East and Metro Central. 48 teachers participated and so the programme impacted on approximately 10 000 learners.

The L4L programme consisted of workshop training and classroom-based support by university mentors (UWC, UCT, Stellenbosch and Rhodes Universities) with teachers visited approximately 5 times per term.

The impact of the L4L programme was documented through qualitative observation during workshops and classroom visits.

Bilingual Learning Materials

The Bilingual Learning Materials research project produced bilingual learning materials for isiXhosa and Kaaps. The first bilingual learning materials, iSayensi Yethu, emerged out of a workshops on multilingual teaching and learning for primary schools in the Western Cape, and collaboration with the National Basic Education department.

Over the last few years, the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) has celebrated the project milestones with the materials being accepted and implementation as part of Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) in South Africa. Contributing to the educational transformation of isiXhosa multilingual learners, the Grade 4 Natural Science and Technology, iSayensi Yethu, has seen an marked improvement in assessment results and classroom participation of isiXhosa learners, as the documentary *Free to Learn: Soze Ungayibambi* (watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuoZoG6CeeM&t=10s>) has shown.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has selected the material to assist with the implementation of MTBBE for isiXhosa learners, led by Dr Robyn Tyler. This monumental and historic decision means that from 2025 the learning materials will be in 176 schools and on the desks of over 23 000 Grade 4s, starting from January 2025. This involved a large-scale training exercise for isiXhosa teachers on how to develop multilingual pedagogies for the school curriculum.

Codification and Development of Kaaps and impact on Language Policy Transformation

Kaaps has been developed by Kaaps not only through the previous project, in the production of the Osse Science bilingual learning materials (see here: <https://bua-lit.org.za/osse-science-new-science-textbook-in-kaaps-and-english-is-launched/>). This

follows the development of the first dictionary of Kaaps, published in 2025 (see here details: <https://dwkaaps.co.za/>).

The dictionary of Kaaps project and Kaaps research has been a strong focus in the CMDR and in the service of linguistic, universities are making space to include it in the institution and curriculum and language policies.

UCT has just recently launched its new language policy, quite progressive, inclusive and multilingualism. It includes Kaaps as one of the languages for development,

Evidence and sources to corroborate the impact:

(For examples of types of evidence see Section 5 of the Guidance Note. For quantitative evidence please use publicly available figures as far as possible, with references. You may provide weblinks to items of evidence, but please keep to the Presentation Guidelines in Section 7 of the Guidance Note.)

The social impact of the programmes outlined in the previous section can be identified by the public facing engagement, transformations and citation communicated to the broader South African public and institutions. The impact of the scholarship and activities in realising multilingual education for the two groups of historically marginalised speakers – isiXhosa and Kaaps speakers – are a testament to change at the basic education and tertiary level. We break down the evidence of impact at the level of basic and higher education below:

1. To realise multilingual education at our schools, the National Basic Education Department and the Western Cape Education Department has made significant strides at implementing Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE) and as evidence from the documentary change to the recent circular sent (below), the impact at the level of national regulation of multilingual education demonstrates the impact of the CMDR's work:
 - Promoting multilingualism, translanguaging and mother tongue National Department of Basic Education, circular 18 of 2024: <https://bua-lit.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/MTBBE-IMPLEMENTATION-CIRCULAR.pdf>
2. The circular was proceeded by the Western Cape Education Department choosing the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) as the institution to spearhead the implementation of MtBBE. One the one hand, we produced an enrichment course and a documentary to assist with the incorporation of best practice, training and development materials. The focus is on MtBBE knowledge and the translanguaging concept in a free free enrichment course and documentary:
 - Getting started with Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE) course: <https://bua-lit.org.za/courses-page/getting-started-with-mother-tongue-based-bilingual-education-mtbbe/>
 - *Free to Learn: Soze Ungayibambi* (watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuoZoG6CeeM&t=10s>)
3. There has also been a citation in the media about the bilingual learning materials published and implemented via the CMDR developed:
 - Tyler, Robyn. 2022. Bilingual Education can work in South African schools: here's how:

<https://theconversation.com/bilingual-education-can-work-in-south-african-schools-heres-how-186780>

4. Over the last few years, we have worked to inform and transform language policies at higher education universities in the Western Cape province. Not only has this endeavour been aimed at language recognition but also linguistic justice for the speakers. Recently, and historically, the University of Cape Town, revised its policy to include the development of isiXhosa and Kaaps, amongst other official and non-official languages. This was also cited in the media. We list them here below:

Documentary Evidence - Evidence of Policy Change or public debate:

- UCT Revised Language Policy that includes isiXhosa and Kaaps:
<https://uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/media/documents/policy-lpc-language-december-2024.pdf>

Reviews and Citations – Citations in the media

- UCT's new language policy: embracing multilingualism in Higher Education
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UI7S1o-BrqQ>
- UCT identifies Afrikaaps, Khoekhoegowab, N|uu as languages for development:
<https://www.ewn.co.za/2025/03/17/uct-identifies-afrikaaps-khoekhoegowab-n-uu-as-languages-for-development>

Any other information considered relevant:

Signed off on behalf of the University by (Name, position and email address):

Date: 26 September 2025



Signature: DVC: Academic
Prof Monwabisi K Ralarala

Document Specifications:

- Please submit only one pdf document per case study, no bigger than 2 Mb.
- Please do not exceed 1,500 words in total.
- Please do not add attachments to your document.