

Humanising Digital Spaces: Disrupting Anglocentric LMS Norms through Critical Digital Translanguaging

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Abstract:

The design of learning management systems (LMS) is seldom linguistically neutral, often reifying English as a hegemonic language of power and exacerbating the marginalisation of multilingual students in South African higher education (Raban, 2026). This presentation reports on a component of a critical design-based research study that interrogated this Anglocentric bias by implementing a digitally-mediated translanguaging intervention.

Framed by Critical Theory and drawing on Humanising Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and Critical Digital Pedagogy (Stommel, 2018), the research introduced a 'My Presence' activity on Nelson Mandela University's LMS, Funda. The activity prompted first-year English Additional Language students to share their linguistic histories, cultural backgrounds, and self-representational imagery using their full linguistic repertoires, while also engaging in affirming peer commentary.

Findings demonstrate that intentional digital translanguaging (Raban, 2026) effectively challenged the LMS's monolingual norms, fostering a pedagogy of care, belonging, and humanisation. Participants reported enhanced recognition, inclusion, and agency, actively granting epistemic power to their mother tongues.

The study concludes that such critical, context-responsive digital design is essential for transformative, humanising education. It moves beyond technological novelty to enact pedagogical innovation that affirms identity, disrupts linguistic inequity, and cultivates relational learning spaces conducive to mutual humanisation.

This work contributes a practical framework for leveraging standard LMS tools to advance social justice and epistemic access in linguistically diverse digital learning spaces.

Keywords: *Digital Translanguaging, Critical Theory, Humanising Pedagogy, Critical Digital Pedagogy*



Mukhtar Raban is a lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities at Nelson Mandela University. He is the institutional coordinator of the Humanising Pedagogy Project in the Office of the DVC: Learning and Teaching, and a member of the university's Digital Humanities Hub. He is also a former research fellow of UCT's Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching. He currently lectures in professional English communication and language learning and teaching modules. He was awarded the university's 'Excellent Teacher of the Year' in 2015. His research interests include technology-enhanced language learning, digital humanities, humanising pedagogies and Critical Theory. He has presented at a few conferences, authored several book chapters, and has completed a PhD in education with a focus on critical digital language pedagogies.