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Teacher Perceptions on Using Translanguaging for Teaching Second and Foreign Languages in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The linguistic landscape of Sri Lanka underwent dramatic transformations owing to the influence of Indic languages and the colonization which resulted in increased language contact and hybridization of local languages. Advancements in digital and commercialization of language learning increased the demand for second and foreign language education. Whether language planning and education have undergone changes in par with the transformations in the linguistic landscape is questionable. Approaches and methodologies of second and foreign language learning in Sri Lanka remain entrenched in hegemonic practices of post-colonial language education. Taking on a convergent parallel design, the present study explored the potentials of incorporating translanguaging into second and foreign language education in Sri Lanka. Teachers of English as a second language and three other foreign languages were selected as the key informants of the study. Recognizing language as a transformative entity from a sociolinguistic stance, the study employed dynamic systems theory to evaluate the significant transformations of the linguistic landscape in Sri Lanka juxtaposed with developments in language studies. The findings have revealed that although the teachers have identified the need for shifting towards inclusive language education that recognizes the significance of learners' native language repertoire, the language education system is still entrenched in the conservative approaches. Teaching learning material and ideologies attached to second and foreign languages education have become 'leg irons' that constrain adaptation into the new language environment. National scale linguistic landscape surveys, transformations in methodologies, localized learning material and long-term language policy and planning initiatives are key requirements for ensuring inclusive, equitable and decolonized language education.

Keywords: *Translanguaging, Teacher Perceptions, Second and Foreign Language Education, Sri Lanka, Linguistic Landscape*

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Introduction

In the recent past there has not only been a divergent discussion on the role of L1 in teaching second and foreign languages, but also there is sufficient evidence to support the fact that the sphere of language teaching has seen pragmatic shifts in terms of instructional language. Rapid digitalization of learning environments, and at large, the whole social network, has resulted in more complex language contact. One of the key causes of significant shifts in 21st century language education is the multilingual turn. Dramatic digitalization of communication, migration and advancements in transportation have transformed monolingual and bilingual communities into multilingual communities. However, while technological innovation has largely contributed to linguistic pluralism, it has also fortified the dominance of popular lingua franca (Tonkin & Reagan, 2003, p. 7). Therefore, approaches to the study of language and its pedagogy have also seen changes in the 21st century.

The need for rediscovering existing methodologies and approaches to language teaching and learning have never been more significant in previous eras like the present. In particular, the role of L1 of learners, their native language repertoire and native culture are becoming increasingly popular topics of discussion within the sphere of foreign language learning. These shifts not only demonstrate a heightened awareness of the dynamic nature of language and the necessity for flexible, student-centered methodologies to cater to the diverse needs of learners in our interconnected global society, but also underscore a deeper acknowledgment of the need for integration of learners' native language into the learning process. Nevertheless, a contentious debate, often marked by intense disagreements, persists regarding the role of learners' first language (L1) in aiding the process of learning a second language (L2) or whether it should be actively discouraged (Littlewood & Shufang, 2022, p. 2). Translanguaging emerged as a substitute for monolingual approaches, which have been demonstrated to be less effective in burgeoning multilingual communities. In contrast to the traditional methods, translanguaging does not compartmentalize the learners' language repertoire and perceives it as a single dynamic entity, a unified language repertoire

that encompasses the linguistic features of all their languages (Fu et al., 2019, p. 24).

The methodologies employed in second and foreign language education in Sri Lanka were predominantly shaped by those developed for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL), reflecting the influential dominance of English education. Despite the growing multilingualism in Sri Lanka over the past decade, driven by factors such as digitalization of communication and tourism, there persists a necessity to revise pedagogical approaches through research to align with this evolving language environment. This study aims to address the existing research gap by conducting a systematic examination of teacher perspectives on the integration of translanguaging into the instruction of second and foreign languages in Sri Lanka. The investigation will explore whether teachers of second language (English) and foreign languages in Sri Lanka hold congruent views regarding the incorporation of translanguaging, particularly in relation to the use of the learners' native language (L1) within the classroom.

Review of Literature

The Linguistic Context of Sri Lanka – A Historical Overview

There is substantial evidence indicating that Sri Lanka had a predominantly multilingual character long before the era of colonialism. Introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka was one of the significant milestones of multilingualism in Sri Lanka which spurred the use of Sanskrit and Pali. Pali was the choice language of the Theravada Buddhists who considered it as an independent language **that** did not derive from Sanskrit (Gornall, 2020, p. 05). As Mahayana Buddhism gained popularity in Sri Lanka, scholarly monks who adhered to Mahayana principles began to focus on Sanskrit, as many Mahayana scriptures were composed in that language (Silva & Silva, 2005, p. 79). Dravidian languages, especially Tamil has existed in Sri Lanka for over 2000 years alongside the native and Indic languages. In fact, the very origin of the Sinhalese is associated with the arrival of

the Indian prince Vijaya and his clan around 543 BCE, marking the introduction of the local Indian vernacular to Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, the historical trade relationships with the Arab world resulted in the introduction of Arabic to Sri Lanka, a trend that gained momentum with the settlement of Muslims in the country.

Colonization marked a new era of multilingualism in Sri Lanka. The actions of colonial rulers not only instigated significant changes in the status of native languages but also influenced the overall linguistic behavior of the population (Ramesh & Wong, 2020, p. 16). The inflow of loanwords from Portuguese, Dutch, and English, accompanied by the socio-cultural traits associated with these languages, significantly transformed multilingualism in Sri Lanka. Words adopted from Portuguese have become essential elements of both Sinhala and Tamil vernacular and they have continued to maintain their 'currency' and 'vogue' within the local vernacular even after independence (Smith, 2011, p. 152). Words originating from Portuguese primarily pertain to everyday life, whereas Sinhala borrowings from Dutch are associated with legal and administrative facets (Chandralal, 2010, p. 41). These loanwords have become an integral part of modern Sinhala which are being frequently used in its vernacular further broadening the scope of multilingualism in Sri Lanka.

After 1815, English assumed a 'preeminent position' by becoming the principal medium in administrative, legislative, and professional spheres, in addition to the social prestige associated with it (Dharmadāsa, 1992, p. 35). The introduction of English marked a significant milestone in the linguistic context of Sri Lanka which also spurred controversy, social turbulence and, at times, conflict over language policy reforms. After the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom into the control of the British, they adopted a policy based on introducing English language, leading to substantial sociolinguistic transformations over time (Ramesh & Wong, 2020, p. 55). The introduction of the English centric education system had far-reaching effects on the society, culture and politics of Sri Lanka which haunts even the present-day Sri Lankan context. The British-led language policy implementations and reforms played a pivotal role in creating a

complex linguistic scenario in Sri Lanka, bringing about substantial transformations in the usage of both foreign and local vernaculars.

Despite the language purism attempts of hyper-nationalists in the post-colonial era of Sri Lanka, English continued its dominance over local lingua franca. In fact, in the absence of a systematic education like that of the British, the local elite aristocrats were easy to be persuaded to adopt the new sophisticated system. Unlike the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers, who found it necessary to integrate the local elite to streamline government administration, the local elite under British rule were readily drawn to the English education system (Hennayake, 2006, p. 77). With the prestige factor bestowed upon English and the competitive edge of English competence in administration under British rule, it gained extensive dominance in governance. Even though the Official Language Commission, formed in 1951, promoted the idea of declaring both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages, English continued to be the language of administration, mainly because the administration was predominantly controlled by the English-educated elite (Wyss, 2020, p.19).

During the post-colonial era in Sri Lanka, language politics emerged in a way unprecedented in history. Linguistic nationalism in post-colonial Sri Lanka was largely triggered by religious and ethnic struggle of the majority Sinhalese Buddhists who aimed towards ethnic and linguistic purism. As per Dissanayake (2011, p. 187), Sri Lanka witnessed two notable language purism movements. The first, led by Rev. Velivita Saranankara, was a response to the diminishing importance of Sinhalese and their native language in the eighteenth century. The second movement, known as the *Hela* movement, was initiated by Kumaratunga Munidasa in the twentieth century. However, Sinhala purism was challenged within its own linguistic characteristics which were predominantly of Indic origin. In fact, the dawn of the 21st century triggered new challenges to linguistic purism with more widespread use of *lingua franca* through digitalization of communication. Hence, the 21st century marked a new era of multilingualism in Sri Lanka, characterized by increased language contact unlike any previous period.

Post-colonial Second and Foreign Language Education in Sri Lanka

443 years of colonization not only transformed the linguistic landscape of Sri Lanka, but also made significant impacts on language education. While the Portuguese and Dutch influence on local vernacular was largely limited to lexical borrowing, English continued to have a far-reaching sociolinguistic influence on the Island's linguistic landscape. As in many other former colonies over the globe, English in Sri Lanka is bestowed upon social prestige, an elitist factor and thereby, superiority over local vernacular. It is for this reason that English is called *Kaduwa*, in Sri Lanka, a word that literally means sword and figuratively refers to the power dynamics bestowed upon English language which can sever the less fortunate who are ill proficient in English (Medawattegedera, 2023, p. 66). The superior symbolism attached to English has further been made stronger in post-independent Sri Lanka despite the language policy reforms which elevated the status of local vernacular. The debate on the existence and promotion of a Sri Lankan version of English could be considered as an extension of this issue. While there is empirical evidence to support that a considerable number of Sri Lankans believe on the existence of Sri Lankan English (Mukherjee, 2012, p. 195), it is not yet recognized by many others who still resort to the conservative British English. According to Hettiarachchi (2013, p. 10), the prestige associated with English has served as a motivating factor for ESL teachers in choosing their profession.

The country's primary schools discontinued using English as the medium of instruction in 1946. Instead, English was introduced as a second language from grade 3 onwards for all students. The policy was driven by the principles of social justice and equal opportunity for the majority (Fernando, 1996, p. 495). Later English became a link language by the Chapter IV of the Constitution adopted in 1978 (Official Languages Commission, 2022). With the rapid global promotion of English language in the first decades of 21st century following digitalization of communication networks, English language education in Sri Lanka became one of the key concerns of the administration. However, despite sustained efforts spanning decades

to enhance the English language proficiency of rural learners, the majority of learners still exhibit unsatisfactory levels of competence. As per the 2018 English Impact Report from the British Council in Sri Lanka, a mere 0.1% of the surveyed sample demonstrated proficiency as CEFR Level C, and an additional 2.0% fell into Level B2. The majority, constituting 58.2%, were categorized as A1 level, while another 29.2% were classified as A2 level (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018, p. 44). Examining the students' performances in English language in two significant examinations conducted in Sri Lanka in 2006, Wijesekera (2014, p. 1) argues that the prevailing public perception criticizing the failure of English language education in Sri Lanka to meet its intended objectives is not without merit.

While recent research in English language teaching has associated the shortcomings of English education in Sri Lanka to various factors such as learning materials, teacher training, language policy, and planning, minimal emphasis has been placed on the medium of instruction in the second and foreign language classroom. The need for adapting conservative approaches to teaching languages is at a critical juncture since the language situation of Sri Lanka has changed drastically in recent times. Most importantly, the dramatic shifts in the use of L1 and L2 in the second and foreign language classroom globally, most local teachers in Sri Lanka still resort to conservative total immersion approaches. There is a notable research gap in this field too since the role of L1 and the native language repertoire of the learners are not adequately paid attention in recent ELT research in Sri Lanka. Even lesser emphasis has been placed on this aspect in recent research on teaching foreign languages in Sri Lanka.

Translanguaging as an Alternative to Monolingual Approaches

Modern-day approaches to bilingual and multilingual education have seen significant shifts from those of the previous decades. As claimed by García (2011, p. 82), one of the key differences between total immersion and bilingual education is that the latter facilitates more meaningful and equitable education. Garcia further emphasizes that 21st century language education prioritizes integration of language and content. Approaches to language teaching

of the twentieth century such as the audio-lingual method were extensively target language-oriented methods. These methods were dedicated for realizing the colonial dream of depriving colonies of their native languages and infusing the language, culture, and ideology of the *lingua franca*. As an alternative to these monolingual ideologies, language educators and researchers have begun opening spaces for translanguaging in language classrooms in the past decade (Garcia, 2023).

Translanguaging is acknowledged as one of the latest approaches to teaching second and foreign languages. It stands out as a commonly employed concept associated with the recent trends in the exploration of multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017, p. 3). As claimed by Hungwe & Mbirimi-Hungwe (2020, p. 03) translanguaging is integral to a movement within the critical post-structuralist paradigm, challenging constrained concepts of language in favor of a more fluid understanding that questions standard language ideologies. One of the key rationales behind the concept of translanguaging is to mitigate the sense of alienation experienced by learners in a new language environment. The native linguistic and cultural repertoire of the learner were largely neglected by the total immersion approaches, thus leading to a sense of insecurity within the classroom. As per Sembiante & Tian (2023, p. 920), Translanguaging has the potential for counteracting monoglossic bias in three ways, namely, (a) boosting students' cognitive abilities and language acquisition, (b) establishing inclusive pathways for everyone to engage in learning communities, and (c) implementing fair, just, and humanizing teaching practices in multilingual classrooms. The neglect of the native language repertoire of less proficient learners in Sri Lankan second language education is a major factor contributing to the failure of the system, leading to the alienation of these students in the classroom.

Translanguaging also diversifies the learning experience in the classroom by incorporating otherness into the learning experience. According to the findings of an empirical study by Tsokalidou & Skourtou (2020, p. 232), translanguaging serves as a potent method for fostering a deeper understanding of the world, providing openness, adaptability, and generating additional opportunities for teachable

moments. Monoglossic approaches were predominantly concentrated on infusing the learners with target language and its culture where the content was laden with dominant ideologies. As claimed by Dumrukcic (2022), translanguaging is characterized as a 'conscious socio-political act' which serves the purpose of establishing a connection with the audience, fostering a sense of community inclusion. The prospects of translanguaging extend well beyond mere language competence into ensuring inclusiveness and social harmony within education. Thus, translanguaging allows learners of minority and marginalized groups also feel secure inside the language classroom.

The utilization of the first language (L1) in language classrooms has faced significant criticism from conservative monoglossic language learning approaches, which argue that it might impede the acquisition of the target language. Rooted in monolingual ideologies and conflicting with research findings, pedagogical practices frequently fail to acknowledge the importance of minority languages in the learning of students (Duarte, 2016, p. 3). Many of these monolingual approaches compartmentalized each language within the learner's repertoire, treating them as distinct spaces in the language classroom, isolating one from the other. In contrast, translanguaging perceives all languages in the learner's repertoire as operating within a common space. It emphasizes the dynamic use of multiple languages to enhance learning to make the learning environment more welcoming to children of diverse linguistic backgrounds (MacSwan, 2017, p. 191). In contrast with the monolingual approaches which dissuade any use of L1, translanguaging promotes the positive and purposeful integration of learners' L1 in the classroom.

Methodology

Materials and Methods

A questionnaire was utilized as the key primary data collection method which was distributed among foreign language teachers in Sri Lanka. Snowball sampling was used for reaching informants through known informants. The questionnaire was distributed among teachers of English, Chinese, Japanese and Hindi which are four of the most

popular foreign languages in most parts of Sri Lanka. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items in total divided into four sections. To ensure a thorough exploration of teachers' perceptions, distinct sets of items were designed for each perspective, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the subject matter. Composition of the questionnaire is demonstrated in Table 1. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and both Sinhala and English were used as instruction language in the questionnaire. The purpose of the study was elicited in the beginning of the questionnaire and anonymity of the informants was ensured in the demographic information. All informants provided the information with full prior consent.

Table 1 – Composition of the Questionnaire

Dimension	Type	Items
Demographic information and informant language dynamics	Multiple Choice, Short Answer	07
Instruction language in the classroom	Multiple Choice	06
Classroom language setting	Multiple Choice	05
Translanguaging pedagogy	Multiple Choice	03
	Total	21

The questionnaire was distributed among the informants and was kept active for a period of two weeks. A total of 102 responses were received within the stipulated period out of which a total of 75 responses were selected for the study. 30 responses were selected from second language English and 15 responses were selected from each of the other three foreign languages. More responses were selected from English since its responses were compared with the other foreign languages. Exclusion criteria for selection of responses was time of receipt. The demographic profiles of the informants are demonstrated in table 2. A Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to measure the reliability and the results ranged from 0.732 to 0.872 which indicate that the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable (Adadan & Savasci, 2011, p. 524).

Table 2 - Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Aspect	Category	Frequency	%
Age group	25-30	29	38.7
	31-35	24	32.0
	36-40	8	10.7
	41-45	6	8
	Above 45	8	10.7
Teaching Language	English	30	40
	Japanese	15	20
	Chinese	15	20
	Hindi	15	20
Teaching Setting	Urban	38	50.7
	Semi Urban	31	41.3
	Rural	6	8
Teaching Experience	1-3 years	14	18.7
	4-6 years	26	34.7
	7-10 years	13	17.3
	More than 10 years	22	29.3
Multilingual Competence	Bilingual	25	33.3
	Trilingual	36	48.0
	Quadrilingual	10	13.3
	More than 4 Languages	4	5.3
English Competence	Excellent	20	26.7
	Good	42	56.0
	Average	13	17.3
	Poor	0	0.0
	Very Poor	0	0.0

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 teachers (3 English teachers and another one from each foreign language) in which the teachers' in class experience regarding instruction language, language ideology, colonial ideology in language education in Sri Lanka, role of native language and its culture in the learning process. Interview data were conducted in the form of casual discussion in order to retrieve in-depth insights of teachers into the topics. The interviews were conducted in informants' first language and the information elicited from the interviews were first recorded and scripted digitally later.

Data Measures and Metrics

The research employed a convergent parallel design, following the methodology outlined by Creswell and Pablo-Clark (2011). This approach involved the simultaneous collection of quantitative data through a questionnaire and qualitative data through interviews. The subsequent analysis involved comparing and contrasting these two sets of data to draw comprehensive insights. Numerical data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 21. Descriptive statistics were drawn for each section of the four sections of the questionnaire. Qualitative data were approached both from language competence, sociolinguistic, and language politics perspectives. The power dynamics associated with learning second and foreign languages in Sri Lanka was analyzed from a critical sociolinguistics perspective examining power dynamics, language ideologies, and the impact of translanguaging on challenging linguistic hierarchies and linguistic discrimination. Dynamic systems theory was incorporated to understand translanguaging as a dynamic and adaptive linguistic system, where language use evolves over time in response to varying social and contextual factors.

Results

In the analysis, the total 75 responses have been analyzed as a full data set at occasions while the second language respondents (n =30) and the foreign language respondents (n=45) have been separately analyzed and compared where necessary. Taking on a convergent parallel approach, the present analysis compares and contrasts data from the questionnaire with the information extracted from the interviews. Most teachers 41.3% (n=31) have answered that

they use both Sinhala and English in the classroom other than the target language in the classroom while 36% of the teachers (*n*=27) have answered that they mostly use Sinhala to supplement the target language. Out of the 45 foreign language respondents, 48.9% (*n*=22) have responded that they use both Sinhala and English while another 42.2% (*n*=19) have responded that they use Sinhala in the classroom other than the target language. Only 8.9% (*n*=4) have responded that they use English in the foreign language classroom.

The interviews revealed a variety of challenges related to instructional language within the classroom. The teachers are compelled to switch to their mother tongue frequently in the classroom due to low competency of a considerable number of learners in a class in target language. In addition, all the informants who teach foreign languages reported that the textbooks they employ exclusively provide instructions in the English language. This poses a challenge for learners with limited proficiency in English, making it challenging for them to comprehend the meanings of words and descriptions. The following excerpt from an interview will provide further insight into this situation.

> Informant 2: *Most of my students are good in their grammar. But they are reluctant to speak in English no matter how hard I try to convince them that making mistakes is not to be worried. And in most classes I teach, there are around 30% students who are very poor in both comprehension and speaking. Most of the time I resort to Sinhala when they do not understand the lesson but sometimes even I am doubtful whether that is correct because there is the notion in Sri Lanka that the teacher should never use L1 in the classroom.*

Table 3 – Target Language Competence of Learners

	Foreign Languages				Second Language (English)			
	Freq	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Freq	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Excellent	6	13.3	13.3	13.3	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
Good	20	44.4	44.4	57.8	7	23.3	23.3	40.0

Average	18	40.0	40.0	97.8	16	53.3	53.3	93.3
Poor	1	2.2	2.2	100.0	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
Very Poor	-	-	-	-	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0		30	100.0	100.0	

One of the significant findings of this study is that the foreign language teachers have shown more confidence on their learners' language competence than the second language (English) teachers. As elicited in Table 3, there is a considerable difference between the 'good' and 'average' rates of second and foreign language learners' target language competence. These data align closely with the findings presented in the 'English Impact Report' by Shepherd and Ainsworth (2018).

Table 4 - Descriptive Statistics - Role of L1 in the Classroom

Item	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Using Mother Tongue in the Classroom	75	1.00	3.00	1.9467	.36367
Encouraging Students to Use L1 in the Classroom	75	1.00	3.00	2.5600	.59820
Perception about code-switching	75	1.00	3.00	1.4267	.75647

Majority of the informants 86.7% (*n*=65) have responded that L1 could be constructively utilized in the classroom. Only 9.3% of the informants (*n* =7) have responded that teachers should refrain from the use of L1 in the classroom at all costs. Most of the informants have demonstrated a positive attitude towards code-switching in learning languages. 73.3% of the informants (*n*=55) have responded that code-switching could be constructively utilized for developing language competence of the learners. While 12% of the informants have responded that code-switching is very useful for learning languages, only 10.7% of the informants have responded that code-switching should be discouraged. Nevertheless, as elicited in the following excerpt from the interviews, the some teachers believe that code-

switching could have both favorable and unfavorable impacts on language learning.

> Informant 1: *Use of code-switching has its benefits as well as downsides. Some students can improve language skills of students because when they struggle with words and phrases, they can still communicate without feeling left out. However, when someone gets used to code-switching it can become fossilized and can influence language accuracy in the long run.*

The informants have responded with mixed opinions to the question whether the informants feel insecure to use target language in the classroom. 42.7% (*n*=32) of the teachers have answered that the learners do feel insecure while 33.3% (*n*=25) have responded that the learners feel insecure 'sometimes'. Only 24% (*n*=18) of the teachers have responded that their learners do not feel insecure in speaking in the target language. Out of the second language (English) group, 60% of the informants have responded that the learners feel insecure to speak in the target language with another 16.7% (*n*=5) who have responded that the learners feel insecure 'sometimes'. Only 23.3% (*n*=7) have responded that their learners do not feel insecure to use target language in the classroom. 37.3% of the sample (*n*=28) have responded that if a student is unable to give an answer in the target language, they give the answer by themselves while the remaining 62.7% (*n*=47) have responded that they allow the learners to switch to their L1 or L2 in case if they are unable to answer a question in the target language.

Table 5 – Role of Local Culture in Learning

	Representation of Local Culture in Textbooks				Total immersion into target culture			
	Freq	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Freq	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	39	52.0	52.0	52.0	34	45.3	45.3	45.3
No	36	48.0	48.0	100.0	41	54.7	54.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0		75	100.0	100.0	

Information elicited in the interviews also demonstrate that the teachers, especially those who teach foreign languages, are challenged with the lack of learning materials that integrate elements of the local culture. All the informants claimed that they are compelled to use global textbooks in the absence of localized material and unfortunately, these materials often carry ideological elements from the target culture, leading to a sense of alienation among learners. The following excerpt from the interviews would provide further insight into the matter. However, there were some teachers who strongly believed that learners should fully immerse into the target culture to achieve a comprehensive learning experience.

> Informant 4: *One of the biggest issues we have is that there are no Sinhala explanations and word meanings in the textbooks we use. The language of the explanations in the grammar section is too complex for the learners and sometimes even for us. Most of the time I totally ignore the grammar notes in the book and make my own ones in a way that students can understand easily.*

56% of the informants (*n*=42) have responded that they are familiar with translanguaging while the remaining 44% (*n*=33) have claimed that they are not familiar with the method. Only 53% out of the foreign language group (*n*=24) are familiar with translanguaging while the remaining 46.7% (*n*=21) are not familiar with the approach. 60% of the English language teachers (*n*=18) are familiar with translanguaging and the remaining 12% (*n*=12) are not familiar with it. Out of the 42 informants who are familiar with translanguaging,

83.3% (*n*=35) have responded that translanguaging is a constructive approach in language education while only 16.7% (*n*=7) have responded that translanguaging is not suitable for teaching their language. From the interviews it was understood that the teachers have not had an exposure to the developments in language teaching methods of the 21st century. Especially, most teachers are unaware of the current trends in bilingualism, multilingualism, and their impact on language education. It was also revealed that apart from the initial training received years ago in methods like the Audio-lingual Method, Direct Method, and Communicative Language Teaching, the teachers have not undergone any further training in innovative language learning approaches.

Discussion

Almost every major language benchmarking framework and guideline in the world have recognized the significance of incorporating multilingualism into language education. As mentioned in the CEFR companion volume, while developing their pluricultural repertoire, the social agent actively leverages diverse linguistic resources to communicate proficiently in multilingual settings or classic mediation scenarios where there is no shared language among participants (CEFR, 2018, p. 161). In addition, the aim of language education has extended well beyond enhancing mere linguistic competence of learners into creating more dynamic individuals who are able to 'integrate language skills with 21st century skills' (ACTFL, 2011, p. 1). The crucial inquiry revolves around the preparedness of societies entrenched in colonial ideologies and dominant language practices to embrace these significant changes. It is of paramount importance to explore and understand the sociolinguistic dynamics of the present-day language landscape to adapt existing approaches to language education.

In quest for such understanding of the dynamics of Sri Lankan linguistic landscape and on the prospects of popularizing translanguaging on such understanding, the present study has revealed several significant implications. When the information elicited from the teachers are juxtaposed with the historical developments of language education in Sri Lanka, it could be understood that although

the teachers are ready to embrace the transformations in the contemporary linguistic landscape, the education system itself is not prepared for such adaptations. Sri Lanka is in critical requirement of language planning and language education reforms to meet the dynamic needs of the changing linguistic landscape of the nation. As argued by Mitchell (1996, p.17), in a changing world of economic imbalance and political instability, active participation in policy discussions is essential to uphold pluralistic traditions, ensuring progress and equal educational opportunities, particularly in addressing issues like standard language instruction, instructional mediums, and decisions on foreign language education. The lack of reliable statistical data on multilingualism in Sri Lanka is a critical issue in both language research and implementing language planning initiatives which can only be complemented through a comprehensive national survey on use of languages. It is also important to design a reliable framework and a benchmarking mechanism for teaching second and foreign languages in Sri Lanka.

Ensuring that the learners' native linguistic and cultural identity is given an adequate credit they deserve and identifying the importance of them in the learning process are crucial in 21st century language learning. As argued by Kumar (2015, p. 4) the colonial education system had a predetermination that the indigenous knowledge system and culture were 'deficient' and thus were dissociated from the so called 'elitist' new knowledge system. Examining available literature reveals that the local elites who willingly adopted colonial ideologies harbored disdain for local culture and traditional knowledge, leading to the cultivation of an inferiority complex toward native ideology. Similar to the situation in Africa described by Mhango (2018, p. 21), the 'toxic' and 'hegemonic' colonial education system not only deconstructed the local knowledge system, but also established a long term 'dependent' mindset among the indigenous population. A key strategy for reducing the influence of ideologies attached to dominant *lingua franca* is to minimize the use of global textbooks and switch to localized textbooks. As claimed by Gheisari & Akbari (2022, p. 19) it is important to consider the diversity of cultures, their modes of

interaction using the target language, cross-cultural exchanges, and the necessity for a dialogue between cultures in compiling textbooks.

A significant concern in Sri Lankan language education is the absence of research on the current trends and changes in the linguistic landscape of the country. While there are some developments in second language research, there are wider research gaps in pedagogy of foreign languages. Each foreign language can also conduct barometer surveys to identify the trends, weaknesses and needs in the field. Especially, the sociolinguistic dynamics of language use in Sri Lanka, language politics of postwar Sri Lanka and role of second and foreign languages in the country's development have been largely neglected in the contemporary research. Especially, lack of classroom research is a critical shortfall in Sri Lankan language education. Classroom research is an effective method for teachers to enhance their own teaching while it can also be instrumental in testing, evaluating the priorities of a school (Hopkins, 2014, p. 1).

To familiarize teachers with translanguaging and popularizing the method in language education in Sri Lanka, adequate training is essential for both teachers and administrators. The aims of translanguaging extend well beyond mere linguistic competence into inclusive education, equity and equality, intercultural competence, tolerance of otherness and even social justice. As claimed by (Wei, 2023, p. 1), it is a mistake to understand translanguaging merely as a language teaching strategy. It is a dynamic approach that extends beyond multilingualism by challenging raciolinguistic ideologies that perceive bilingual learners as having distinct languages and language experiences. Wang (2022, p. 1) perceives translanguaging as a decolonising approach that can facilitate a pluriversal epistemological stance that promotes plurilingualism in language education. It is an approach to language learning that can bring learners of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds together, especially those of marginalized communities. As a country with a recent history of ethnic tensions, and heating debates on language policy, the education system of Sri Lanka and the whole country at large could be benefited much from translanguaging. However, as emphasized previously, comprehensive research is in much need on 'how to' and 'where to' incorporate the approach in a national scale.

Conclusion

In the context of language education, translanguaging, a pedagogical approach that encourages students to use their entire linguistic repertoire fluidly and intentionally for effective communication and learning, has gained prominence as educators recognize its potential to foster deeper language understanding and cross-cultural competence. The findings of the present study reveals that these potentials have not yet been thoroughly explored in the context of Sri Lanka. Although it is several decades since the nation has ended four centuries of colonial rule, traces of colonial hegemony still haunt language education in Sri Lanka where both learners and teachers remain entrenched in the conservative teaching methods that allow little or no space for the learners' native language repertoire. The empirical findings clearly demonstrate that the teachers have identified the need for making use of the full language repertoire of the learners. However, the language education system, prescribed language material and ideologies attached to teaching and learning of second and foreign languages have become 'leg irons' that constrain adaptation into the new language environment. It is evident from the findings that these issues are more critical in second language (English) education in Sri Lanka where little progress has been made after decades of rigorous efforts for improving English competency of learners. The present study also emphasizes that there are ideological constraints associated with the shortfalls of English language education in Sri Lanka which have their sources deeply rooted in colonial dogma. Further research is essential for exploring the potentials of introducing and popularizing translanguaging in Sri Lankan second and foreign language education, especially, in terms of sociolinguistic dynamics of the new language environment, language policy and planning, the role of L1 and L2 in language education, and approaches to localizing teaching learning material.

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