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# **A Critical Evaluation of Using Translanguaging for Teaching Chinese in Sri Lanka: Native Language Repertoire vs. Language Ideology**

**Noel Dassanayake**

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

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## **Abstract**

Despite the dramatic shifts language teaching approaches have undergone over the globe in the recent past, pedagogy of second and foreign languages in Sri Lanka have largely remained resorted to traditional immersion education which accommodate limited consciousness towards the socio-linguistic and cultural dimensions of non-native learners and teachers. The present study is an evaluation of the prospects of employing translanguaging for teaching Chinese to Sri Lankan learners. The study is supported by empirical data of both qualitative and quantitative nature obtained from 65 informants in a higher education context in Sri Lanka. Findings of the study indicate that conservative monolingual approaches, largely triggered by hegemonic colonial ideologies and practices, are proven futile in modern-day Sri Lankan multilingual setting. The discrepancies of global textbooks coupled with absence of localized textbooks, minimal learner engagement triggered by total immersion and alienation within distant dominant cultural ideology of target language, have resulted in an indifference towards the dynamics of learners' native language repertoire. Based on existing literature on similar settings, the study perceives that the potentials of translanguaging extends beyond mere linguistic competence and has the aptitude to promote learner autonomy, harmonious existence, inclusive learning and decolonized mindset.

## **Keywords**

Translanguaging, multilingualism, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Sri Lanka, native language repertoire

## **1. Introduction**

Starting from the initial contacts of native Sri Lankan languages with Sanskrit, Pali etc. Indic languages and Dravidian languages, and further escalating under Portuguese, Dutch and English colonizers, Sri Lanka has largely been a multilingual community throughout its known history. Nevertheless, the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 who were the first European colonizers to reach in Sri Lanka marked a new era of multilingualism in Sri Lanka (Irshad, 2018, p.110). Along with the developments in recent decades in mobilization, foreign trade, inbound tourism and digitalized intercultural communication, several

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foreign languages including Chinese, Japanese, French have become popular in Sri Lanka. The need for rediscovering, redesigning and implementing language policies and language education approaches has been of critical significance in a digital age when the linguistic dynamics of diverse youth communities are much different from that of post-colonial Sri Lanka.

The notions that second language competence is comparable to monolingual competence and the key objective of language learning is ‘ideal native competence’ have been seriously challenged recently with the multilingual turn in language learning (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998, p. 17-19). Building plurilingual competencies is one of the key aspects in contemporary language proficiency benchmarks such as CEFR framework which emphasizes the significance of switching between languages or dialects, mediating between individuals with no common language etc. plurilingual skills (“Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment,” 2012, p. 28). As claimed by Boeckmann et al. (2012, p. 23), an environment which values plurilingualism can enable learners to develop a strong and positive sense of their own identities while promoting confidence, awareness and pleasure of multilingual competencies. In the case of Sri Lanka, although language pluralism has been a topic of discussion over the past few decades, the continual struggle between haunting internal colonization of ‘prestigious English’ and native language ideology has a hampering dominance over realization of the ‘plurilingual dream’. Despite the considerable developments in the discourse on multilingualism and multilingual education in Sri Lanka has seen during recent decades, little has been studied on the role of native language repertoire and native culture in second and foreign language learning. The lingering colonial English ideology has resulted in resorting to traditional immersion education with little or no consideration on the dynamics of learners’ native language repertoire.

The present study is an attempt to investigate how translanguaging could be utilized in the context of teaching Chinese language in Sri Lanka for optimal utilization of learners’ native language repertoire in the learning process. The growing dissatisfaction over existing theoretical concepts on language teaching has demanded researchers in applied linguistics to rethink the orientations to language in a post-globalized world of rich linguistic repertoires (Lau & Viegen, 2020, p. 4). The emergence of translanguaging is perceived as a promising approach towards a move from traditional perspectives on monolingual education towards a dynamic perception of multilingualism and multilingual ideologies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p.1). Based on empirical data and existing literature the study aims to critically examine to which extent do the existing instruction models, textbooks, the role of culture and native language repertoire are favorable for implementing translanguaging as a novel pedagogical approach. As claimed by Wang (2022, p. 3) translanguaging has been largely ignored in the field of Chinese language education which largely resorts to traditional monolingual ideologies and pedagogies associated with them. The present study is also aimed at filling this research gap both in the local context in Sri Lanka and global context at large.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The multilingual turn and teaching languages

Rapid digitalization of communication, enhanced virtual and physical mobilization potentials triggered by technological advancements and migration have brought forth a new era of multilingualism to the 21<sup>st</sup> century globe. The world has been multilingual throughout its known history of human civilization and what’s new about multilingualism is the novel approaches and perspectives on multilingualism. As claimed by Aronin & Singleton (2012, p. 42), contemporary developments in multilingualism extend well beyond mere expansion of an individual’s language knowledge or augmentation of the number of languages, multilinguals, and multilingual states. Recent trends and shifts in multilingualism could be identified from several perspectives.

The most evident of such transformations is the definition of multilingualism itself in the contemporary society. As claimed by Cenoz (2009, p. 2), multilingualism is an individual as well as a social phenomenon which can be approached in multiple perspectives such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology or sociolinguistics. The notion that ‘multilingualism implies multiculturalism’ is triggered from the concept that the adaption to the new culture entails acquisition of new knowledge together with communication and inferential competencies (Ennaji, 2005, p. 1). The cultural turn in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in new paradigm-shifts in language learning. Zotzmann & Hernández-Zamora (2013, p. 4) argue that last decades of the 20th century saw a dramatic turn in the traditional perspectives of culture in language learning towards an interplay between language, culture and identity which promotes intercultural competencies. Language teaching is perceived as a social and cultural practice which plays a key role in ‘cultural and linguistic globalization’ (Risager, 2006, p. 25).

Secondly, the multilingual turn has expanded the traditional linguistic limitations of language studies in a transdisciplinary shift which has incorporated sociolinguistic, socio-cultural etc. aspects into language learning. As claimed by Liddicoat (2018, p. 6), working with multilingualism is an interdisciplinary phenomenon which extends beyond working across languages. Multilingualism is an integral aspect of modern sociolinguistics which works with the diversity of languages, dialects and their respective languages in different social classes and contexts. For example, complex sociolinguistic features of urban communities promote linguistic diversity as well as uniformity where several languages and dialects function in harmony while some immigrants from rural communities may abandon their native languages to embrace iconic modern languages to merge with urban communities (Romaine, 2000, p. 66). The behavior of these dynamics in the language learning process has direct and indirect influences on language acquisition of second and foreign language learners. For example, the functions of identity in language learning were not distinctive in the traditional linguistics and sociolinguistics as in modern sociolinguistics and the relevance of these issues extends from the language learner to language teacher, educator and the researcher (Khatib & Ghamari, 2011, p. 1703).

The role of culture in language acquisition has also been rediscovered and redefined along with the multilingual turn. The role of culture in language education itself and the representation of native and target culture in the teaching learning process have been debated over decades among researchers of second and foreign language. Byram (1991, p. 18) argues that language is not merely a reflector of an ‘objective cultural reality’ but is an integral, symbolic part of the whole which shapes and in turn is shaped by sociocultural actions, beliefs and values. In challenging the stereotypical ways in which culture is represented in Indian EFL textbooks, Wandel emphasizes the importance of bridging the ‘relatively large cultural gap’ between native and target culture in teaching material (Wandel, 2003, p. 72).

Despite these novel prospects and potentials of multilingualism, the language of the larger ethnicities within regions, and in global context, the dominant *lingua francas* have continually had an upper hand over multilingualism and multilingual education. Some scholars even argue that the very nature of multilingualism itself is making it vulnerable. Even after decades of colonization, the ‘English Only’ discourse has been able to force minority and subordinate social groups to adopt dominant discourse values in fear of being marginalized which Gonzalez refers to as ‘autocolonization’ (Gonzalez & Melis, 2014, p. xxviii). A similar situation could be observed in Sri Lanka where a dispute over selection of an official language sprung out after the country gained independence over British colonization (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 72) and a major juncture of this conflict could be considered as the Sinhala only policy in 1956 (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016, p.2).

The leading role of English as a *lingua franca* extends to its influence into political, commercial, and military worlds of the European nationals while it was bestowed a symbolic value among the elite fractions in post-colonial contexts (Phillipson, 2009, p. 92). In fact, the pedagogy of most other foreign languages and how their specific linguistic characteristics relate to their pedagogy have been largely neglected while key implications on foreign language teaching have been concentrated on teaching of English. In the scarcity or absence of specific approaches to other foreign languages have resulted in resorting to pedagogical approaches designed for teaching English as a second or foreign language.

## 2.2 New perspectives on the use of L1 and Translanguaging as an emerging approach towards multilingual education

The role of L1 in second language acquisition has been seriously debated among scholars as an important issue (Wu, 2016, p. 3). From a bird's-eye view, recent studies on the use of L1 in the second and foreign language classroom has shown a remarkable shift from the earlier approaches (Shabir, 2017, p. 45). As claimed by Evans et al. (2020, p. 214), although the use of L1 has been outlawed by blind faith in naturalistic approaches, largely supported by mainstream theoretical linguistics, its potentials have also been re-evaluated and validated in recent pedagogical approaches. Yavuz (2012, p. 4340) reveals that the practical realities have overshadowed the theoretical assumptions and compelled the methodologist to re-evaluate the use of L1 in ELT classroom. While traditional monolingual approaches have been challenged, there is sufficient empirical evidence which drive away the negativism over the use of L1 in language classroom (Du, 2016, p. 1).

Zulfikar (2019, p. 44-48) has revealed several crucial benefits of using L1 in L2 classrooms. The less proficient learners can engage in clear and effective communication which a total immersion classroom may not facilitate them to. Use of L1 can create a 'collaborative dialog' among the learners while it can also save time. It can also assist teachers to bridge the critical authenticity gap in the L2 used within the language classroom. As claimed by Yi-chun & Yi-ching (2010, p. 93), the use of L1 could assist learners to drive away the insecurities they feel in the foreign language classroom while at the same time it could facilitate their comprehension skills. Salama Jawhar (2018, p. 307) has examined the use of L1 in the L2 classroom as a source of humor and proposes that it could facilitate a 'tremendous amount of interactional work' and create a 'warm classroom atmosphere'. As claimed by Ismaili (2015, p. 190), the use of L1 in a language classroom could be instrumental for learners for them to cope with their difficulties in communication and interaction while they could also constructively utilize the prior knowledge of their native language.

The use of L1 in L2 and FL classroom has become a question of 'how' rather than a question of 'why' (Lo & Lin, 2018, p. 88). In this light, Forman has introduced seven principles for using L1 in the L2 classroom as L2 knowledge, solidarity, collaboration, time-effectiveness, comprehensibility, inclusivity and contingency (Forman, 2016, p. 90). Hu (2022, p. 188) claims that a 'one-size-fits-all principle' is non-existent for L1 use and both learner factors and contextual factors must be evaluated when regulating the use of L1. Shin et al. (2019, p. 10) proposes that L1 use in terms of translation could be instrumental in if administered using student-driven methods.

However, irrespective of the dramatic shift language learning and teaching have come across during recent times globally, especially in terms of multilingualism, little has pedagogy of foreign languages in Sri Lanka adopted from such recent developments to suit the new multilingual setting in Sri Lanka. This could be one of the key reasons behind the failure of Sri Lankan English language education to address the needs of its stakeholders, especially the learners. According to British Council 'English impact: An evaluation of English language capability Sri Lanka' report of 2018, 58.2% of the sample English language learners that they have used for this survey are at CEFR level A1 while another 29.2% are at level A2 (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018).

Haukås et al. (2022, p. 11) claim that the teacher's perception of the multilingual classroom and their readiness to adapt their teaching methods to suit multilingual context are imperative factors in realizing new pedagogical implication to suit such dynamic teaching learning environments. Translanguaging has emerged as a new paradigm for describing complexity and multimodality in multilingual learning of popular languages among non-native speakers such as English (Liu & Fang, 2020, p. 393). As claimed by Wang (2018, p. 98) translanguaging offers a theoretical strength to a multilingual pedagogical perspective which accommodates all the semiotic and linguistic resources of both the learner and the teacher. While translanguaging is a promising instructional model for emerging bilinguals, it can also

systematically utilize learners' linguistic repertoire to enhance their content knowledge, language skills and awareness in social contexts (Fu et al., 2019, p. 29). It is of paramount importance to identify and characterize the underlining principles of translanguaging since the concept is relatively new. As claimed by García & Kleyn (2016, p. 14) 'translanguaging refers to the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire, which does in any way correspond to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages'. García (2020, p. 16) proposes that a 'translanguaging stance' is revealing the colonial discrimination and the modes in which 'language, bilingualism and multilingualism have been used and continue to be used to minoritize and racialize conquered and colonized populations'.

Recent studies indicate that the functions of translanguaging extends beyond mere linguistic and communicative functions which largely were the major focuses of earlier approaches to language acquisition. As claimed by Donley (2022, p. 11), the implications of translanguaging as a pedagogy are not only instrumental in commitment to language development, but also rooted in a commitment to social justice for multilingual learners of color. Fang & Xu (2022, p. 10) have emphasized that translanguaging, which functions as a critical decolonizing pedagogy and a political stance, promotes equitable education in contrast to monolingual native ideologies. Translanguaging could also be utilized as a social justice strategy creating inclusive and equitable learning environments for minority learners (Wang, 2022, p. 11). A similar study by Liu et al. (2022, p. 14) has revealed that translanguaging practices promote and facilitate inclusiveness and learner autonomy while curtailing learner anxiety in the classroom.

Translanguaging has been validated as an effective approach to foreign language teaching, especially in teaching English as a foreign language. However, as justifiably claimed by Wang (2022, p. 3), translanguaging has been largely unknown to Chinese language teaching professionals despite its significant impact in applied linguistics. There have been limited attempts to break free from the monolingual ideologies embedded within curriculum, pedagogy and assessments. In a study conducted with some bilingual Chinese language teacher-researchers from an Australian university, Han (2022, p. 8) claim that the informants had utilized translanguaging in teaching even without knowing its conceptual underpinnings.

Similar to the situation of second and foreign language education in Sri Lanka, Chinese language education in many contexts over the globe remain largely entrenched in traditional monolingual approaches. For instance, in a study situated in Hong Kong, Wang (2018, p. 5) proposes that the predominant monolingual policy has not only created linguistic barriers for Chinese language learners in Hong Kong, but also the idea of persuading minority learners to enrol into mainstream Chinese taught schools for exposing them to more Chinese language has been proven ineffective. Based on a comparative study conducted on monolingual and translanguaging CSL classrooms in China, Nie et al. (2022, p. 19) claim that the use of pedagogical translanguaging can make the roles of learners and teachers 'dynamic, shifting, and reciprocal'. In a study situated in Australia, Han & Ji (2022, p. 1) emphasize the significance of understanding the needs of emerging bilingual Chinese learners and utilizing their native English repertoire by adopting translanguaging pedagogies. Another study conducted using native Chinese speakers of a language classroom in China has revealed that translanguaging can enable even low proficiency learners to 'break the ice' into the new language and to articulate their views on both L1 and L2.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Theoretical underpinnings**

In terms of theoretical underpinnings, the study employs Translanguaging Theory that emphasizes the fluid and dynamic nature of language use, advocating for the integration of multiple languages in educational contexts (García, 2020). The theory brings forth insights into how learners utilize their



entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning and learn new languages which is one of the key concerns of this study. The study also employs language ideology and linguistic identity theories. The former is associated with the nature, structure, and use of linguistic forms in a social world (Gal, 2023) and the latter has a significant role in the acquisition of communicative competence in new languages and the process of acculturation of ethnolinguistic groups (Noels, 2017).

### 3.2 Context, sampling and participants

#### 3.2.1 Setting

The study is situated in a rural higher education setting in Sri Lanka where Chinese language is offered as a four-year special degree program. The programme was taught by both local Sri Lankan teachers and native Chinese volunteer teachers funded by the Confucius Institute.

#### 3.2.2 Cluster 1 – Questionnaire

Cluster sampling was used in which the whole population of the cluster (n=58) of Year 1 students of a CFL (Chinese as a Foreign Language) class in a Sri Lankan state university were selected as the sample. This Year I cluster was selected out of the total population on two crucial grounds. Firstly, it was the cluster with largest number of informants as all other clusters consisted of less than 20 major students. Secondly, this class was the highest in terms of linguistic diversity since these fresh students were from various linguistic backgrounds who had followed different languages in their Advanced Level examinations.

#### 3.2.3 Cluster 2 - Focus Group Interviews

Cluster sampling method was utilized for selection of informants for the focus group interview which incorporated the synthesized opinions of 7 CFL learners of the same higher education institution. The informants were Year 4 students who were in their final semester of the programme and they were selected for the focus group interviews on the basis that their rich linguistic and cultural repertoire could elicit more descriptive data since they have already completed 18 major courses on language, culture, history and art among other minor and core courses. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic information of the key informants of this study.

Table 1

*Demographics of the Questionnaire and Focus Group Interview Informants*

Item	Variables	Questionnaire n (%)	FGI n (%)
Age	Min(yrs)	24	23
	Max(yrs)	21	24
	$\bar{x}$	21.18	23.7
Gender	Male	4 (6.9%)	1
	Female	54 (93.1%)	6
Locality (where most of informants' life was spent)	Urban	16 (27.5%)	42.85
	Rural	42 (72.4%)	57.14
Mother Tongue	Sinhala	58 (100%)	7 (100%)
	Tamil	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Second Language	English	58 (100%)	7 (100%)
Shared languages	Sinhala and English		
Other Foreign Languages Learnt	English	58 (100%)	7 (100%)
	Japanese	11 (19%)	2 (28.5%)
	French	7 (12.1%)	
	Hindi	7 (12.1%)	
	Korean	1 (1.7%)	
	German	4 (6.9%)	

### 3.3 Data collection, instruments and analysis

The main data collection tool was a structured questionnaire which was distributed among the informants using Google Forms and personal information of all informants were kept anonymous. Prior consent was obtained from the informants for providing data. All items in the questionnaire were provided both in Sinhala (mother tongue of informants) and English (shared second language of informants) to ensure the comprehensibility of the items. Table 2 provides an outlook into the arrangement of items of the questionnaire.

Table 2

#### *Distribution of Questionnaire Items*

Category	Type	No of items
1. Demographic information	short answer, multiple choice	05
2. Second language competence	multiple choice, likert scale	05
3. Target language and other foreign language competence	multiple choice	03
4. Instruction language	short answer, multiple choice	05
Total		18

The present study has utilized both a structured questionnaire and a focus group interview with learners of diverse language competencies. Therefore, the study is established on a mixed method approach inspired by the more liberal approaches to translanguaging research since diversity of language and multilingualism demands such openness (i.e. Lee, 2022, p. 5). Recent studies on translanguaging have also complemented this phenomenon including (Liu et al. 2022, p. 6) who have utilized a phased mixed methods approach and the exploratory approach of (Nie et al., 2022, p. 4).

Quantitative and qualitative data were separately analyzed using SPSS statistics and NVivo 12 respectively. Quantitative data were fed into variables in SPSS and mean value  $\bar{x} = (\sum x_i) / n$  and standard deviation  $\sigma = \sqrt{[\sum (X_i - \mu)^2 / N]}$  were calculated where necessary. A correlation coefficients analysis  $\rho (X, Y) = \text{cov} (X, Y) / \sigma X$  was conducted to measure the correlation between the informants' locality and foreign language competence. The focus group discussion was transcribed, and the script was fed into NVivo 12. A content analysis was run using two parental codes, namely 'multiculturalism' and 'native culture and identity' which entailed 14 child codes. Word frequency queries and relevant visualizations were used to analyze and demonstrate qualitative and quantitative data.

Thus, the study has employed a multi-method approach to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between linguistic and cultural dynamics within the context of Chinese language learning in Sri Lanka. While the in-depth thematic analysis using N-Vivo delved into the lived experiences of the CFL learners, their cultural identities, and their evolving perceptions of multilingualism, quantitative

data, analyzed using the statistical package provided valuable insights into the learners' language proficiency through standardized measures. The study juxtaposes these two data sets from the structured questionnaire and focus group interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and cultural dynamics within the CFL learners and language environment they are exposed to. By triangulating these two distinct data sets, the study leveraged the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches that yielded a holistic picture of the learners' linguistic repertoire, encompassing not only their technical language skills but also their subjective experiences and evolving strategies in navigating translanguaging practices within the Sri Lankan context.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results of the quantitative data analysis

The reliability test was conducted on the 16 questions that demanded numerical data and the Cronbach's Alpha value of those 16 questions was recorded as 0.74. 100% of the informants ( $n=58$ ) have responded that the most convenient language for them is Sinhala, their native language. Majority of the informants 72.4% ( $n=42$ ) were from rural backgrounds while only 27.5% ( $n=16$ ) were from urban backgrounds. A Pearson Correlation test was conducted on the locality variable and the L2 competence variable which resulted in a positive correlation for which relevant data is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

*Correlation between Locality (urban/rural) of Informants and Their L2 Competence*

		English Competence	Locality
English Competence	Pearson Correlation	1	.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	58	58
Locality	Pearson Correlation	.422**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	58	58

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Face validity of the questionnaire was ensured with the help of an expert in the field and the suggestions given were incorporated into the final edition distributed among the informants. Items in the questionnaire were also juxtaposed against the existing theoretical underpinnings of translanguaging and second and foreign language education and to ensure that they are validated within them. The pilot test conducted with 15 informants of the total population spurred further concerns on the validity of several items, especially, in terms of repetition which were scrutinized.

Section 2 of the questionnaire was aimed at the L2 competence of the informants and 63.8% ( $n=37$ ) of the informants have responded that their overall L2 competency is at an 'average' or 'poor' levels of L2 competence. Item 12, 'How was the English language competence of your classmates at school?', was aimed at understanding the authentic L2 environment of the learners and a majority 56.9% ( $n=33$ ) of informants have responded that most of them were at an average competency of English while 17.2% ( $n=10$ ) have responded that they were at a poor level. A positive correlation was observed between item 11 and 13, of which, the former examined the instruction language used in the L2 classroom and the latter aimed at understanding whether the learners were able to comprehend what was taught in the L2 classroom. Table 4 demonstrates the L2 four skills of the informants, and it could be elicited from the data that the informants' L2 skills are relatively low.



Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of Informants' L2 Four Skills*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
L2 Speaking	58	2.00	5.00	3.4655	.99500
L2 Reading	58	1.00	5.00	2.8966	.96772
L2 Writing	58	2.00	5.00	3.6207	.97022
L2 Listening	58	2.00	5.00	3.2586	.88971
Valid N (listwise)	58				

72.4% (n=42) of the informants have responded that they prefer a Chinese, Sinhala and English mixed method of instruction English, Chinese bilingual instruction is the second most preferred method with a 19% (n=11) who have voted for it. 8.6% (n=5) of informants have responded that they prefer a Chinese-Sinhala bilingual instruction and none of the informants have chosen Chinese only instruction. The descriptive statistics pertaining to this item is demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5

*Student Preference of Instruction Language in Chinese Language Classroom*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preferred Language of Instruction	58	1.00	4.00	3.3621	1.07112
Valid N (listwise)	58				

## 4.2 Results of the qualitative data analysis

### 4.2.1 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism was identified as the most common theme in the focus group discussion (Table 6). All 7 informants were in favor of a multilingual and a multicultural learning environment. The informants have shown a keen ambition for learning about and experiencing new cultures. The informants also believed that intercultural competence was an essential aspect of language learning. Promotion of inclusiveness could in turn bring about peace and harmony through cultural sensitivity and multilingualism is identified by the informants as a key competence in blending with the other cultures. Figure 1 demonstrates the 100 most frequent terms in the discussion.

Figure 1

*Word Frequency Cloud for 100 Most Frequent Terms*

Table 6  
*Codebook and Key References*

Code	References	Percentage	Key Phrases
Multiculturalism and Multilingualism	167	72.29	
Culture Sensitivity	47	20.35	Learning international languages will also promote intercultural mutual understanding.
Dress Code	5	2.16	I like modern Chinese clothing culture since it is very diverse
Food	10	4.33	I like to try different food items of different cultures in the world.
Inclusiveness	5	2.16	It will be helpful to improve mutual understanding among people of different cultural backgrounds.
Intercultural Competence	41	17.75	We will not be tricked by the others since we have a good knowledge about the other people's cultures and religions.
Language	21	9.09	In fact, language and culture are so closely linked that one cannot separate the two from each other.
Mythological Beliefs	8	3.46	Can learn about the manners of other cultures such as their mythological beliefs, gods, religion etc.
Peace and Harmony	11	4.76	Promoting ethnic harmony is one of the important benefits of learning a other languages and language knowledge is a good way of getting closer to people of other cultures and regions.
Religion	19	8.23	I want to learn more about Chinese Buddhism and its concepts. I have learned many things about Taoism and Confucianism in Chinese culture which are very interesting.
Native Culture and Identity	64	27.71	
Identity	12	5.19	Since our own culture is our identity, we should never forget about our own culture and embrace other Western or Eastern cultures.
Native Culture	31	13.42	Chinese people are very sensitive about their culture and try to preserve their culture.
Native Language	6	2.60	Sometimes they learn our language and teach their culture using our native language.
Sri Lankanness	8	3.46	Sri Lanka culture is there only in Sri Lanka so that we must preserve our own culture.
Westernization	7	3.03	We might forget about our native culture and embrace the western culture.

#### 4.2.2 Native Culture and Identity

The informants also demonstrated a keen ambition towards learning, preserving and disseminating attributes of their native culture. Some informants have shown a profound sense of understanding towards the socio-political dynamics of native culture in the Sri Lankan context as shown in the extract below.

(Informant 1, Female) : ‘However, it is not all about clinging onto hard-line nationalist culture movements or politically propagated ideas, but it is about learning properly about our own culture.’

100% of the informants (n=7) believed that their native language is symbolic of their identity in the world. While learning and familiarizing with other cultures are found to be significant, not letting the native culture and language degenerate under the influence of dominant cultures and lingua franca is also found to be essential.

(Informant 3, Female) : ‘Since our own culture is our identity, we should never forget about our own culture and embrace other Western or Eastern cultures.’

Several informants have claimed that the influence of dominant Western cultures such as English and American cultures are a threat to the existence of their native culture while some were worried how modern-day technology, devices etc. are used by prominent cultures to spread their ideologies. The learners’ keenness towards preserving their own language and culture in the process of fusion with the foreign language is evidenced by their responses.

The learners have also shown a fear towards the inaccurate use of other languages which may lead to miscommunication or even disputes as claimed by some of the informants.

(Informant 2, Female): ‘I too have met such friends from other cultures who do not like their language being inaccurately used. Some people are there who do not like to share their own cultures with others and for others to imitate their cultures or adopt them, but they like to learn other cultures.’

Informants’ responses also demonstrate that the use of L1 in the classroom has been unplanned and merely aimed at occasional filling of language and translation gaps, explanation of culturally distant terminology and ice breaking activities. The teaching material used in the classroom are also less supportive of a translanguaging approach.

### **4.3 Discussions**

It could be inferred from the quantitative and qualitative data that the informants are in favour of multilingualism and multiculturalism in contrast to monolingualism and ethnocentrism which could be perceived as segments of what Parekh (2002, p. 16) refers to as ‘moral monism’. The informants have also identified the crucial role their native language and culture plays in language education which also contrasts with total and partial immersion language education. The results are clearly indicative of the fact that the learners believe that their native and second language repertoire play a crucial role in acquisition of foreign languages.

Recent studies have established that non-native teachers could outperform native teachers in teaching foreign languages owing to their own shared difficulties in language acquisition with the learners (Llurda, 2009, p. 44). The native-speaker ideology has thus been challenged by modern-day approaches to language teaching and learning. Native speakerism and related linguistic imperialism have resulted in a strong opposition and a desire to combat such ideologies of dominant lingua franca (Phillipson, 1992, p. 35). The results of the study indicate that Sri Lankan Chinese language learners could benefit less neither from a native-speaker model nor from a total localization model. As evidenced in both the qualitative and quantitative data presented in the previous section, the learners are more inclined towards a multilingual and multicultural learning in place of native speakerism and total immersion. Nevertheless, the native opposition to native speakerism has often resulted in precarious fallbacks largely due to its own limitations.

There is sufficient evidence from this study that a translanguaging model could bring about favourable results in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Sri Lanka. Among all codes, the code

‘multilingualism and multiculturalism’ has been recorded the highest percentage of 72.29%. In addition, as evidenced by data, majority of the learners have clearly demonstrated that their native language repertoire could be effectively utilized for an inclusive learning experience. However, the key issue lies in exploring how to effectively incorporate translanguaging practices into this context. First, the teaching learning environment should be adapted to suit a translanguaging model. The most significant step of this process is to make teachers and learners aware of the dynamic role of their L1 where they can employ a balanced approach is needed which perceive L1 as a beneficial tool as mentioned by Galali & Cinkara (2017, p. 63). Awan & Sipra (2015, p. 19) propose that the judicious use of L1 in the target language classroom is the ideal method that could benefit all the stakeholders. The amount and function of the use of L1 in pedagogical practices is also of paramount importance as proposed by O. Alharbi (2019, p. 345).

The second important step of the process is to adapt teaching learning resources to suit a translanguaging model. One of the key issues raised by the informants is the unavailability of localized textbooks for learning Chinese in Sri Lanka. Culture and ideology represented in global textbooks are often biased which implicitly and explicitly include their own ideologies and marginalize outer circle cultures (Ulum & Köksal, 2019, p. 83). Based on empirical findings from a higher education context in China, Fang et al. (2022, p. 13) have revealed that EFL textbooks need urgent revision by accommodating cultural diversity to incorporate Global Englishes and translanguaging into the classroom.

The present study also underscores the critical need for producing inclusive textbooks since the extensive use of global textbooks is not in the best interest of the learners who are less competent in English. The dominance of global CFL textbooks have undermined the linguistic and cultural repertoire of Sri Lankan Chinese language learners and there is a critical necessity of designing and publishing localized textbooks that can accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity. Redesigning, adapting and evaluating curriculums, assessment methods, teaching resources and relevant policies to facilitate translanguaging are identified as equally crucial factors. Teachers should also be made aware of the bilingual use of texts which can enable the learners to enhance their critical thinking skills through comparison and contrast (Zhang & Jocuns, 2022, p. 323).

Thirdly, there is the critical requirement of a comprehensive need analysis followed by language planning and policy reforms to define the roles of each language, including both local and foreign languages in Sri Lanka. The future of multilingualism in Sri Lanka could only be predicted through a comprehensive survey of the distribution and the opinions of all stakeholders, including teachers, learners, educationists, and parents towards native and foreign languages in Sri Lanka. The Special Eurobarometer 386 on Europeans and Their Languages (European Commission, 2012) could be referred to as an example which illustrates the situation of languages in Europe with empirical evidence.

As claimed by Cecilia & Lopes (2019, p. 1) the role played by foreign languages in contemporary societies have taken a drastic shift with the multifaceted impacts of globalization, demands in labor market, cultural diversity and new dimensions in intercultural communication. Nevertheless, it is a critical concern to which extent have the recent pedagogical reforms, language policy reforms and related research have identified these dynamics in modern Sri Lankan second and foreign language education. The questions ‘What roles do native and foreign cultures play in language education?’ and ‘How could native language repertoire be effectively utilized in second and foreign language education?’ have rarely been studied in the Sri Lankan context.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study evaluated the prospects of utilizing translanguaging as an alternative to total immersion in the context of CFL teaching and learning in Sri Lanka. The informants of the study have shown a positive mindset towards utilizing their native language repertoire in the classroom which Liu

et al. (2022, p. 14) have claimed as a constructive approach that could facilitate lesser learner anxiety, ‘classroom safety’ and ‘greater learner autonomy’. It has also been inferred that the learners are not in agreement with total immersion into the target culture but expect that their own culture to be incorporated into the learning experience.

Informants’ low L2 competency levels indicate that the traditional monolingual immersion education approaches to second language education, largely triggered by colonial linguistic ideologies have failed to cater to the needs of the modern-day Sri Lankan language student. Therefore, it is emphasized that the traditional monolingual approaches which overlook the native linguistic and cultural repertoire of foreign language learners should be substituted with more inclusive novel approaches to language learning. They have also demonstrated a keen aspiration towards engaging in a multicultural and multilingual learning experience where they can improve their intercultural competence. In light of the analysis, the study emphasizes that translanguaging could be approached in Sri Lanka as a ‘decolonizing approach’ (Wang, 2022) with greater importance on the learners’ indigenous epistemology. The present study yields ample opportunities for an array of further research spaces including prospects, challenges, dimensions and the metrics of employing translanguaging in second and foreign language education in Sri Lanka. The perceptions of K-12 learners, teachers and education policy makers could also serve a significant area of further research on translanguaging pedagogy in Sri Lanka.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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**Noel Dassanayake** is a Senior Lecturer in Chinese at the Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka. He received his PhD from College of Chinese Language and Culture at Jinan University, Guangzhou, China in Overseas Chinese Teaching. Areas of his research interests include Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Chinese Linguistics, Asian Philosophy, Sociolinguistics and Language Politics.

# 斯里兰卡超语中文教学的批判性评估：母语使用与语言观念

诺尔

萨巴拉加穆瓦大学，斯里兰卡

## 摘要

尽管近年来全球语言教学方法发生了巨大变化，斯里兰卡的第二语言 and 外语教学仍然主要依赖于传统的沉浸式教育，这种方法对非母语学习者和教师的社会语言学和文化维度关注有限。本文对在斯里兰卡的中文教学中使用超语现象的前景进行了评估。研究通过从斯里兰卡高等教育背景下的 65 名受访者中获得的定性和定量实证数据支持。研究结果表明，由殖民霸权意识形态和实践推动的保守单一语言教学方法在当代斯里兰卡的多语言环境中已被证明是无效的。全球教材的不一致性、缺乏本土化教材、全沉浸式教学引发的学习者参与度低以及目标语言所代表的遥远的主流文化意识形态的疏离感，导致了对学习者母语能力动态的忽视。基于现有的类似环境的文献研究，本研究认为超语现象的潜力不仅限于提高语言能力，还具有促进学习者自主性、和谐共处、包容性学习和去殖民化思维的能力。

## 关键词

超语实践，多语言能力，对外汉语教学，斯里兰卡，母语知识

诺尔博士是斯里兰卡萨巴勒格穆瓦大学语言系的中文高级讲师。他在中国广州暨南大学华文学院获得了华文教学的博士学位。他的研究兴趣领域包括对外汉语教学、汉语语言学、亚洲哲学、社会语言学和语言政治。