Influence of translanguaging in writing across languages: A case of multilingual primary students in Sri Lanka

Mohmed Cassim Badurusaman Nihmathulla

THA160024@siswa.um.edu.my

Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, Universiti Malaya,

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4006-8986

Abstract

Studying aspects of multilingualism, such as the dynamics of multilingual and linguistic variation, is a widely documented phenomenon. What remains relatively less explored in such studies, however, concerns how translanguaging (TL) influences writing across languages. This study considers essays written by three students at the primary level of education in Sri Lanka in their first language (L1/Tamil), second language (L2/English) and third language (L3/Sinhala). The purpose of the study is to comprehend how TL practices influence their writing and to report on the reflections of the students and their teachers on TL in writing. The study provides insights into how TL supports student writing across languages and the views of teachers and students on TL in writing. Additionally, implications for the education of multilingual students are discussed.

Keywords: ESL, Multilingual Students, Primary School Education, Second Language Writing, Tamil, Translanguaging, Sinhala, Sri Lanka

1.   Introduction

Immersion in the official languages of instruction is operationalised in a way that named languages are partitioned and treated as autonomous and divided entities (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). This situation arises due to ignorance of the fact that emergent multilingual students are children at the developing stages of language skills in their respective languages (Bauer et al., 2017), and as a result, their literary practices, such as writing, represent their languages, their individual selves, and their world (Dworin & Moll, 2006). Failing to acknowledge such realities leads to situations where only skills which are tested are given priority while their diverse linguistic backgrounds and resources, which they bring into their classrooms, are ignored (García, 2009). Further, the monolingual driven mindset that controls second language (L2) pedagogies hardly consider the potential of children who bring rich linguistic and cultural repertoires into the classroom which could be utilized as resources for language production (Li, 2021; Li & García, 2022). Owing to the predominance of a monolingual-biased culture in designing and implementing L2 pedagogies, only one specific target language tends to be given more consideration in language classrooms, and as a result, the potential of multilinguals to draw from their repertoire of languages is given less focus.

In a monolingual dominated classroom, there is a possibility of prevalence of "an overemphasis on appealing to the dominant group [white English speakers], and the inscription of the unequal power relations deeply rooted" (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p.65). To challenge a monolingual norm in multilingual literary practices, especially in writing, Ortega and Carson (2010), suggest a change in direction in approaches to studying how multilinguals write. Here, the focus for language educators is on what multicompetent writers can do and not on what they cannot or should not do in their L2. Similarly, Canagarajah (2006, p. 591) posited that multilingual writing research needs to challenge a monolingual bias by "shuttling creatively through discourses in order to achieve their communicative objectives".

A line of inquiry that has challenged monolingual norms in studying multilingualism is studies on translanguaging (TL). TL is a term that was first coined by Cen Williams in Welsh as 'trawsieithu' (1994) and more recently expanded as a theoretical and analytic concept in broader terms (Canagarajah, 2013). Findings suggest that multilingual writers dynamically shape their texts through TL practices (Li & García, 2022). Based on their findings, researchers assert that by not allowing student writers to engage in TL practices, this may result in them being unable to

freely express themselves. This is because many students may not be able to engage with content in the classroom due to barriers caused by a lack of proficiency in the language used in the classroom. Blasena (2020) took a similar stance to argue that if the language of the classroom does not reflect the language of students' experiences, they may struggle to participate and fully express themselves. This is, according to Dorner and Layton (2014), due of the fact that they feel their experiences are not accepted in their educational settings. This leads to a context where students are faced with tension filled situations in which they panic as their linguistic performances are viewed as deficient which becomes a serious problem for multilingual students, especially, novice writers (García & Li, 2018).

The present study investigated how multilingual students engage in TL practices for writing across languages. In particular, the study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do TL practices shape writing in different named languages?

RQ2: How do teachers and students view TL in writing?

This study was based on a qualitative methodology and TL as a theoretical framework to analyse data obtained from the essays written by the multilingual writers. The student writers who participated in this study were emergent multilinguals, hailing from a multilingual and multicultural community. It is important to understand the ways in which students become multilinguals if students are to be supported by educators working with them in relation to their language development (García, 2009). It is hoped that this study will be able to contribute to the understanding of the need for multilingual practices, such as TL, in writing in multilingual educational spaces.

2.   Literature Review

There have been growing research interests in studying aspects of multilingualism such as 'translingualism' (Canagarajah, 2013), hybridity / fluidity of language use of multilinguals (Cook, 2008), and multilingual dynamics (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). Additionally, in studies on the writings of multilinguals, researchers have considered features such as the ability of multilinguals to draw on the full extent of their linguistic repertoire for writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013) and their tendency to use previous writing knowledge and experience for writing (Tullock & Fernández-Villanueva, 2013). In such studies, how translanguaging influences writing across

languages, however, is a relatively less explored phenomenon. This study, therefore, intends to study the impact of TL practices on writing in multiple languages.

Modern scholars are of the view that multilinguals learn through a unique scaffolding process of mixing resources from other languages (Bauer et al., 2017). In such contexts, students "shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system" (Canagarajah, 2011, p.401). Despite the widespread practice of mixing resources of different named languages, discussions around whether to accept such practices in language use, especially in writing, or to consider such practices as errors, still persist among language educators (Bauer et al., 2017). Thus, the following literature review focuses on the practice of adopting TL as a pedagogical method for writing instruction in multilingual classroom settings. In addition, a review of the positive influences of TL on teaching practices and strategies found in various multilingual contexts is also included in the review. The review concludes with recommendations as to how TL can facilitate the process of development of writing skills among novice writers, especially those who struggle to develop writing in a non-native context.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

A TL framework has been adopted as a theoretical base for interpreting the findings of this study. This framework, which, according to Sayer (2013), is used to describe language use and practices of students in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, sees the linguistic repertoire of multilinguals as one unit from which they draw upon for communication (Li, 2017). In line with this, it also views languages used by a single person as a unified system and does not consider them as autonomous and divided entities (Bauer et al., 2017).

According to García and Li (2014), languaging helps individuals with the process of making meaning in the world through language that can take place across languages which goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages. In relation to this, TL reflects the broader set of practices that bilinguals engage in as they leverage the 'tools in their 'toolkits' to do things in the world (Orellana et al., 2014). Additionally, this broader set of translingual practices that are part of TL include language brokering (the use of knowledge of more than one language to do things for others), code-switching (the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation), and metalinguistic awareness (the ability to objectify language as a process as well as an artefact) (Bauer et al., 2017). Especially in writing, TL refers to the

"combination of structures, the alteration between systems, the transmission of information, representation of values, identities and relationship" (Li, 2011, p.1223). García (2009) further asserts that TL explains the potential for cross-language transfer, flexibility in language and pedagogic classroom approaches, and the permeability of learning across languages.

The general perception of languages as standardised, autonomous and divided entities has been contrasted with the concept of TL that values the ability of language users to select and engage with linguistic features that are most suitable for communication. By ignoring this fact, bi/multilinguals may be stigmatised for opting to select and deploy linguistic choices which do not match features that are relevant to a certain named language. They are, therefore, faced with a situation where they are often criticised for their language use being simply different from an "imagined and idealised monolingual norm" (García & Li, 2014, p.2). A TL perspective, therefore. challenges the conventional way of viewing bi/multilingualism, which considers any contact of a certain language in any form with that of other languages as language transfer and deviations (García & Li, 2014).

2.2. TL Practices in the Writing of Multilinguals

In recent years, findings suggest that bi/multilinguals deploy knowledge of their two or more languages in a way that is qualitatively distinct from how monolinguals use languages (Velasco & García, 2014). Further, it has been reported that multilinguals use multiple linguistic codes, semiotic modalities, and participation structures during literacy events such as writing This implies a hybrid practice that could be termed as hybridisation (Gort, 2012). Gort (2012), for instance, reported that the participants in her study used their languages for explaining /clarifying, and discussing language structures of English and Spanish while attending to writing language patterns of each language in systematic and purposeful ways. In a similar vein, Kiramba (2017) found that the students in her study tended to use words in their native language, Kikuyu, to communicate intended meanings in English while using resources from the participant's local language.

Empirical evidence shows that multilinguals drew on their full repertoire of linguistic knowledge for writing "from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively" (García & Li, 2014, p.22). In an attempt to comprehend the process of writing in different languages, Velasco and García (2014) considered writing samples of five multilinguals from different multilingual contexts. The results suggested that the participants engaged in TL practices

in the planning, drafting, and final product stages of the writing process. They further reported that the student writers demonstrated a higher level of creativity and complexity by using their entire linguistic repertoire. The study also showcased tendencies of the students for code-switching, prewriting in L1, and using the spelling patterns of L1 with the help of L2 letters.

In addition, studies have reported that writing knowledge obtained from a particular language shape writing in other languages. Drawing on empirical evidence, Dworin (2003) contended that young children taught in both Spanish and English showed a tendency to use their writing knowledge obtained from both these languages to express themselves in either language. Dorwin (2003), who argued in favour of children's ability to shape their writing across languages using previous writing knowledge, is of the opinion that bi/multilinguals are capable of transferring writing knowledge bi/multi-directionally provided that the class environment treats such practices as legitimate.

Other studies have shown that TL practices, such as students' engagement to peer interactions during writing (Gort, 2008), read-aloud discussions (Worthy et al., 2013) in which they frequently engaged in repetition, translation, nonverbal communication, and code-switching support writing by multilinguals. Additional TL practices used as strategies for writing across languages (Angelova et al., 2006) include listing out things and activities (Lindgren et al., 2017), using punctuation techniques (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) and using previous writing knowledge (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013).

Studies related to debates about whether to entertain or to ignore TL practices in writing have considered the responses of students and teachers who are engaged in multilingual education. In a study that involved Spanish bilingual students taught in English at a university in the Basque country, Muguruza et al. (2020) considered students' reactions toward the use of three languages. Their findings suggest learning in the different languages was enjoyable as the teacher applied a flexible language policy allowing for the use of the three languages. In a contrasting context, Daryai-Hansen et al. (2017) reported that despite teachers' assumption that TL is a very useful tool for classroom management and language learning at a university in Denmark, the ideal situation seems to be both for teachers and students to only use the target language which signals the prevalence of monolingual ideologies based on compartmentalising languages. In a more extreme case of monolingual bias, Kiramba's (2017) study reported the tendency of teachers to reduce marks for students for using their local languages in assignments written in English.

2.3. TL Pedagogies

Amidst the prevalence of discussion among scholars with regard to considering TL as a way to teach languages as an integrated system and not as different entities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2017), thoughts around this topic mostly appear to be grounded in theoretical and ideological terms (Schneider, 2016). A TL pedagogy has been proposed instead as a solution to cater to challenges faced by emergent bi/multilinguals as a result of compartmentalising languages into different units and not accommodating language differences especially in writing. In such conditions, the possibility of using TL in writing has been pronounced in order to support novice writers develop their writing. With an intention of comprehending how translanguaging promotes innovations in bilingual and multiliteracy pedagogy, Hélot (2014) studied writing by multilingual students and found that they tended to cross soft linguistic boundaries. Based on TL practices used by multilingual writers and their meaning-making through means of "new hybrid forms of language" (Kiramba, 2017, p.1), Hélot (2014) argued for the need for envisioning TL as a pedagogical approach in bilingual education. Hélot (2014) further argued that TL in literary texts provides more avenues for legitimised language mixing and breaking ideological barriers of named languages. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2020), pedagogical TL is possible even in situations where English is in contact with languages that are linguistically distant and have different scripts.

In sum, the literature reviewed points to the need for embracing multiple linguistic repertoires in writing in order to encourage student multilingual writers to negotiate restrictive policies, voice, and identity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Locations and Participants

The data collection started, first, with the selection of research locations. Based on permissions and consent obtained from principals of particular schools, the study was conducted at two schools namely Aboobakkar M. V[1] and Ali M. V. They were selected for their locations and their ability to provide students who write in three languages, Tamil, English and Sinhala. The first school was a primary girls' school and the second was a coeducational school.

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[1] M.V= senior school (names are pseudonyms)

At the next stage, with the support of the principals of these schools, nine language teachers, who taught the three languages were identified and, following discussions held with them, they agreed to voluntarily participate in the study. With these teachers' recommendations, three participants, aged 9 to 10 in grade four were included. They were two girls namely Leena and Reena from the first school, and a boy named Ravi[2] from the second one, drawing insights from Conoz and Gorter (2011) and Tullock and Fernández-Villanueva (2013). All these students started learning their first language (L1), Tamil at the age of five and second language (L2), English and third language (L3), Sinhala, respectively when they were around eight years old. The participants mostly use their L1 for daily interaction with their family and community members while they use, very rarely, the other languages in varied degrees. Apart from school, they attend additional tuition for English but their efforts to learn their L3, outside school, appear to be very minimal.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

First, institutional ethics approval from Universiti Malaya (UM.TNC2/UMREC–981) and consent from the principals of the schools and participants were obtained. The study was conducted twice within a period of 12 months to understand how TL practices influenced writing over time. The data included essays written by the three students on four topics with three at Time 1/T1. At Time 2/T2, after 12 months, the students were asked to repeat the already given topics and, in addition, they were asked to write on a new topic to see how they reacted to an unfamiliar topic. In order to ensure familiarity with the titles, questions that were assigned for writing tasks in their classrooms and in their examinations were selectively given as writing tasks in this study (Table 1). The students were asked to write 75 to 100 words per essay within 20 minutes and they were allowed to take more time if needed with the intention of creating a writing-friendly and a tension-free environment for writing. These are similar to the conditions given by Tullock and Fernández-Villanueva (2013) to the participants in their studies. In addition to the written essays, the data also included interviews of the student writers and their respective language teachers.

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[2] Names are all pseudonyms.

Table 1. Prompts assigned for writing

No	Title	T1			T2		
		L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3
1	Write a short account on 'myself'.	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	Write a short account on 'my school'.	√	√	√	√	√	√
3	Write a short account on 'my favourite teacher'.	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	Write a short account on 'my favourite hobby'.	-	-	-	√	√	√

3.3. Analytical Procedure

Given the fact that the study involved data from the essays and interviews of the students and the relevant language teachers, a qualitative case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1994) model was adopted to analyse the data and to interpret findings. In order to ensure proper execution of the analysis, the study deployed an interpretive and inductive approach and performed within-case (Merriam, 1998) and thematic analyses (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) to interpret findings. In the progression of the analysis, firstly, the essays were read through to understand how TL practices influenced writing in different languages. At the initial stage, the focus of inquiry was on every single essay which was treated as unique and was handled separately drawing on Merriam (1998).

During the inquiry, primary attention was given to understand if the use of multilingual resources, such as the use of lexical items, previously learnt information, subject knowledge and previous writing experiences, influenced their writing. This particular exercise helped to derive answers to the first research question. At the next stage of the analysis, these elements were examined to see whether they had anything to do with the changes that took place over time in the writing in different languages. The interview data from the students[3] and the teachers were used to understand of how TL practices influenced writing and how the teachers and students viewed TL in writing, thus partly addressing the first research question, and fully answering the second research question.

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[3] Interviews of the students and non-English teachers were translated from their L1.

Drawing on Kobayashi and Rinnert (2013), in order to ensure trustworthiness and validity of the data and analysis, two language specialists who were proficient in the three languages were engaged to support the process of analysing and interpreting the findings. They helped with the translation of the non-English essays and interviews, identifying translanguaging practices and their influence on the writing.

4. Findings

4.1. Influence of TL Practices on Writing in Different Languages

In the following section, findings for the first research question are presented and discussed. The findings discussed here were derived from essays written by the student writers and interviews with the student writers and their relevant teachers. Excerpts from the students' writing and their interviews are presented in order to support the interpretation of the data.

One of the most commonly observed means of TL was the use of L2 lexical items for writing in the different languages so that the flow of the writing is not interrupted:

> ***Tamil****il allathu singalahtthil elthum poluthu nan **English** sotkalai payanpaduththinen. Adu wasanagalai thadai indri elutha udawiyath.* (M/PS003)[4]

> (I used English words for writing in Tamil or Sinhala. This practice helped me with the flow of the writing).

Such use of language can be seen in Extracts 1 and 2.e

Extract 1: L2 in L1

> *Enathu padasalayyil miga azagana **children park** undu.* (M/PS003)

> (There is a very beautiful children park in our school.)

> *Enakku **cartoon** patpathu migawum pidikkum.* (FM/PS001)

> (I like to watch cartoon very much).

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[4] The participants' IDs denote as follows: M= male, FM= female, PS= primary level student, 001 (e.g.) = FM/PS001/Leena, FM/PS002/Reena, M/PS003/Ravi, T1= Time 1, T2= Time 2.

*Enakku **volleyball** vilaiyaduwathu migawum pidikkum*. (FM/PS002)

(*I like to play volleyball very much*.)

*Kalai elu manikku **school bell** adithathum padasalai aramabamagum.* (M/PS003)

(*My school begins at 7.30 with the morning bell*.)

*Pareetchchai kalangalil awar oru pothum **leave** eduppathillai.* (FM/PS001)

(*He never takes leave during exam days*.)

*Enakku pidiththa malar **orchid** agum.* (M/PS003)

(*My favourite flower is orchid*.)

*Enathu padasalayyil miga azagana **children park** undu.* (FM/PS002)

(There is a very beautiful children park in our school.)

*Enakku pidiththamana poo **anthurium**agum.* (FM/PS001)

(My favourite flower is anthurium.)

Extract 2: L2 in L3

*Mama **free time** velin **cartoon** balanawa.* (FM/PS002)

(I watch cartoon during my free time.)

Mata ***volleyball match T.V.*** en balanna harima asai. (FM/PS001)

(I like to watch volleyball matches on television.)

*Eyata kemathiya chellam badu **bol**aya.* (FM/PS002)

(His favourite play item is ball.)

*Mage guruthuma mata **pencil** ulkarrannata **pencil cutter** denawa.* (FM/PS001)

(My teacher gives me a pencil-cutter to sharpen my pencil.)

*Mage guruthuma **exam** kalaye **leave** ganna na.* (M/PS003)

(*My teacher never takes leave during exam time*.)

*Mage pasale Puttalama disthririkkiye **famous** pasala eka.* (FM/PS002)

(My school is very famous in Puttalam.)

*Mata **cartoon** balanna harima ashai.* (M/PS003)

 (I like to watch cartoons very much.)

*Eyata kemathiya sellam badu **bowl**aya.* (FM/PS001)

(His favourite play item is ball.)

*Mama **free time** velin **cartoon** balanawa.* (FM/PS002)

(I watch cartoons during my free time.)

The findings also suggest that the student writers selected features from their language repertoire and assembled their linguistic practices in ways that fulfilled their communicative needs (Velasco & García, 2014). In this sense, they reported that they "used previously learnt information and writing knowledge to write in the different languages". This practice, according to them, "supported the smooth flow of the writing". They reported that their "essays did not flow smoothly when [they] wrote at the beginning of the study due to lack of enough practice". According to the writers, they were given extensive writing practice, during the period of the study, to write 10 to15 sentences under given topics in L1 which were used for writing across the languages. As a result of this, their essays, according to them "progressed more smoothly" (M/PS003) when they wrote at T2. The following are examples of how they wrote across the languages at both time periods.

Extract 1: L1/T1

Enathu padasalayyin peyar P/Ayisha Muslim penkal padasalyyaguml. Enathu Padasalyyil ayiraththukku metpatta Manawa manawigal kalvi katkindrargal…… (FM/PS001)

(The name of my school is P/Ayisha Muslim Ladies School. There are more than one thousand students in my school…)

Extract 2: L1/T2

Enathu padasalyyin peyar P/Ayisha Muslim penkal padasalyyagum. Athu migawum periyathu. Wilayyattu maithanam migawum periyathu. Poonga migawum alaganathu. (FM/PS001)

(The name of my school is P/Ayisha Muslim ladies' school. It is very big. The playground is very big. Children Park is very beautiful.)

Extract 3: L2/T1

My school name is P/Ayisha Muslim girls' primary school. My school playground and canteen. My school has a library. (FM/PS001)

Extract 4: L2/T2

My school name is P/Ayisha Muslim girls' primary school. My school is big. Playground is big. Park is beautiful**.** (FM/PS001)

Extract 5: L3/T1

Mage pasale nama Ayisha Vidyalaya. Mage pasale lamai innawa. Mage pasale karyalaya thiyanawa. Mage pasale pusthakaleye thiyanawa…. (FM/PS001)

(The name of my school is P/Ayisha Vidyalaya. There are students in my school. There is an office in my school. There is a library in my school.)

Extract 6: L3/T2

Mage pasale nama Ayisha Mage pasale inne guruwaru lassanai. Mei pase inne widuhalpathi lassanai. Mei pasale inne lamai lassanai. (FM/PS001)

(The name of my school is Ayisha Vidyalaya. I play in the playground. The teachers in my school are beautiful. The students in my school are beautiful.)

As shown, for instance, in the above extracts written at T2, words such as 'playgrounds' and 'park' were not followed by any description in her essays at T1. On the contrary, the writer attempted to provide descriptions such as "my school is big, park is beautiful". Such type of changes was noticed in the entire texts written by the participants due to the following reason:

> ***Arampaththil*** *Adaimoligalaip payan paduththi ewwaru eluthuwadu endru therinthirukkawillai. Pinnar, enathu Tamil asiriyalr pothithanar. Athu enaiyya moligalil elutha udawiyadhu.* (FM/PS001)

> (At the beginning I did not know how to use adjectives. Later, my Tamil language teacher taught me how to describe things using adjectives and adverbs. I used that knowledge which helped me with writing in the other languages.)

In addition to what has been reported above, there were other instances of TL such as the use of punctuation techniques (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) and the use of the same strategies for writing in different languages (Lindgren et al., 2017). As evident in extracts 1 to 6, Leena/PS001 followed similar ways to describe her favourite teachers. According to the writer, she used the writing knowledge she gained in her L1 to write in the three languages which was the reason for all her three texts appear to be similar.

> *Arampaththil, eluthuppayirchchi adiham illai. Tamilili petra anupawaththai wiathhtu enaiyya moligali eluthinen.* (FM /SS002)

> (At the beginning, I did not have writing practice. Later, I used the writing practice I received in Tamil for writing in the different languages.)

Further, the students reported that their "Tamil language teacher showed how to use punctuations such as full stop, commas and question marks" which they "used for writing in other languages". This practice of sharing writing knowledge, according to them, "helped with the flow of the writing" (FM/SS001) when they wrote in a language that they were relatively less exposed to.

Listing out objects, for instance, was one of the similar strategies that the students used for writing in the different languages as shown in the following examples, a finding that accords with results by Lindgren et al. (2017). The student writers reported that they "learnt to list out objects

from their L1 teachers which [they] used in the other languages". This practice, according to them, "helped [them] approach [their] tasks with confidence" (M/PS03).

> *Enathu padasaliyi pachchappasel ena ilaigalk thongum marangal, azagana thawarangal, pallivasal, athipar aluvalaham……vagupparaigal enpana ullana.* (M/PS003/L1)

> (There are trees with greenish leaves, beautiful plants, principal office and classrooms in my school.)

> *Mage pasele kreeda pittaniya, pusthakale, lassana malawaththa ekak, gaswal…. (*M/PS003/L3)

> (In our school, there are playground, library, and beautiful flowers.)

4.2. Teachers' and Students' Views on TL in Writing

Even though recent research on bi- and multilingual school models has offered evidence for the potential of using multilingualism for raising academic achievement, the common trend in teaching multilingual pupils appears to be dominated by monolingual bias approaches. As a result, multilingual students who engage in multilingual practices, get into a situation where they panic as they may be penalised for such practices as reported, for instance, by Kiramba (2017).

The multilingual writers who participated in this study reacted in a way that showed some signs of uneasiness towards their TL practices, especially with regard to the use of resources from other languages to produce linguistic performance in other languages. This is because they are penalised for doing so by a reduction of marks by their relevant subject teachers, a finding that is consistent with Kiramba (2017). Even though the students acknowledge that they liked TL in order to communicate effectively and to solve linguistic problems they are faced with, they fear doing that as they consider this practice illegitimate as revealed below:

> *Nan pirmoliogalil kalanthu eltuthwatahi wirpukiren. Iruppinum marks kuraikkappadum enappauappudukiren.* (FM/PS001)

> (I like TL. At the same time, I fear doing so, because my teachers reduce marks for that.)

Further, it was found that the students prefer mixing languages for interaction in the classroom during teacher instruction and peer reviews. They liked teachers who use more L1 in L2 or L3 classes as can be discerned in the following example:

> *Nan angilathil kadaikkum anda asiriyarai wirumpawilla. Awar wellakkarar pondru wegamaga kadaippar. Awar pesuwathu wilanguwathillai*" (M/PS003)

> (I don't like a particular teacher who uses more English in a British accent and speaks very fast and, as a result, understood very little of what she said).

Conversely, they revealed that they "prefer learning from other teachers who allow mixing languages and use 'Tanglish'" (FM/PS001) (mixture of Tamil and English) in classrooms. They also reported that they "like one particular L3 teacher as he uses more L1 than L3 and all his lessons are understood and were very enjoyable". Even with this tolerance when treating language differences in speaking, the students complained about the paradoxical positioning of the teachers in response to language mixing in writing as all of them tend to penalise students for mixing languages when they write.

Opinions regarding TL practices varied among teachers. Almost all the teachers of the students of this study, except one teacher, strongly resisted any reference to language mixing, especially in writing, a stance which reflects monolingual bias in handling multilingualism. "I would like my students not to use non-standard English when they write: "I think that is not allowed by the department. I reduce marks if I see any language mixing or grammatical errors in writing" (FM/LT[5]001). Another teacher replied to a question regarding how he feels about mixing languages in speaking or during classroom instruction said the following: "I allow this practice to a certain extent when speaking, but do not like to permit any mixing in writing" (M/LT003).

When the teachers were questioned about how the students reacted to the resistance employed by the teachers with reference to language mixing in writing, they responded that they "understand that the students don't entertain such resistances, but [we] don't have any option other than that" (FM/LT008). In addition, when the teachers were asked whether they were aware of new trends in language teaching such as TL and multilingual trends, all of them responded negatively except one of them. The one who responded in favour of TL knew a little about TL and said that she understood new trends in language. She had several discussions regarding these trends

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[5] LT= language teacher

with the author. She feels that there is a need to dig deeper into this subject with a policy change. In addition, a pedagogical approach is needed in order to benefit from this current thinking in language studies. Despite her understanding of TL, she feels that she needs "to reduce marks for language mixing and ungrammaticality in writing as official instructions don't allow such practices" (FM/LT009).

5. Discussion

The study looked at how TL practices influenced writing by three multilingual students in three languages, Tamil, English and Sinhala. The findings suggested that TL practices helped the students achieve their communicative goal in writing. Further, it was found that the three writers communicated their intended meanings in the three languages using the resources at their disposal. Despite their assumed perception that TL is not acceptable, their concern over correctness, grammaticality and separation of the three languages as well as their fears about being penalized for crossing linguistic bounds, the writers continued to translanguage their writing, a finding that confirms the results by Kiramba (2017). This act of TL depicts the inevitability of multilingual practices in literary practices of multilinguals such as writing. Even though these TL practices helped readers comprehend their texts, their efforts were not recognized due to the dominance of a monolingual bias among language educators. The TL practices were possible due to what García and Li (2014, p.22) termed as "the activation of the entire language repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively". As reported previously, the activation of the full extent of the student writers' linguistic repertoire was reflected in their writing across the three languages in the form of the use of lexical items (Kiramba, 2017; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020), previous writing knowledge (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013), and previously used information.

The activation of the full extent of their linguistic repertoire and the TL practices that were reported does not only showcase the disruption of the monolingual norm but also points out to a struggle for suitable legitimized linguistic operation in their writing for expressing themselves. Further, the language choices of the student writers indicate the deconstruction of language hierarchies (Otheguy et al., 2015) and distraction of monolingual bias ideologies in writing. The crossing of soft linguistic borders (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) of named languages by the student writers indicates that "language-separation and perpetuation of monolingual practices do not

indicate ways in which children access knowledge naturally" (Kiramba, 2017, p.12). In spite of the students' violation of writing norms established by monolingual ideologies, the translanguaged literary practices indicate the importance of the need for best practices in teaching in order to cater for inequalities created by applying monolingual norms in language use.

The way the students wrote showed they were concerned mainly about meanings and not conventions in the form of linguistic rules. This is consistent with the fact that "textual meaning does not reside solely in language or text but in all resources of the text and the context" (Kiramba, 2017, p.12). In relation to this, the texts produced represent their own real voices and, at the same time, showcase tensions faced by the writers owing to their worries over correctness and grammaticality. However, the TL practices noticed in the writing can be considered as a move away from a monolingual bias language development to a more all-comprehensive language practice. The use of previous writing knowledge and information as well as the deployment of the same strategies for writing might not be possible had the writers not moved their writing knowledge across the languages (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013; Lindgren et al. (2017). Flores and Garcia (2017), for instance, claim that the use of TL provides avenues for voices that have been silenced by the use of target language only. According to them, capitalizing on students' voices is useful in multilingual literary practices, such as writing.

It appears from what has been reported that the mindsets of the students and the teachers did not favour multilingual practices, even though the students translanguaged their writing. The students showed signs of a sense of uneasiness towards TL as their writings were assumed as deficit and fossilized and they were penalized by a reduction of marks, similar to Kiramba (2017). Despite the students' perceptions that TL practices favoured their writing development, they were not that comfortable with the use of TL. In the meantime, most of the teachers opined that TL practices in writing violate monolingual norms. It was found from the interviews that even though most of the teachers were aware of new trends in language studies and were more inclined to promote multilingual practices, they acknowledged that they would reduce marks for doing so as the department rules do not favour such practices. This approach that favours monolingual bias tends to hamper trends of children in using TL practices in writing which can be disadvantageous to language development. The denial of the right of multilinguals to draw from the full extent of their multilingual repertoire for literary practices ignores the need to reflect their linguistic identities and voices.

6. Conclusion, Recommendations and Implications for Practice

In spite of restrictions applied by monolingual ideologies driven language educators and institutions, students continued to translanguage their writing as was evident in the findings of this study which are consistent with García (2009) and Canagarajah (2011, 2013). Additionally, TL is is used to cater for communicational needs rather than as a violation to language conventions (Buer et al., 2017). A finding that is consistent with Canagarajah (2013) is that TL practices can be considered as a form of "complex linguistic and rhetorical competence". In addition, as Blackledge et al. (2014), Hélot (2014) and Flores and Garcia (2017) assert, TL facilitates silenced voices. In addition, it was reported by the participants that TL scaffolds writing in multiple languages if mixing among languages is treated as legitimate (Dworin & Moll, 2006; Bauer et al., 2017). The concept of TL, therefore, provides a base, in a monolingual ideology-driven context like Sri Lanka, for a discussion over what it means to be multilingual and for exploring the suitability of imposing monolingual ideologies in multilingual education. In addition, the TL concept also challenges monolingual norms that assume named languages as divided and autonomous systems and instead sees such a perception as a barrier to language development, especially with regard to novice writers (García, 2009).

The study reported here suggests that flexible language practices could mitigate difficulties encountered by multilingual writers even in contexts where proficiency in the target language is not that high. In the current study, it was found that the participants were emerging or growing multilinguals. Amidst their limitation in functioning in any of the languages, the students operated in whatever language they wanted without being restricted by the boundaries of the named languages. At the same time, they acknowledged that using multilingual resources was of immense support for them for the smooth flow of their writing because they could freely choose among the three languages. This study is consistent with Daryai-Hansen et al. (2017) and Kiramba (2017) who also found that using multilingual practices could be useful in multilingual contexts. The use of multilingual practices can be understood as a scaffold in a context when the general level of target language/s among the students is low (Kiramba, 2017). As for this study, the student writers would have had a lot more difficulties in writing had they been deprived of the liberty to use TL practices.

Due to the fact that students benefit from TL practices, there is a need, therefore, for teachers, as Block (2007) argues, to draw on the considerable language resources that such students

bring with them to classrooms. However, in reality, the ability of multilinguals to draw on available resources at their disposal for communication is ignored. There is a need, therefore, to go into what Creese and Blackledge (2010, p.112) refer to as the "flexible bilingual pedagogy", that allows permeable boundaries between languages. The traditional strategy of separating languages and using only the target language in classrooms does not allow multilinguals to use TL in communication. There is a need, therefore, to take into account the resources that students possess for processing languages. This helps them use what is learned in one language for language production in different languages (Bauer et al., 2017). Taking these scenarios into consideration, language teachers may consider accommodating language differences in multilingual classrooms and allowing students to use multilingual practices in order to facilitate language learning. It is, therefore, highly recommended that educators consider implementing a pedagogy which accommodates TL practices and acknowledges them as a legitimate cognitive tool in order to maximize meaning-making in literary practices such as writing in school contexts.

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