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Translanguaging Influenced Writing in Different Languages: A Case of Multilingual Students at Secondary Education in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Researching aspects of multilingualism has attracted growing interest among scholars. However, such studies have less explored how translanguaging (TL) influences writing in multiple languages. This study considered essays written by three students in secondary education in Sri Lanka, using their first language (L1/Tamil), second language (L2/English), and third language (L3/Sinhala). The study aims to comprehend how TL practices have influenced their writing and report on the reflections of the students and their teachers on TL in writing. A comprehensive qualitative analysis of the data revealed that TL practices such as the use of lexical items from students' L2, following similar strategies for writing and the use of previously learnt information and writing knowledge have influenced the writing across languages. The findings from the interview data suggested that the student writers sensed uneasiness towards TL in writing as such practices were not recognised as legitimate and that the teachers did not favour TL in writing even though they were lenient towards TL in speaking. The implications for the education of multilingual students are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Multilingualism, Multilingual Students, translanguaging, pedagogy, Literary Practices

Introduction

As claimed by Cook (2012), a monolingual's mind is different from that of a multilingual as the former possesses only one language system. In contrast, the latter compasses a mind consisting of more than one language; therefore, multilingualism operates in a way distinct from that of

monolinguals. In recent years, studies on translanguaging (TL), initially coined by Williams (1994) in Welsh as “trawsieithu” and currently used as a theoretical and analytic concept in broader terms (Canagarajah, 2013), have shed light on how bi/multilinguals deployed knowledge of their two or more languages in a way qualitatively distinct from monolinguals (Bauer et al., 2017). According to García and Kleyn (2016), TL states that bilingual speakers draw from one integrated linguistic repertoire for meaning-making in their multilingual contexts. Differentiating TL from the act of code-switching, they further claimed that it refers to the deployment of a particular speaker’s repertoire of linguistic knowledge that does not accord with socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages. Ignoring such realities leads to a situation where monolingual norms are applied in language studies or in researching multilingualism, and only limited recognition is given to their diverse linguistic backgrounds (Garcia, 2009). This perception also creates a learning context where a particular target language is given more focus (Li, 2017; Li & Garcia, 2022) and the potential of multilingualism to draw from their repertoire of languages receives less attention (Bauer et al., 2017).

Studies conducted to research various aspects of multilingualism, such as TL, have challenged monolingual norms deployed in multilingualism and suggested that monolingual norms are inappropriate for exploring literary practices such as writing. In this sense, Bauer et al. (2017) argued that by not allowing student writers to capitalise on TL options, they may have difficulties expressing themselves when they communicate or write in different languages. According to Laura (2020), this situation may arise because many students may be deprived of the content needed to respond to a particular assigned task in the classroom because of a barrier based on a lack of proficiency in the classroom language. Further, Dorner and Layton (2014) proposed that if the classroom language does not reflect the language of students’ experiences, they may struggle to participate and fully express themselves. This leads to a situation where novice writers encounter a tension-filled condition in which they panic because their linguistic performances are considered fossilised (Garcia & Li, 2014), which becomes a severe problem for their language learning (Garcia, 2009).

The current study aims to comprehend how the student writers in secondary education in Sri Lanka responded to given topics to express their intended meanings in different languages by drawing on multilingual resources. Specifically, the research endeavours to accomplish the following objectives (ROs):

RO1: To comprehend how TL practices influence the writing of student writers across the languages.

RO2: To report on reflections of the students and their teachers on TL in writing.

The study is guided by these research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do TL practices shape writing in the languages used by the student writers?

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

To show how they did it, I provide examples from texts they produced, explicitly referring to TL practices. The analysis and interpretation of the findings are based on understanding how students become multilingual and how they use their language to reach their goals, which is very important if students concerned are to be supported efficiently by their respective language educators

(Pennycook, 2010). In addition, the teachers' perception of languaging is also presumed handy for the smooth facilitation of learning in classrooms in multilingual contexts. In this connection, the data also include responses from students and their teachers regarding how they felt about language mixing in writing. Drawing on TL as a framework, I use a qualitative methodology to reveal insights about writing among the writers. It is anticipated that this study will contribute to understanding the need for permitting multilingual practices such as TL in writing if multilingual students are to be guided in writing development.

Literature Review

Bi/multilingual contexts are places where two or more languages are used to learn various topics at different levels of education through a unique scaffolding process of mixing multilingual resources. In such contexts, multilingual students “shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form the repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah 2011, p. 401). Even though there is generally a tendency for multilingual to engage in multilingual practices such as TL, discussions around whether to allow such practices or to presume them as a reflection of fossilised linguistic production remains widely disputed (Bauer et al., 2017). This literature review is presented in a way that evaluates previous works that discussed the legitimacy of TL in writing and how it influences multilingual written works.

Theoretical framework

A TL framework that describes students' language use and practices in bi/multilingual classrooms (Sayer, 2013) provides a theoretical base for interpreting this study's findings. According to TL theory, the linguistic knowledge of each multilingual individual is one unit, and, therefore, it should not be viewed as different entities that a language user clings to (Li, 2017). In this sense, a TL perspective violates conventions related to perception regarding the language of multilingualism; that is to consider named languages as divided and autonomous entities and contact of a specific language in any form with that of other languages is seen as language transfer and deviations (Garcia & Li, 2014). TL theory challenges then the ideas of language contact and language deviation. Instead, it considers TL to be the art of the contact zone (Pratt, 1991), where language users use this space for dynamic interaction of meanings.

Even though there is a general tendency to consider languages as standardised, autonomous and divided entities, modern scholars presume that languaging refers to the human capacity to interact with others and to make meanings through a semiotic repertoire. To elaborate on how this takes place, Garcia and Li (2014) argued that multilingual makes meanings through linguistic features (words, sounds, structures, etc.) and multimodal topographies such as gestures, images and sounds. In explaining how TL facilitates languaging, Garcia (2009) opined that it goes against conventions that consider languages autonomous and divided as first and second languages. Further, TL, according to Orellana et al. (2014), is the broader set of languaging practices that bilinguals deploy to communicate, drawing on multilingual resources at their disposal. Bauer et al. (2017) suggested that TL includes language brokering, which refers to the use of knowledge of more than one language to make a linguistic function in other languages, 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). Also, in writing, TL refers to, as Li (2011) claimed, the combination of structures, making alterations in language systems, transferring information and representing values, identities and relationships across languages.

Overall, the concept of TL acknowledges language users' ability to choose and deploy the most relevant linguistic features to communicate with concerned people. Ignoring this fact forces multilingual to panic when they select and deploy linguistic choices that do not fit into those of a specific named language. According to Garcia and Li (2014), this idealised and imagined monolingual norm forces multilingual people to face situations where they are often criticised for their language use being simply different from the target language they are expected to use. Contrasting to such a monolingual approach to multilingualism, TL provides, as García (2009) claimed, avenues for cross-language transfer, flexible language and pedagogic classroom approaches, and creates permeable access to cross-soft linguistic boundaries. As a whole, TL enables multilinguals to show their multilingual selves through flexible linguistic practices that allow the use of different languages to make sense of their experiences in literary practices such as writing.

TL influenced multilingual writing

Recent empirical shreds of evidence showcased how bi/multilingual deployed their knowledge of two or more languages in a way qualitatively different from that of monolinguals (Velasco & García, 2014). Further, findings also suggested that multilinguals engage in hybrid language practices such as using structures, multiple linguistic codes and semiotic modalities across languages during literacy events such as writing (Gort, 2012). For example, Kiramba (2017) reported that the rural student participant of her study showed a general tendency to use words from the native Kenyan language, Kikuyu when writing in English. Similarly, Gort's (2012) study participants used their languages to explain/clarify and discuss English and Spanish language structures. They wrote language patterns of each language systematically and purposefully.

Velasco and García (2014) reported that their participants engaged in TL practices in the writing process's planning, drafting, and final product stages. The researchers further pointed out that the student writers demonstrated higher creativity and complexity by using their entire linguistic repertoire. The findings also suggested that the participants engaged in code-switching, prewriting in L1, and using the spelling patterns of L1 with the help of L2 letters. Further, García and Li (2014) argued that multilinguals select features strategically to communicate effectively, drawing on their entire repertoire of linguistic knowledge. Based on findings, Dworin (2003) argued that young children taught in more than one language shaped their writing across languages by transferring writing knowledge bi/multi-directionally.

Previous findings also suggested that TL practices, such as students' engagement with peer interactions during writing (Gort, 2012), read-aloud discussions (Worthy et al., 2013) in which they frequently engaged in repetition, translation, nonverbal communication and code-switching support writing by multilingual. Recent findings also highlighted practices such as listing things and activities (Lindgren et al., 2017), using punctuation techniques (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) and

using previous writing knowledge (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) were used as strategies for writing across languages, interventions that signal TL practices (Angelova et al., 2006).

Studies also have shown that emergent bi/multilinguals develop their writing skills when they have access to the use of multimodal writing and TL. For instance, in a case study in which Ramos and Musanti (2021) provided multimodal writing opportunities, the students were asked to respond to the writing prompts in either their L1 or L2 using modern technologies such as Google Apps, digital tools and images to demonstrate their written response to the prompt. The students were also allowed to use Google Translate to both directly translate L1 to L2 or back translate L2 to L1 to express their intended meanings. These modern tools helped the student writers to observe the difference in sentence word order between Spanish and English and provided experiences which supported the development of English and Spanish spelling and vocabulary. The researchers argued with the support of the findings that these tactics help maximise learning in multiple languages.

More studies have further showcased how translanguaging influence even the academic writing of graduates and postgraduate students. Zhang and Hadjioannou (2022) studied the writing of Chinese graduate students to explore the complexity of the language process in the context of their English academic writing. A qualitative analysis of research articles written in English revealed that the writers used translanguaging tools and strategies to support their English writing. The writers showed tendency to utilise Chinese resources to support thinking, drafting, and integrating literacy knowledge in the writing. However, negative perceptions of these practices, contributed to indecisive bilingual identities and prevented the smooth flow of their writing.

In a similar attempt, Zheng and Drybrough (2023) explored dissertations written by five Chinese students doing their postgraduate master's studies at a British university. In the analysis, the researchers traced evidence for translanguaging practices in the outlining, note-taking and drafting phases of their writing process. The findings suggested that translanguaging in the academic dissertation writing process facilitate the dialogues involving the writers, the reading materials and the target audience of the dissertation. The findings also revealed that translanguaging could help bi/multilingual writers to control the recursive and extensive dissertation writing process, and to enhance their immediate and global goals. Further, the researchers encouraged tutors and dissertation supervisors to value translanguaging in students' writing practice, an approach that contrasts the monolingual norms in academic settings.

In a contrasting effort from what has been reviewed above, Li et al. (2020, p. 309) analysed Kongish Daily, a Facebook page, which transforms local news items in Hong Kong into a "mix of Cantonese in traditional Chinese characters, Romanisation and made-up characters, simplified Chinese, Pinyin, English, Hong Kong English, other phonetic symbols, emoji and other signs and images". The purpose of the study was to comprehend how far the news items that appear on the Facebook page are politically motivated and to understand the criticism that it carries through its dynamic TL practices. Through this work, the researchers also intended to highlight the subversive nature of the translanguaging practices. The findings also showed that translanguaging can support maximise effective communication among varied participants.

In response to the debates about whether educators should accommodate or deny TL practices in writing, researchers have considered data from students and teachers who engage in multilingual education and reported it either way. Based on reflections from Spanish bilingual students taught

in English at a university in Basque country regarding the use of three languages in their lessons, Muguruza et al. (2020) reported that the students felt learning in the different languages was enjoyable due to the teacher's flexible language policy applied in the class. In contrast, Kiramba (2017) asserted that even though the students tended to use their L1 in their English assignments, they panicked because they thought their teachers would penalise them by reducing their marks. Similarly, Daryai-Hansen et al. (2017) reported that even though the teachers and the students believed that TL supported classroom management and language learning at Roskilde University in Denmark, in reality, both the students and the teachers seemed to prefer only the target languages during their lessons.

In an attempt to understand how the act of TL is seen in two different contexts and to show how the two different kinds of participants were approached and listened to by their teachers, Li and Garcia (2022) involved two bilingual students whose first languages were Shanghainese and Spanish respectively, in a study. The findings suggested that by acknowledging the bi/multilingual capacities of the students as a resource for learning and language development, the teachers helped the students maximise learning and understanding content of lessons and communicate efficiently in the different multilingual classroom setting. Based on the findings the researchers argued in favour of the importance of understanding translanguaging as a “unitary repertoire” as well as understanding its “decolonial potential” (Li & Garcia, 2022, p. 315) in teaching.

Pedagogical TL in multilingual writing

Even though there have been discussions regarding a flexible language policy to solve problems in language learning in multilingual contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2017; May, 2014), ideas on this topic appear to be centred around theoretical and ideological terms (Schneider, 2016). As a practical solution to problems faced by students, especially in writing, a TL pedagogy has been proposed to support novice writers in developing their writing (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Based on TL practices and meaning-making through “new hybrid forms of language” (Kiramba, 2017, p.1), it argued the need to envision TL as a pedagogical approach in bilingual education. Also, Hélot (2014) considered written works by multilingual students and found that they produced meaningful texts using multilingual resources/TL practices and argued that TL in literary texts provides more avenues for pedagogical language mixing and breaking ideological barriers of named languages. In this connection, Cenoz and Gorter (2020) further asserted that pedagogical TL is possible even when English is in contact with linguistically distant languages and has different scripts.

Similarly, Duarte (2020) studied data from two multilingual settings namely Luxembourg and Netherlands where teachers worked in design-based projects to teach target languages. The purpose of the study was to operationalise the concept of translanguaging in both migrant and minority languages in mainstream education. The study considered classroom transcripts which provided examples for different functions of translanguaging practices of the two settings. The analyses of the data yielded insights into how translanguaging in classroom settings provide pedagogical strategy to value migrant languages, ensure less language separation that is commonly observed in traditional immersion models and to maximise content understanding. Also, reflection of teachers with regard to the use of translanguaging and interpretation of excerpts of the data provided an overview of the functional use of different languages when space provided for moments of official translanguaging.

Based on insights from the previous works reviewed above, I point to the need for accommodating multilingual practices such as TL in writing to help students overcome difficulties caused by language educators' widespread monolingual restrictive policies.

Methodology

This qualitative case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1994) was conducted by deploying an interpretive and inductive approach and by performing thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) to interpret the findings of this research, with institutional ethics approval (UM. TNC2/UMREC-981).

Research locations and participants

The data collection started with the selection of research locations. Based on permission and consent obtained from the school principals, the study was conducted at two schools namely Aboobakkar M. V¹ and Ali M. V. which were selected based on their locations and availability of students who write in the three languages. The first one was a girls' high school and the latter was a mixed school. It was assumed that selecting two different schools would provide additional inputs and would be handy in expanding the researcher's understanding on multilingual writing.

At the next stage, with support of the principals of the above-mentioned schools, nine language teachers, who taught the three languages were identified and, following discussions held with them, they voluntarily participated in the study. With these teachers' recommendations and drawing insights from Cenoz and Gorter (2011) and Tullock and Fernandez-Villanueva (2013), three participants, aged 14 -15 reading in grade nine were included - two girls namely Meena and Zeena from the first school and a boy named Raja from the latter (all are pseudonyms).

Data collection procedure

The study was conducted twice within a period of 12 months to understand how TL practices influenced the writing over time. The data included essays written by the three students on four topics; 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 under 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 of the study. The students were asked to write 250 to 300 words per essay within 30 minutes and they were allowed to take more time if needed with the intension of creating a writing-friendly and a tension-free environment for writing. These were roughly the conditions given by Wang (2002) and Tullock and Fernandez-Villanueva (2013) to the participants of their studies.

In addition to the written essays, the data also included interviews of the student writers and their relevant language teachers. Excerpts from the essays written by the students and data derived from interviews of the three student writers and their relevant language teachers are selectively provided

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

for the purpose of analysing the students' writing, reporting the findings and supporting my arguments.

Analytical procedure

Given the fact that the study involved multiple data such as 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 data and to interpret findings. 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 the different languages. At the initial stage, the focus of inquiry was on every single essay which was treated as unique and handled separately.

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 had their influences on the writing. This particular exercise helped with finding the answer to the first research question (RQ1). At the next stage of the analysis, I sought to examine whether these elements had anything to do with the changes that took place over time in the writing in the different languages. In order to expand my understanding on how TL practices influenced the writing and how the teachers and students viewed TL in writing, I used interview data derived from interviews with the students² and teachers. This practice partly supported the answer to the RQ1, and fully answer the second research question (RQ2).

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

Table 1. Topics of the prompts

No	Title	T1			T2		
		L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3
1	The person whom I like most	√	√	√	√	√	√

² Interviews of non-English speaking students and teachers were translated from their L1.

2	A holiday I enjoyed most	√	√	√	√	√	√
3	Teachers are essential to a nation.	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	Discuss what we can do to make this world a wonderful place to live.	-	-	-	√	√	√

Results

RQ 1: How do TL practices shape writing in languages used by the students?

According to the student participants, one of the most observed means of TL that shaped writing across the languages was using the L2 lexical items for writing in the other languages, echoing results by Cenoz and Gorter (2011).

Example 1: L2 in L1

*Nangal **restroom**ukkul chendru kai kal alampinom.*

Translation: We went into the restroom and refreshed ourselves.

*Enakku **children's cartoon** ondrai pottu widakkoora awarum pottu wittar.*

Translation: He played a cartoon show on my request.

*Nam antha **hotel**ukku chendrom.*

Translation: We went to that hotel.

*Tholai pesi **memory full** enakkattiyathu.*

Translation: There was a 'memory full' alert message.

Example 2: L2 in L3

*Mama mage niwadu kalaye mage yaluwoth ekka '**celebrate**' keruwa.*

Translation: I spent my vacation with my friends.

*Ape asama' **flavour ice cream**' kewa.*

Translation: We ate an ice cream which consisted of my favourite flavour.

*Apee **trip** eka '**arrange**' kala.*

Translation: We arranged a trip.

*Apee ape '**principal**' ha '**teacher**' hemoma '**meet**' kala.*

Translation: We met our principal and teachers.

*Mang mage nivadu kalayawa hodak sathutin '**finish**' kala.*

Translation: I finished my vacation very happily.

*Api **hill capital** balanna giya.*

Translation: We went to the hill capital.

*Mama hawesewelin pittaniyata gihilla **cricket** chellam karanawa.*

Translation: *I go to the playground in the evening and play cricket.*

Api **cricket match** eka chellelam kara.

Translation: We played a cricket match.

*Kemata paasse hemoma' **magic show**'ta giya.*

Translation: After the meal, we all went to the magic show.

*Eith ei dawasa **megic** karanna aya awe na.*

Translation: *That day the magician was not present.*

Further, confirming results by Kiramba (2017), the researcher was able to trace evidence for TL in the form of the use of L1 in L2, as shown below:

Example 3: L1 in L2

He inaugurated **aikkiya deshiya** (*united national*) congress.

He changed its name as **aikkiya deshiya parti** (*United National Party*).

He gave opinion to get the new '**yappu**' (constitution).

According to these student writers, they had relatively less essay writing practice, specifically in their L1 and L3. As a result, they had issues with their vocabularies and, therefore, translanguaged in the form of the use of lexical items, which helped them “with the flow of writing,” and they were able to “approach their essays with command.” (M/SS003)³

In addition to what has been reported above, the findings of this study suggested that the student writers selected features from the repertoire of language and assembled their linguistic practices in ways that fulfilled their communicative needs (Velasco & García, 2014). In this sense, they reported using previously learnt information and writing knowledge to write in the different languages. They “supported the smooth flow of the writing” (FM/PS002)⁴. They reported that their essays did not flow smoothly while writing at T1 due to insufficient practice. They were given extensive writing practice during the study, especially in their L2. As a result, their writing improved, as shown below:

For all children around the world, their dads be their hero. My dad is my best because from my small to big he teaches me, he fulfils my needs, he loves me a lot.... (L2/T1)

My dad may be an ordinary person in the society. But for me he is my hero. He is a live wire for my life. If the life is gone, there will be no light and everyone has to be in dark. If not for him, I will be in complete darkness. (L2/T2)

³M= male, SS003= secondary student 3/Raja

⁴FM= female, SS002= secondary student 2/Meena

As for the above excerpts, the texts produced at T2 carried certain missing features from those made at T1. According to Meena, she tried to use selective words for stylish purposes to attract the reader's attention. As shown in the above excerpts, Meena compared her father with "live wire" and "lighthouse" in her L2 essay at T2. Similarly, she compared ignorance with "blindness" or "darkness".

The following sentences were also found in Meena's L1 essays, which, as reported, were produced based on the writing practice she received during the study period.

Enathu thanthai enakkuppidththa oru nafarawar. Awar seyyum ovvoru seyalum enathu manathil alamaga pathindhu widum. Avarathu seyal owwandrum enakkup pidiththathage irukkum. (L1/T1)

Translation: I have a very favourite and special person for me. That is my father. All his activities are very deeply uprooted in my heart. Each and activity of him is highly admired by me always.

Enathu thanthaiye enathu wazwin atharam. Awar en walwin oru kalangarai wizakkam. Awar illai enin enathu wazwu iruttagiye irukkum. Adarntha kadondril karirul soolntha soolalil thanimayil widappaattawan pol aagiyiruppen. (L1/T2)

Translation: He is the foundation and the lighthouse to me. Without him, I would be in total darkness, like a person left alone in a thick jungle on a dark night.

As evident above, she distinctly described her father at both periods. Reportedly, she wrote for stylish purposes at T2 due to her new writing experience, which she obtained from her extensive writing practice in her L2 literary appreciation classes, which she used across the languages.

Other ways imply translanguaging practices, such as the use of punctuation techniques (Cenoz and Gorter, 2011) and the use of the same strategies for writing in different languages (Lindgren et al. (2017). The students reported having relatively less writing practice in their L1 and L3. They used previous writing knowledge to write in different languages; also, the writing knowledge they received in their L2 during the study period. For instance, their English teacher instructed them "to commence their essays with a preface" (M/SS003), which they followed when they wrote across the languages as shown below:

The man of this Nano technological era is busy at his own ideologies and motives. He spends his life in misery and in stressful manner. If it is not for rest and leisure time activities..... (M/SS003/L2)

Athu oru wellikkilamayyagum. Nan Migawum surusuruppudan pallikku wirainthen. Kayyil oru periya moottaiyudan enathu thanthayyin mottar wandiyl erinenr.... (M/SS003/L2)

Translation: That was a Friday. I rushed to my school with full of hope and enthusiasm. I got on to my father's motor bike with a load of sweet items in my school bag. ...

Minissun wana ape niwaduwen nethi kaleyak gathe kreema itha aaphasuthawayak lak karai. Welawe newethu wenna nei missun wenuwen.... (M/SS003/L3)

Translation: Restless life which we live puts us in a lot of difficulties. Time and tides wait for no man....

As evident above and as reported by Raja, he followed similar ways, especially in writing stylishly across the languages. He used his writing knowledge, which he gained during the study in his L2, to write in three languages. Similarly, the other two students reported:

“I was taught how to write stylishly by my English literature teacher. I used this writing knowledge to write in the different languages.” (FM/SS001)⁵

“We were taught by our Tamil language teachers how to use punctuations such as full stop, commas and question marks which we used in the other languages when we write.” (M/SS003)

The above finding accords with results by Cenoz and Gorter (2011) and Dworin (2003), which refer to the writing knowledge used for writing in different languages. It was also found that all three students commenced their essays in the three languages as evident in the above excerpt, with a preface in order, according to them, to attract the readers towards their writing:

“I am always concerned about my reader. So, I prefer starting my essays with something that makes them interested.” (FM/SS001)

RQ2. *How do teachers and students view TL in writing?*

As Creese and Blackledge (2010) argued, immersion in the official languages of instruction is operationalised in a way that named languages are partitioned and treated as autonomous and divided entities. As a result, multilingual students who engage in multilingual practices get into a situation where they panic as they are penalised for such practices, as reported, for instance, by Kiramba (2017). As noted below, the study participants reported that they panicked in their translanguaging practices because they feared they would be penalised for doing so, through the reductions of marks by their relevant subject teachers.

“I use words and sentence patterns for writing. This helps me communicate my views effectively. At the same time, I fear doing so because my teachers don’t allow that and reduce marks for that.” (M/SS001)

Further, it was revealed that the students liked teachers who allowed language mixing when writing in different languages. They also said they did not “like a particular teacher who uses more Sinhala in her class and, as a result, a very less is understood from her” (M/SS002). Contrastingly, they preferred to learn from other teachers who “allow mixing languages in classrooms” (M/SS002). They also reported that they liked a particular L3 teacher as he used more L1 than L3, and all his lessons were enjoyable. Even with this lenience in treating language differences in speaking, the students complained about the paradoxical positioning of the teachers in response to TL in writing, as all of them tended to penalise students for such practices.

⁵ FM= female, student 01/Zeena

Almost all the teachers who participated in this study, except one teacher, strongly resisted any reference to TL in writing, a stance which reflects monolingual bias in handling multilingualism.

“I would like my students don’t use unstandardised 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/LT007)⁶

Another teacher replied to a similar question:

“I allow this practice to a certain extent when speaking, but not like to permit any mixing in writing.” (M/LT008)

When the teachers were interrogated about how the students reacted to the resistance employed by the teachers in this respect, they responded that they:

“... understand that the students don’t entertain such resistances, but I don't have any option other than that.” (M/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 translanguaging and understood new trends in language education. She had several discussions regarding these trends with the researcher of this study. She felt that there was a need to dig deeper into this subject, and a policy change and a pedagogical approach were needed to benefit from this current thinking in language studies. Despite her understanding of TL, she felt she needed “to reduce marks for language mixing and ungrammaticality in writing as official instructions don’t allow such practices”. (FM/LT009)

Discussion

Some writing samples extracted from the student writers’ essays showcased how the writers made meanings under given prompts, drawing on multilingual resources. Overall, the findings revealed that TL played a scaffolding role in helping with the writers’ competency development. Even though the writers knew they would be penalised for TL practices, they continued to translanguage their writing, showing that they intended to communicate and were not concerned about being penalised. Also, this practice showed the tension-filled literary practices of the students, especially in terms of correctness, grammaticality and compartmentalising languages in hierarchical order (Garcia, 2009). Even though TL/multilingual practices helped inform the writers about the flow of their writing and helped them communicate their intended meanings, the dominance of a monolingual bias education policy led to a situation where their literary practices were treated as fossilised. In the writing efforts, the students drew from their repertoires of languages and solved problems they faced in constructing their texts in the different languages. This practice corresponds with what García & Li (2014, p. 22) termed “the activation of the entire language repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively.” This happens when bi/multilingual learning is encouraged by allowing and enabling them to draw on available

⁶ LT007= language teacher 007

multilingual resources rather than restricting them by monolingual bias pedagogical approaches (Bauer et al., 2017). The activation of the student writers' linguistic repertoire replicated in the students' texts in forms of the use of (a) writing knowledge (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013); (b) lexical items (Kiramba, 2017; Li & Garcia, 2022); (c) previously used information (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013); and (d) deployment of similar strategies (Lindgren et al., 2017) for writing across the different languages.

As pointed out above, the students' tendency to translanguage indicated that language separation and the perpetuation of monolingual practices do not naturally suggest how children access knowledge (Kiramba, 2017). Contrastingly, their multilingual practices showed that they instinctively preferred to distract language hierarchies and monolingual bias ideologies. In addition, a commonly noticed practice of the writers was their tendency to cross soft linguistic borders of named languages, a finding that confirms results by Cenoz and Gorter (2011). Even though the writers tended to disrupt monolingual norms in writing, they, at the same time, had to undergo a panicking situation because they were concerned over correctness and grammaticality. While the writers' linguistic operations violated the writing norms established by monolingual ideologies, it also emphasised the importance of best practices in teaching to cater for inequalities created by applying monolingual norms in language use.

How the writers approached their writing tasks depicted that they were concerned only with the meanings, not with linguistically imposed conventions. They crossed over permeable soft boundaries (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). They drew on resources at their disposal for meaning-making across the languages, confirming 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). Although these texts were of their authentic voices, it appeared that the writers were, at the same, worried about their literary practices being considered as deficit owing to the monolingual ideologies of their teachers. As opposed to such a monolingual perspective, the TL practices of these writers should have been considered their right to draw on the resources at their disposal to correspond their meanings in the different languages. In other words, the writers would not have been able to maintain the flow of their writing had they, for instance, moved their writing knowledge across the languages they had learnt in either L1 or L2 (Lindgren et al., 2017). TL provided avenues for voices that the overdominance of the target language mindset had silenced (García & Flores, 2014).

Even though the students thought TL helped the development of their writing, they were not sure whether to use this facility or not as their writings were, as reported, treated as deficit and fossilised. In addition, they were penalised for doing so by reducing marks, a finding that confirms the result (Kiramba, 2017). As far as the teachers were concerned, they believed that TL was against monolingual norms. According to most of the teachers interviewed, they did not possess enough knowledge regarding new thinking in language studies such as TL. Apart from the fact that one of the teachers was aware of such new trends in language studies, she was more inclined to penalise her students by reducing marks for TL in writing. Viewing texts produced by multilinguals through the monolingual lens in such a way can be a barrier to the writing development of novice writers. A closer look at the essays in the three languages will make any reader assume that employing homogenous approaches in writing is disadvantageous to multilingual. The tendency of teachers to penalise students for TL practices infers educators' failure to acknowledge the writers' ability to draw on multilingualism and their need to reflect

their multilingual selves and voices. Therefore, it is imperative to capitalise on students' voices and experiences by allowing multilingual practices for literary events such as writing.

Conclusion and implications for practice

The results of this study, which accord with previous findings such as García (2009), Canagarajah (2011, 2013) and Bauer et al. (2017), showcased the tendency of the student writers to translanguage their writing. While schools and educational intuitions favour language separation in literacy practices, studies on multilingual writing have suggested that students translanguage their literary practices. As for this study, despite hurdles imposed by monolingual ideologies-driven language policies, the students translanguaged their writing using lexical items, previous writing knowledge, and previously used information, and they deployed similar strategies across the languages. Further, these multilingual practices suggested that TL is not deployed as a transgression of language conventions but has been used for communication (García, 2009). These practices further inferred that TL can be a scaffolding attempt if language mixing is encouraged (Dworin & Moll, 2006; Bauer et al., 2017). Also, the findings suggested that TL practices are a complex linguistic and rhetorical competence (Canagarajah, 2013) and, as Blackledge et al. (2014), García & Flores (2014), and Hélot (2014) argued, TL facilitates silenced voices heard. Unrevealed identities are renegotiated (Kiramba, 2017). Despite these realities, a monolingual norm that dominates language education considers TL in writing a violation of languaging conventions. In contrast, the concept of TL challenges conventional norms of language education, which consider TL an illiteracy practice and a fossilised form of linguistic production. Further, it provides a base for a discussion over what it means to be multilingual and challenges monolingual ideologies that consider named languages as divided and autonomous entities (Otheguy et al., 2015), which becomes a barrier to language development, especially concerning writing (Garcia, 2009).

As Block (2007) emphasised, teachers must draw on the considerable language resources such students bring to class. However, languages are very often perceived as autonomous and divided entities in classroom contexts, and there is a need to consider implementing a flexible bilingual pedagogy that allows permeable boundaries between languages, as proposed by Creese and Blackledge (2014). In the case of multilingualism, the ability of multilinguals to combine different languages in communication should be acknowledged as a handy tool for language production (Bauer et al., 2017). However, in reality, there is a general tendency among language teachers to implement monolingual ideologies, which makes learning very challenging for students. Therefore, it is highly recommended that language teachers seriously consider accommodating language differences and encouraging students to use TL to ensure smooth learning in multilingual classroom settings.

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