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Languages Speak Reconciliation: An Interdisciplinary Study on the Impact of National Language in Post War Reconciliation Sri Lanka

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Abstract. The Role of National Language is endorsed in different contexts and it has triggered an inspired debate within the Sri Lankan political history when its discriminatory nature policies marked a triumph of linguist nationalism. The recognition of the Sinhala language as the only National Language in Sri Lanka and its dominance, drifted both communities apart causing frustration and tension among ethnic groups, which have ultimately culminated in ethnic strife that lasted almost three decades. National Languages, hence wield as a sociopolitical tool that demands a balance among languages, recognition, and policies. Similarly, Sri Lanka, in its path to reconciliation also demands a balance among National Languages, policies, and its recognition among the communities. This study thus explores the Role of National Language in promoting social cohesion and coexistence among ethnic groups to achieve anticipated “Reconciliation” within Sri Lankan social fabric. The paper draws upon a mixed approach employing qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews. Data were gathered from interviewing 20 undergraduates from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Data were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the recognition of National languages in their due status will make a huge impact on fostering reconciliation within Sri Lankan Society. It is further not to be confused with the Link Language as a National Language since its duty in social integration is relatively limited in the cases where the understanding of cultural, traditional, and historical attributes of an ethnic community is more pronounced especially in grappling with attitudinal problems inherited within ethnic communities.

Keywords. National Language, Reconciliation, Linguist Nationalism, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Sri Lanka, evolving through a darker history of ethnic tension and strife which claimed many Sri Lankan lives to end, is now at this critical juncture anticipating sights of reconciliation to weave the social fabric torn apart three decades ago (Jayathilaka, 2020). Occasional clashes within this multiethnic society bear the harsh reality that the fears of segregation, tension, and

discriminatory gestures have not completely been wiped away while bringing forth the necessity of understanding, appreciating, and sustaining the differences and similarities within social ethnic groups. Within this social framework, each ethnic group is inherited with its own set of values, norms, belief systems that are not essentially compatible with another. Nonetheless, these differences can be compatible through a language if each group is confident in conveying what's hidden in their past and what's left in their present and what it is to be like in their future as a confession of their experiences, thoughts, and predictions. (Jayathilaka and Ansari, 2019). This can undoubtedly be enabled through learning languages of another ethnic group as it creates that mutual bonding and cohesion when communities are linguistically integrated.

Accordingly, the trilingual policy introduced by the Sri Lankan government paved its path to learning the Second National Language of the other community recognizing it as a successful mean for fostering co-existence and national integration within Sri Lanka (Irshad, 2018). Hence, recognizing all languages in an equal position is important in language learning and teaching. (Arshad Masood Hashmi, 2014). This enhances the due respect for another language while it has been recognized as a respected language influenced by peculiar cultural norms, history as someone's mother tongue evolved through. According to the LLRC commission, language learning and teaching have been seen as an effective method to encourage understanding, "diversity and national integration". It further advances that it is worthwhile to make it mandatory of learning each other's languages under the school curriculum as it said to expect attitudinal changes among two communities and to encourage trilingual proficiency in Sinhala, Tamil and English among the communities as it eventually moves towards building a trilingual state, and it is invaluable in public service to build up social relationships among Tamil-speaking government officers.

1.2 Objectives of the study

From an enlightened standing Point, the role of National languages in fostering social cohesion among the ethnic groups as a step forward to reconciliation is irreplaceable.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to identify, by what means the role of National Languages is pronounced in the post-war reconciliation process putting forward a perception-based analysis among the students from diverse ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study is enabled through an interdisciplinary approach incorporating two subjects; Reconciliation and Language learning in studying the importance of National Language role in social cohesion among communities while offering a novel dimension to the realm of research in reconciliation research make this study significant and momentous.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Methods

This paper draws upon a mixed-method study applying qualitative methods by interviewing both Sinhala and Tamil Students to validate the role of language in the post-war reconciliation process.

The research sample was drawn from a group of undergraduate students consisting of in-depth interviews employing 20 undergraduate students including 10 Sinhala undergraduates and 10 Tamil undergraduates from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

2.2 Data Collection: Interviews

This study is primarily involved with in-depth interviews to extract authentic opinions, views, experiences, and suggestions from respondents enabling through semi-structured interview platforms using open-ended questions.

2.3 Data Analysis

Gathered Qualitative data were analyzed employing Descriptive Statistics and Thematic Analysis. The extracted opinions were coded into themes to signify the most endorsed opinions by respondents and to retain the validity and accuracy of the data, and extracted themes were further supported by descriptive statistics with numerically endorsed percentages.

3. Language and reconciliation

3.1 Concept of Reconciliation

'Postwar Peace building' by and large refers to a set of transitional actions after a civil war being settled by a peace agreement (Sørbo, 2004). The absence of war brings only negative peace. For achieving positive peace the conflict need to be transformed by demolishing possible distrust and fear among the ethnicities. Reconciliation is a broad concept and there is no uniformity among the academics on the definition of reconciliation. Johan Galtung admits defeat: "Reconciliation is a theme with deep psychological, sociological, theological, philosophical, and profoundly human roots – and nobody knows how to successfully achieve it" (Galtung, 2001: 4). Simply reconciliation can be defined as an approach that consolidates peace, breaks the cycle of violence by preventing the possibilities of the use of the past as the seed of renewed conflict (Jayathilaka, 2014). Johan Galtung one of the founders of the Conflict Resolution field, makes a short definition: Reconciliation = Closure + Healing. "Closer in the sense of not reopening the hostilities, healing in the sense of being rehabilitated" (Galtung, 2001:04). According to him, it is a total relationship-building process. Lederach argues that Reconciliation to be the meeting point of four elements. Four of them are justice, truth, mercy, and peace (Ledarach, 1997). As to him, Reconciliation is a process of internal peace building learning from the past and not carrying it to the future. IDEA handbook defines reconciliation as "a process through which a society moves from a divided past to shared future" (Bloomfield et al, 2003: 12). Reconciliation can generally be viewed as the building and/or restoration of relationships in divided societies (Smith, 2005: 156). Lederach views reconciliation as a way of relationship building. In his words "Reconciliation is the first and last about people and their relationships" (Ledarach, 2006). For him, reconciliation is a process aimed at building and healing the torn fabric of interpersonal and community lives and relationships. Reconciliation is a societal process. It should involve a mutual acknowledgment of past suffering. In this way, reconciliation assist in changing destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace (Brounéus, 2007:6).

Among the various pieces of literature on reconciliation, this study views it as a step of bringing 'Positive Peace'. Johan Galtung invented the term 'peace building' and it means that achieving positive peace after the conflict. By positive peace, it intends to address the 'structural violence. According to him, the visible part of a conflict is just a tip of a huge iceberg.(Jayathilaka, 2014) The hidden part is much larger than this visible tip. In general, attention always draws to the visible part. Anyway, Galtung emphasis the importance of going beyond the visible surface level, when expecting a long-lasting resolution. By following the above theoretical facet on structural violence, some theoreticians view that the post-conflict stage

should aim to bring structural adjustment for addressing structural violence. ‘Development’ has been considered as one way of bringing structural adjustments in post-conflict societies. Consequently, peacebuilding aims at enabling durable peace solutions and a sustainable development approach in post-conflict situations. (Jayathilaka, 2016) Immediately after the conflict, the peacebuilding focuses on economic recovery, removal of small arms from the society and rebuilding of governance institutions and launching of reconciliation, releasing land for agriculture, rebuilding of social capital (Bloomfield et al, 2003).

The post-conflict situation is considered as one of the important stages where peacebuilding activities are carried out. Nicole Ball (1996) has mentioned in post-conflict society’s healing the social wound created by war and giving chance for coexistence are the most important subjects. For him during the war, the growing trend of the conflict makes exploiting more resources and it reduces the long-term development potential. While reducing the potential of a country it reduces the cooperation among people more than that. It highlights the importance of national reconciliation as a priority of peace-building tasks. More positive relationship-building will hopefully develop with time, but just the “negative peace” of an absence of overt violence between the previously warring communities may well be enough to hope for. It is also the minimally fertile ground in which the fragile reconciliation process, having been planted, must now be nurtured and maintained. (Jayathilaka, and Menike, 2021).

3.2 Post-war reconciliation approach in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka suffered from a decade’s long military conflict between the government and LTTE. On the 18th of May 2007, the Sri Lankan government could overcome the war by defeating the LTTE. Due in part to international pressure on alleged war crimes at the latter part of the war in Sri Lanka, the UN Secretary-General appointed a Panel of Experts on these issues. With their findings, the Panel also recommended an international independent Investigation. However, the Government of Sri Lanka rejected this call and refused to accept this UN report. In response to war crimes allegations and the calls for an independent investigation, Sri Lanka came out with its homegrown report, which is a domestic investigation. The ‘Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation commission – LLRC’ is an outcome of this process. To take forward the Recommendations made by LLRC, the government developed a National Plan of Action (NPOA).

3.3 LLRC Recommendations on a language policy

In the LLRC report commission has analyzed the root causes of the ethnic conflict. As is mentioned in the report, “The Commission is expected to focus on the causes of conflict, its effect on the people, and promote national unity and reconciliation, so that all citizens of Sri Lanka, irrespective of ethnicity or religion could live in dignity and a sense of freedom.

The Commission is also expected to identify mechanisms for restitution to the individuals whose lives have been significantly impacted by the conflict.”(LLRC: Paras. 8.186 -8.201). Commission views that the root cause of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka lies in the failure of successive Governments to address the genuine grievances of the Tamil people’(LLRC: Paras.8.150, 9.184). As being described by the commission these grievances are threefold. Firstly, post-independence governments in Sri Lanka have been unable to give a durable solution for power-sharing. Therefore the Commission recommends power devolution. By examining the existing provincial council system commission showed shortcomings in the functioning of the system commission recommend having an adequate mechanism for power-sharing. Secondly, the commission identifies the need of having a proper language policy to

address the grievances of Tamil speaking community. Commission argues that the Official Language Act in 1956 has contributed a lot to shifting Tamil youth for separatism. Moreover, Sinhala only policy has been caused many communicatory and attitudinal obstacles in the country. By identifying language policy as a major requirement of reconciliation, commissions recommend for implementation of a tri-lingual policy with equal recognition to Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

3.4 Language as a bridge of communication

Language wields a huge influence on society in mainstreaming attitudes, values, beliefs, thoughts, and even the facts and contradictions between individuals and societies. Language as the most common tool of communication is vital in helping people build a bridge of relationships. (Abuarqoub, 2019) Language thus, being a tool in man's hand for coordinating activities and realities, has made possible through communication employing mutually agreed codes and symbols to transmit a set of ideas and attitudes within humans, which eventually involve the interaction in between people could be interpersonal or mass (Dada, 2010). As stated, the level of language interaction is commonly determined as a factor in supporting human interaction and relationships on which communal integrity is laid. As specified by Keraf (1997), language has been seen as a tool for self-expression: as a means to communicate, a tool to organize and adapt social integration in the environment or circumstances, and a tool for social control. Accordingly, keraf's (1997) roles of language as a communication tool provided with six different platforms where its obligation is presented as Language as a tool to interact with others: Indicates authority, Language reflects the level of education, as the force of law, Attract the customer, Indicates a person's social standing.

Tracing through a scholastic emergence of language, Plato initially acknowledged that language as an instrument or a tool comprised with a specific art, the art of communicating and distinguishing and followed by an initial formation of Aristotle's norm that a language is governed by different structures that implicitly use different sets of rules. (Arshad Masood Hashmi, 2014). Aristotle further claimed that the meaningfulness of language is always determined by a structure, which is revealed in rules which govern the language. Conversely, early work on the philosophy of language in the modern era was unconcerned with language as a tool for communication: the pioneers of 'ideal' language philosophy such as Frege, Russell, and Tarski were logicians, interested in how insights from logical languages might be applied to the study of 'language' in a very general sense. (Wharton, 2013). Given its history and emergence as a phenomenon, it has continued to be ever current with its controversies and debates, which, in turn, has provided a greater significance to human existence and inheritance. In this way, Language in its way of origins and history was concerned as a tool of communication that has been evolving into a systematic discipline of analyzing every single aspect of language itself. Despite its evolvement through a linguistic phase, the usage of language within the multiethnic society is highly regarded.

In the context of effective use of language in communication - as an eminent aspect of human relationships, is arguably pronounced as a lacking essential in most multilingual communities. In this way, enabling effective use of language or mediation of another language is deemed crucial. This propels Chinwe Innocentia Ahumaraeze (2016) to state, failure in communication maybe the aftermath of poor use of language lacking effectiveness.

Hence, effective communication ensures the capability to use grammatically accurate constructions while strengthening the ability to use language constructively and appropriately. The level of appropriation of language is generally reasoned with an awareness of correct tone,

objectivity, precision, and clarity, to make it comprehensible to the audience. In this way, the sense of clarity in language use is amply demonstrated by Arshad Masood Hashmi revealing that misuse of words due to the lack of awareness of the language may distort the message and lead to misunderstanding between the sender and receiver. In support of language accuracy, the term “linguistic accuracy” was coined by Noam Chomsky referring to correctness and grammatically correct use of language use in communication. (Holmes, 2013).

Followed by linguistic competence, which entailed adhering to the rules of grammar during communication, communicative competence was modeled by Canale and Swain (1980), Searle (1973), Richard and Rochards (1989), Broughton and Brumfit, et al (1978) as cited in (Chinwe Innocentia Ahumaraeze, 2016). Communicative competence has brought linguistic competence into a new scale surpassing the language boundaries and its competence is further claimed by Otagburugu, (1995) as the competence to match the language corresponding to the situation, the competence to appreciate the nature of participants along with their role that they play in the communication process, the competence to identify the purpose of the communication, the competence to use the right words phrases, and sentences in communication, the competence to give the right set of meaning to the words, phrases, and sentences in communication

3.5 Role of language as a tool of reconciliation

3.51 Linguistic Diversity and Language policies

Language as a common tool of communication allowing people to share their own set of feelings, ideas, attitudes within groups and societies, is worth conceptualizing as a tool for reconciliation. The two-edged concepts, “language” and “reconciliation” can be consistent in a multiethnic society where the language is deemed as a tool enabling human interactions and relationships within ethnic groups. Language use and language teaching are vital in recognizing all languages are equal, which is crucial particularly in a multilingual country with linguistic diversity. Arshad Masood Hashmi, in collaborating this truth, opines that Nations that have acknowledged their own “linguistic plurality” can be concluded as a groundwork for encouraging social harmony and peace through “democratic and peaceful spirits”. It is therefore compulsory to endorse respect for the languages of each community while providing entrance to a language of universal opportunity. Hence, “Multilingualism” in the absence of leading “international languages” will inculcate self-confidence in the downgraded linguistic communities while concluding the fact that “Multilingual education” could be beneficial for peace and reconciliation (Arshad Masood Hashmi, 2014).

The significance of recognizing and adopting languages in an equal frame in a multilingual country can be reflected from the society in hindering ethnic tension and discrimination. Adopting, undermining, or fostering one particular language, thus marginalizing a certain community into a linguistic majority and minority was observed as an act of discriminatory and intolerant in Sri Lankan history causing 30 years of civil war - could also be conceptualized as a war embattling not just against a territory but a linguistic regime. Henceforth, the respect and admiration of linguistic diversity and the language of a person’s inherited linguistic communities are crucial for peaceful cohabitation (King, 2003). Accordingly, as noted by Wyss (2020) that at the stage of adopting this “postcolonial Language policy” manifested not only a milestone in ethnic relations among the communities, yet the “triumph of linguistic nationalism” that directed towards the dominance and relegation of Tamils caused the segregation among two communities Tamil and Sinhala. The hindrances and ethnic tension among the Tamils eventually culminated in massive ethnic strife between the Sri

Lankan government and LTTE that prolonged almost thirty years while claiming the lives of both Tamils and Sinhalese (Wyss, 2020).

The above statement points to the hegemonic language policy implementing Sinhala as the only national language of Sri Lanka in 1956 that drastically established a linkage between language, society, politics, ethnicity, and discrimination in the country. In its path emerging from Sinhala Only Act (No 33), Official Language Act in 1987 to present scenario, interrupted by the intervention of a significant force – episodes of ‘critical junctures’ – assumed as crucial moments of institutional change that can spur other progressive paths (Wyss, 2020). Correspondingly, Coperahewa claimed that “language policy implies language planning which is the result of political choices aiming at regulating the relationships between languages and societies”, and assists “specific ideological and political ends” (Alexander 2004, p. 113). In a multiethnic society, implementing a strong language policy is important to further social cohesion and reconciliation while creating a harmonious coexistence among ethnic-linguistical different groups.

Henceforth, a language policy is particularly deemed as a dimension of ethnic identity, which is capable of promoting social cohesion and reconciliation (Footitt and Kelly 2014). Per the LLRC recommendations, revolting of the population were obstructions because of the not implementing country’s language policy and its suggestions and the Commission further recommended that a complete and proper implementation of mentioned language policy is a potential trajectory for promoting post-war reconciliation within the country with a guarantee ensuring that violence occurred in the past is not be resumed (LLRC, 2011).

As specified, the intrinsic link in-between language including language policies within a multiethnic and multilingual society serves as a positive factor in preventing socio-political polarization by tapping into the local peace-building networks which can manage and interrupt conflict-forming dynamics, and provide space for new forms of political consensus.

4. Discussion

4.1 Educating National Languages among University Students

By casting a closer look at “language Education” from a perspective in promoting social harmony and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, the act of recognizing “Sinhala” and “Tamil” as official languages is more pronounced in the country’s history as an initial step to reconsider the necessity of fostering, and educating both languages within the ethnic fabric in Sri Lanka. Evolving through these policies, The Ministry of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress, and Hindu Religious Affairs are accountable for the preparation of policies, projects, plans, and programs along with proper implementation, monitoring, and assessments of issues involved with reconciliation, official languages, and national integration.

The Department of Official Languages (DOL) accountable for the active implementation of the OLP; the Official Languages Commission (OLC) 8 Articles 18(1), (2), (3), 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 of Chapter IV of the 1978 Constitution 9 NLEAP 2019 –Levels of Government subjected to the OLP 30 accountable for policy recommendations, use of official languages and monitoring and supervising its compliance; the National Institute of Language Education and Training (NILET) responsible for language teaching and training of public servants, teachers, translators and interpreters (NLEAP 2019). Followed by policies and mechanisms, “National Language Education” among university students is deemed as a bridge directing towards the grounds of social harmony as their integrity among ethnic groups could be a positive wave for future to anticipate Sri Lanka as a socially, ethnically, and nationally integrated country.

On the other hand, the University system here in Sri Lanka has stepped forward with an outlook affirming the importance of National Language Education among the undergraduates where it is mostly and only facilitated by Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences faculties where language education is a rather prominent part of their degree programs. Yet the efforts in facilitating bilingual education among other faculties are relatively low that can also be referred to as an occasion where it is due to place is being overlooked or undervalued. Anyhow, lack of policy encouragement towards language education within universities and schools cannot be considered as an absence of policy encouragement within the education system so that encouragement within university students towards their second language other than their mother tongue or link language (English) is a fairground to reconsider the enthusiasm within the undergraduates towards either “ Sinhala” or “ Tamil”.

4.2. Motivation towards Learning National Languages

In covering the tendency that undergraduates showed towards learning their second languages either Tamil or Sinhala language, decisions have been influenced by the factors as such the level of results received for “Third Language” Module recognized as a Core Subject prescribed under the Bachelors of Arts Degree programs offered by Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. The Module has been documented with an Introduction of Tamil Alphabet and Sinhala Alphabet to Sinhala Students and Tamil Students, respectively. The module is further aimed at enabling the understanding of language at basic levels by practicing pronunciation, basic sentence structures, numbers, words for household items, and people and activities, and improving the spoken ability of students (FSSL, 2013).

The recognition of “Sinhala and Tamil” Language as a “Third Language” in university systems can be observed as an instance where “Sinhala Language” (SL) and “Tamil language” (TL) are not essentially offered with the status of an official language as it has been replaced with the link language of Sri Lanka. To elaborate, the majority of students are more inclined to choose “English” as their medium of study, which has essentially been the reason for promoting the usage and necessity for learning the English language while being offered status as a second language in universities. Anyhow, this is incompatible with the recommendations made in the LLRC report of 2011 about the Trilingual Policy to be prioritized the teaching of second national languages (2NLs) and the link language English, and reintroducing English as a Medium of Instructions. Interrogations about the viability and the effectiveness of such policies in practice are prompted in the first instance by earlier attempts to use language in education policies for political ends. The Tri-Lingual Policy ((LLRC, 2011). Anyhow, Based on the usage of any other criteria, the status of National languages being called as a “ Third Language” within the university, is a clear exhibition of lack of due respect which might be leading to discouragement among students to learn them in the first place.

Accordingly, when the students were asked to elaborate on the status of National languages in Sri Lanka, most of the Sinhala students opinioned it as a “Third Language” without knowing that the Tamil Language has been offered with the status of a Second Official Language in Sri Lanka. These perceptions can mostly be influenced and reinforced by the fact that these languages are being recognized as a “Third Language” in universities especially titling it as a “Third Language” in core subjects too.

Conversely, in the perspective of Language Acquisition, “Third Language Acquisition” refers to the acquisition of non -native by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages. The acquisition of the first two languages can be simultaneous as in early

bilingualism (Cenoz, 2003). Anyhow, not receiving the due status for National Languages can be the first blow to the fabric of Sri Lankan society while being a reason for diminishing respect to each language and discouraging future generations to learn National Languages as a necessity. To support above mentioned, the awareness and recognition of Tamil – Second National Language and Sinhala – National Language by Sinhala Students (SS) and Tamil Students (TS) can be measured considering the responses given accordingly. The identification of Sinhala Language as the National Language of Sri Lanka was confidently supported by 80% yet the identification of Tamil Language as the Second National Language was only supported by 20% while their major endorsement laid towards recognizing the Tamil Language as a third language.

Table1
Recognition of Tamil Language

	S S 1	S S 2	S S 3	S S 4	S S 5	S S 6	S S 7	S S 8	S S 9	S S 10
SL							√			
SN L		√				√				
TL	√		√	√	√			√	√	√

*SL-Second Language, SNL –Second National Language, TL-Third Language

Table2
Recognition of Sinhala Language

	TS 1	TS 2	TS 3	TS 4	TS 5	TS 6	TS 7	TS 8	TS 9	TS 10
SL										
NL	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√
TL				√	√					

*SL-Second Language, NL – National Language, TL-Third Language

Notwithstanding the lack of recognition of National Languages with their due status by most of the Sinhala Students, the results gained for Second Language Learning Module detailed that Sinhalese students have shown a positive inclination towards learning TL, as the results were relatively encouraging. In analyzing the results received by Tamil students in acquiring SL, the results appeared to be rather not satisfactory as they have not attempted to score while learning the subject as a priority. Satisfactory grades could be attained when students are passionate about learning the subject as a priority.

Table 3
Third language module results

SS 1	SS 2	S S 3	S S 4	S S 5	S S 6	S S 7	S S 8	S S 9	SS 10
A	A-	B +	B	B	C	B -	A	B-	B

*TLR- Tamil Language Results

Table 4
Third language module results

TS 1	T S2	T S3	T S 4	T S 5	T S 6	T S 7	T S 8	T S 9	T S 10
C	C	B	B	A-	B	B	C +	B +	C

*SLR- Sinhala Language Results

These results can be further discussed with the statements that they put forward in expressing their perceptions on Learning Tamil/ Sinhala based on their mother tongue. The inclination towards learning TL or SL could be fairly measured by their encouragement involving the grading that they received for that component and opinions.

SS8:

“But now, I think it is a good thing that we got that this chance to learn Tamil because I have heard that if you know Tamil as government officers, you would get salary increments and allowances. So that’s good anyhow.”

As an influential factor that learning TL among SS, the salary increments entrusted to public officers followed by an effective competence in TL was rather remarked. The SS regarded that requirement as a fair requirement on the viewing it as an effective implement by the Sri Lankan government to promote ethnic coherence among public officers which in turn can be leading towards national integrity. Aside from academic and professional pursuits, the significance of learning TL was rather pronounced as it was seen as a way of bonding with their peers. SS and TS often considered the impact of learning SL or TL could be resulted positively in enriching their relationships among TS and SS, essentially when they are obstructed by a lack of understanding the message that their acquaintances attempting to put forward. Accordingly, 2NL the learning of the language of the other community was seen as a factor fostering co-existence and national integration within Sri Lanka (Irshad, 2018)

SS1:

“Well, I like learning Tamil. Simply because my roomies are Tamil and they were so helpful when I was doing this “Third Language” module. They helped me out to do it well and I helped them with the Sinhala part too. I know without knowing a language we would be so

deaf even though we are not. Because I find it hard to talk with my Tamil friends in Tamil but they would be so happier if I make effort to learn it.

TS2:

“I don’t know, but I feel like learning Sinhala is good because I have a bunch of Sinhala friends with me. And, it’s so confusing when they start talking in Sinhala because I freaking don’t know what they mean at all. But every time they crack jokes and things like that I wish I had known Sinhala because I want to be a part of it. And now, I blame myself for not learning Sinhala. A total regression, I must say!

From an enlightened standing point, the reflection towards reconciliation with the competence of learning a language of other community is more depicted when it demands a high level of trust, confidence, and enthusiasm to make that decision to be a part of another linguistic community which can positively result towards national Integrity in Sri Lanka.

4.3. Respect towards another National Language

Every language is likely to expect its due respect not only from their linguistic community but it is even more valued if their language is respected by another linguistic group. That respect can also be enabled through making an effort to learn and use that language considering it as a necessity vested on each individual sustained through a multiethnic social setting. It is hence advanced the importance of learning another language as a gesture of respect and to recognize that understanding languages of certain communities is the foremost passageway towards understanding said communities, norms, belief systems embedded with that culture.

SS5:

“When I was learning Tamil, I got to know the beauty of Tamil culture. Our lecturer made it so practical and memorable because she played different Tamil songs and assigned us to search on cultural festivals and all that.”

SS3:

“To be honest with you, I thought everything about Tamil is kind of boring because I haven’t learned the language before but in the lectures, I found it interesting! Especially the culture of it.

TS6:

“Before learning Sinhala, I loathed Sinhala songs and culture but now I know it’s more like our culture the only difference is the language. I don’t know I feel like that. And now I can understand Sinhala songs too.

In this systematic discourse, it is evident that language is not simply a set of words, it essentially transcends the linguistic boundaries and assigns to symbolize its “cultural heritage” which is primarily implanted in what is peculiar about a certain community. Thus, beliefs, customs, and traditions are incorporated within a particular language, and understanding these characteristics, values will undoubtedly lead towards “mutual respect” and “recognition”. It cannot necessarily be referred to as a simple process a can be achieved overnight yet a proper understanding of cultural values, experiences throughout the years will clear the path to reach the target destination – the reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka.

4.4. Language as a Tool for Attitudinal Change and Solidarity

As an adverse effect constituted by war, the ethnic stereotypes issues towards ethnic communities are to be expected as a natural phenomenon within a conflict-ridden post-war

society. Aside from its occurrence as an inevitable substance, its cost on society could be detrimental as their inherited misconceptions, fears of segregation and darkest memories are likely to be evoked by themselves. Many studies have contributed to addressing the impact of these negative stereotypes as they have been observed as a “social problem” to understand the nature to prevent injurious effects on the social fabric. (Hosokawa, 2013)

In discussing the opinions viewed SS and ST upon another ethnic group, most of them were confused and misled by the inability of conveying their thoughts, perceptions, experiences, and ideas being as divided groups years ago, essentially interrupted by the lack of proficiency in either TL or SL, that has ultimately led them to hold negative stereotypes upon the divergent group. Having further enlightened that “ethnic stereotypes” as “cognitive markers” that have been formed and sustained through intercultural contact with a new or divergent group, (Alexander S. English, 2021) the language use of another group can be proposed as a tool of diminishing misconceptions, misbelief deep-rooted within their minds, which essentially can positively result in building up social solidarity and cohesiveness.

TS7:

“I thought Sinhala people are the reason for us to not having our cousins, relations, and Tamil friends. But having talked to them I realize they are so innocent. So I have no hard feelings for them”

SS4:

“I have had no Tamil friends before. I was kind of afraid of Tamils because of this bloody war. But now I realize they have nothing to do with it because they are not so rude and scary as I imagined before. They are humans as we all.”

SS5:

“All the Tamils were called as “Koti” (Tigers) by Sinhala People back then, so I was really scared of them, but having talked to them now I know there’s no such brutality in them. They are really fun to be around. I was so wrong before!

TS2:

“I thought we were the ones who suffered from war. But I was so wrong! My Sinhala friend Disa** lost her father because of war. When I talked to her about war and things like that she got the worst!

The statements attributed to SS and ST students were portrayed as evidence that caused them to determine or judge another ethnic group based on their war-related experiences which finally resulted in a negative stereotype holding against another ethnic group. In analyzing the statements, it was rather evident that the efforts of respondents have made to claim that “talking with SS or ST’s helped a lot in wiping away their misconceptions and negative judgments caged in their minds throughout the years”. Thus, these indications simply put forward the role of national languages as a tool for changing negative attitudes, thoughts harbored within ethnic communities, and the duty vested in its shoulders to encourage social integration after making communities linguistically integrated.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study brought to fore the inclination grown within the majority of Sri Lankans to learn English as a Second Language by acknowledging the benefits arisen with a good command of the language, nevertheless it leaves high levels of confusion among this multiethnic society while questioning the due place, recognition, and respect given to National Languages within a society. Accordingly, the majority of Sri Lankans are still confused with

the status of National Languages in Sri Lanka not seeing them as a with the status, respect, or else the duties entrusted to foster National Languages have deliberately been underplayed or overlooked.

All the analysts who have been wedded to the delusion of fostering the English Language as a way of fostering reconciliation within this torn multiethnic fabric must reconsider their efforts making to foster the English language not have understood the complexity of war-affected frames of mind as a psychological battle intertwined within themselves. Yet, all ethnicities are likely to beam with pride upon the efforts, when another community is trying to learn and appreciate their language and in the same way, it enables understanding the culture, norms, and traditions that made that community so peculiar in their way. From this enlightened standing point, anticipated Social integrity can be achieved while strengthening linguistic integrity especially integrating National Languages.

What's important here, to destroy the roots of mistrust, misconceptions using this Language weapon, which is unlikely to be successful when communities are misled to choose the "wrong weapon", yet it is to reconsider that the strength inherited within a link language - merely being a medium of instruction- to abolish the roots of fear, tension, history caused to thirty years of blood-shedding. It is to logically comprehend what sort of impact that a link language would do to understand a different ethnic culture? "English language, taking on bare minimum duties in communicating ideas, would not give us a fair conviction to understand what a Tamil culture is like, or to understand what a Sinhala culture is like.

It is to understand that English is the language of "opportunity and empowerment" (Crystal, 2012). In collaborating with the Indian context, usage of the English Language is informed to be rising and gaining ground in South India and West Bengal followed by the adaptation of trilingual policy: Hindi, English, and one of the other national languages, but in Sri Lankan context the scenario is way too different with Trilingual Policy. In the Indian context, "the flexibility of using any of these languages as a medium of instruction in schools and as a language of administration and record in particular localities is given" This particular policy has accomplished a triumph in that language riots have nearly disappeared (Nesiah, 2012) . While proposing that English be offered with more prominence does not mean that the place given to the National languages should be lessened. "The two local languages should, of course, be permitted to continue to perform an important set of functions while as an expression of local identity" (Crystal, 2012).

In policy-wise, the process of reconciliation must not be misinterpreted as a unidimensional process yet as a multidimensional process that demands each dimension to be incorporated simultaneously. By putting in place forward-looking policies to revive the status of National languages, and to hearten the recognition of National Languages, social solidarity can be anticipated. Ascertain policies,

1. The recognition of National Languages in education should be promoted or revised
2. Active learning of National Languages within each university and Faculty should be encouraged without seeing it as the only responsibility vested in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Faculties.
3. To make students hardwired to consider National Languages as a necessity, National Language learning platforms should be reformed and promoted from an early age while encouraging simultaneous language acquisition platforms for their Mother tongue (SL/TL) and Second Language (SL/TL)

4. The Education Ministry of Sri Lanka should create a proper foundation to encourage cultural festivals within schools and universities while arranging language competitions between Sinhala and Tamil Languages.
5. National Language learning must be put in place as a compulsory component of education subjected to certain examinations and proficiency levels.
6. The proficiency of Second Languages within schools and Universities should be considered as a compulsory requirement, and the students with good command in second languages should highly be appreciated while offering them scholarships.

Stipulation of Sinhala and Tamil languages are long journeyed, not just as the linguistic norm but as a cultural, traditional, and historical phenomenon. Owing to that, lengths and breadths of cultures, traditions, beliefs, and communities are necessarily reflected through a language. To be part of this multiethnic social environment, learning, fostering, and sustaining National Languages is a national priority as it gradually heading towards the grounds of reconciliation in post-Sri Lanka.

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