

The Role of Plurilingual Representations in Promoting Cultural Inclusivity: A Content Analysis Based on the Sri Lankan English as a Second Language Textbooks and Teacher Perceptions

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Plurilingualism and cultural inclusivity are two distinct yet, deeply interconnected concepts that emphasize the dynamic and holistic nature of linguistic and cultural diversity. Plurilingual content, which emphasizes leveraging learners' entire linguistic repertoires, has emerged as a fundamental component in second language education. In a culturally and linguistically diverse context like Sri Lanka, the integration of plurilingualism in English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks can serve as a powerful tool for promoting inclusivity and enhancing language acquisition. Despite the rich linguistic diversity of Sri Lanka, our ESL textbooks primarily prioritize English, often marginalizing the rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners. This monolingual focus not only undermines the inclusivity of language education but also limits the potential for learners to engage fully with their linguistic and cultural identities. On the other hand, the absence of a deliberate and systematic integration of the elements related to first language (L1), i.e. either Sinhala or Tamil, and second language (L2), i.e. English, in ESL materials hinders the promotion of cultural inclusivity and linguistic equity. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of plurilingual representations in fostering cultural inclusivity through Sri Lankan ESL textbooks. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzed content taken from the ESL textbooks ranging from Grades 6 to 11, followed by a thematic analysis. Moreover, five semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the perspectives of teachers who are employed in the government sector on the effectiveness of incorporating plurilingualism and cultural elements in addressing the needs of learners who come from linguistically and culturally diverse environments. Consequently, the findings reveal that while plurilingual content is present in textbooks, it is inconsistently integrated and often limited to tokenistic representation of Sinhala and Tamil. The responses collected from teachers highlighted the potential of plurilingualism to enhance learner engagement and inclusivity by indicating that students demonstrated increased confidence when exposed to culturally relevant materials and first-language explanations. These implications suggest that a more systematic and intentional approach to incorporating plurilingual content in ESL textbooks can significantly

enhance cultural inclusivity, linguistic equity, and learner engagement. The recommendations for future research include revising curricular frameworks to incorporate structured plurilingual strategies and providing professional development for educators thereby, underscoring the capacity of plurilingual content to transform ESL education in Sri Lanka and create a more inclusive and effective environment for learners irrespective of their cultural nuances.

Keywords: Plurilingualism, Cultural inclusivity, Plurilingual content, Linguistic equity, Teacher perceptions