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Linguistic reconciliation in contexts of conflict: Tamil language learning in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This article explores how language learning is an integral component of progressing linguistic reconciliation in contexts of war and conflict. Sri Lanka is a case where ethnolinguistic division and the devaluation of Tamil as a co-official language has led to linguistic injustice for Tamil people and users of Tamil. In the post-war landscape, government commitment towards addressing this injustice, and reconciliation for that matter, has been weak. We interviewed 12 adult students and teachers in a small, non-profit, Tamil language course to understand what motivates people to learn Tamil in this context. The language course was a space where both second language and heritage language learners came together. Thematic analysis of the interview data showed that language learning motivations extended beyond the norm of the instrumental/integrative dichotomy and revealed the role of social, historical, and political factors, and a shared vision for societal multilingualism in shaping learners' motivations. The results help to form a preliminary conceptualisation of linguistic reconciliation and to promote language learning "of the enemy" as an integral and impactful component.

Keywords Linguistic justice · Reconciliation · War · Conflict · Transitional justice · Language learning motivation · Sri Lanka · Tamil

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Introduction

Language plays an integral role in multicultural societies across the globe, as stable language co-existence in such contexts is critical for building social harmony and unity (Lo Bianco, 2017; Piller, 2016). If minority language rights are not considered politically, this can lead to societal fragmentation and secessionist pressures (May, 2012). Additionally, when there is fragmentation and conflict, language becomes a tool to divide and marginalise groups (Duncan, 2016). However, in analyses of war, the role of language tends to be sidelined and political, legal or economic factors are given precedence (Mac Coinnigh et al., 2019). Human rights abuses are central considerations of wartime but language rights, as part of human rights, are generally overlooked (Price, 2020). In this article, we pay attention to the history of linguistic injustice in Sri Lanka which fed into a 26-year long civil war. In the post-war phase, the reconciliation project has been fraught, mainly due to an absence of political commitment. We examine whether and how language learning contributes to post-war peacebuilding in this context.

Reconciliation has been defined as "the goal and process of stabilising peace through undermining politico-cultural polarisation and fostering attitudinal change towards inclusion and respect for difference" (Mitchell & Miller, 2019, p. 238). It is not merely "conflict resolution", but a "deep and sustainable change in attitudes, behaviours and relations between groups" (Kumove, 2022, pp. 784–785) in order to promote a shared future of peace (Lederach, 1997). Progressing peacebuilding in post-conflict sites, as seen in Rwanda or South Africa, involves a process of transitional justice (TJ). The concept encompasses how societies move from a period of conflict and human rights violations to one of peace, reconciliation and democracy (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). Price has argued that the critical role of language tends to be overlooked in TJ processes, but that a TJ-focussed language policy (TJLP) is critical "in scenarios where oppression or conflict has sociolinguistic dimensions" (2020, p. 486). This is because language policy has the propensity to affect people's wellbeing, health and rights if it reduces or escalates linguistic exclusion (Gazzola et al., 2023; see also Roche, 2022).

Linguistic justice is tied to a TJLP and is a necessary step for linguistic reconciliation. Generally, the concept of linguistic justice refers to the rights afforded to users of different languages in a particular state or region. Citizens should have access to public institutions and processes, and social and cultural participation and expression, along linguistic lines (Gazzola et al., 2023; Rubio-Marin, 2003). Linguistic injustice is caused by linguistic privilege, possessed by those who have relatively uncomplicated access to the dominant language, usually because it is their mother tongue, at the cost of members of the marginalised language groups (Piller, 2016; Van Parijs, 2002). Gazzola et al. (2023) define linguistic justice in terms of how government language policy affects individuals' rights across the systemic-policy level and state operational level. This involves consideration of three types of rights: (1) toleration of individuals' private language choices; (2) accommodation by the public provision of key services and processes that are accessible to people of varying linguistic repertoires; and (3) compensation for any costs of individuals' adjustments to abide by the language policy (Gazzola et al., 2023, p. 252). Price refers to De Greiff's (2012) TJ

measures that need to be incorporated into a TJLP: (1) *recognition* of linguistic injustices towards affected parties; (2) building of *civic trust* through reform of societal institutions' language policies; (3) *reconciliation*, or equalisation of social relations; and (4) *democratisation*, or full political participation enabled via linguistic rights. In this article, we understand linguistic reconciliation as interrelated with these notions of linguistic justice and TJLP, but we also argue that it can take place at the individual or interpersonal level when policy and political will lag behind.

Education is a key site for reform as part of TJ, especially for creating inclusive, multilingual and multiethnic classrooms that promote social cohesion (Davis, 2020; Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2014; Wijesekera et al., 2019). In Sri Lanka, the recent history of language education policy and attempts to teach school children the two official languages of the nation, Tamil and Sinhala, have been affected by the climate of war, lack of political commitment, and Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that has downgraded the linguistic capital of Tamil. Linguistic privilege means that Tamils have little choice but to learn Sinhala in order to access social, economic, cultural and political participation (see Van Parijs, 2002). The same conditions do not exist for Sinhala students when it comes to learning Tamil, especially if they do not place social or cultural value on such knowledge (Davis, 2015, 2020; Jayathilaka et al., 2022). The fractured history of Tamil language education in Sri Lanka means that different generations have grown up with variable knowledge of Tamil.

In the present, if adults want to study Tamil, there are limited options outside of formal educational institutions (i.e. diplomas and degrees at public or private universities) or government employment. Private one-on-one tuition is also available, catering both to children and adults. Our study focuses on a recent addition to this institution/non-institution landscape for learning Tamil. A non-profit Sri Lankan Tamil language school, run out of the capital, Colombo, has been offering short and intensive Tamil language courses for small groups of adults. This offering differs from other private Tamil courses in Sri Lanka in that it is non-profit and has the aim of making a "high quality foundation in the Tamil Language accessible to those who need it" (Learning Tamil, 2024). The non-profit and accessibility aspects of this course potentially represent a development towards progressing linguistic reconciliation in the country.

Our qualitative study sought to investigate why, in post-war Sri Lanka, adults elect to study Tamil outside of traditional educational structures, and whether these personal language learning steps may indeed be a sign of progress. To answer this question, we interviewed students and teachers in the non-profit Tamil course and thematically analysed their responses to understand their motivations for studying Tamil. This article thus contributes to the literature on language learning for peacebuilding in post-war contexts.

Ethnolinguistic division in Sri Lanka

Ethnolinguistic division, and linguistic injustice, have been critical features of Sri Lanka since its independence in 1948. After the British colonisers left, there was a plan for the two main languages, Sinhala (language of the majority ethnic group) and

Tamil (language of the largest minority) to have equal status as the official languages of the new nation. However, majoritarian politics meant that a Sinhala president was elected on the basis that he would make Sinhala the sole official language of the country. This discriminatory policy (known as the Sinhala Only Act) set the tone for Sinhala (commonly conflated with the ethnoreligious identity, Sinhala Buddhist) chauvinism. The 1956 Act changed the language of the public sector from English to Sinhala and required employees to be fluent in order to gain or retain employment (Herath, 2015). Another blow came in 1972 when the Sinhala majority were given privileged access to tertiary education by the government who placed higher requirements on Tamil students to gain entry to the same courses (Herath, 2015). Such policies were tied to historic-sociopolitical conditions that made ethnicity salient in post Independent Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe, 2006). The discontent and resistance they generated amongst sections of the Tamil population fed into the 26-year long civil war (Coperahewa, 2009; DeVotta, 2004).

The war officially began in 1983, marked by what is known as Black July, when Tamil civilians and property were brutalised by Sinhala mobs. At this time, language became a shibboleth, a way to distinguish in-group members – suspected Tamils were stopped in public and commanded by the mobs to speak Sinhala and if they answered with Tamil pronunciation, they would be targeted (Nishan, 2008). The war caused the death, displacement and forced migration of an estimated more than 1 million Tamil people (Perera, 2023). The war ended in 2009 after a military campaign against the "Tamil Tiger"-controlled areas of northern and eastern Sri Lanka which cost an estimated 40,000 Tamil civilian lives (United Nations, 2011). The matters of war crimes and human rights abuses are still unresolved to this day (International Truth and Justice Project, 2019).

After the war ended, the president (Mahinda Rajapaksa, later accused of war crimes himself (Michalski, 2021)) established the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) as an apparent first step towards TJ. The Commission's 2011 report recommended that Sri Lanka become a trilingual state and that its citizens gain proficiency in English, Sinhala and Tamil. It proposed compulsory second language learning (in Sinhala and Tamil) for students in primary and secondary schools (Herath, 2015). Institutional mechanisms were also implemented such as the establishment of a Department of Official Languages and the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration (Herath, 2015). However, a number of problems have been cited as obstructing the goal of trilingualism. These include: the difficulty of resourcing and staffing second language programmes in all schools (Davis, 2015; Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2014); the availability of Sinhala and Tamil interpreters and translators across all government services around the country (Wakkumbura, 2016); and the issue of access to justice if such services are not available (Abayasekara, 2010; Punchihewa, 2012). As Herath (2015, p. 256) put it,

> There has not been sufficient political will on the part of previous governments to ensure a wider spread of the Tamil language in the public sphere by enforcing second language requirements for civil servants or hiring more Tamil speakers in dominant Tamil areas and vice versa.

Before the LLRC's report, there were attempts during wartime to reform education policy to promote a multilingual society, with students of school age learning Sinhala or Tamil as a second language alongside English (Davis, 2015, 2020; Sedere et al., 2024). However, in practice it was found that, for Sinhala students, Tamil language was rarely deployed outside of the classroom, and therefore its diminished status in society was upheld despite it gaining official language status in 1987. While multilingual education was seen as a way forward, the fact that most Sinhala and Tamil students were educated in separate mother tongue instruction schools did little to nurture cross-ethnic relations and an inclusive society (Wijesekera et al., 2019; Wijesekera & Hamid, 2022). During wartime, there were also attempts to teach Tamil as a second language to Sinhala government administrators and police officers. These Tamil as a second language education policies have been ongoing after the war however implementation continues to be a challenge due to the lack of Tamil language instructors (Davis, 2020). Furthermore, more than a decade after its release, Sri Lanka's National Education Commission still calls for the proper implementation of the LLRC report (Wijesekera & Nanayakkara, 2024).

Since 2009, the overall post-war TJ process has been virtually non-existent due to limited government action and neglect of accountability (Höglund & Orjuela, 2013). Subsequent governments have ignored international calls for TJ processes in Sri Lanka, as new threats have emerged for Tamils and other minorities such as Muslims. Two strategies directly contradict transitional justice: the Sinhalisation and militarisation of the war-affected (Tamil) regions of the island in the north and east. These processes involve the government-sponsored movement of Sinhala people, language, religion and culture into the Tamil regions, including changing names and signs from Tamil to Sinhala and the increased visibility of Sinhala-Buddhist symbols (in historically Tamil Hindu areas); and intensive monitoring of Tamils by the Sinhala-dominant military (Barry, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2012; Venugopal, 2024).

In 2020, the (since disgraced) president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, reversed a reconciliatory measure to have a bilingual national anthem and ordered that it only be sung in Sinhala (Wickramasinghe, 2021). The same president also withdrew agreement to a UN Human Rights Council resolution to promote reconciliation with Tamils (DeVotta, 2021). In 2022, the world watched as Sri Lankan citizens protested the corrupt leadership of the country, which had led to a grave economic crisis, and called for structural change in the campaign known as the *Aragalaya* (Sinhala for struggle, also known as *pōrāṭṭam* in Tamil). The *Aragalaya* made headlines around the world, symbolised by images of protestors swimming in the presidential pool after storming his official residence. The months of protest were seen as a momentous time when citizens of all ethnic and religious identifications from around the country came together to demand changes to how the country was managed (Rafique, 2023). However this time also highlighted the role of Sinhala nationalism in contributing to the crisis and to a lack of social cohesion in general (Kandasamy, 2022).

Within this climate, two Tamil friends in Colombo, who were not trained as teachers but were passionate about language rights, saw the lack of non-institutional educational pathways for learning Tamil as a problem. They set up the online Tamil language course for adults to provide such an opportunity so that Tamil could be promoted across a wider section of society. The course has attracted members of the

Sri Lankan diaspora and resident Sri Lankans of varying ethnicities and language backgrounds. The popularity of this non-profit, private intensive course for adults is a small but significant development given the enduring threats to the Tamil language in the country.

Language learning motivations in post-war contexts

Language is widely regarded as a symbolic facet of group identity, which facilitates access through shared meaning (Mitchell & Miller, 2019). Therefore, shared language can play a significant role in peacebuilding, and reconciliation can be assisted by language-learning programmes (Kumove, 2022; Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2014; Mac Coinnigh et al., 2019; Mitchell & Miller, 2019). Language learning can: (1) create opportunities for divided groups to discover shared historical experiences; (2) help to disrupt or weaken groups' strong identification with particular places; (3) help language learners to develop empathy for so-called rival (ethno)linguistic communities (Mitchell & Miller, 2019); and (4) promote social cohesion (Jayathilaka et al., 2022). The role of language learning as a facilitator of post-war peacebuilding has received limited focus though (Mitchell & Miller, 2019).

While there is much research on second language learning motivation, studies that look at the particularities of motivation in conflictual contexts are sparse. For one, language learning motivation research has focused on "foreign" language learning, whereas contexts of conflict might concern the learning of a "community" language that is already operational in the present environment. Traditionally, researchers have relied on the dichotomy of instrumental (for social or economic advantage) versus integrative (to become associated with the target language group) motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Concerned with the individual-psychological nature of language learning motivations, another dominant theory has been the L2 Motivational Self System, consisting of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experiences (Dörnyei, 2009). More recent research has also pointed out the need to account for the strong social and political affiliations with the target language and culture, especially for heritage language learners (Stracke, 2021).

When it comes to research on language learning in conflict or post-war settings, scholars have stressed the uniqueness that the nature of conflict brings to the language learning context (Charalambous & Rampton, 2020; Duncan, 2016), because learners and speakers of the target language might be in direct ideological opposition (Tum & Kunt, 2021). Studies on language learning for peacebuilding have tended to focus on school-aged learners, particularly secondary schools which are a key site for reconciliatory language education reform (for example Davis, 2020; Tum & Kunt, 2021; Wijesekera et al., 2019). This means that it is a requirement for students to study the "other" language as part of the curriculum, or in the case of government administrators and police officers in Sri Lanka, language learning has been a compulsory part of their work (Davis, 2020). Such policies tend to evoke ideological dilemmas for learners who are willing to learn the "language of the enemy" but are uncomfortable promoting their language learning outside of the classroom.

In the conflict context of Cyprus, for example, both Greek and Turkish are the official languages of the nation. In some secondary schools, Greek-Cypriot students must learn the "enemy" language, Turkish-Cypriot. These students were reported as being less willing to learn it, and this manifested in negative comments about the target language and its speakers (Charalambous & Rampton, 2020). This was so much so that the teacher's strategy became to disassociate the target language from the people and the political context of the island in order to improve student engagement. In contrast, the same study also found that for Greek-Cypriot adults, who took language classes outside of the formal school setting, their mere presence in the class signalled their opposition to dominant Hellenocentric discourse (Charalambous & Rampton, 2020).

In the same context, Tum and Kunt (2021) investigated the experience of teachers of the "language of the other" for Turkish-Cypriot Greek-language teachers in secondary schools. The teachers argued that Turkish-Cypriot students should learn Greek for both instrumental and integrative reasons. The potential for language learning to contribute to improving attitudes towards the target-language group, by challenging pre-existing beliefs about its speakers, could potentially contribute to peaceful coexistence on the island (Tum & Kunt, 2021). However, it is noted that these were the reports of the teachers rather than the learners themselves.

A case of adults learning the language of the other in post-war contexts is seen in Belfast, Northern Ireland. During the "Troubles", which were largely between the unionist Protestants and republican Catholics, the Irish language was viewed as a threat to British identity (Mac Coinnigh et al., 2019). In these times, unionist governments in Northern Ireland enacted policies to diminish the role of Irish language in education and public domains. However, the post-war phase opened up opportunities for grass-roots efforts to promote the Irish language to Northerners. A women's reconciliation group started to offer short Irish language courses as a way to stimulate interest amongst those (unionists) who were, previously, discouraged from associating with the language. The vision was that language learners would start attending Irish language events and then commingle with republicans, thus increasing opportunities for reconciliation.

What started as a very small group of Irish language learners in Belfast led to the establishment of the *Turas* (meaning journey in Irish and Scots Gaelic) project (Mac Coinnigh et al., 2019). Part of the success of the project has been that Protestants who historically were taught that Irish was the language of the enemy, through the language lessons, came to learn that their own religious culture had connections to that very language. Thus the Irish language could become part of their identity rather than one seen as separate to them (Mitchell & Miller, 2019). Based on this case, Flynn and Harris (2016) draw our attention to the motivational diversity of adult minority language learners and point out that the learner's cultural background, linguistic heritage and personal identity may be directly connected to their language learning motivation. These "socioculturally motivated" learners though, have received less attention in the motivational research (Flynn & Harris, 2016).

Methodology

We conducted a purposively-sampled, qualitative, thematic analysis study based on interviews with past students and teachers of the Tamil language course run by the non-profit organisation, “Learning Tamil”. The school officially began in 2020 with a 12-week foundational course. Due to the online setting, class sizes are kept to about six students and two teachers. At the time of our study, in 2022, 85 students had been through the foundational course. In that year, the first author, a member of the Sri Lankan diaspora based in Australia, joined the online language course due to her research (further details given in (Perera, 2023)). While her fellow students did not explicitly discuss their personal motivations for learning Tamil, their comments during the classes piqued her interest as they referred to reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Data collection and analysis

Before approaching (former and current) students and staff at Learning Tamil, we presented our research proposal to the course founder for approval and endorsement. She then distributed our call for participants via email so they could opt-in to the study by contacting the first author directly. The project was approved by our institution’s research ethics committee (Curtin University HRE2022-0324). All interviews were conducted online on a one-on-one basis, predominantly in English. Each session lasted between 30 and 90 min and was audio-recorded with participants’ permission.

The interviews were designed to be a mix of semi-structured and in-depth approaches to suit the potentially sensitive nature of the content. In this way, the interviewer could ask leading questions to guide the interviewees, and also offer an open-ended invitation to reveal as much as they could about the topic of interest (Taylor, 2013). Some prompts served the purpose of initiating participants’ narratives of life experiences that impacted on their sense of linguistic justice in Sri Lanka. Interviews were conducted by the first author whose positionality enabled her to create familiarity with the participants (sometimes using basic Tamil and Sinhala), understand context and local references and share in the recounting of personal experiences of wartime and Tamil language learning. In this way, interviews were also conversations or two-way exchanges on social, political and cultural views.

Interview recordings were uploaded to an online transcription platform (Otter.ai Inc, 2021) to generate verbatim transcripts which were edited for accuracy by the first author and analysed using NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020). To identify the recurring themes that arose in the interview data, the researchers applied reflexive thematic analysis (TA), following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases. The reflexive aspect of TA involved both researchers identifying and interrogating assumptions made about the data, as well as being reflexive about the analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This step was critical given the first author’s dual role as researcher and student in the course and her familiarity with the interviewee’s narratives. The second author performed the role of reviewing the TA results. As she was not connected to Sri Lanka but had her own experiences of war (being from Ukraine), she was able to critique the analysis in order to enhance credibility of the study.

This review process was iterative until both researchers agreed on the final themes. Throughout the analysis, we were guided by a realist/essentialist approach, meaning that we treated participants' experiences and narratives as real to them (Clarke et al., 2015). In accordance, we aimed to stay as close as possible to the meanings in the data (inductive) and focussed on ideas that were explicitly stated (semantic) (Clarke et al., 2015).

Following analysis, the participants were given the opportunity to review the findings and their interview quotes. This resulted in a few modifications for protection of identity, with some respondents electing to use pseudonyms.

Participants

The sample consisted of 12 adults: nine former students and three teachers. Table 1 contains the participant characteristics and shows that some participants had no Tamil language education during their school years while others had between two and four years, reflecting the different phases of language education policy in post Independent Sri Lanka.

While interviews with the teachers were sought for their perspectives on student motivations, an unexpected outcome was that two of the teachers identified as learners of Tamil as a heritage language (THLs). A single teacher was classified as a learner of Tamil as a first language (TFL), as he was the only one to be raised in a Tamil-speaking household. Given this outcome, the results include quotes from the three teachers speaking of their own experiences rather than their views of the students' motivations. Similar to the two teachers, two student participants were also THLs. The THLs were of Tamil ethnicity yet had experiences of being disconnected from their Tamil identity and language due to the disruption of war. The remaining students were Sinhala and were classified as learners of Tamil as a second language (TSLs).

Results

The thematic analysis revealed three major themes among all participants: (1) influences on Tamil language learning; (2) motivations for Tamil language learning; and (3) visions for linguistic justice and social inclusion, as shown in Fig. 1. The colour coding in Fig. 1 highlights how some sub-themes were dominant to either the THL or TSL groups, while others were common amongst both groups. We will describe these differences and overlaps in the ensuing sections, with a selection of interview quotes to illustrate the nature of these themes. Note that quotes from the one participant who is a TFL, Gopi, have been included with the THL quotes for presentation purposes.

Theme 1: Influences – Ethnic division

The overarching concern for the influences on TSL and THLs' language learning motivations was ethnic division. This theme encompasses the social, political, and historical circumstances that underlie participants' positions on linguistic reconciliation.

Table 1 Participant characteristics

Learner type	Name	Ethnic identity	Born	Where do they live now	Home language during childhood	Medium of education during childhood	Learnt TSL at school	Home lang during childhood	Role
TSL	Biman	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka & overseas	Sinhala & English	Sinhala	Yes, 1 year	Sinhala & English	Student
TSL	Blue	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	English	English	Yes, 1 to 2 years	English	Student
TSL	Kalini	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Sinhala	Sinhala & English	Yes, 2 years	Sinhala	Student
TSL	Manel	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Sinhala & English	Sinhala	No	Sinhala & English	Student
TSL	Nithila	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Sinhala & English	Sinhala & English	No	Sinhala & English	Student
TSL	Rose	Sinhala	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Sinhala	English	Yes, 1 to 2 years	Sinhala	Student
TSL	Vatsala	Sinhala (some Tamil ancestry)	Sri Lanka	Overseas	Sinhala	Sinhala	Yes, 1 to 2 years	Sinhala	Student
THL	AJ	Tamil	Sri Lanka	Overseas	English	Sinhala	Yes, 2 years	English	Student
THL	Meena	Tamil	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	English, a little Tamil	English	Yes, 3 to 4 years	English, a little Tamil	Teacher
THL	Padmini	Sinhala & Tamil mix	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Sinhala & English	Sinhala	No	Sinhala & English	Student
THL	Sabitha	Tamil	Overseas	Sri Lanka & overseas	English, a little Tamil	English	No	English, a little Tamil	Teacher
TFL	Gopi	Tamil	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Tamil	Tamil	No	Tamil	Teacher

TSL = Tamil as a second language learner; THL = Tamil as a heritage language learner; TFL = Tamil as first language

For both participant groups, there were three shared sub-themes: (1) linguistic injustice; (2) persecution of Tamils; and (3) Sinhala bias. Additional sub-themes pertained to only one group: (4) social isolation for THLs; and (5) Aragalaya for TSLs.

Linguistic injustice

Making Sinhala the sole official language of the nation in 1956 was a pivotal moment in Sri Lanka's history of interethnic relations. The downgrading of the Tamil language had a profound effect on Tamil people, and determined their access to a Tamil language education:

> … my dispossession, and my entire identity around language, is shaped by a denial of language rights … for a large part of my life, it has affected me in this way. I went to university and studied English literature whereas all along I really just wanted to know Tamil literature. (Meena, THL)

There were several accounts from the TSLs about Tamil friends or associates who had experienced linguistic injustice at interpersonal and societal levels, even down to accessing their rights in acts of law that were written in Sinhala:

> … our law is in Sinhala … the cases are all argued in Sinhala and/or English. So if the person can't communicate [in Sinhala] … you don't understand what's being said. (Blue, TSL)

One student referred to an experience at her English-medium university, where the lecturer would show preference for Sinhala, putting Tamil students at a disadvantage:

> … inconsiderate teachers who, they're supposed to deliver the lecture in English, and then suddenly, they would move to Sinhalese. It could be a request made by the [Sinhala] student because they don't understand. But there are lecturers who would do because it's convenient for them. (Vatsala, TSL).

Persecution of Tamils

THL participants referred to experiences of persecution and violence, directed at themselves or their relatives, based on their ethnicity. Hence Tamil language became an identity marker that had to be hidden for the sake of personal safety, so much so that some THLs' families made the decision to stop speaking it during wartime:

> … houses were burned, the Tamil MPs' houses. So the moment people hear someone conversing in Tamil, they would go and attack those houses. So that was the main reason for the family safety that she [my grandmother] stopped it. (AJ, THL)

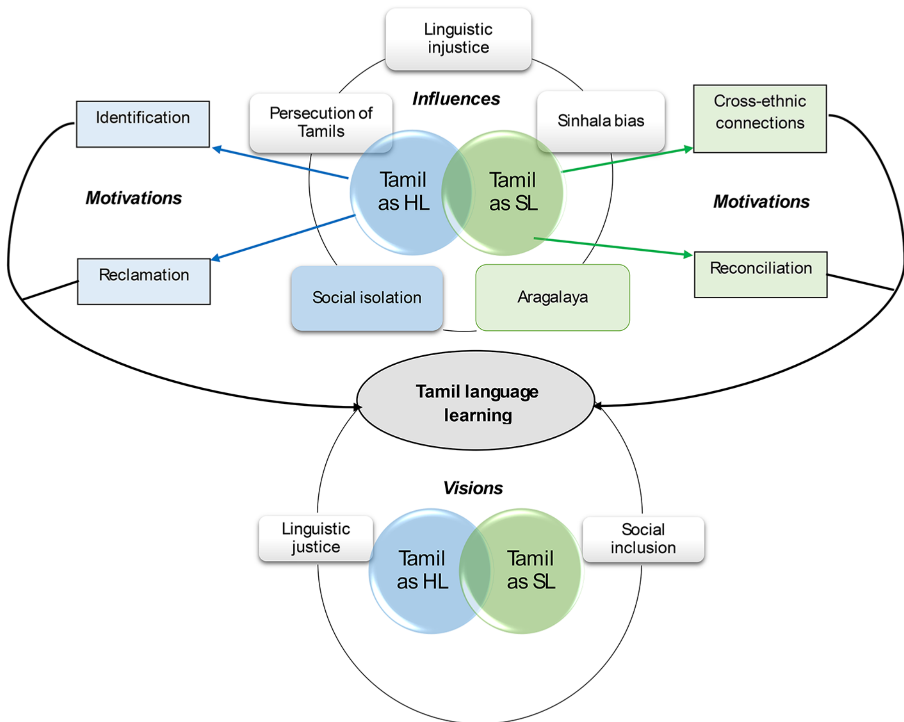

Fig. 1 Graphic showing interrelationship between influences, motivations, and visions regarding Tamil language learning. This graphic image depicts the findings of the thematic analysis and the interrelationship between the three main themes in the study of Tamil language learning motivations, that is, (1) influences, (2) motivations and (3) visions. Note that the graphic has some colour-coding. Tamil as Heritage Language (HL) bubbles are blue and Tamil as Second Language (SL) bubbles are green. Any sub-themes which correspond to a particular bubble match that colour. The sub-themes that correspond to both bubbles are white. At the centre of the graphic is a bubble containing the words "Tamil language learning". Above that is a circle that shows the influences: Persecution of Tamils (white); Linguistic injustice (white); Sinhala bias (white); Social isolation (blue); Aragalaya (blue). Inside the circle are two bubbles which overlap. One bubble states "Tamil as HL" (blue) and the other states "Tamil as SL" (green). From these bubbles there are arrows pointing to each side to join the motivation sub-themes for each bubble. On the right of the TSL bubble are the motivations titled Cross-ethnic connections (green) and Reconciliation (green). On the left of the THL bubble are the motivations titled Identification (blue) and Reclamation (blue). There are lines to connect the motivations to arrows which point to the centre bubble containing the words "Tamil language learning". Below the centre bubble containing the words "Tamil language learning" there is an arrow pointing to the third theme which is Visions. Again there is a circle with two bubbles: one for Tamil as HL (blue) and one for Tamil as SL (green). Around the circle are the two sub-themes for Visions: Linguistic justice (white), and Social inclusion (white) (Colour Online)

The anti-Tamil pogroms of Black July in 1983 are firmly embedded in the national consciousness. Tamil people and their property were targeted, as experienced by the THLs' families, causing deep trauma. Attackers relied on language in order to identify Tamil people, using the Sinhala word for "bucket" as a shibboleth because Tamil pronunciation of the word differed to that of Sinhala:

> My mom who, during the riots in '83, she was in a van where there was some man shaking a bottle of kerosene asking the driver to pronounce that word in Sinhala, 'bucket' … because Tamils wouldn't pronounce it the way Sinhalese people would, that's how they were identifying people. So my mother, I think, obviously has long trauma from that. (Sabitha, THL)

Some of the TSL participants were children in 1983 and recalled witnessing Tamils being persecuted. Manel's family provided a hiding place for their Tamil neighbours. The youngest Tamil daughter, Manel's best friend, was traumatised by the events and this had a lasting impact on Manel and the friend's ability to speak Tamil:

> My friend was absolutely traumatised. So we were 10 years old at that time … She didn't speak for about two to three months after that … she just stopped talking. And when she started talking again, she didn't speak any Tamil. So I don't know if it was that. But I forgot all my Tamil. I would struggle … every time that I tried to speak Tamil, it was like I was going underwater. (Manel, TSL)

For Vatsala, her family had some Tamil heritage yet they denied this background, due to the threat to safety, and identified as Sinhala.

> He [my father] was thinking, 'okay, if I'm open about this [being part-Tamil], in the current environment, it wouldn't be something safe to do'. (Vatsala, TSL)

Sinhala bias

THL participants relayed experiences of Sinhala bias, including missing out on opportunities that were given to Sinhala people:

> … the psyche of Tamil people is … we have always been minorities in this country … the treatment is like second class … I went to a public school, majority Sinhala, so you have that kind of mentality … overall, the sense of second class feeling or that Sinhala people are privileged. (Padmini, THL)

During wartime, and beyond, army checkpoints were a prolific feature around the island and sites where Tamil people had to be highly cautious, often being targeted by the Sinhala security forces based on their ethnicity:

> … unless you knew a bit of Sinhala, it was really difficult because you never knew what people are asking you, especially the security forces. In my experience going through this every time I go to a checkpoint, and when they check our ID cards and find that we're Tamil, … they will ask us to stay back so that they can process the native Sinhala speakers first. (Gopi, TFL)

Another example of Sinhala bias was the much-discussed topic of Tamil language being excluded from the national anthem, when the (since disgraced) president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, reversed a prior measure to have a bilingual anthem:

> My grandmother, I remember recently, when the government said that they were no longer going to be singing the national anthem in Tamil, she started to cry … it really hit her, obviously hit me as well, these symbolic things I suppose, … 'you are not part of the nation' is what the government was saying to us. (Meena, THL)

All seven of the TSLs referred to the existence of Sinhala bias and racism towards Tamils in the country, exemplified in the popular nationalistic slogan *Sinhala lee* (blood of the lion in Sinhala language) to describe Sinhala people, as pointed out by Manel (TSL). The national anthem was again mentioned as an example of Sinhala chauvinism:

> It's not even about 'I want it [national anthem] to be Sinhala'. It's more about 'I don't want it to be Tamil', those are very different things. So it's not coming from 'oh I'm very proud to sing this patriotic song in Sinhala language', [no] 'I don't want it to be translated to Tamil'. (Kalini, TSL)

Participants spoke of the unconscious bias Sinhala people had in implying that Tamil people were inferior:

> … one of the worst things I ever hear as a person is that 'he's very nice for a Tamil' and 'she's very nice for a Muslim'. And I'm like, 'that's insane'. (Nithila, TSL)

Such bias also applied to people who were of mixed ethnicity:

> … not many knew that I come from a Tamil background, because there was also this prejudice within the Sinhalese society that if you are a mix … they would look down upon you. I guess that's the main reason my father was uncomfortable sharing openly about his background with others. (Vatsala, TSL)

Kalini commented on the problematic ethnoreligious identification of Sinhala Buddhist which fed into this nationalist pride and, in Kalini's case, meant she was segregated from Tamils during her childhood, both socially and linguistically:

> I mean, I'm in Colombo, I went to a Sinhala Buddhist school, no one in my immediate family is even married to a non-Sinhala person. (Kalini, TSL)

Social isolation

Growing up during the war, THL participants experienced shame and discrimination due to their identity and had to censor their use of Tamil in public. Some experienced isolation if they grew up in a Sinhala area:

> … there weren't many other Tamil kids at the school … I was the only Tamil in there. (AJ, THL)

Social isolation also occurred for THLs who were excluded from Tamil circles because they could not speak Tamil fluently:

> My cousin was not very happy with us talking in Tamil because we were not fluent at all. So she was kind of ashamed … she would instruct us only to speak in English. (Padmini, THL)

Aragalaya

For the TSLs especially, the *Aragalaya* movement (2022 mass civilian protests against corrupt national governance) was a catalyst for Sinhala people to acknowledge the injustices that Tamil people have endured during the civil war and its aftermath:

> … in Colombo, I think especially in the last six months, I would say a lot of people have been doing a lot of soul searching to understand why Sri Lanka is where we are right now, where we went wrong. (Nithila, TSL)

However, the *Aragalaya* was also a catalyst for citizens to realise that, while protesting against the government was new for a lot of Sinhala people, it had been ongoing for Tamils in the aftermath of the war:

> During the Aragalaya this year, there was a lot of talk [from Sinhala people] about how it was the first time everybody came together to fight a cause … That's really untrue … because I have worked closely with the [predominantly Tamil] mothers of the disappeared and multiple groups on that front. And they have been protesting far longer than anyone else. (Rose, TSL)

Theme 2: Motivations

The second theme features participants' statements that directly express their reasons for learning Tamil. Given the history of ethnic division, there were some stark differences between motivations for the THLs: (1) identification; and (2) reclamation; and for the TSLs: (3) cross-ethnic connections; and (4) reconciliation.

Identification

THL participants spoke of a motivation for identification in terms of their own desire to claim a Tamil identity and to align and connect with other Tamil people.

Search for identity

THLs referred to identity struggles faced during childhood, especially for those who grew up in the time of war and experienced interpersonal discrimination in Sinhala-dominant locales:

> … when I entered this public school, I found children would laugh when my surname is mentioned. … I felt I was teased because of my surname. I disliked being a Tamil to an extent where I disliked Tamil people. So that changed when … we were targeted as Tamils and we lost everything and that is where my Tamil identity emerged. I realised that this happened to us because we were Tamils. (Padmini, THL)

For AJ, this manifested in denying her Tamil identity in order to blend in with the Sinhala students at her school:

> I was the only Tamil but I didn't identify myself as a Tamil, it was like an identity crisis that I was grappling with. If someone said 'oh, she's a Tamil' …, I'll be like 'no, no, no, I'm Sinhala'. (AJ, THL)

At the same time, some THLs feared being judged as inadequate or fake by other Tamils due to their lack of language knowledge:

> When I make a mistake in Tamil, I feel a sense of shame because … there's that sense of I'm not Tamil enough, I'm a fake Tamil. (Sabitha, THL)

These interview quotes evoke the strong ideology that connects language knowledge with the entitlement to claim a Tamil identity.

Search for connection

There were also students who made a direct link between knowing Tamil and the ability to make meaningful connections with other Tamils. THLs who had been denied the opportunity to acquire Tamil as children, because of the disruption of war, were aware of this limitation when they sought to understand the lives of their fellow Tamils impacted during wartime:

> I remember at the end of the war … I went to an orphanage in the northeast [Tamil region]. And I talked to some girls who were my age about their experiences. And I was fumbling in my Tamil … I felt like I didn't have the skills to speak to them sensitively. And they were implying that … they had been

> through experiences that were very traumatic and I felt deeply then, and personally, that I wasn't able to connect in the ways I wanted to. (Meena, THL)

Reclamation

The theme of reclamation, while closely connected to the search for connection and identification, is presented as a discrete category to reflect the depth to which language and identity loss affected THLs. "Reclamation" emphasises the significance of knowing the Tamil language to right historic wrongs – including empowering individuals to reclaim their cultural and linguistic rights, and to not carry fear about their identity as shown below:

> I have another memory … I would go to school with my cousin. She was five years younger than me … maybe I was 11 … I just have this memory that as we were walking in, we were clearly speaking to each other in Tamil, but I would be embarrassed as we got closer to school. And we had a hand signal where I would squeeze her hand and we'd switch to English. (Sabitha, THL)

For Meena, although Tamil herself and with her own experiences of linguistic injustice, there was a sense of reconciliation in her language learning motivation, to acknowledge those who were "worse off" than her. This included those Tamils who were caught in the war zones of the north and east towards the end of the war, away from the capital of Colombo:

> … the act of learning Tamil was an act of not forgetting and of centring people who had been completely forgotten by the state, who had been subjected to several war crimes, and also what that community calls genocide. … I was 19 when it happened, but still, I was part of the society which enabled it … And I wanted to make sure that I didn't forget, that I kept these individuals centered in my life. For me, learning Tamil … reassures that we live in a world maybe where people care. And I think that's an act of love. (Meena, THL)

Cross-ethnic connections

For the TSLs, learning Tamil was a way to symbolically cross the divide but also simply necessary for understanding Tamil people. While this section has been subdivided to distinguish between social and professional relationships, we found that learning Tamil for professional motivations was rarely expressed in purely instrumental terms; the professional motivations came from personal commitments to peacebuilding.

Social and familial relationships

Some TSLs had Tamil friends or partners, so the language was important for connecting with in-laws and for the possibility of raising multilingual children in the future:

> When my [Tamil] partner and I have a family, … we want our family to also have Sinhala and Tamil in it. (Kalini, TSL)

In Vatsala's university years, Tamil and Sinhala students were, socially, linguistically segregated because they could not speak the other's language. She wanted to know Tamil in order to connect with her Tamil peers:

> I went to [university name] … that's the first time I got to meet Tamil people who spoke Tamil, who couldn't speak Sinhalese or English. So we had to find a way to talk to them, and then get to know about them. So that was a moment where all the biases broke. (Vatsala, TSL)

Professional relationships

Several TSLs enrolled in the Tamil course because their work concerned transitional justice or social cohesion in the Tamil areas of the island. They saw knowing at least some Tamil as critical to fulfilling their role:

> And I think there was also a trust element. I would like to be able to speak the language of the place that I'm in and I feel like that's a very respectful thing to do. (Kalini, TSL)

It was also important to understand Tamils without having to rely on a third-party interpreter, again revolving around the issue of building trust:

> For my reporting work, I actually found that not speaking Tamil was a drawback because I always had to have one of my colleagues translate for me. Especially if we were speaking to somebody for a story around the war or we were somewhere in the north and had one of these army interpreters, I didn't trust them, or what they were interpreting with how factually correct it was. (Manel, TSL)

These quotes demonstrate that learning Tamil for professional purposes was not couched in terms of material or economic gains, but to enhance cross-ethnic communication and relationship-building.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation was a significant driver of learning Tamil for the TSLs, being aware of the injustices experienced by Tamil people as a result of the conflict and wanting

to redress that on a personal level. Biman spoke of the influence of his grandfather as part of his motivation for peacebuilding:

> So when I was about 14 … he [my grandfather] sat me down in the living room one day, 'son, I want to talk to you' … he said, … 'our country, we need to build bridges between the communities' … 'if we ever progress and really sustain that progress, we've got to solve this ethnic issue and this division, separatism and come together as a country'. (Biman, TSL)

Some students who had grown up as Sinhala Buddhists in Colombo felt that they had been sheltered from the war and only become aware of the reality as they entered adulthood. They wanted to remedy this by learning more about Tamil people:

> With the conflict, I wish in hindsight that my family paid more attention to having more knowledge and understanding of Tamil culture and language in our community, but it's [not knowing about Tamil people] just something that happens, I think, quite a lot. I hear this quite frequently. So I wanted to rectify that. (Kalini, TSL)

As part of reconciliation efforts, learning Tamil was expressed in terms of it being a duty for all citizens of the nation to know both languages. They felt that since Tamil and Sinhala are the only official languages of the country, it was important for them to be treated equally:

> … I have long believed that … if Sinhala is the predominant language, then Tamil also needs the same place. … that's why I felt that I had to learn the language, … I feel that we just don't give it the prominence it deserves. (Blue, TSL)

These interview quotes demonstrate how the participants attribute the act of learning Tamil to part of their personal reconciliation pathways.

Reclamation and reconciliation intertwined

We have included this final type of motivation to complicate the categories of heritage and second language learners. Especially in the largest urban centre of Colombo, these categories can be porous for Tamil and Sinhala people, where they live amongst each other and can have close ties. The below excerpts illustrate how, the motivation "reclamation" has salience for TSLs in addition to THLs, just as it was shown above that "reconciliation" was relevant to Meena's (THL) learning motivation for reclamation.

Vatsala, who identified as Sinhala, spoke of how one of her grandmothers had a Tamil parent and was raised with Tamil language and culture. This Tamil connection was very much part of her family's story even though they did not share that information with everyone. For Vatsala, learning Tamil was, in part, due to connecting to her Tamil background:

> … my grandma from my father's side, her father was a Tamil. So we've got the mixed background, but due to the situation in the country, my father was not really vocal about that. (Vatsala, TSL)

Manel and her sister grew up with Tamil neighbours. The two Sinhala daughters and two Tamil neighbour daughters were so close they acted like sisters and often moved as one unit, sleeping over at each other's houses. Manel referred to her neighbours' grandmother as *appamma* (Tamil for grandma) and was ordered by the grandmother to only speak Tamil in her presence. In this sense, Manel's childhood had a strong Tamil cultural element to it. Tragically, the Tamil neighbours were targeted in the 1983 pogroms, causing trauma for Manel's Tamil counterpart who stopped speaking Tamil. Manel was so affected by this that she too stopped speaking Tamil to align with her best friend (as shown in the section "Persecution of Tamils"). Her close and ongoing relationship with the Tamil sisters drove Manel to address that trauma through relearning Tamil. She felt that it was a duty to her *appamma* who instilled the Tamil language in her. In this sense, for Manel, learning Tamil was an act of reclamation, carrying semblance to some of the views expressed by THLs:

> … every time I struggle to speak Tamil, I think of appamma [Tamil grandmother] and how much the language meant to her … always saying, in her broken Sinhala, 'lamaya, katak karanne demala' [child, speak Tamil!]. I would be like, 'okay', and I just I used to speak with her, we would sit and she and I would have conversations in Tamil. And all of that has just gone…(Manel, TSL).
> I am going to learn, I'm going to speak Tamil before I die. I'm not going to let this be something that stops me from speaking a language that I once knew. (Manel, TSL)

Theme 3: Visions for linguistic justice and social inclusion

The final theme encompasses participants' visions for the future of the country in terms of linguistic justice and social inclusion, and such visions were shared by THLs and TSLs, based on their political stance taken in learning or teaching Tamil. In this sense, these shared visions for the future can be viewed as additional motivations for knowing Tamil.

Linguistic justice

Statements about linguistic justice referred to the role of education in fostering cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understanding early in life:

> … make Tamil an equal language that everybody studies. Because that way, at least a generation will grow up appreciating it, and not just the language, but the culture. Because I think there's so much more than just language. So the Tamil

> culture is to be something you learned, if it was not your birth culture. And the same for the Tamil students as well. Learn the Sinhala culture… (Manel, TSL).

Such shared knowledge could lead to the realisation of a safer multilingual society, with residents being proficient in both the official languages:

> Just life continuing in the same way as it is but with Tamil being an option. Just that it's always an option. Like, you'd see somebody walking down the road. And you'd speak to them in Sinhala. And they'd be like, 'sorry, I don't understand'. And then you say, 'oh, sorry, do you understand Tamil then?' and then you'd be able to switch. (Rose, TSL)

Social inclusion

Education was viewed as a key site for nurturing cross-ethnic social engagement for social inclusion. It was not sufficient to have students in the one school being separated into Tamil and Sinhala streams:

> … recommendation to bring more intermingling, more curricular activities, more sport, … in the education system, people need to mix more. … I think that's fostering collaboration. (Biman, TSL)

Social inclusion also meant having linguistically inclusive policies:

> Having a name board in all three languages is not going to bring you reconciliation or anything, but at least it's going to give the confidence and space for people to feel comfortable from where they are living, so that's something, that's kind of the start towards reconciliation. (Gopi, TFL)

Discussion

This study examined what motivated Sri Lankans to learn Tamil as adults in a post-war context where the linguistic capital of Tamil has been diminished due to a history of linguistic injustice. Inquiring into "language-of-the-enemy" learning motivations, it was particularly relevant to consider the impact of social, political and historical (including colonial) factors present in the conflict context (Flynn & Harris, 2016; Rosiak, 2023). The results revealed a strong connection between the socio-political landscape and denial of language rights and adults' motivations to learn Tamil, thus confirming the idea of language learning for reconciliation. Our study found that language learning motivations moved beyond the traditional instrumental versus integrative dichotomy to encompass notions of linguistic justice and linguistic reconciliation.

A salient finding was that students were not all classified as Tamil as a second language learners. Unlike the scenarios in Cyprus and Belfast, outlined earlier, where students were from a single ethnic or religious group, in this context, learners of both Sinhala, Tamil and mixed-ethnicity backgrounds came together in the one class to learn Tamil. By catering to Tamil as a heritage language as well as Tamil as a second language learners, the language course itself was a reconciliation space, because such adult learners were kept apart in secondary school education (Wijesekera et al., 2019). The intensive and small-group format of the Tamil lessons would suit the purpose of linguistic reconciliation because of the opportunity for exchange between the students. Another significant characteristic of this course was that it included participants who were based outside of Sri Lanka, facilitated by the online format of the classes. This means that the potential for linguistic reconciliation extends beyond the geographical boundaries of the nation to include its global diaspora.

Mitchell and Miller (2019) drew a causal link between Irish language learning in Belfast and Protestant learners discovering shared historical experiences and developing empathy for so-called rival communities, to explain how language learning contributed to reconciliation. In the case of our study, we argue that the Tamil course did not strongly display this causal link. Instead, we posit that students' understanding of shared and separate historical experiences with Tamils, and already having empathy for the "other" preceded their engagement with the Tamil course. The course gave them an opportunity to channel their reconciliatory intentions into something practical, that is, knowing Tamil so they could use it in society.

We draw from our thematic analysis of the participants' responses and the literature to arrive at a preliminary conceptualisation of linguistic reconciliation (Fig. 2). We propose that linguistic reconciliation incorporates the following aspects: reflecting on linguistic injustices; addressing language rights; building linguistic bridges through language learning; and having a shared vision for a linguistically equitable future inclusive of multilingual policies. The concept is influenced by, and interrelated with, notions of language rights and peacebuilding, and we have referred to three in our conceptualisation: reconciliation; transitional justice-focussed language policy; and linguistic justice. However we note the salience of other concepts such as minority language rights (May, 2012) and linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2010) in this space.

We stress that while it is imperative that linguistic reconciliation is incorporated at the level of policy and governance, what occurs at the grassroots, especially in climates of social instability as in Sri Lanka, plays an important role in the process. Language learning is an integral component of the linguistic reconciliation process and this can happen outside of formal institutional and policy structures. In fact, there is a need to recognise the power of the personal and interpersonal benefits of marginalised language learning initiatives – as ameliorating the interpersonal realm is what ultimately fosters social cohesion. In the words of one member of the Learning Tamil school, efforts that "bypass the state" were more meaningful to them because such efforts are less vulnerable to fluctuations in state leadership and the promotion of Sinhala chauvinism that often accompanies it (Meena, personal communication, 30 July 2024).

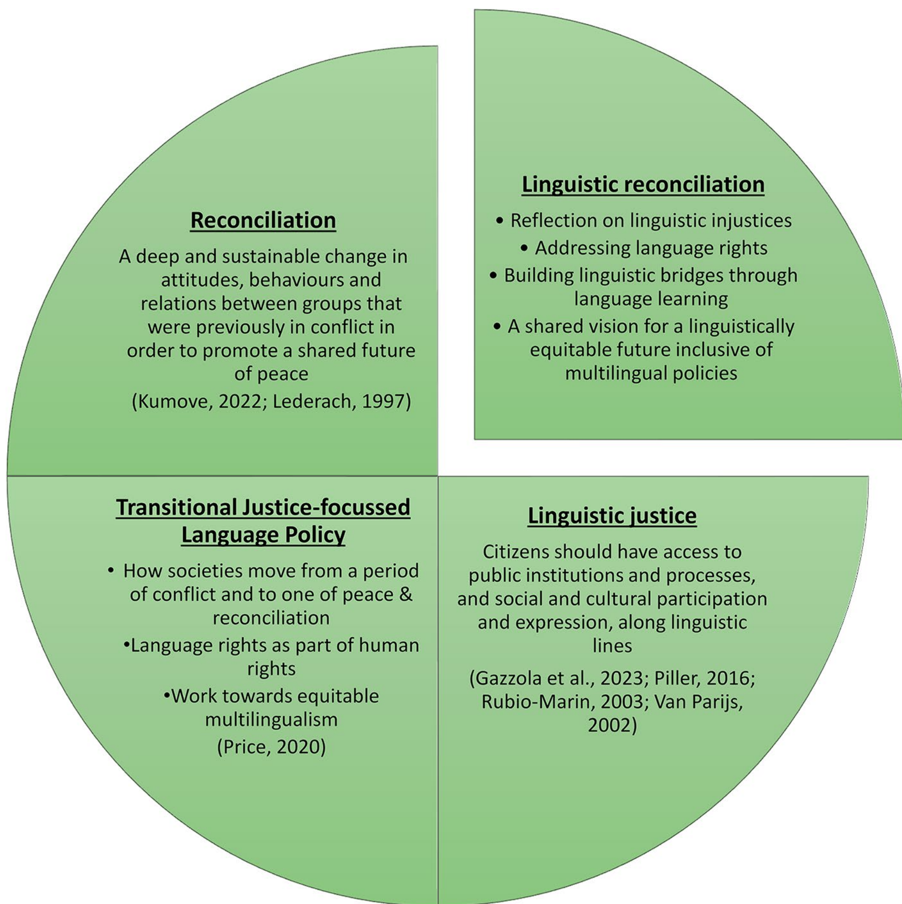

Fig. 2 Graphic showing preliminary conceptualisation of linguistic reconciliation. This image is a circle divided into four parts to represent how the concepts of (1) reconciliation, (2) transitional justice-focussed language policy, (3) linguistic justice and (4) linguistic reconciliation are interrelated. Each quarter contains one of the four concepts listed above with some text underneath to explain each concept. One quarter is separated by white space from the other three quarters. This quarter contains the concept of linguistic reconciliation (Colour Online)

We acknowledge a situational factor in the conclusions drawn from our study – that they are particular to the capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo, which was referred to by some participants as a "bubble" due to its relatively privileged access to resources and services, and increased opportunities for Sinhala and Tamil people to mix such as in workplaces and universities. Most study participants were from or based in Colombo and of middle-class backgrounds. They were able to individually finance their own language education because a publicly provided service for adult second language education (see Gazzola et al., 2023) did not exist. The course would not be as accessible to lower income earners, however we note that at the time of writing the Tamil course has introduced tiered fees and scholarships to address this. Another limitation of this study is the minimal attention paid to the role of English in wartime

and peacebuilding education, however this has been addressed in other research (see Canagarajah, 1995, 2005; Davis, 2020; Wijesekera & Hamid, 2022). Furthermore, we have not addressed the impact of language politics on other minority languages in the country such as Sri Lankan Sign Language, Vedda, Sri Lankan Malay and Sri Lankan Portuguese Creole. To further develop the concept of linguistic reconciliation, we recommend that future research could explore the impact of more Sri Lankans learning and knowing Tamil, on Tamil native speakers and society in general.

Conclusion

This paper outlined the post-war context of Sri Lanka, where there is a lack of government support for transitional justice and reconciliation. In such a landscape, issues of language rights are often sidelined by the state. Our study revealed that, in a small non-profit Tamil language course for adults, students of Sinhala, Tamil, and mixed ethnicities are pursuing language learning due to motivations that extend beyond educational and vocational factors and signal a commitment to linguistic reconciliation and reclamation. Students enrolled in the course for reasons connected to the historic-socio political role of language in the country and a desire to address linguistic injustices against Tamil language and speakers. In this way, our study promotes the notion of language learning for building linguistic bridges between different ethnolinguistic group members, and for those harmed by such injustices to safely reclaim their rights to use their language.

Language learning initiatives like the one in this study (i.e. private yet non-profit, and outside of government and formal education institutions) are spaces that encourage cross-ethnic learning and reflection on the role of language in post-war reconciliation. While the government lags behind in successfully developing and implementing a language policy that promotes multilingualism in Sri Lanka, it is small grass-roots actions like the Tamil language course that propel the movement of linguistic reconciliation. We argue that the notion of linguistic reconciliation is salient in contexts of war and conflict. Conflictual contexts similar to Sri Lanka could promote adult language learning as addressing a significant gap in the pursuit of linguistic reconciliation.

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Declarations

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