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# **From mother tongue to English: Exploring the transition and student investment in an English medium university**

A case study from Sri Lanka

Educational Sciences/Department of Education

Master's thesis

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## **Master's thesis**

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## **Abstract**

The study was stimulated by the low English proficiency of Sri Lankan school students in national exams, the requirement to shift to English Medium Instruction (EMI) in university, and the lack of literature on EMI in non-state universities and STEM fields in Sri Lanka. This study explored the transition from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction and the student investment in L2 practices through the lens of Darwin and Norton's Model of Investment. Three research questions of the study reflect identity, capital, and ideology: the three components of the framework. The research questions of the study are: How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction? How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction? How do language and societal ideologies shape the students' investment in English medium studies? A single embedded case study method is used as the research design as the study focuses on a particular non-state university in Sri Lanka. The population of the study comprises all non-state university students in Sri Lanka, while the sample includes students from the Faculty of Science in a selected non-state university. The sample size was seven. Empirical data was obtained through a demographic data form, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and a drawing of an identity portrait. Interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis, while the identity portraits were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed three main themes, identity, capital, and ideology, which align with the theoretical framework. Despite being proud of their ethnic, religious, and cultural identity, the participants acknowledged the importance of English proficiency and EMI studies for their future. The findings also revealed that the participants are becoming legitimate speakers of English to a certain extent, although it is affected by their multilingual identity and the use of L1. The majority of the participants portrayed a high-performing and motivated English learner identity during their school education, and it was challenged at the university as some reverted to underperforming learners due to their English proficiency. In addition, the imagined-self identity of the learners mediated the high-performing and motivated English learner identities. It has been noticed that the participants' investment in learning English depends on the financial status of the family, the presence of different ethnic groups at the school, university, and residential area, and the support received and not received from the teachers, family members, and friends. Moreover, the participants' existing English knowledge, subject-specific English vocabulary, English speaking skills, and opportunities available to use English determine the level of capital for L2 practices. In addition, the findings revealed that the participant's investment in L2 practices is shaped by their nationalist, globalization, and neoliberal ideologies as well as the English as a class marker ideology. The main implications of the study are evaluating the existing university English modules, providing general English, EAP, and ESP modules to ease the transition to EMI, and revisiting the national curriculum and educational policy of the country to suit the needs of the current society and to minimize the issues faced due to MoI transition.

**Key words:** English medium instruction, transition, identity, capital, ideology.

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## 1 Introduction

University education can be different from school education owing to differences in the medium of instruction, curricula, student's identity, student's motivation, the role of teacher, rules, and culture (Bragazzi et al., 2016; Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Martin, 2009; McGhie, 2017; Soiferman, 2012). As a result, students' transition from school to university may vary depending on how well they adapt to these changes. For instance, some students may have a smooth transition, while others may encounter an unsteady road in their journey from school to the university. The medium of Instruction (MoI) plays a significant role when the MoI of the school differs from the one in the university (Al Zumor, 2019; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Kamaşak et al., 2021). If the university implements English Medium Instruction (EMI) in a country where English is learnt as a second language (ESL), it can pose several challenges to the students. Difficulties in understanding lectures, difficulties in reading and writing academic texts, and difficulties in engaging in academic and casual conversations are some of the challenges faced by students with ESL backgrounds (Aizawa et al., 2023; Attanayake, 2020; Dzormeku, 2023; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Kamaşak et al., 2021). In such contexts, for instance, in the Sri Lankan context, EMI and the students' level of investment in L2 learning practices can be considered as variables that have an impact on the smooth transition from school to university. The concept of investment in L2 practices professes that a student may be a good learner but may not be invested in the target language practices in the classroom, which is a result of the interplay of the student's identity (race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status), capital (social relationships, financials, and culture) and ideologies (attitudes towards the target language and one's mother tongue in the society) (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2016, 2023).

In the Sri Lankan context, merely 3% of the student population at government schools studies in bilingual or English medium, while 29% of the private school student population studies in English medium (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024). This low number of students studying in EMI can be a concerning factor when students join universities, especially the degree programs offered in EMI. This situation can have an adverse impact on the students if their English proficiency is inadequate to participate in an EMI environment. After completing Grade 11, the students face the General Certificate of Education: Ordinary Level (G.C.E. O/L), which includes English as a core subject. Thereafter, the students face the General Certificate of Education: Advanced Level (G.C.E. A/L), which consists of the General English exam paper (Aturupane & Little, 2021). The results obtained for these two English exams can be taken as a standard to measure the English language proficiency of the students who join the university education. For instance, in 2022, 74% of the students who faced the G.C.E. (O/L) were able to pass the 'English' subject (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2023b). Even though the pass rate of the English subject was high, the distribution of results between the grades shows that the grades are more concentrated at the lower end of the spectrum as 14%, 10%, 28%, and 27% of students obtained A, B, C and S grades respectively ('A' being the highest and 'S'

being the lowest passing grade) (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2023b). Meanwhile, only 59% of those who faced the G.C.E. (A/L) passed the subject 'General English' (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2024). Moreover, the distribution of the results shows that 8%, 7%, 13%, and 31% obtained grades of A, B, C, and S respectively ('A' being the highest and 'S' being the lowest passing grade) (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2024). It should be noted that most students who faced the subject 'General English' obtained an 'S' grade, which the researcher believes cannot be considered sufficient to study at the university level in EMI.

Although the researcher could not find any literature where the exam results of these two exams are mapped against an international language proficiency criterion such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS), there is one study which presents the English language proficiency of Grade 11 school children using CEFR. The study in question was conducted by the British Council of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, to evaluate the English language capability of secondary school students (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). Here, they took a sample of 148 schools and 1,437 students across the island, and the students who participated in the study were from Grade 11. As a part of the study, the students were given the British Council's Aptis for Teens English Language assessment. The majority of the participants that is 58%, achieved the CEFR A1 level, followed by 29% achieving the CEFR A2 level. A small percentage of students achieved CEFR B1, B2, and C accounting for 7%, 2%, and 0.1% respectively (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). Considering the fact that these students have been studying English as a subject at school for eight years by the time they sat for the exam, the results are alarming. As far as language skills are concerned, the students have performed better in receptive skills (listening and reading) compared to productive skills (speaking and writing) (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). For instance, the mean score for listening was 24, and the majority that is 48% of the participants achieved the CEFR A2 level, while a considerable amount of participants that is 40% achieved the B1 level for listening. The mean score for reading was 15, and 56% of participants achieved CEFR A2 level for reading. Pertaining to productive skills, the mean score for writing was 8, and 32% achieved CEFR A1 level for writing while 17% achieved above A1 level for writing. Speaking skill was the least performed skill of the four language skills, with a mean score of 5, and 69% of the students achieved an A0 level, meaning that they failed to achieve the threshold of A1 level (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). Moreover, the mandatory language requirement to pursue a bachelor's degree at an international university that offers EMI degrees can be taken as a benchmark for proficiency. International universities require an overall score of 6.0 for IELTS (*University of Turku*, n.d.), which is equivalent to the CEFR B2 level (*International English Language Testing System*, n.d.). The findings of Shepherd and Ainsworth's study, along with the G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) results for the English exams and the international requirement, raise questions such as how the students engage in EMI learning at university, as well as how their identity and ideologies related to

the English language and their existing socio-cultural and monetary capital interplay their adaptation to EMI.

In addition to the empirical findings that suggest the need to conduct further research with university undergraduates, the existing literature also points to a gap; little or no literature is conducted in the Sri Lankan context in this regard. Amidst the dearth of studies conducted with regard to EMI in Sri Lanka, some studies focus on the school education system (Balakrishnar & Thanaraj, 2015; Wijayatunga, 2018) while the rest focus on the state universities (Jayathilake et al., 2021; Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Rathnasiri, 2021; Vidanapathirana & Gamini, 2009). This creates a gap in the existing literature where the non-state university sector is not addressed in the Sri Lankan literature. Investigating the transition from mother-tongue instruction to EMI in the non-state university sector is paramount because it has a significant student population across 24 educational institutes (*Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education*, n.d.). Moreover, due to the fee-levying nature, there may be differences in the learners' level of investment in L2 practices, which are negotiated through their identity, capital, and ideologies. Furthermore, the existing Sri Lankan literature on EMI at universities has taken students mainly from arts and management faculties, creating a gap to investigate the situation of those following science-related degrees. There may be differences in the level of investment and how the students adapt to EMI, and factors that affect their EMI studies depending on their subject field (Bukve, 2018; Tsui & Ngo, 2017; Zhang & Pladevall-Ballester, 2023). This study is based on the non-state university sector of Sri Lanka, stimulated by the existing research gap in the Sri Lankan context and the low English proficiency level attained by secondary school students.

This study seeks to explore the role of the medium of instruction and learner's investment in second language (L2) practices, if and how these variables affect the transition from school to university. The main research question of the study is as follows:

How does the transition from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction shape students' investment in learning English and learning through English?

Sub-research questions of the study:

- 1) How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction?
- 2) How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction?
- 3) How do language and societal ideologies shape the students' investment in English medium studies?

In this study, the terms 'mother tongue' and L1 are used interchangeably and mean the same.

In order to address the above-mentioned research questions, this study uses a qualitative research design. Particularly, a case study method is used as this study focuses on a non-state university in Sri

Lanka and seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how the students transitioning from their mother tongue to English medium instruction invest themselves in L2 learning practices, which may ease the transitioning process. The participants of this study are undergraduates following STEM degrees who are in their first year of studies. Data is obtained through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, a drawing of an identity portrait, and a demographic data form. Interview data is analyzed thematically, and the identity portraits are analyzed using content analysis. Finally, the data obtained through the three research tools are triangulated in the findings section.

This study adds value to the existing literature in the field of EMI by addressing the existing gap in the Sri Lankan context. Several studies have been conducted about EMI practices at Sri Lankan schools (Balakrishnar & Thanaraj, 2015; Davis, 2018; Wijayatunga, 2018) and state universities (Jayathilake et al., 2021; Mahawatta & Rassool, 2023; Rathnasiri, 2021) but little or no literature could be found on the non-state university sector, which plays a crucial role in the Sri Lankan education system. Furthermore, the non-state universities may have a different university subculture from that of the state universities, which may impact the investment in L2. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the study enables gaining an in-depth understanding of the research problem.

The results obtained through this study will be significant for several stakeholders in the Sri Lankan education context. Although the results cannot be generalized to the population due to the qualitative nature of the study (Fraenkel et al., 2012), these stakeholders can gain valuable insights from this study. First, the non-state university where the study is based can gain insights into the level of English proficiency the students possess when they enter their undergraduate studies, the problems faced by them, and how they negotiate their existing capital, ideologies, and their identities in order to adapt to English medium instruction. Second, the university in question can understand how their courses and academic staff members facilitate the transition from mother tongue to English medium instruction and what steps could be taken to enhance the quality and quantity of the support provided. Third, English language lecturers at the said university can get a clear idea of the level of investment of the students in L2 practices, their needs and adjust their curriculum and teaching methods to suit them. Fourth, subject lecturers can gain insights into their students' backgrounds and experiences related to the English language, learning in an EMI environment, and facilitate their learning process. Fourth, educators and curriculum developers in the Sri Lankan educational context can gain some insights into the impact of transitioning from mother-tongue instruction to EMI at a later stage of the educational cycle of a student and the support provided by the school education to improve the competencies needed to pursue an EMI degree. In addition to the Sri Lankan stakeholders, any interested party in the global arena can gain some valuable insights into how L2 language practices and the level of investment of the students impact their transition from L1 to EMI.

## 2 The Sri Lankan Context

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean located between 5 ° 55 'and 9 ° 50' North Latitude and between 79 ° 31 'and 81 ° 53' East Longitude bearing the official name Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Its 65,610 sq. km area is divided into nine provinces and 25 districts (*National Portal of Sri Lanka*, n.d.) . Sri Lanka's history dates back to the 6th century BC and has undergone several socio, political, and economic changes to date, including colonization, civil war, and liberalization of the economy (*Britannica*, n.d.). Understanding the socio-economical, historical, and current status of school and university education in the country, with a special focus on language policy, would help readers comprehend the purpose of this study and the data analysis and discussion section of this thesis.

### 2.1 Historical Background

Sri Lanka has a history of pre-colonial and postcolonial eras. Before the colonization, education opportunities were limited to noblemen or those who were from high-caste families, and they studied at Buddhist temples or Hindu temples depending on their religion (Punchi, 2001). Sri Lanka was partly invaded by the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch in 1505 and 1656 respectively, and finally colonized by the British in 1796 (partially) and 1815 (the entire country) (Punchi, 2001). The British established two types of schools in Sri Lanka. The first type used English medium instruction and was open for the higher strata of the society with a fee, while the second type provided education in vernacular mediums free of charge (Punchi, 2001). The modern university education was established in 1921 with the inception of the Ceylon University College (Bandara, 2021). It was not an autonomous university as it was under the British administration. Finally, a fully autonomous university was established under the name of the University of Ceylon in 1942 (Bandara, 2021).

1945 educational reforms play a crucial role in the Sri Lankan education system to date. It introduced free education for all as a mean to mitigate socioeconomic inequalities (Punchi, 2001). In addition, under these reforms, well-facilitated schools, one per each electoral division of the country, were established, and these schools offered quality education free of charge in English medium (Kalugalagedera & Kaushalya, 2017). In addition, 1945 educational reforms led to a unified state education system (Gamage & Setunga, 2010).

After the independence in 1948, some changes were made to the elite schools which offered English medium education. Aturupane and Little (2021) state that “the medium of instruction was changed to the vernacular (Sinhala or Tamil) progressively, starting in 1948 from Year 1, in 1953 from Year 6, and in 1959 from the first year of university courses in Arts subjects, and in the early 1970s in Science, Medicine, and Engineering” (Aturupane & Little, 2021, p. 700). The year 1956 marked a turning point in Sri Lankan history, which had an impact on the education system, too. That is the

introduction of a closed economic policy and making Sinhala the official language of the country (Kalugalagedera & Kaushalya, 2017). It is believed that this policy led to disharmony between the Sinhalese ethnic group and the Tamil ethnic group, resulting in a 30-year-long civil war (Rajapakse, 2024). A significant change in the medium of instruction was observed during the 1960s when the University of Ceylon started offering degree programs in Sinhala and Tamil languages (Kalugalagedera & Kaushalya, 2017). The introduction of open market policies in the late 1970s, which was different from the previously held closed market policies, made several changes to the Sri Lankan education system. It paved the way for the establishment of private schools, international schools, private universities (Punchi, 2001), and transnational education providers (Bandara, 2021) and also recognition of the importance of English language proficiency and EMI at the university context (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023). In 1987, the government made an amendment to the language policy by recognizing the Tamil language as one of the national languages and accorded with official language status (Rajapakse, 2024), which was marginalized due to the 1956 language policy (Dassanayake, 2024). Overall, historical events of the country may have an impact on the ideologies of the L2 learners, which may determine the level of their investment in L2 learning practices.

## 2.2 Socioeconomic Background

Sri Lanka is a multilingual and multiethnic country. According to the 2012 census, the ethnic groups of Sri Lanka consist of Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil, Sri Lankan Moor, and others accounting for 75%, 11%, 4%, 9%, and 0.5% respectively (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2018, p. 1). As per Chapter IV of the Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978), both Sinhala and Tamil languages are considered national and official languages, while English is considered a link language (*Official Languages Policy*, n.d.). Here, the term ‘link language’ implies that English is used as a common language among the different ethnic groups of the nation and also uses English for global communication purposes (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). In addition to the ethnic diversity, the rural-urban demarcation and the economic status of the country can have an impact on its education system. As far as the rural-urban demarcation is concerned, the majority of the population is concentrated in the rural areas that are 77%, and the urban population accounts for 18%, while only 4% accounts for estate areas (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2018, p. 1). Meanwhile, the average monthly household income is Rs. 76414 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2023, p. xii) which is equivalent to approximately 250 EUR or 261 USD. Moreover, the Sri Lankan government has declared 16 districts out of 25 districts as ‘educationally disadvantaged’ and provides special provisions when entering state universities (*University Admissions Handbook*, 2023). Socioeconomic factors such as ethnicity, rural-urban demarcation, the wealth of the family, and having resided in an educationally disadvantaged district can influence the identity, capital, and ideologies of the EMI learners and may affect their level of investment in L2 learning practices.

## 2.3 Current Status of School Education

The current Sri Lankan education system has some unique features. First, the schools can be categorized into four study cycles: primary cycle (grade 1 - 5 starting from the age 5+), junior secondary cycle (grade 6 to 9), senior secondary Ordinary Level (O/L) cycle (grade 10 – 11) and senior secondary Advanced Level (A/L) cycle (grade 12 -13)(Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024). In the Sri Lankan context, school education is conducted using three MoIs, namely Sinhala medium, Tamil medium, Bilingual, and or English medium. Some of the government schools have offered bilingual education since 2002, which is considered an attempt to introduce EMI to secondary school education (Aturupane & Little, 2021). Under this scheme, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Western Music, Geography, Life Competencies, Civic Education, and Information and Communication Technology are offered in EMI while the remaining subjects are offered in either Sinhala or Tamil. As far as EMI is concerned, some private and international schools offer all the subjects in EMI, and they might use either the national curriculum or a foreign curriculum (Aturupane & Little, 2021). Nevertheless, the number of schools and the number of students who study in a particular MoI differ significantly. According to the annual school census statistics for the year 2023 (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024) 73% of students at government schools study in Sinhala medium, while 24% of the students study in Tamil medium. In contrast to those two mediums, the Bilingual and English medium accounts for a fraction of 3% of the total government school student population. In addition to government schools that provide free education, the Sri Lankan education system consists of private schools which are fee levied. Among the 95 registered private schools, 59% of students attend Sinhala medium, 12% attend Tamil medium, and 29% attend English medium. Compared to the government schools, private schools have a relatively higher percentage of students who study in English medium (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024).

Regardless of the MoI, students are taught English as a second language in government schools, and private and international schools may teach English as a first language (L1) or second language (L2) according to their preference. It should be noted that some private schools and international schools follow the curriculum prescribed by the government and prepare their students for national exams instead of foreign examinations such as Cambridge International and Edexcel (Aturupane & Little, 2021). The national curriculum offers English to Grade 1 and 2 students in the form of Activity Based Oral English (ABOE), and from grades 3 to 5 the students learn English as a subject with a textbook (Aturupane & Little, 2021). From grades 6 to 11, Students learn English as one of their core subjects with a textbook (Brunfaut & Green, 2019). From grade 6 onwards, the students are expected to reach the desired level for eight competencies, which are as follows:

- Competency 1: Identifies the sounds of English Language
- Competency 2: Uses mechanics of writing with understanding
- Competency 3: Engages in active listening and responds appropriately

Competency 4: Building up vocabulary using words appropriately and accurately to convey precise meaning

Competency 5: Extracts necessary information from various types of texts

Competency 6: Uses English grammar for the purpose of accurate and effective communication

Competency 7: Uses English creatively and innovatively in written communication

Competency 8: Communicates clearly, fluently and concisely (Brunfaut & Green, 2019)

When entering grade 12, the students select a subject stream of their choice. There are six subject streams, namely, Arts Stream, Commerce Stream, Biological Science Stream, Physical Science Stream, Engineering Technology Stream, and Biosystems Technology Stream (*University Admissions Handbook*, 2023). Students study three subjects from their selected stream and General English during grades 12 and 13.

Sri Lankan education system has three national exams, namely, the grade 5 scholarship exam, the General Certificate of Examination Ordinary Level (G.C.E. O/L) exam after completing grade 11, and the General Certificate of Examination Advanced Level (G.C.E. A/L) after completing grade 13 (Aturupane & Little, 2021). All these exams evaluate English language proficiency at varying degrees. The Grade 5 scholarship exam includes a few questions to test English such as writing the meaning of a given English word in the local language, writing the English word for a given picture, and constructing a simple sentence from jumbled words (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2020). In contrast, G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) examinations offer more formal papers for the subject of English. For instance, G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) papers include several writing tasks such as writing notices, letters, graph descriptions, and essays; several reading comprehension tasks; and several grammar and vocabulary questions mainly in the format of cloze passages (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2019, 2023a). Considering the structure of the Sri Lankan education system, it is evident that the students have studied English as a subject for at least 10 years by the time they leave school for tertiary education.

## 2.4 Current Status of University Education

Sri Lankan students who wish to pursue a university education can enroll in a degree program at a state university, a nonstate university, a transnational educational provider (TNE), or go overseas. However, the eligibility criteria, fee structure, and medium of instruction differ among these modes of university education. For example, admission to state universities is highly competitive which is based on Z-score<sup>1</sup> and a district quota (*University Admissions Handbook*, 2023). State universities offer a limited number of study places each year. For instance, in the year 2023, out of 232,797 who sat for the G.C.E. A/L exam, 149,487 students were eligible to apply for a state university (Department of

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<sup>1</sup> Z score is calculated by considering 'Raw marks' of students for the given subject for the given year, Mean of the performance of that subject for the given year, and Standard deviation of that subject for the given year.

Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2024) although only 42150 were granted study places (*University Admissions Handbook, 2023*). This leads the remaining students to look for higher education opportunities at nonstate universities, TNEs, or overseas which are fee-levying.

As far as the MoI is concerned, the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka (UGC) encourages the state universities to implement EMI degree programs across all the faculties, believing that EMI degrees will help graduate employability and the universities will benefit from the trend of internationalization (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023). Currently, only a few degree programs are offered in either Sinhala or Tamil medium at government universities, most of them being subjects related to traditional arts subjects (*University Admissions Handbook, 2023*). In contrast, the private/non-state universities offer degree programs in EMI (Punchi, 2001). Undoubtedly, the TNEs use EMI as they offer their original degree programs at their university in EMI.

In conclusion, it is evident that Sri Lanka's history and socioeconomic status have impacted both school and higher education and language policy has been shaped and reshaped due to various reasons. These may shape the level of investment of the L2 learners.

### 3 English Medium Instruction (EMI)

#### 3.1 Medium of Instruction with Special Reference to EMI

Medium of Instruction (MoI) is a part of the education policy, and it may have an impact on the teaching-learning process. Christ (1997, p. 1) claims that there are several ways in which education policy is determined, and one such way is “through the language(s) of instruction chosen or prescribed.” Due to this importance given to MoI, it is important to define what MoI is. Van Pinxteren defines MoI as “the language that is used for giving oral instruction, but also the language that is used in teaching materials (written material) and, significantly, in carrying out assessments and exams”(Van Pinxteren, 2023, p. 2). According to this definition, it is evident that the MoI has an impact on all aspects of learning in a particular educational context. There are different types of MoIs such as mother tongue instruction (L1) and second language instruction (L2). English Medium Instruction (EMI) is one of the second language instruction types.

Macaro (2018) defines EMI as “the use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English”(Macaro, 2018, p. 39). English Medium Instruction (EMI) has gained the interest of scholars owing to the fact that a considerable number of universities are adopting EMI in the global context. Coleman cites six factors that influence the adaptation of EMI in the European higher education system. They are “CLIL, internationalization, student exchanges, teaching and research materials, staff mobility, graduate employability and the market in international students” (Coleman, n.d.). Similarly, Richards and Pun (2023) provide a general list of several reasons for selecting EMI by an educational institute:

- To improve the learning of English
- To provide a common language of instruction in countries with multilingual populations
- To promote economic competitiveness through developing an English proficient workforce
- To produce graduates with global literacy skills
- To enable institutions to attract international students
- To raise university rankings
- To increase the prestige of an institution
- To promote the competitiveness of universities
- To facilitate regional and international communication
- To develop students’ intercultural communication skills (Richards & Pun, 2023, p. 217)

Richards and Pun (2023) go beyond merely stating the above reasons for adapting EMI and provide a typology for EMI which consists of the purposes of EMI, assessment in EMI, curriculum models, introduction of EMI, access to EMI, the English course and EMI, the EMI teacher, the English subject teacher, the EMI learner and the instructional materials in EMI. According to Richards and Pun (2023), the purposes of EMI depend on the context. They explain, for instance, that some countries that were a colony of either Britain or the USA may use EMI due to the influence of

their colonization. Some countries may adopt EMI to attract international students, while some countries introduce EMI in order to prepare their graduates for the global economy. As far as the Sri Lankan education system is concerned, it is evident that at first, EMI was adapted due to colonization, and after the independence, EMI lost its precedence and in recent years, it has regained significance owing to graduate employability and internationalization of the higher education institutes (Aturupane & Little, 2021; Kalugalagedera & Kaushalya, 2017; Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Punchi, 2001). Assessments in EMI are threefold: ‘assessment based on content mastery’, ‘assessment based on content mastery and language proficiency’, and ‘assessment based on language proficiency’. Among these assessment methods, the most common type used in tertiary education is the assessment based on content mastery (Richards & Pun, 2023).

There are several EMI curriculum models such as teaching all subjects in English, teaching some subjects in English, and teaching some subjects in both English and another language (Richards & Pun, 2023). In the Sri Lankan context, the government schools adopt a bilingual format where some subjects such as science and mathematics are offered in English while some are offered in either Sinhala or Tamil, whereas the private schools may offer all the subjects in EMI according to their preference (Aturupane & Little, 2021). In the higher education sector, most of the degrees offered by the state universities are in EMI, and the non-state universities offer only EMI degree programs (*University Admissions Handbook*, 2023; Punchi, 2001). Furthermore, the introduction of EMI can happen in different age groups such as early EMI (in primary school), middle EMI (in secondary school), and late EMI (in the university). The Sri Lankan education system has a unique situation with regard to the introduction of EMI. Selected state schools offer EMI in the format of bilingual education from grade 6 onwards, which is considered as middle EMI in this typology, whereas some private schools offer early EMI starting from primary school education (Aturupane & Little, 2021; Punchi, 2001). However, a mere fraction of the student population studies in EMI (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024), and as a result, the majority of the students undergo late EMI when they join the university, which can have an impact on the effectiveness of EMI studies. Access to EMI is another factor included in the typology of EMI. Here, some educational institutes may use a test to screen the suitability of the students to enroll them in EMI courses, while some institutes may provide a bridging course to minimize the gap between the required level of English proficiency and the actual level of proficiency before the start of the EMI course or program in question (Richards & Pun, 2023).

Richards and Pun (2023) also explain the relationship between the English subject and EMI. Here, when the students learn the English subject, their target is learning English, while in EMI, the students use English as the means of learning. Moreover, some educational institutes may provide an English subject course within their EMI programs to facilitate the learning process of the subject contents or at times, it can be independent. In addition, the availability and the quality of the instructional materials used in the EMI courses play a crucial role in EMI. In their typology of EMI, Richards and Pun (2023) mention three important individuals: the content teacher, the English teacher,

and the EMI learner. They present the lack of English language proficiency of content teachers, lack of training programs available for content teachers to teach their subjects in English, lack of English proficiency of the English language teachers, and inadequate English language proficiency of the EMI learners as barriers to the successful implementation of EMI programs in some countries. Empirical findings from both global and Sri Lankan contexts can enlighten the understanding of these typologies and their impact on the EMI stakeholders.

### **3.2 Insights from Global Literature on EMI**

Global literature on EMI addresses perceptions towards EMI, challenges faced by the students, and the effectiveness of EMI programs. Kong and Wei (2019) investigated the perceptions towards EMI at Chinese universities and found that the majority of the participants perceived that EMI would improve their English language proficiency and also would be beneficial for non-academic aspects of their lives such as securing jobs. Furthermore, they perceived that the success of EMI would depend on the prerequisites of students' level of comprehension, the quality of teachers, and teaching materials. Similarly, Bukve (2018) investigated the students' perceptions towards EMI, paying special attention to differences in subject fields. The findings revealed that both natural sciences and philosophy students had a higher subject load in English compared to law students. Irrespective of the subject field, the students demonstrated confidence in receptive skills (reading and listening) compared to productive skills (writing and speaking). Although students from all three subject fields expressed positive attitudes towards EMI, natural sciences students slightly surpassed their counterparts. Moreover, the students who expressed higher confidence in their English language skills have expressed their intentions to study abroad.

Challenges faced by EMI students may include linguistic challenges, problems with transitioning from mother tongue to EMI, and psychological issues. Dzormeku (2023) investigated the effects of linguistic challenges faced by Ghanaian pre-service teachers in their EMI studies. The findings of this study identified writing and speaking skills as the most challenging skills compared to reading and listening skills. Interestingly, the study found no adverse effect on EMI learning due to linguistic challenges faced by the pre-service teachers. However, the researcher asserts that their limited English language competencies may affect their future teaching career as well as they might pass down their linguistic challenges to their future students, which can be an issue for the country. Similarly, Kamaşak et al. (2021) studied the linguistic challenges faced by the students enrolled in EMI degree programs and how the characteristics of the learners influence these challenges. Their study was based in the Turkish university context, and the sample included 512 participants. The findings disclosed that the most challenging skills were writing and speaking skills. Moreover, the students have shown difficulties related to academic English such as writing essays using academic writing style. In terms of speaking skills, the students found it difficult to engage in discussions in

English and comprehend what the interlocutor was saying. The researchers investigated whether there is a difference between the problems faced by EMI students owing to their field of study and found that social sciences students expressed more difficulties compared to engineering students. Moreover, the findings showed that the students who had prior experiences in EMI found fewer difficulties when pursuing an EMI degree compared to the ones who had to shift from L1 to EMI.

Al Zumor's (2019) study is set in a background where the students experience a change of medium of instruction when they transfer from secondary to tertiary education and in this case, it is particularly from Arabic instruction to EMI. The sample of the study was the students who were pursuing STEM degrees at university. The findings of the study stated several challenges such as the problem of understanding lectures and course material and difficulties in communicating with the lecturers both in and outside the classroom context. Moreover, they attributed their low test scores in their subjects to the fact that the exams were done in English and their perceived low proficiency in the English language. They professed that they could have obtained better scores if the exams were conducted in Arabic. As a solution, the students spend a significant amount of their time translating their lectures and course material into Arabic. In addition, the students claimed that the transition from Arabic medium instruction to EMI resulted in anxiety, frustration, tension, and fear and that EMI practices at university would lead them to be weaker graduates. Evans and Morrison (2011) studied the challenges faced by first-year undergraduates due to EMI at a Hong Kong University. The sample included students from different backgrounds. The transitions and the problems associated with transitions were attributed to the MoI at the secondary school. For instance, those who came from an L1 instruction background faced more challenges compared to the ones who studied in EMI during their secondary school. The priority of the participants was to obtain a good GPA followed by improving their English language competency, which is needed for Hong Kong's English-oriented professional world. The participants faced four types of challenges, namely, "(1) understanding technical vocabulary, (2) comprehending lectures, (3) achieving an appropriate writing style, and (4) conforming to the specialized culture and conventions of the academic community to which they now belonged" (Evans & Morrison, 2011, p. 203). As far as vocabulary issues are concerned, the participants expressed the sheer amount of academic and technical vocabulary that is being used in their studies and have overcome those challenges by recording words in a book and practicing them frequently. The participants have highlighted the impact of the lecturers' accents on the ease of understanding EMI lectures. For instance, they found that those with a Hong Kong English accent were easier to understand. When it comes to the skill of writing, the participants expressed their frustration because they were not prepared to write answers, essays, and so on using academic writing style. Furthermore, they experienced difficulties owing to the different teaching, learning, and assessment styles used by the university compared to their schools. Peer support played a major role in helping the students overcome issues associated with EMI practices at university.

Brown (2008) conducted an ethnographic study exploring the language and anxiety of international students at a UK university. Despite having fulfilled the minimum language requirement of achieving IELTS 6 to enroll in postgraduate degree programs at UK universities, the participants showcased issues related to English language competency and speaking skills, which ultimately led to anxiety. The participants had experienced anxiety, a sense of shame, a lack of confidence in speaking, and an inadequate vocabulary bank due to their English language skills, which hindered them from engaging in conversations. Brown (2008) noticed several issues the students faced during their lectures such as lack of student participation in classroom discussions and answering the questions posed by the lecturers, anxiety and panic when their names were being called by the lecturers to answer questions, and poor listening comprehension skills.

Huang (2015) studied the effectiveness of EMI courses at a Taiwanese university by considering learning motivation, learning anxiety, and achievement. Strengthening English proficiency and professional knowledge and interaction with other nationalities became a motivating factor, while the anxiety among the local students contributed to their self-perceived low English proficiency. In addition, the local students had lower motivation levels and achievement compared to their foreign counterparts. Aizawa et al. (2023) studied to what extent General English language proficiency and the success in the academic English course offered by the university ease the problems associated with EMI learning in the Japanese context. They found that the students with a higher general English score experienced fewer language-related issues during their EMI course. Interestingly, the students could not reach a consensus about the threshold level of English proficiency that minimizes language-related issues in EMI. Moreover, the ease of studying in EMI does not solely depend on L2 proficiency but is also affected by the ability to use academic English. Further, they found that speaking and reading skills were challenging compared to writing skills.

Galloway and Sahan (2021) conducted a study on the use of EMI at Thai and Vietnamese universities. The findings of the study indicated that languages other than English were also used during the teaching-learning process, although a majority of the students and the teachers believed that only English should be permitted in the EMI classroom. Paradoxically, the majority of the students also acknowledged bilingual instruction and the fact that students should be permitted to use both their mother tongue and English, mainly owing to the benefit of using L1 in explaining complex concepts. The driving forces behind enrolling in EMI degree programs were future career and study abroad opportunities along with the opportunity to practice and learn the English language. Both EMI teachers and students claimed that EMI teachers should support the students to improve their English language proficiency and learn subject-specific vocabulary. In addition, they acknowledged the need for support from the English teachers.

Civan and Coşkun (2016) examined the effect of EMI on the academic success of the undergraduates at a Turkish private university by comparing the EMI students' semester GPA with their Turkish medium counterparts. The availability of the same degree program in both EMI and

Turkish medium allowed the researchers to compare the differences statistically. Accordingly, the GPA of Turkish medium students was higher than that of EMI students. Here, the Turkish medium students obtained an average GPA of 2.15 out of 4, while the EMI students obtained an average of 2.06 out of 4. The researchers used several proxies that may determine the students' success such as their high school GPA, percentile ranking of the student's score on the university entrance exam, whether the student has received a scholarship, and if the student graduated at the top of his/her/their high school and the statistical analysis revealed that the EMI students low academic performance was not attributed to any of these proxies but the instruction in English which is not their native language.

As far as the global literature on EMI is concerned, it is vital to focus on the studies conducted within the South Asian region where the current study is located due to the shared geopolitics, the countries' history with colonization, nationalistic diasporas and the fact that English is learnt as a second language. Islam's (2013) study on EMI practices at a private university in Bangladesh provides several insights. The participants revealed the domineering role played by English at the university, and especially during the academic-related activities, Bangla (mother tongue and medium of instruction of school education received by the participants) losing its status. Both students and teachers at the university expressed positive attitudes towards EMI owing to the global prominence of the English language and the demands of the labor market. Moreover, the majority of the students revealed that they faced problems in EMI classes due to their lack of vocabulary and claimed that Bangla medium instruction would have been beneficial. Karim et al. (2023) explored the perspectives of higher education educators with regard to the medium of instruction. The participants have questioned the quality of the EMI teaching and highlighted the EMI teachers' low proficiency in English as a barrier to successful EMI implementation. Moreover, they have emphasized the demographic factors of the Bangladeshi context as a barrier to the successful implementation of EMI. They claimed that the majority of the students were from Bangla medium backgrounds and had learned English as a subject and faced issues with understanding subject matter in English. In addition, the practice of using English outside the classroom for communication purposes at private universities has marginalized the Bangla medium students. Citing these facts, the participants of the study opposed EMI practices.

Khan (2013) explored the use of EMI at two Pakistani universities while taking both lecturers and postgraduate students as the sample. The results revealed that the students' English language proficiency was poor even at the master's degree level and as a result of that the lecturers conducted their lectures using both English and Urdu to facilitate their learning. Moreover, the students did not engage in classroom discussions in English due to their limited spoken skills, which led them to use Urdu for such discussions. As far as the exams are concerned, most of the students were stressed about the written exams in English and believed that they could have performed better in Urdu medium. Sah and Li (2018) explored the case of a particular Nepali public school's transition from the Nepali medium of instruction to EMI. This transition was made due to parental pressure, which tended to

enroll their children at private schools that offer EMI education, which ultimately elevates the status of the children in society. As Nepal does not share the history of colonization as their neighboring countries and as a result of that, EMI was introduced to Nepal as a source of linguistic capital for the children of elites (Phyak, 2016 as cited in Sah & Li, 2018). The findings of the study revealed that EMI was a burden for the teachers as well as students. EMI teachers lack the required proficiency level to teach subject matter in English and pedagogical training to conduct EMI lessons. As a result, they opted to use strategies such as translation and code-mixing, which allowed them to explain the subject matter in Nepalese. Moreover, the classroom instruction was teacher-centered, and there was a lack of opportunities for the students to practice their English language skills such as speaking. A similar study (Jayadeva, 2019) was conducted in the Indian context, which explores English Medium schooling. This ethnographical study revealed that parents prefer to send their children to English medium schools, including parents who are at the lower strata of society, due to the perceived benefits of EMI. They believed that even sending their children to a low-cost EMI school would enable their children with English language proficiency, especially speaking confidently in English, which would ultimately be beneficial for their future career opportunities.

### **3.3 Insights from Sri Lankan Literature on EMI**

EMI has penetrated both school education and higher education at different proportions. Therefore, it is important to understand to which extent EMI is used at both educational levels, the challenges faced by each level, and the attitudes held by different stakeholders towards EMI. Wijayatunga (2018) explains some challenges and issues associated with EMI in the context of secondary school. Accordingly, around 30% of the students from her sample stated that they would have been able to learn the subject more had they used the vernacular mediums of instruction. In addition, the majority of the students claimed that they need extra tutoring for the subjects since they follow EMI. However, the majority of them believed that they have a better position, and opportunities compared to their counterparts who study in vernacular mediums as a result of their EMI studies. Around 53% of the EMI students in her sample claimed that there is a gap between EMI students and vernacular students, which results in difficulty in making friends with other students (Wijayatunga, 2018). In another Sri Lankan study, Balakrishnar and Thanaraj (2015) examined the effectiveness of the EMI policy in the schools in the Jaffna district and listed several reasons for leaving the EMI study program at school. Not having family members to help the students with their EMI studies, inability to communicate in English, difficulty in memorizing material in English, and inability to comprehend exam questions were among the cited reasons for unenrolling from EMI studies at school (Balakrishnar & Thanaraj, 2015).

Since the current study aims to explore EMI at the university level, it is important to investigate literature related to the university context. Jayathilake et al.'s study (2021) focuses on the

experiences and the role of subject lecturers who teach humanities and social sciences subjects- with regard to EMI, the problems they encounter, and what they have observed in the EMI classes in terms of the students' performance and behavior at a selected state university. Under the theme of lecturers' exposure to and proficiency in English, it was found that all the lecturers who participated in this qualitative study used Sinhala as their L1, and they had limited exposure to English at home. Moreover, nine participants mentioned that their English was poor during their school education and improved it during their higher studies, now ranking them as 'average' despite all of them having obtained a postgraduate qualification in an EMI context. Further, they have started delivering lectures in EMI due to the institutional pressure and the social prestige attached to EMI. Meanwhile, they consider 'EMI as a war' as their lectures solely depend on the PowerPoint slides and limited interactions with the students. As a solution, they have adopted code-mixing and re-explaining the concepts in the vernacular medium (Jayathilake et al., 2021).

Vidanapathirana and Gamini (2009) examined the impact of English language proficiency on the performance of a Bachelor of Arts Social Sciences degree conducted in EMI at the Open University of Sri Lanka. Their study tested three hypotheses. The first null hypothesis was that the "examination performance of learners will be the same irrespective of their English language proficiency," which was rejected by the data analysis, implying that the English language proficiency of the learners has a direct impact on the marks obtained for their core modules in their respective degree programs. The second hypothesis tested whether the three different programs (economics, sociology, and mass communication) require different levels of English proficiency in order to study those programs in an EMI environment. Initial results showed that students require a higher proficiency level of English to perform well in the sociology program compared to the economics program owing to the nature of sociology dealing with complex theories and phenomena while economics deals with numbers and charts. However, the ANOVA test results showed that this initial difference is statistically insignificant, suggesting that the influence of English language proficiency is equal among the three subjects. The third null hypothesis stated that the enrollment of the learners to this EMI B.A. Social Sciences program is not skewed towards an 'elitist group'. Here, what they meant by an 'elitist group' is the students who come from a better financial background, attended better schools, have access to private study rooms at home, have access to English printed media, and are located in the capital city. The results of the data showed that the enrollment for this EMI study program is skewed towards the 'elitist group', suggesting that learner profiles affect enrolling in an EMI degree program (Vidanapathirana & Gamini, 2009).

Mahawattha and Rassool's (2023) study focuses on the transition from secondary school to EMI degree programs. Their sample includes focus group interviews with students from different faculties, including science, management, humanities, and social sciences, as well as lecturers within the context of Sri Lankan state universities. One of the themes identified by them is the sudden transition from L1 instruction to EMI. Almost all the participants mentioned that their transition was

an enormous challenge. Moreover, some students have highlighted the fact that they lack a good foundation in English at a young age and the inability to have private tuition for English due to their poor socio-economic status. In addition, the lack of English language support courses during the orientation program of the university was also mentioned as a factor that affected their transition to EMI. Further, a student has mentioned that he transferred to the L1 degree program from the EMI program as he found it difficult to cope with EMI and due to the fear of not being able to receive a 'class' for his degree. Here, the researchers also highlighted the Sri Lankan culture and job market, which values a degree with a 'class', preferably a 'first class or a second upper'. Meanwhile, the lecturers who participated in their study claimed that the English language teaching unit delivers lessons that focus only on English grammar and general English. In addition, they highlighted the impact of the university sub-culture, which includes 'ragging' of new students and suppression of using the English language as a barrier to improving English proficiency (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023).

Rathnasiri (2021) conducted a narrative case study at a Sri Lankan state university to explore how ideologies, identities, and investments intersect the L2 learners pursuing EMI degrees. The findings of her study revealed that although the ideology of considering the English language as a symbolic capital is still present in society, in the context of the selected university, the use of English was considered a risk to friendship and social capital within the university. It has discouraged proficient speakers from hiding their identity as proficient English speakers and limited their English usage to utilitarian purposes such as delivering a presentation or facing a viva voce. Moreover, her participants claimed that those who kept using English, irrespective of the common practice of using the vernaculars, were ostracized. Rathnasiri's study (2020) also revealed some ideologies about the English language and its usage. The participants have associated English with negative sentiments such as fear, discomfort, intimidation, and embarrassment. Moreover, the participants share the ideology of using English in a perfect situation where they could use English without any grammar mistakes, using complex sentence structures and a wide range of vocabulary. Further, they have shown their concerns regarding their accent, and they prefer to have an accent that shows their fluency.

Indrarathne and McCulloch (2022) summarize the gaps between policy and practice related to English language teaching in Sri Lanka which reinforce the poor performance at the national examinations. Accordingly, there is a mismatch between the curriculum, course books, and assessment procedures. In addition, speaking and listening skills are neglected during the learning process as well as in the assessment process. Further, they found that a considerable number of school teachers are below CEFR B2 proficiency (Indrarathne & McCulloch, 2022). These types of situations pose several concerns and questions to the educators in the university context regarding the English proficiency level of the students who enter the university, their ability to study in an EMI environment, and the role of both English lecturers and subject lecturers in achieving the learning outcomes of the students.

## 4 Theoretical Framework

Before delving into the theoretical framework of this study, it is vital to acknowledge that the concepts of learner identity and motivation are by some means interconnected and supposedly play an important role in the field of second language acquisition as they attract a considerable number of prolific researchers (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011; Gardner, 2007; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Richards, 2023). Moreover, these two concepts provide the basis for the theoretical framework of this study. Identity is characterized as “how we understand and express who we are, how we position ourselves in relation to others in different situations and those aspects of oneself that we choose to express in an interaction” (Richards, 2023, p. 252). In addition to these characteristics, ‘identity’ is seen as a dynamic process that is shaped by interaction with others, which can be expressed through language and which is multifaceted (Richards, 2023). It is important to understand the significance of investigating the learner identity in the second language learning context. Richards (2023) lists several issues that are connected to the identity of second language learners:

- how learner identity affects the learner’s use of English
- how features of learner identity can facilitate or inhibit language learning
- how learner identity influences attitudes towards the target-language culture
- how learner identity influences attitudes towards different varieties of English
- how the learner’s use of English can mark different aspects of learner identity
- how the role of the ‘imagined self’ can influence language learning and
- how learner identity is affected by the context of L2 interaction. (p. 258)

Motivation is another key concept that relates to second language acquisition and identity, and various theories have been developed since the 1950s, starting with Gardner’s motivation theory (Lamb et al., 2019). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) compress the broad and complex definitions of motivation into a single definition. Accordingly, motivation is “the *choice* of a particular action, the *persistence* with it, the *effort* expended on it” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 4). Motivation has several key concepts such as types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), two motivational constructs (language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation), demotivation (losing one’s motivation), amotivation (lack of motivation) (Csizér, 2017; Gardner, 2007). The significance of learner identity in the field of second language acquisition has been steered to study it from different perspectives such as psychological and sociological approaches. For instance, Dörnyei’s ‘L2 Motivational Self System’ presents three components derived from psychological roots (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Ng, 2021). According to Dörnyei, the concept of ‘ideal self’ refers to the attributes that a particular L2 learner ideally wishes to possess based on the learner’s personal aspirations, ‘ought-to self’ refers to the attributes that the learner believes an L2 learner should possess based on the learner’s duties and responsibilities and ‘L2 learning experiences’ refers to the motives related to the learning environment and the experiences of the learner (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Darvin and

Norton's Model of Investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) investigates the identity of the learner through a sociological lens (Ng, 2021), which is taken as the theoretical framework of this study and will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Furthermore, the rationale for selecting Darvin and Norton's Model of Investment is twofold: it is a recent model, and several existing studies have employed this model (Mavaddat & Razmjoo, 2020; Sung, 2020; Teng, 2019).

#### **4.1 Darvin and Norton's Model of Investment**

This study is based on Darvin and Norton's Model of Investment (2015) which focuses on second-language learners (See Figure 1). They identify three key elements that influence the L2 learners, namely, identity, capital, and ideology and they have placed "investment" at the intersection of these three elements. Here, "investment", which is a result of the interplay of identity, capital, and ideology, plays a crucial role in how a learner learns and uses an L2. Norton and Toohey claim that a learner's investment in an L2 does not necessarily equate to their level of motivation to learn an L2:

A language learner may be highly motivated, but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may, for example, be racist, sexist, elitist, anti-immigrant, or homophobic. Alternatively, the language learner's conception of good language teaching may not be consistent with that of the teacher, compromising the learner's investment in the language practices of the classroom. Thus, the language learner, despite being highly motivated, may not be invested in the language practices of a given classroom. (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 421)

This remark implies that investment is a result of the three key elements in the model of investment which are identity, capital, and ideology. The concept of investment is based on sociological approaches and recognizes the impact of social inequalities when investing in an L2 (Darvin & Norton, 2023). The notion of "investment" related to the current study may be reflected in how well students adapt to the EMI learning environment. For instance, their previous experiences associated with learning English may motivate or demotivate them to actively engage in the EMI classroom at the university. Otherwise, the income level and the resources available to the students may determine the investment in EMI. In addition, students' perceptions of English and their future aspirations may reflect to what extent they are invested in the L2 learning and the EMI learning environment. In order to understand how this framework describes the second language learning context, it is important to comprehend each element independently as well as collectively.

##### **4.1.1 Identity**

Norton defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 5). This definition suggests that identity goes beyond basic characteristics such as gender, age, social class, and race. When describing the notion of identity in their model of investment, Darvin and Norton refer to Bourdieu's ideas on habitus and dispositions. Correspondingly,

habitus is shaped by ideology, and it helps individuals understand the world and their role in it. Moreover, the learners position themselves and are positioned by others in society, which influences their L2 practices. Furthermore, learners' desires which are guided by these habitus and dispositions also influence their investment in an L2 (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Identity in this model is influenced by the poststructuralist theories of language and subjectivity. Poststructuralist language theories recognize the relationship between language and power and also imply that the learners can be “the subject OF a set of relationships” as well as “the subject TO a set of relationships”(Norton & Toohey, 2011). Therefore, Darvin and Norton assert that “an individual’s identity is a site of struggle that is negotiated through language and social interaction”(Darvin & Norton, 2023, p. 31). For instance, a learner can feel marginalized or privileged owing to some of his/her/their identity characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of the family, which determines the degree to which a learner is invested in L2 practices. Consequently, the learners are required to negotiate their identities when investing themselves in an L2.

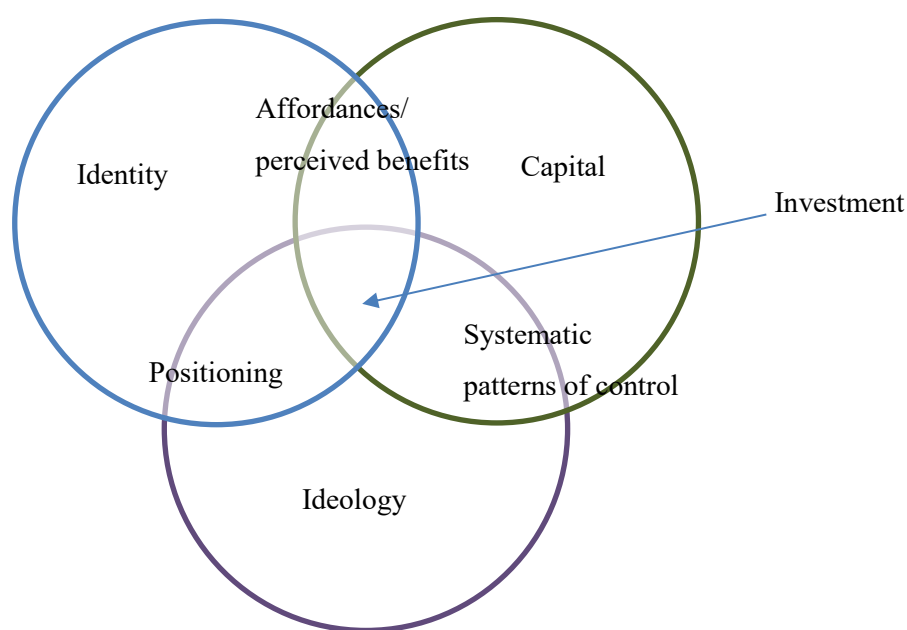


Figure 1 Model of Investment (with permission from Cambridge University Press)

Ethnic and religious identity can play a significant role in Sri Lankan society, which may influence the level of investment in L2 learning practices. In her article, ‘Language policy, ethnic tensions, and linguistic rights in post-war Sri Lanka’, Herath (2015) states that the 30-year-long ethnic-based civil war which was between the Sinhalese-led government and the Tamil militant group made Sri Lankans to be more conscious of their ethnic and linguistic identities. Although the civil war was based on the language rights of each ethnic group and acted as a divider between different ethnic groups, it was a unifying factor during the fight for independence. Back then, the fight for

independence was also a fight to defeat the dominance of the English language. Nevertheless, English is still considered as a source of power and prestige in the society (Herath, 2015). Muslims, also known as Moor, are one of the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. They are the second-largest minority ethnic group (Davis, 2018). According to McGilvray and Raheem (2007) (as cited in Davis, 2018), the origin of Muslims in Sri Lanka dates back to pre-Islamic maritime trade between the Middle East and South and South East Asia and Arab Muslim mercantile during the first half of the seventh century. Although the majority of the Muslims in Sri Lanka speak Tamil as their first language, they are different from the Tamils due to their religion. Moreover, owing to the conflicting views on what is the mother tongue of Sri Lankan Muslims (Nuhman, 2007 as cited in Davis, 2018), they speak either Sinhala or Tamil, depending on the area they live. During her study, she observed that there is a higher proportion of Muslim students in bilingual medium classes. One of the participants in her study was the English subject head of a school who was also a Muslim. According to her, Tamils are cynical about the success or importance of studying in the bilingual medium due to their strong attachment to their Tamil identity, whereas Muslims have linguistic flexibility, which aids them in pursuing studies in English. It is assumed that students who study in the bilingual medium are from wealthy family backgrounds compared to the vernacular mediums, despite the fact that everyone wears the same uniform to school (Davis, 2018). Their social class is displayed through the earrings, pencil cases, and so on (Davis, 2018). Moreover, the students have classified those who are studying in bilingual medium classes as “posh,” which is also a class marker (Davis, 2018).

Attanayake's (2020) book titled 'Post-Colonial Curriculum Practices in South Asia: Building Confidence to Speak English' presents the English language teaching scenario of four nations, namely, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. She claims that these post-colonial countries share more or less similar approaches to language policies. Having said that, immediately after the independence, these countries focused on the aspect of nationalism, which they achieved by downplaying the status of English and giving prominence to national languages. Thereafter, the language policies were influenced by education and job market requirements. Attanayake (2020) states the importance of English in the job market and claims that it is a prerequisite in the private sector and with the diminishing role of government organizations in the current economy, Sri Lanka faces the challenge of producing English-language proficient youth. Attanayake (2020) claims that there is a mismatch between the students' needs in terms of English language learning and what the education system provides them in Sri Lanka. The students are perceived to be proficient in English speaking skills, but the education system focuses on reading and writing, which causes the mismatch. Furthermore, the students' aspirations to be proficient in speaking English are attributed to the fact that “being able to speak in English means that one is presenting oneself as educated, belonging to a higher class and as a member of the intellectual community without having to prove it by writing in English” (Samarakkody, 2001 as cited in Attanayake, 2020, p. 25). During the interview, the Sri Lankan students mentioned the following as attitudes and advantages of being able to speak English well ““it

is the best way to face challenges in life and society'; 'I will be without fear'; 'it is prestigious', 'marketable, employable', 'high class', 'important', 'good jobs', 'high society', 'get good job'"(Attanayake, 2020, p. 44). Despite the higher percentage of Sri Lankan learners who indicated that they would like to speak in English (99%), only 4% rated themselves as able to speak English well. Interestingly, the reason for not being able to speak in English is attributed to the fear of being ridiculed by society and shyness (82%). During the interview, the students made remarks on the influence of society on speaking English, "society discourages, various social status, intellectual levels/capacities and attitudes matter, 'people laugh', 'some friends encourage, some don't'" (Attanayake, 2020, p. 45).

Attanayake (2020) claims that there is a concept called 'watchdog' in the South Asian English language learning context. A 'watchdog' is a real or imaginary person who judges a person's ability to speak English and the standard or the quality of such speaking acts. The concept of 'watchdog' instills fear, shyness, and uncertainty among language learners, which results in inhibitions towards speaking English. Interestingly, these 'watchdogs' are not necessarily those who speak English well but also include those who do not speak English. If a learner feels that he/she is among 'watchdogs' who are better speakers of English, they may feel shy or lack the confidence to speak, thinking that their English is poor, and it will put them at a lower status. Meanwhile, if the learner is among those who do not speak English, the learner may not speak in English, thinking that those 'watchdogs' may consider the learner to be 'showing off' or that it is 'odd' to speak in English. Whichever the case, both affect the learners negatively. Attanayake (2020) asserts that Sri Lankans mainly fear the locals who speak English fluently due to being ridiculed for poor or improper use of English, while Bangladeshi and Pakistani learners fear the locals who do not speak English at all due to being mocked for using English.

#### 4.1.2 Capital

Darvin and Norton have grounded the notion of capital in Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu's threefold capital, which is economic, cultural, and social capital, determines the success of a particular set of practices (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015). This set of practices can be language practices used by the L2 learner. Among these three forms of capital, the most obvious one is economic capital, which refers to the wealth, income, and property of a particular person (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can be embodied in the mind and body of the people, in cultural artifacts such as books and dictionaries, or in the form of educational qualifications, while social capital includes relationships and membership in a particular group (Bourdieu, 1986). Darvin and Norton include Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital when describing the notion of capital in their model of investment. Accordingly, the resources a person possesses determine his or her position in society, and the legitimacy given to those resources

creates a symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1987, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2023). They relate Bourdieu's symbolic capital aspect to the language learners: "To communicate and learn an L2, learners need to draw on their linguistic, semiotic, cultural, social, and material resources, and the extent to which teachers are able to recognize, value and mobilize these resources is what empowers learners" (Darvin & Norton, 2023, p. 36).

In the Sri Lankan context, capital can play a significant role in a student's investment in L2 practices. Resources available at school to learn English can be a form of capital. Although the textbooks for all subjects are provided free of charge by the state for the government schools, not all government schools have the required number of teachers to teach English. Coprahewa (2009) states that although English language learning has gained popularity in the country, the standard of English proficiency has fallen during the past decades since government schools mainly teach in local languages and the lack of competent English teachers in rural schools. A report published by the National Education Commission of Sri Lanka (2023), states that there has been a deficiency in the number of required English teachers in the country within the past five years. Accordingly, there was a 25% of English teacher deficit in the country, and a significant level of deficiency was observed in 24 districts out of the 25 districts in the country (National Education Commission, 2023, p. 28).

The quality of teachers can also be considered as capital when learning English. Having said that, a study conducted by Allan and Mackenzie (2019) to find the proficiency level of Sri Lankan English teachers raised concerns regarding their proficiency. They used the British Council's Aptis for Teachers exam to evaluate the English language proficiency of 400 secondary school English teachers at government schools. Accordingly, the majority of the teachers are at CEFR 'B2' level accounting for 48% followed by 36% being CEFR 'B1' level. All together 84% of the sample has the proficiency of CEFR 'B' level. Meanwhile, 10% of the sample is at CEFR 'C' level and only 5% are below CEFR 'C' level. Moreover, rural schools have more teachers with lower proficiency compared to urban areas of the country (Allan & Mackenzie, 2019). Therefore, the proficiency level of the English teachers a student receives can be considered as capital in learning English because it affects the way they teach and how well they can teach English grammar and the four skills.

The wealth of the family can determine the availability of learning resources in the Sri Lankan context. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the average monthly household income is Rs. 76414 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2023, p. xii) (approximately 250 EUR or 261 USD), which can have an impact on L2 learning. For instance, it may be difficult for a family of four to afford private tuition for the English language with this income, and as Sri Lanka has a culture of private tuition (Pallegedara, 2011), those who cannot afford private tuition may lag behind their counterparts who gain some additional knowledge from those private tuition. Moreover, the household income of a family may determine access to certain study materials such as English dictionaries, self-study English books, English novels, and so on. Similarly, the income of a family may determine the possibility of owning a computer/laptop or a smartphone that can be used for educational purposes. For instance,

only 22% of total households own either a desktop computer or a laptop in 2022 (Department of Census and Statistics, n.d.), which suggests that the income of a particular family may play a role in owning a technological device that can help them learn English at home.

The medium of instruction at school can be a source of capital when learning English. Being a student from an international school in Sri Lanka can be another source of capital when learning English and pursuing a degree in English medium. A study conducted by Wettewa (2016) presents the reasons for selecting an international school instead of a government school. Accordingly, most of the parents have stated that the use of English medium instruction is their primary factor for selecting an international school for their children. Similarly, the students studying at the selected international schools also mentioned EMI as their number one reason for selecting an international school. Furthermore, her study highlighted some socio-economical underpinnings associated with choosing an international school. For instance, some of the parents have mentioned that they selected an international school for their children as they want them to have a better future through the means of EMI and foreign curricula. Moreover, some of the parents have stressed the fact that they have been to government schools and lacked opportunities to study English language and literature, resulting in poor proficiency and or lack of fluency in English. Some of the participants have highlighted the importance of English in both local and international job markets, stating some incidents where students from international schools got recruited over a graduate solely because of the English language proficiency and leadership skills of the international school student (Wettewa, 2016). Therefore, it is evident that having studied at an international school provides a competitive advantage in the form of capital due to EMI. However, it is not easy to acquire this capital in Sri Lanka due to the high term fees of the international schools, which range from 65 USD to 300 USD, and some even charge 8000 USD (Wettewa, 2016).

### 4.1.3 Ideology

Darvin and Norton (2015) define ideology as “a normative set of ideas” (p. 43). According to them, ideology in relation to the investment in language practices includes not only language ideologies such as ‘pluralism ideology and assimilation ideology’ but also the thinking patterns that govern a particular group of people, which leads to either inclusion or exclusion of those who join such groups. These include ‘racist ideology’ and ‘neoliberal ideology’, in which the former promotes prejudiced behavior while the latter gives prominence to market value (Darvin & Norton, 2023). Darvin and Norton claim that L2 learners are influenced by the ideologies they encounter, which simultaneously determines their capacity to speak and be heard in a particular language community (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2023). Navigating ideologies can be a difficult task for L2 learners as some ideologies are invisible in society as they have become common sense, and some ideologies are deliberately concealed by themselves (Darvin & Norton, 2016). Furthermore, the development of digital technology has also

influenced the ideologies which in turn impact the teaching-learning process of L2 (Darvin & Norton, 2016).

In the Sri Lankan context, several ideologies may come into play in the lives of L2 learners. Nationalist ideology can be one of the ideologies that have an impact on Sri Lankan L2 learners. As mentioned earlier, Sri Lanka was colonized mainly by the British and obtained independence in 1948. Nationalistic ideologies led to standing against the oppression (both linguistic and economic) and ultimately obtaining independence (Herath, 2015). After obtaining independence, Sinhala was made the official language of the country to revitalize the lost identity and regain power (Herath, 2015). During this process, Tamils were marginalized as they lost the privileges they enjoyed during the British rule and due to not considering Tamil language as one of the official languages of the post-independent Sri Lanka (Herath, 2015). As a result of colonization, Sinhalese L2 learners may not recognize the full value of learning English, and they may favor their mother tongue over English, which may negatively affect their investment in L2 learning practices. On the other hand, Tamils who were marginalized due to the previous official language bill (Dassanayake, 2024) may value English, which in turn will reflect in the investment of L2 learning.

With a closer link to nationalistic and post-colonial ideologies, Sri Lankans have developed a resistance towards the English language and thereby have created a metaphor called “Kaduwa” which means ‘sword’ in Sinhala (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). It connotes the use of the English language in the society. Kandiah (1984) explains the concept of “Kaduwa/sword” from the perspective of “the man who has no chance of beating the English dominated system... The sword, he knows, if grasped firmly in his own hands will endow him with the power ... to live with dignity in terms of equality with other men; in someone else’s hands, it remains the instrument of his oppression, the means of his subjugation” (Kandiah, 1984, p.139 as cited in Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016, pp. 311–312). Although Kandiah explained this metaphor decades ago, it is still used in Sri Lankan society as 81% of a sample of 100 Arts degree undergraduates of a state university acknowledged the fact that they are aware of this concept (Widyalandara, 2009b). Among these students who claimed that they know the concept of ‘Kaduwa/sword’, 72% connote this metaphor with a positive attitude towards English while 15% of them connote it with fear and considered the English language to be a threat. Therefore, it is evident that this metaphor prevails in today’s society as well and it may influence to what extent the students invest themselves in L2 learning practices.

Linguistic shame is another phenomenon that may have an impact on the learners’ investment in L2 practices. According to Liyanage and Canagarajah (2019), linguistic shame is “embarrassment in using a language resulting from the social discourses and practices that denigrate the identities and outcomes attached to such language use” (Abeyseena et al., 2024). Wijetunge (2008) highlights the fact that Sri Lankan society associates a person with a particular social category based on the way he/she/they pronounce English words. For instance, in the Sri Lankan context, some English speakers may pronounce the word school as /*Iskuul*/ whereas the standard way is /*sku:l*/, and those who have

this variety of pronunciation are considered to be from a lower social class (Gunasekera, 2005, as cited in Wijetunge, 2008). As a result, if a particular learner depicts these signs in a class, they may get ridiculed by others, resulting in linguistic shame, which may limit the investment of that learner in L2 practices.

Globalization can be considered as another ideology that may have an impact on the level of investment in L2 practices. Rizvi and Lingard (2009) provide a detailed definition of globalization: “It refers not only to shifts in patterns of transnational economic activities, especially with respect to the movement of capital and finance, but also to the ways in which contemporary political and cultural configurations have been reshaped by major advances in information technologies” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, pp. 22–23). Moreover, they claim that globalization is an ideology as well as a social imaginary. Globalization can be considered an ideology because it reshapes and redefines the term “society” with the involvement of different viewpoints such as globalists, skeptics, global enthusiasts, and transformationalists. Similarly, globalization can be considered as a social imaginary because people imagine their future selves based on the effects of globalization (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Thus, it is evident that globalization has penetrated each aspect of the lives of human beings, including the field of education. For instance, the way education is provided and the curriculum may be influenced by globalization. The notions of global employability, global communication, Information communication technology, and artificial intelligence may have an impact on the field of education due to the pervasive nature of globalization. Particularly, the aspects of global employability and global communication may have an impact on Sri Lankan students’ investment in learning English and pursuing a degree in EMI. If the students aspire to migrate to an English-speaking country for better job opportunities and a better lifestyle, they may invest themselves in learning English. Moreover, if they consider getting a job in the private sector of the country, they may recognize the importance of English and engage themselves effectively in L2 learning practices.

Neoliberal ideology may also play a role in the level of investment in L2 learning. According to Trowler (2003), neoliberalism advocates a free market with limited government interference. The government is mainly present in the field of national security and a few basic areas. The implication for education is that diversity and competitiveness are valued. For example, the students and schools may compete against each other, and parents are seen as customers who make choices based on the results of the competition. Sri Lanka has embraced neoliberal ideologies and let the private sector open schools and higher education institutes (Punchi, 2001). The students who are influenced by this ideology may invest more in learning English anticipating better job opportunities both locally and internationally.

## 4.2 Insights from Studies Related to the Theoretical Framework

Sung's study (2020) is quite similar to the current study as it focuses on mainland Chinese learners' investment in English-mediated practices in an EMI university in Hong Kong. These students also experience a transition when they come to Hong Kong to study with limited or no proficiency in Cantonese, which is spoken in Hong Kong. The participants have exploited their existing cultural capital to overcome the challenges associated with EMI such as not understanding lectures and not knowing specialized vocabulary. Here, the participants have used their competitive nature, which is inherited from being a student from mainland China. By leveraging their existing cultural capital, they have been able to negotiate their desired identity as a competent learner in the EMI classroom. They have seized every opportunity to speak in English, which resulted in improving their English as well as being able to project themselves as competent learners. The participants have recalled the struggles they faced due to the transition from Chinese medium to EMI and now feel a sense of achievement by projecting themselves as competent and dedicated learners. The majority of the participants have mentioned their desire to continue postgraduate studies in English, driven by the fact that education elevates one's social identity. Ideologies regarding the English language have influenced the participants' investment in L2 practices at the university. Here, they have recognized the role and importance of the English language in today's globalized world, which has become an incentive for them to invest themselves in L2 learning practices. Compared to academic situations, the participants have been less invested in social situations. When they tried to interact with the exchange students who speak English, their lack of English-speaking skills, lack of knowledge of informal English, and lack of knowledge of Western cultures acted as barriers, and their existing cultural and linguistic capital failed to support their interactions outside the formal classroom interactions. As far as the communication with the local Cantonese students is concerned, the participants have been less invested due to the ideology that defines English as a foreign language and speaking in English is considered a 'Westernized' act (Sung, 2020).

Another study based on Darwin and Norton's model of investment is Mavaddat and Razmjoo's study (2020), which presents the narratives of two ESL learners in Iranian higher education. One male participant believed that English, which was taught at his school was not effective. The researchers assert that the negative attitudes towards the English teaching at his school and the lack of opportunity to participate in extra English sessions deprived him of English learning networks and creating imagined selves where he foresees using English in the future. His connection with English changed after grade 12 when he found a kindhearted male relative who started teaching him English, which resulted in his obtaining higher scores. His newly improved English skills and enrollment in anesthesiology have given him a new identity in his society as people started showing their prescriptions, which are in English, and asking for his interpretation. During his first year at university, he had a female English teacher who asked questions and reprimanded the students in front

of the class, including the girls, which decreased his investment in learning as his male identity was challenged in front of the girls. He underwent some changes during the next level of the English course, where he found a teacher who gives enjoyable activities and empowers student autonomy. The second male participant had a different story compared to the first participant. His family has facilitated him to learn English as early as 10 years old by enrolling him at an English language institute. He had an interesting way of learning English, which is to write down every conversation that occurs in a movie and study the new words and their meanings. He believes that this method has helped him immensely to be fluent in English. In addition, he has obtained a diploma in English, which shows his investment in learning English. When the teacher asks for the reason for sitting in the last row of the class, he replied, "I don't like to be kind of student who sits in front of professor and shows off but I do my best at class" (p.333) which can be considered as negotiating his identity to suit the class which is a part of the society.

Teng (2019) conducted a narrative inquiry to examine how three EFL learners in a Chinese university practiced learning English and how their identities influenced their investment in English. One participant highlighted that she studied English for exam-oriented purposes and used the methods of drilling and rote memory to learn English, which was also encouraged by her teachers and her parents. Influenced by the prevailing ideologies in her society, which value learning English and the benefits attached to it, she became an English major student. Although she tried her best to engage in learning English actively, specifically improving her speaking skills, she failed to do so owing to her previous learning experiences, which were more exam-oriented. The second participant is from the countryside, and he lacks confidence in English. He has highlighted the lack of resources available to learn English during his school days, suggesting the inability to convert them into investment in learning English. In addition, he has a Chinese accent when pronouncing English words, which was ridiculed by his fellow classmates and can be considered as linguistic shame, which negatively affects the process of investment. Due to his lack of English language proficiency, he has changed his course to Chinese medium, which suggests his failure to convert the ideologies, identities, and capital to invest himself in learning English. The third participant depicts a positive investment in English practices owing to her background as a city girl and the resources available in the city, which helped her to engage in speaking and become a competent English learner. Moreover, her background in bilingual education also acted as capital that could be converted into investment.

## 5 Research Tasks and Methods

### 5.1 Research Questions

This study seeks to explore how the transition from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction shapes students' investment in learning English and learning through English. Based on the theoretical framework of this study, which is 'The Model of Investment' by Darvin and Norton (2015), the above-mentioned research question is divided into three sub-research questions as follows: Sub-research questions of the study:

- 1) How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction?
- 2) How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction?
- 3) How do language and societal ideologies shape the students' investment in English medium studies?

### 5.2 Research Design

In order to address the research questions of the study, a constructivist worldview is adopted. Constructivism is founded on the belief that individuals understand the world based on their social (living, working, studying) context, and these may vary depending on the person, and they are complex in nature, which requires an in-depth understanding mainly through qualitative research interventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For instance, it is rational to study how the students negotiate their identity, capital, and ideologies when they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to EMI with a constructivist mindset due to the complexity and subjectivity of these concepts. Here, a qualitative research design is appropriate as it is a way of "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 51). In the context of the current study, the researcher explores the role of the medium of instruction, especially when there is a transition from mother-tongue instruction to English medium, and how the learners' investment in English language learning helps them negotiate this transition. In order to study this social and human problem, a case study research strategy is used, which is a distinctive research design that comes under the umbrella term 'qualitative research'.

#### 5.2.1 Case Study Approach

Case study research design can be used to address research questions that start with 'how' and 'why' which focuses on a contemporary issue where the researcher has little or no control over the issue

(Yin, 2018). Yin plays a crucial role in defining case study research. He provides a twofold definition covering both the scope and characteristics of a case study, which is as follows:

A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.(Yin, 2018, p. 45)

A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.(Yin, 2018, p. 46)

According to the above definition, the research questions of the current study, which start with ‘how ... negotiate, how...utilize and how...shape’, can be addressed effectively by adopting a case study method. It is important to understand what a case means when using the case study research method. A case can be a single person, an event, an entity, or even a specific program that is dealing with a contemporary issue (Yin, 2018). According to Yin’s classification of different types of case studies, the current study can be identified as a single-embedded case study, which is shown in Figure 2.

Yin (2018) compares a single case study design to a single experiment, which can have subunits. Here, the single case study focuses on a single issue or context. In the current study, the context is Sri Lankan non-state universities that offer EMI degree programs, and the case is the selected non-state university and its faculty (Faculty of Science), which can be considered as a single context. The embedded units in the current study are the students who participated in the study representing the university and the faculty. Moreover, this case study can be considered as an exploratory case study as the researcher tries to explore the phenomenon of transitioning from mother tongue to EMI, how the students negotiate their identities, use their capital, and how their L2 practices are shaped by the ideologies.

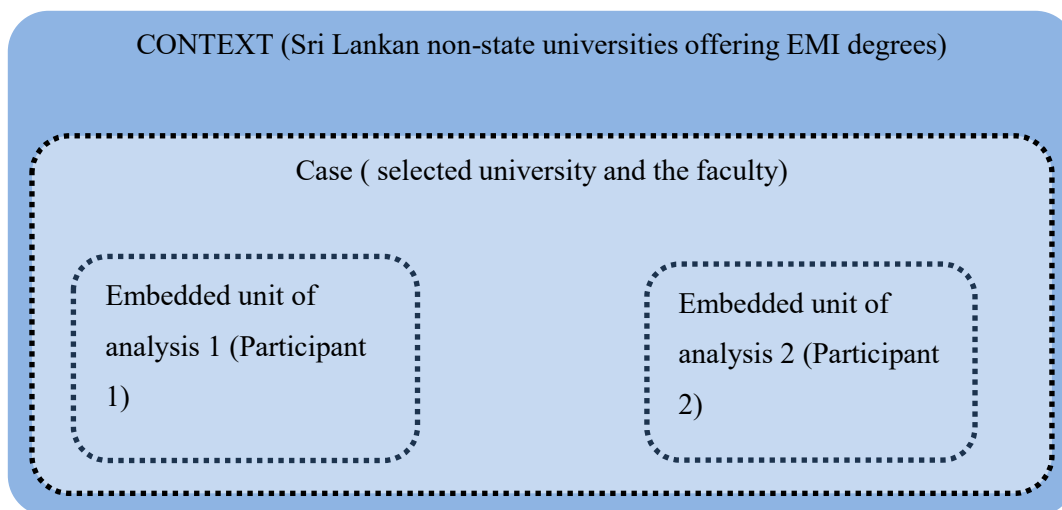


Figure 2 Single-Embedded Case Study Design adapted from Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications* (Sixth edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.

### 5.2.2 Researcher's Positionality

The researcher's positionality can impact the study to a certain extent. As a Sri Lankan university lecturer in English, my assumptions and interpretations may be molded by my previous experience working at the non-state university where the current study is based. Moreover, the researcher would bring in an insider view owing to having studied EMI degrees and an outsider view as my EMI studies were due to my choice not mandatory. Furthermore, the participants of the study are aware of the fact that the researcher worked as a lecturer at their university, which may have influenced their answers to a certain extent. Moreover, this may encourage or discourage the students from volunteering to participate in the study. In addition, the participants may not reveal their true feelings since the researcher has a connection to their university. The researcher explained and reiterated several times that the participants' privacy would not be exposed either to their university or the general public, and there would not be any positive or negative impact on their studies at the university due to their participation. These ethical matters were discussed via the privacy notice and the consent form in written format before starting the interview verbally. The researcher was careful and reflective on the formation of interview questions and interpretation of data so as not to have any influence from the researcher's positionality.

### 5.2.3 Research Instruments

This study employs three research instruments. Interviews are used as the primary research tool for data collection, followed by an identity portrait. Demographic data of the participants are collected through an online form. The functionality of each research instrument is as follows:

## **Interview**

Obtaining empirical data through interviews is a common method used in qualitative research designs, particularly in case studies (Dörnyei, 2011; Yin, 2018). There are different types of interviews based on the structure of the interview, the number of participants, and the number of times an interview is conducted (Dörnyei, 2011). As far as the structure of an interview is concerned, there can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, with both strengths and weaknesses in each method. The current study uses a semi-structured interview as it allows the researcher to have a pre-defined set of interview questions as a guide and also the possibility of asking new questions and clarifying questions based on the interviewee's responses (Dörnyei, 2011). Moreover, the current study conducts one-to-one interviews with the participants, and due to time constraints, the interviews are limited to one session.

Interviews allow the researchers to ask different types of questions from the participants (Dörnyei, 2011) and these questions should be linked to the research questions of the study (See Appendix 1). For example, a researcher can start the interview with a few starting questions, which sets the tone for the rest of the interview. This includes asking demographic questions and some basic questions to set the tone for the interview (Dörnyei, 2011). In the current study, the demographic data of the participants are collected through a digital form (See Appendix 2) prior to the interview to save time and the interview starts with basic questions like recalling their past experiences with MoI, the format of English lessons at their school, and how they felt when they come into realization that their degree studies will be in EMI. These starting questions give the participant a general idea of the research study. After starting questions, content questions that are directly related to the research questions can be asked. Patton (2002) has identified six types of content questions, namely, background (or demographic) questions, knowledge questions, experience (or behavior) questions, opinion (or values) questions, feelings questions, and sensory questions (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

In the current study, two questions are asked for the first research question: How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction? They are 'How has studying in English changed how you think about yourself as a student?' and 'How do you bring your culture or language into your English medium studies or activities at university?' which can be categorized as experience (or behavior) questions that "elicit descriptions of experience, behaviors" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 453). These questions are accompanied by several prompts about the learner's confidence in speaking English and participating in classroom discussions, whether the participants have sensed a change in themselves due to EMI studies, and how they use their cultural identity and linguistic identity in the EMI environment.

The second research question, 'How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction?' is addressed through what resources, skills, or experiences have you relied on to adapt to learning in English, which is also an experience

(or behavior) question with several prompts such as help received from teachers and friends, financial support received, and the use of technology when learning English and adapting to EMI. Third research question: How do language and societal ideologies shape the students' investment in English medium instruction? includes three interview questions. 'How important do you believe English proficiency is for your academic and future professional success?' and 'How do you perceive EMI at university?' can be categorized as opinion (or values) questions that try to elicit "the respondent's goals, beliefs, attitudes, or values" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 453). These questions are accompanied by prompts such as an example of when English was important for the learner and the effects of English being the primary language at university.

The third interview question, which corresponds to the third research question is 'Have you noticed any power dynamics in the classroom related to language use?' which is an experience (or behavior) question where the participants share their responses for the prompts like who speaks more in the class and whether English speaking skills affect one's participation in group discussions. The interview ends with a few closing questions, which give the participant an opportunity to mention anything else related to the topic. In addition to this generic closing question, the current study includes questions requesting the participants' advice for future students and an opportunity to express what they expect from the university to smoothen their transition from their mother tongue to EMI.

### **Identity portrait**

Identity portraits, also known as language portraits, have been used in language studies for over 20 years, and mostly, these portraits have been used during workshops where the participants try to present their linguistic repertoires through a visual format (Busch, 2018). These portraits use a body silhouette as the base, and these multimodal biographies help "to deconstruct internalized categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound to genre expectations" (Busch, 2010, p. 286). The participants were given the freedom to create their own identity portraits either by drawing them on paper or using an MS Word document or Paint options. Here, they could use colors, pictures, words, graphic art, and so forth, which they feel comfortable with when creating their identity portrait. They were instructed to depict their personal, cultural, and social identity along with their relationships with the English language and their aspirations. These visual representations aid the researcher in obtaining an in-depth understanding of the participants with regard to their identity, capital, and ideology.

### **Demographic data form**

A demographic data form (See Appendix 2) is used to collect basic demographic data such as gender, results obtained for the subject English at G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) exams, the residential district, average monthly income of the family, the age when the participant started learning English and the participant's self-evaluation of their English language competency with regard to the four skills. The

demographic data form is sent to the participants before the interview, which enables the researcher to get an insight into the participants' lives before the interview and formulate some additional questions to facilitate the semi-structured interview. In addition, the data obtained through this form helps the researcher to build the background story of each participant which is important in qualitative research studies as an individual's experiences and perceptions may be based on his/her/their context. Furthermore, the participants' answers to the interview questions may be shaped by their subjective viewpoints, and the data obtained through the demographic data form helps the researcher understand such subjectivities.

The functionality of the three research instruments varies according to the research questions of the study. The one-on-one semi-structured interview is used as the primary research tool, and it is used to address all three research questions. Identity portrait is used to address the research question of how the students negotiate re(construct) their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to EMI. It should be noted that due to the interconnectedness of the concepts of identity capital and ideology, the findings of the identity portrait may hint at aspects of capital and ideologies. Data collected from the demographic data form does not necessarily address a research question, but it provides vital background information about the participants and their contexts, which aids in interpreting data obtained through other research tools.

### **5.3 Population and the Sample of the Study**

Population is the larger group to which the results of a particular study are applied, and a sample is the individuals who represent this larger group (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The population of a study can be further divided into two: the target population and the accessible population. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the target population is the ideal population that a researcher wants to study and generalize the results, but it is normally unavailable at the researcher's disposal. Meanwhile, the accessible population is the population to which the researcher has access. In the context of the current study, the target population is all the Sri Lankan undergraduates in non-state universities who experience a transition from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction when they enter the university from school. The accessible population is the selected non-state university, which is recognized as a degree-awarding institute by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka and the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 (*University Grants Commission-Sri Lanka*, n.d.). This selected non-state university is given the pseudonym 'XXX University' in order to protect the privacy of the institute and the participants. Due to the nature of qualitative research, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to either the target or accessible population of this study. However, the researcher can make several implications based on the findings, which will be beneficial in understanding the issue studied in the current study.

XXX University has several faculties which offer both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in English medium. Faculty of Science is a part of the XXX University, which offers several undergraduate degree programs including the B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology and B.Sc. (Hons) in Financial Mathematics and Applied Statistics. These degree programs are offered by the XXX University are recognized by the UGC, Sri Lanka. First-year students who volunteer from this faculty are selected as the sample of the study, which is purposive in nature. The rationale for purposefully selecting the first-year undergraduates is the fact that they have experienced the transition from their mother tongue to EMI for at least a semester and are still in the transition period, which enables them to relate their experiences clearly and vividly. Since the current study uses a case study design, seven undergraduates were selected as the sample size.

#### **5.4 Research Procedure, Methods, and the Procedure of Data Analysis**

First, the Dean of the Faculty of Science of the XXX University was contacted by the researcher and requested permission to conduct my study at that university which was reciprocated positively. After finalizing the theoretical framework and reading ample literature on EMI and the studies that had used the selected framework, a set of interview questions and the protocol were designed (See Appendix 3). After a few rounds of editing the interview questions, the privacy notice (See Appendix 4), and the consent form (See Appendix 5) were prepared according to the guidelines of the University of Turku. Along with the interview questions, instructions for the identity portrait (See Appendix 6), a form to fill in the demographic data, the contact details of the participants, and an invitation to participate (See Appendix 7) in the study were also developed. The form that collected the contact information and the demographic data was created on Webropol. Next, the Dean of the selected university was contacted again and informed that data collection would commence. With his permission, the researcher contacted the department heads of the three-degree programs offered by the faculty. The heads of the departments informed the program coordinators and or student batch representatives' contact details as the contact points for this study. Then, the relevant contact points were contacted along with the invitation to participate in the research, which included a link to the demographic data form to be filled out if interested. These contact points were initially contacted via the university email but later shifted the communication to WhatsApp due to the convenience of sharing the invitation message. Within two weeks of sharing the invitation, several participants (5) showed interest in participating in the study by filling out the demographic data form. Since the initial round of invitations attracted only 5 participants, a second round of invitations was sent, and two participants replied to that request, bringing the total number of participants to seven. Next, those participants were contacted and sent the privacy form, consent form, and instructions for the identity portrait. Once the participants provided their formal consent, links for the Zoom meetings were shared with the participants based on their

convenient times. The participants were given the freedom to create their identity portrait in their own space and send it to the researcher.

At the beginning of each interview, the details about the research, how their information will be handled, how their privacy will be secured, and other ethical information were explained. The videos were audio recorded, and the participants were given the freedom to keep their video camera on or off and also the freedom to use the language they prefer or shift between languages when answering. The average time of an interview was 65 minutes, excluding the preliminary section. Altogether, the transcriptions included 97 pages. After the interviews, the audio recordings were uploaded to European Commission AI-Based Multilingual Services (<https://language-tools.ec.europa.eu/>), and the transcripts were obtained. However, this was successful only for the interviews which were conducted entirely in English or a significant proportion in English. The rest of the interviews were transcribed and translated by the researcher manually. The translations included in the interviews, mainly conducted in English, were placed within square brackets so it is easy to distinguish the participant's own words and the verbatim translation done by the researcher. Moreover, the researcher did not correct the grammar mistakes of the participants who faced the interview in English as it shows the actual level of English proficiency of them which is key to the study. While transcribing the interviews, personally identifiable data such as the names of the lecturers, teachers, and friends, and the names of any institutes mentioned by the participants were given pseudonyms so that privacy would be secured. Finally, the transcriptions were checked against the audio recordings for correctness.

### **Thematic analysis for interview data**

Qualitative research can be analyzed using pattern-based approaches, and Thematic Analysis (TA) is one such pattern-based “method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question; possibly the most widely used qualitative method of data analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 175). Thematic analysis has four varieties, namely, inductive TA, theoretical TA, experiential TA, and constructionist TA. The current study uses a combination of inductive and theoretical TA. Theoretical TA analysis is based on the theoretical framework of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013) which in this case, is Darwin and Norton's framework of investment. Inductive TA is data-driven and a bottom-up approach rather than based on a particular theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013). By adopting both theoretical and inductive TA, the researcher can analyze the data from the theoretical lens as well as have the possibility to notice themes that are not covered by a particular theory. This study follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide for thematic analysis, which is described below:

#### **Step 1: Familiarizing with data**

First, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo under the pseudonym of each participant. Then each transcript was read at least twice while keeping in mind the components of the theoretical framework and the research questions of the study.

**Step 2: Generating initial codes**

As the second step, a coding scheme was developed based on the theoretical framework and the expected responses. This coding scheme was developed to facilitate a deductive coding approach. The first round of coding was done with 84 codes in the coding scheme. The researcher noticed that there were no examples for some of the initial codes in the actual data set and also noticed that there were some new codes. The inclusion of new codes that emerged from the data was possible as this study used both deductive and inductive coding approaches. The final coding included 72 codes, which span across the three main themes (See Appendix 8,9,10).

**Step 3: Searching for themes**

The third step involved identifying themes. Three main themes were identified namely, identity, capital, and ideology which are in line with the research questions and the theoretical framework. Each main theme consisted of several sub-themes and each subtheme had multiple codes. Here, the three main themes were identified based on the theoretical framework of the study and the sub-themes identified were data driven. Thus, the identification of themes employs both deductive and inductive data analysis methods.

**Step 4: Reviewing themes**

When reviewing the themes, it was noted that some sub-themes and codes corresponded to more than one theme, which was possible due to the interconnectedness of the main themes in the theoretical framework. Figure 1 clearly shows how each theme circle is interconnected in the Ven diagram. Moreover, some of the related sub-themes were connected into a single theme to ease the data analysis. (See Appendix 8,9,10)

**Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

In this step, each theme was defined and named properly, so it was easier to analyze the findings.

**Step 6: Producing the report**

As the final step, the findings are reported in the Findings Chapter and discussed in the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter.

**Content analysis for identity portraits**

Rose (2002) claims that content analysis can be used to analyze visuals, although it is mainly used to analyze spoken and written texts. According to Rose, visuals can be analyzed using content analysis through a four-step method. The first step is finding the images, and, in this study, the participants create their identity portraits and send them to the researcher via email. The second step is devising categories for coding, which is done by paying attention to the theoretical framework of the study. The third step is coding the images, followed by the final step, analyzing the results. The coding was done manually by entering the data into an Excel sheet (See Appendix 11).

## 5.5 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Researchers can employ several measures or tactics to address the validity and reliability of case studies (Yin, 2018). Accordingly, construct validity can be achieved through the use of “multiple sources of evidence”( p. 79). The current study employs one-to-one semi-structured interviews, a demographic data form, and a drawing of an identity portrait as methods of data collection. This allows the researcher to triangulate the data obtained and thereby achieve construct validity. As the current study is an exploratory study seeking internal validity is not applicable (Yin, 2018). External validity addresses “whether a study’s findings are generalizable beyond the immediate study” especially “analytic generalization”(Yin, 2018, p. 72,81), which can be achieved through the use of theory in single case studies. The current study is based on Darvin and Norton’s Model of Investment (2015), and the research questions and the research instruments are developed to address the framework. Reliability can be achieved by using a case study protocol and by maintaining a chain of evidence that will help future researchers conduct a similar study (Yin, 2018). In the current study, an interview protocol is used, and the signed consent forms of the privacy notice, demographic data form, and interview transcripts are obtained and kept confidential. Moreover, the privacy notice, consent form, information for identity portrait, and interview questions are attached as appendixes, which can be used by future researchers to gain a clear idea of how the study was conducted.

## 6 Findings

### 6.1 Description of the Participants

Descriptions of the participants are based on the data collected through the demographic data form, which was sent to the participants prior to their interviews. Table 1 presents the basic demographic data of the participants, providing a visual guide to the detailed descriptions. It is followed by a more detailed description of each participant.

Table 1 Demographic data of the participants

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	Average monthly household income	Result of G.C.E. (O/L) English	Result of G.C.E. (A/L) General English
<b>Thilini</b>	Female	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Rs.100001-Rs. 150000	A	A
<b>Dasuni</b>	Female	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Rs.300001-Rs. 350000	A	A
<b>Gayani</b>	Female	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Rs.250001-Rs. 300000	A	A
<b>Sashini</b>	Female	Sinhalese	Roman Catholic	Rs.150001-Rs. 200000	A	C
<b>Kasun</b>	Male	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Rs.150001-Rs. 200000	C	S
<b>Pooja</b>	Female	Tamil	Hindu	Rs.200001-Rs. 250000	A	A
<b>Jothika</b>	Female	Tamil	Roman Catholic	Rs.50001-Rs. 100000	A	A

#### **Thilini (Pseudonym)**

Thilini is a female student from the Gampaha district. Her ethnicity is Sinhalese, her religion is Buddhism, and her mother tongue is Sinhala. She comes from a household whose average monthly income (Rs.100001-Rs. 150000) is above the country's average. Meanwhile, she studied in Sinhala medium throughout her school education and started learning English when she was between 4-7 years old. She obtained excellent English results at both G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations, which was an 'A' - the highest passing grade. Currently, she is pursuing the B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology degree program at XXX University, and she has already completed the year 1 semester 1. She obtained an 'A' for the English module offered during the first semester of her degree program and has proved to be a keen student by obtaining a GPA of 3.87 on a scale of 4. Thilini opted to do the interview in English and used Sinhala in a few instances.

**Dasuni (Pseudonym)**

Dasuni is a female Sinhalese Buddhist from the Kandy district. Her mother tongue is Sinhala, and she studied in Sinhala medium at school. She comes from a household whose average monthly income lies between Rs. 300001 and Rs. 350000, which is significantly above the country's average. She started learning English when she was 4 -7 years old and has obtained excellent results in English at G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) examinations, which was 'A' - the highest passing grade. Meanwhile, she has participated in various English Day competitions at her school. Currently, she is a year 1 semester 1 undergraduate in the B.Sc. (Hons) in Financial Mathematics and Applied Statistics degree program at XXX University. She has obtained an 'A minus' for the English module offered in her degree program and has secured a GPA of 2.7 on a scale of 4. Dasuni's interview was entirely in Sinhala.

**Gayani (Pseudonym)**

Gayani is a female student from Puttalam district. She is a Sinhalese Buddhist bearing Sinhala as her mother tongue. Her family records a monthly average income of Rs.250001-Rs. 300000, which is considerably above the country's average. She has studied in Sinhala medium throughout her school education. However, she started studying English when she was 4-7 years old and obtained 'A' grades for both G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) English exams. In addition to these two English subjects, she has opted for English literature and obtained a 'B' - the second-highest passing grade. Currently, she is pursuing a B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology degree at the XXX University as a year 1 semester 2 student. She has obtained an 'A minus' for the English module at the university and achieved a GPA of 3.66 on a scale of 4. A considerable proportion of Dasuni's interview was in English.

**Sashini (Pseudonym)**

Sashini is a female student from Gampaha district. Her ethnicity is Sinhalese, while her region is Roman Catholicism. Her mother tongue is Sinhala, and she studied in Sinhala medium during her entire school education. She started learning English between the ages of 4 to 7. She has obtained an 'A' - the highest passing grade- for G.C.E. (O/L) English subject; however, she secured only a 'C' - second lowest passing grade- for G.C.E. (A/L) English subject. Meanwhile, she comes from a household whose average monthly income is Rs.150001-Rs. 200000, which is above the average for the country. Currently, she is a year 1 semester 1 student of the B.Sc. (Hons) in Financial Mathematics and Applied Statistics degree program at XXX University, and she has not faced the final exams of year 1 semester 1 by the time the data was collected. Sashini's interview was entirely in Sinhala.

**Kasun (Pseudonym)**

Kasun is from the Kurunegala district and is the only male participant in the study. He is a Sinhalese Buddhist bearing Sinhala as his mother tongue. He comes from a household whose monthly average income is between Rs.150001-Rs. 200000, which is above the country's average. He studied in

Sinhala medium at school and started learning English between the age of 8 to 11. He obtained considerably lower grades for English subjects at the two national examinations compared to the other participants. He secured a ‘C’ pass – the second lowest passing grade- for G.C.E. (O/L) English subject and an ‘S’ pass- the lowest passing grade- for G.C.E. (A/L) English subject. He is a year 1 semester 2 student in the B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology degree program at the XXX University and has obtained a ‘B minus’ in the English module and obtained a GPA of 3.08 on a scale of 4. Kasun’s interview was mainly in Sinhala.

### **Pooja (Pseudonym)**

Pooja is one of the two Tamil participants in the study. Her ethnicity is Tamil, while her religion is Hinduism. Her mother tongue is Tamil. She resides in the Colombo district and comes from a household whose average monthly income is Rs.200001-Rs. 250000, which is above the country’s average. She has studied in Tamil medium during her entire school education, and she started learning English when she was between 4 to 7 years old. She has performed excellently at both G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) examinations and obtained ‘A’ passes – the highest passing grade- for both English subjects. Currently, she is a year 1 semester 2 student of the B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology degree program at XXX University and has obtained an ‘A’ pass for the English module offered in her degree program and achieved a GPA of 3.42 on a scale of 4. As additional information, she mentioned that she followed Cambridge English courses during her school days. Pooja’s interview was entirely in English.

### **Jothika (Pseudonym)**

Jothika is the second Tamil student in this study. Her ethnicity is Tamil, and her religion is Roman Catholicism. Her mother tongue is Tamil. She comes from Batticaloa district and a household whose average monthly income is Rs.50001-Rs. 100000, which is at the margin of the country’s average. She has studied in Tamil medium and has started learning English when she was 4 to 7 years old. She has obtained ‘A’ passes -the highest passing grade- for English subjects at both G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) examinations. Currently, she is a year 1 semester 1 student in the B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology degree program at XXX University. Pooja’s interview was entirely in English.

The demographic data form collected data on the district of the residence and the self-proclaimed proficiency level for the four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (See Appendix 12). It revealed that Gayani and Jothika come from districts that are listed as ‘educationally disadvantaged’ by the UGC, Sri Lanka (*University Admissions Handbook*, 2023), suggesting that this condition may have impacted their L2 studies. However, other factors such as the average monthly income of the family and having resided in an urban or a rural may also have an impact on the participants in addition to the former categorization. The self-proclaimed competency level of the four

skills also provides valuable insights into the problems faced by the participants when learning English and EMI degrees, their level of motivation to learn English, and so forth. Here, the majority of the participants rated their speaking skills either 1 or 2 (on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), which was revealed during the interview multiple times.

## **6.2 Navigating Identities, Access to Capital, and Ideological Influence: Thematic Insights**

Data analysis led to identifying three main themes namely identity, capital, and ideology which are in line with the theoretical framework of the study. Each main theme is complemented by several sub-themes.

### **6.2.1 Multiple Identities and Their Role in the L2 Journey**

Identity is the main theme that emerged while addressing the first research question -how do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction? It consists of several sub-themes, which can be categorized into linguistic, academic, imagined-self identity, and identity within the family (See Figure 3). The sub-themes 'imagined-self identity' and 'identity within the family' emerged from the data analysis, which the researcher did not expect initially. In addition, a change of identity is found under the sub-theme high performing vs. underperforming learner identity. Meanwhile, imagined-self identity impacts both high performing vs. underperforming learner identity and the motivated learner identity. It should be noted that identity within the family was prominent in only one participant, although traces could be found in two more participants.

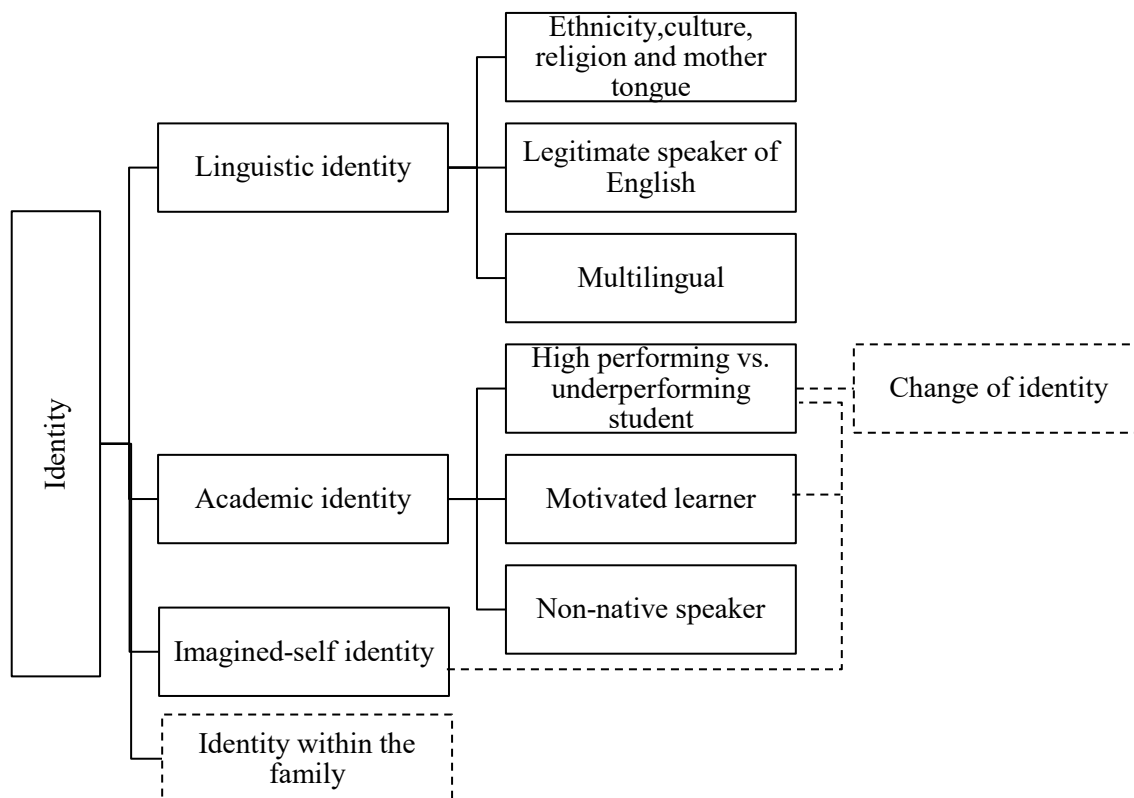


Figure 3 Summary of the theme identity

### **Linguistic identity**

Linguistic identity is one of the sub-themes that emerged under the main theme ‘identity’. It includes the dimensions of ethnicity, culture, religion and mother tongue; legitimate speaker of English and multilingual identity.

#### ***Role of ethnicity, culture, religion, and mother tongue in my L2 journey***

A person’s ethnic, religious, and cultural identity can play a vital role in learning the English language. In the Sri Lankan context, with ethnic identity, a person receives their mother tongue, either Sinhala or Tamil, in most cases, as there are the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The participants of this study belong to two ethnic groups (Sinhala, Tamil) and three religious groups (Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu). Their ethnic and religious identities may compel them to act within a particular fixed perspective on interacting with each other as well as excelling in a foreign language like English. Thilini has a great sense of pride in her Sinhala Buddhist identity. However, that has not restricted her interactions with other ethnic and religious groups and her high motivation to learn English. Instead, she thinks that being a Sinhala Buddhist, she must excel in English and take her country forward:

As a Sinhala Buddhist, it's always in my mind that I have to learn another language, so, if I have to bring my country or my nationality forward, I have to go into the world, so, English is a universal, like, in every country, English is the popular language, so, I know that I have to learn English, and it will make me proud, my country proud, and my culture proud (Thilini)

In addition, she claimed that she does not care about a person's ethnicity or religion when interacting with him/her/them; only the language acts as a barrier to successful communication. Compared to her school days when she used only Sinhala, the university provided a platform where she could interact with different ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, she tries to utilize every opportunity at her hand to communicate with Tamil and Muslim students at the university in English. As a result, she has made new friends and improved her English proficiency. Thilini also mentioned that she has attended Tamil cultural events organized at the university, and her Tamil friends have done the same for Sinhalese cultural events. Both parties enjoy each other's cultures, which provides them with the opportunity to communicate in English.

Jothika, bearing the Tamil Catholic identity, claimed that she speaks in English with her Sinhala friends, and that improves her English skills. She mentioned that during group discussions, the students shift to Sinhala, creating a barrier for the Tamil students who do not understand Sinhala, unlike her. Moreover, she claimed that she is highly inspired by her Tamil seniors who have performed well by scoring well on the exams, and it is them who motivate her to excel in EMI studies. Pooja bears the Tamil Hindu identity and considers her identity as an advantage to improve her English speaking skills as well as making friends from different ethnic groups. During her school days, she did not have many opportunities to interact with people from different ethnic groups, and her English course was the only place where she could find Sinhalese friends and interact with them in English, fulfilling dual purposes. Once she joined the university, she utilized this and started having more Sinhalese friends so she could use English as the medium of communication. However, during the classroom discussions, the tendency to use Sinhala by the group members has affected her to a certain extent due to not knowing Sinhala owing to her Tamil identity. During those times, she requested them to translate whatever they said in Sinhala to English. As a Tamil, she has actively engaged in Tamil cultural events organized at the university and invited her Sinhalese friends to those events, which they enjoyed together. Dasuni is a Sinhala Buddhist who enjoys exploring different cultures. She considers that it is better to speak in English with Tamil and Muslim students as most of them do not understand Sinhala.

Along with the ethnic identity, a person receives his/her/their mother tongue, which may influence the process of learning English. For instance, Dasuni believes that Sinhala makes it harder to learn in EMI, so she does not translate the words or learning material into Sinhala. Instead, she uses simplified English which can be taken as an increment to improve English. Gayani admitted that she likes English more than her mother tongue-Sinhala due to the complexity of Sinhala grammatical structures. Quite similar to Gayani, Jothika also admitted that it is easier to communicate in English, and it gives her confidence, which her mother tongue has failed to do. Kasun and Sashini believe that it would have been better if the school education had been provided in English medium instead of the vernacular mediums. Especially, Sashini claimed that children would learn Sinhala as a result of being engaged in family and it will not damage the mother tongue:

Therefore, it would have been better if we had studied in English medium from the start. Sinhala can be learned definitely when they speak among the family members. I think they will learn Sinhala regardless. I think it would be better if English medium instruction could be implemented in Sri Lankan schools at a young age rather than offering English just as a subject. For the Sinhala language, there will be no harm because it is used among the families. I think that since Sinhala is used in the family, that's enough (Sashini)

### ***On my way to becoming a legitimate speaker of English***

Achieving the identity of a legitimate speaker of English boosts the confidence of non-native speakers. Here, the students can attain this identity by speaking in English mainly outside their classroom. For instance, Dasuni seems to be on the right path as she uses English to make friends, especially from foreign countries, and she uses English outside the classroom at university with her friends. Meanwhile, Gayani uses English outside the classroom with her lecturers, non-academic staff members, and senior students at the university. Jothika and Pooja use English outside the classroom to communicate with Sinhala friends and similarly, Thilini uses English to communicate with Tamil friends at the university. Kasun mentioned that he has applied for a position in a university club that mainly operates in English and has faced an interview for that in English. He wishes to engage in volunteering and networking activities using English which will give him the identity of a legitimate speaker of English.

Achieving the identity of a legitimate speaker of English may be hindered if the students constantly use their L1 both inside the classroom and outside, as it limits the opportunities to use English, and thereby, society does not identify them as legitimate English speakers. Dasuni claimed that most of the time, they use Sinhala during class discussions, and some of her batchmates think that English is unimportant. Gayani tends to use her L1 during the class, mainly when she is confused, or to chit-chat with her friends when the lecturer moves around the class. Jothika, despite being a Tamil student, uses Sinhala whenever her group members shift to Sinhala during discussions. However, since Pooja does not know Sinhala, she speaks only in English during group work even though her groupmates shift to Sinhala back and forth. Meanwhile, Kasun and Sashini both tend to use Sinhala during classroom discussions. Thilini claimed that her group always starts the conversations in English and then shifts to Sinhala. However, she takes every opportunity to talk with Tamil students in English. All the participants acknowledged that they use their L1 at the university when they casually interact with each other or when participating in a tutoring session conducted by a more knowledgeable batchmate or a senior student. As far as family and society are concerned, all the participants use their L1, while a few participants sometimes use English with their family members, with foreign friends, or at public places like supermarkets. This suggests that although the participants are on the path to achieving the identity of a legitimate speaker of English, their use of L1 may hinder their chances of becoming one sooner.

Confidence in speaking English also helps a learner to be a legitimate speaker of English in society. Almost all the participants mentioned they were scared and nervous speaking in English when

they first started their EMI studies. Despite their initial apprehensions towards English, some of them have been able to become legitimate speakers of English by gaining confidence with time. Thilini claimed that she lacks confidence in speaking in English when she speaks with her professors because they are highly educated personnel, but she confidently converses with her batchmates. Dasuni also claimed that she feels a bit more confident in speaking in English now and shares the same mentality about speaking with her professors. However, at the same time, she claimed that she is proud of herself as she speaks in English now compared to her school days. Jothika mentioned that she is gaining confidence gradually. In contrast, Pooja claimed that she is confident in speaking English at the university.

***My multilingualism troubles my L2 journey but facilitates my university life***

Multilingual identity also has the potential to facilitate or hinder the process of English language learning. Dasuni mentioned that she uses her little-known Tamil to communicate with the Tamil boy in her batch whose English and Sinhala proficiency are poor. She uses both Tamil and English at a 50% ratio when communicating with him. At this juncture, her multilingual identity has helped her make new friends and ease the communication process. However, it has somewhat minimized the extent to which she uses English to communicate with him, which could have benefitted both of them. Jothika is a good example of a multilingual identity. She can speak fluently in Tamil (mother tongue), English, and Sinhala, which has helped her to communicate easily with the Sinhalese students at the university, who comprise the majority. Jothika fondly mentioned that she studied Sinhala at her school, which was her favorite subject. Moreover, due to her multilingual identity, she joins classroom discussions without any significant issues because most of the Sinhalese students tend to switch to Sinhala during the discussions. Although her multilingual identity is an overall asset to her, when it comes to learning English, it may not be the same as it minimizes the need to use English. Thilini also possesses a multilingual identity to a certain extent as she learns Malayalam and Tamil languages by herself using English subtitles. That helps her improve her English as she uses it as the medium to understand what is taught in the online videos.

Analysis of the subtheme-linguistic identity reveals both commonalities and divergences. The majority of the participants are proud of their ethnic, cultural, religious, and mother tongue identity. Despite this sense of pride, they believe that EMI studies are important and are motivated to improve their English language skills. Moreover, the majority mentioned that they use English to interact with students from different ethnic groups and both the English language and the university have supported them in finding friends from different ethnic groups. Some participants expressed that it is easier to learn in EMI due to the complexities of their mother tongue, which acted as a motivating factor to improve English. Some claimed that school education should be conducted in EMI. The Tamil participants mentioned the fact that the Sinhalese students tend to shift to their L1 during classroom discussions, putting them in a disadvantaged position. The findings reveal that all the participants are

on their way to becoming legitimate speakers of English. However, the extent to which and how soon they will become legitimate speakers depends on their practices, such as the use of English outside the classroom, the use of English within their family, and the use of English in the general public.

Although the participants are on their way to achieving the identity of legitimate speakers, their investment in these practices varies. The findings revealed that some participants experienced a unique situation where their confidence in speaking in English was high with their peers compared to their lecturers, suggesting subtle hints of power dynamics. Overall, multilingual identity was the least prominent linguistic identity of the participants. However, it was noticeable in one participant, while two more participants depicted their multilingual identity to a certain extent. It has been observed that the participants' multilingual identity does not aid their L2 journey but facilitates the EMI studies and social needs to a certain extent.

### **Academic identity**

Academic identity is another sub-theme of 'identity.' It includes the dimensions of high-performing vs. underperforming learners, motivated learners, and non-native speakers.

#### ***Swinging between high and underperforming learner backed by my motivation***

The thematic analysis uncovered that the academic identity of the participants is constructed through the mediation of high performing learner vs. underperforming learner, motivated learner, and non-native speaker identities. The most prominent dimension under the sub-theme 'academic identity' is the high-performing vs. underperforming learner. It should also be noted that the 'motivated learner' identity overlaps with the high-underperforming learner identity. Dasuni possessed the identity of a good and high performing English learner during her school days as English was her favorite subject, and the high scores obtained for English subject at school exams. Moreover, she is motivated to learn and improve her English proficiency continuously. She has used the strategy of watching English movies without Sinhala subtitles or with only English subtitles. While watching movies and listening to music, she tries to comprehend what is being said and compares her understanding with the English subtitles later. In addition, she reads novels, internet blogs, and newspapers to improve her English. A unique strategy used by her is talking to herself in front of a mirror in English to improve her speaking skills. After joining the university, Dasuni experienced a change in her identity as a high performing student. At first, she thought that she was a weak student due to EMI and seeing other students and lecturers speak English fluently. However, the mid-term exam results have helped her to recover from that underperforming identity to a certain extent, and she gained the drive to improve her English language skills:

At first, I thought I'm really weak. Then after the midterm, mid-exam, I was like, I can do this. I have an idea what I can do, like what I have to do to improve my skills. Like that...[well, when I see others in the university speak in English, I feel that I need to do the same. Like when the lecturers teach and all. Because of that now I have felt that I need to learn English more. I want to be fluent by the time I graduate.] (Dasuni)

Gayani also possessed the identity of a high performing English learner during her school days. This was especially due to the fact that she opted for English literature subject at the G.C.E. (O/L) examination. Her school teachers identified her as a student who must sit for the General English subject at the G.C.E. (A/L) examination. Apparently, many students at her school did not sit for this English exam due to the focus given to the other compulsory subjects, and Gayani's teachers compelled the selected students to sit for the exam. Their selection criterion was that students who studied in EMI or those who opted for English literature for the G.C.E. (O/L) examination because they considered these students as high performing learners. After joining the university, she has felt that she has improved her English language proficiency compared to those days at school as a result of being a highly motivated English learner. Her continuous dedication to learning English is shown in her use of self-study for English as well as attending the lectures of the English module at the university, irrespective of her batchmates bunking the same lesson. Another factor that affected her motivation to learn English was the fact that she wanted to go abroad for her bachelor's, which unfortunately did not work out, but it made her engage in learning English continuously. As a highly motivated learner, Gayani has started writing a journal in English to improve her English writing skills, which is a unique way of improving English.

Jothika was another highly motivated English learner. She participated in various English competitions at school and as a result of that she had a good relationship with the teachers. As a highly motivated English learner, she has used the strategies of watching English movies, cartoons, and documentaries and writing stories in English to improve her English skills. The transition from Tamil medium instruction to EMI has been a difficult process to a certain extent. At some point, she felt that the difficulties faced by her during this transition were due to her fault of not having the required English proficiency level to study in EMI. Despite this belief, her motivation to learn English and the correlation between English proficiency and higher studies, future career, and dreams has kept her continuing her journey as a highly motivated English learner:

It's a little bit difficult, but with the practice and self-confidence, I can improve the language without any barriers. And it's better to speak in English because it improves my communication or it helps me in my studies. But I have to practice daily and I'm afraid to make mistakes because it's new to me. So, I keep learning step by step and improving myself and gaining my confidence... Because the first thing is my studies. So, whatever happens, I have to study English. And the main language is English. So, I have to improve that thing because my life is my life or dreams. So, that is involved in my job. If I get a perfect or good job salary, I can achieve my dreams or my preference, whatever that thing is. So, I have to study English and improve it to make my dream job much better... The negative thing is, It's my fault, I think so. I have to improve my English language, the university is teaching us in English, but that's the correct way. But it's difficult for me to suddenly learn or speak in English, ma'am. So, that is my fault, I think so, but not a negative. I didn't see that in a negative perspective (Jothika)

Pooja was another motivated and high-performing English learner at her school as she participated in English competitions. She claimed that reading and watching the entire Harry Potter

series immensely helped her to improve her English proficiency. Even after joining the university, she has continued spending some time twice a week to “brush -up” and improve her English skills by doing online activities. As far as EMI is concerned, she has wondered how EMI would work, and it has also motivated her to improve her English proficiency in all four skills. After joining the university, she realized that studying English as a subject and studying EMI are two different things and, thereby, need different skill sets and should pay attention to both aspects of learning.

Thilini was a highly motivated and high-performing English learner during her school days, as she obtained 90 or 95 marks out of 100 for most of her English tests. With this high-performing identity, she received attention from her friends, too, as they came to her whenever they needed help with English, which boosted her self-confidence. At the university, she has been able to maintain the high performing identity mainly for the subject chemistry:

I already got about 90 to 95 percent of the exams, so my name was always in the front. In school, I did score well. So, my friends always asked help from me. They always like, came up with like, you are good at English, so can you teach us this part, how the grammar works and present tense, past tense, future like this. And like from that, I was very confident that, okay, people are coming to me asking help in English, so I might know something more than them. So, in here also, I'm good at chemistry. So, in chemistry module, my friends ask help from me. So, yeah, the English terms also, I did get them or I did put them all good in chemistry part (Thilini)

Thilini shared another proud moment, which was a result of her motivation to learn and improve herself continuously. That is how her hard work paid off, and she received good marks for the presentation, which shows her confidence in speaking in English, reducing the speaking anxieties that she had earlier at the beginning of her EMI studies. Thilini has used a unique strategy to learn and improve English. That is by watching Korean dramas with English subtitles in addition to watching English movies and TV series. She claimed that she uses only English subtitles even though she has access to Sinhala subtitles because she wants to improve her English.

Shashini was also a high performing English learner at her school, as she obtained high marks for the subject English among her fellow Sinhala medium students, and she claimed that she is highly motivated to learn English. However, in several instances, she made contradictory statements, which suggest that she is not a motivated English learner compared to other participants. For instance, she claimed that she bunked the lectures of the English module offered at the university and said that she had not learned anything new from that module. In addition, when questioned about the strategies used to improve her English, she replied, “Nothing as such,” depicting a lack of motivation. Additionally, she has realized that she needed to improve her English, but she does not take any action. Moreover, her lack of motivation to improve her English is also influenced by the fact that her core subjects do not include essay-type questions in the exam, which undermines the need to improve her English:

Yeah, I think I must improve my English skills but at the same time I don't take any action towards that, too...Currently, only the communication skills module asks (essay type) questions in English at the exam. Otherwise, I can do the other modules without good English knowledge. So, I don't put a heavy weight on English (Sashini)

With the transition from L1 to EMI, some participants have realized a change in their identity as learners owing to the different skills needed by the university. For instance, Pooja claimed that it is required to study by oneself at the university, which contradicted the school days when the teachers and parents always guided the students. According to her, university students must work on their tasks autonomously and meet the deadlines. This sharp contrast between the two practices troubled Pooja during the first semester at the university, costing her the Dean's List Award, which is given to students who surpass a certain GPA. Her lamentation over not being able to receive the award also suggests how much she values her high performing learner identity:

Only with a few points I have missed the Dean's list award. So I'm a little bit sad about that but other than that it's a lesson for us because it's the first time uh we are learning it individually, so when we are at school there will be like somebody else who will assist us to help with the studies but in university all the work should be done by us. There will be deadlines we have to work I mean we are trained to work within the deadlines and this was the first time how we learned to study a lot of modules at the same times and study it effectively so it was a really good learning and experience the last semester it was like that (Pooja)

Thilini also realized the different learning styles and claimed that during her school days, she used to receive a note from her teachers, and they would emphasize the sections which are most probably being tested at the exam, which led her to memorize the lessons by heart whereas at the university the performance as a student is based on individual's efforts. Compared to the other participants, Kasun did not show any signs of being a motivated learner or a high performing English learner.

***Since I am a non-native speaker, I cannot comprehend the accents***

The findings revealed that the non-native speaker of English identity influenced the participants' academic identity. The participants have experienced this non-native speaker identity, particularly when they have been watching online videos for study purposes and as a mean to improve English proficiency. They have encountered different accents and varieties of English such as British English, American English, Russian accent, and Indian accent. Dasuni claimed that she finds it difficult to comprehend the British accent when she listens to music and watches movies or YouTube videos. Moreover, she claims that it is easier to understand the American accent. It is evident that different accents of English speakers have affected her efforts in improving English and EMI studies to a certain extent. Thilini also claimed that she encountered difficulties with different accents. Here, she has tried watching videos done by Russian speakers of English to improve her subject matter, which was not fruitful due to the heavy Russian accent. Then, she moved to videos created by Indians. Although she found it difficult to comprehend the heavy Indian accent in those videos, she stuck with them as she felt it was a bit easier to comprehend them. That may be due to the geographical proximity to India. Kasun also acknowledged the fact that his learning was interrupted to a certain extent due to the heavy Indian accent of the videos he watched online to improve the subject matter.

The sub-theme of academic identity depicted the high-underperforming learner identity and motivated learner identity at two junctures: school and university. All the participants, except one, depicted high performing and motivated learner identities with regard to the English language during their school days. In contrast, a noticeable change in the motivated learner identity was observed in one participant at the university. Some participants experienced a change in their high performing learner identity at the university due to EMI and the difference in learning styles at school and university. Despite this turning point, they are trying to regain their high performing learner identity. As far as the effect of non-native speaker identity on academic identity is concerned, it was observed only in a few participants who mentioned the difficulties of comprehending different varieties of English and different English accents.

### **Imagined-self identity**

#### ***I need English for my future dreams***

Having a vision towards oneself, seeing oneself using English in the future, and having dream jobs also form one's identity as well as improve English proficiency. Inspired by the people who speak English fluently at the university, Dasuni foresees a future where she will be fluent in English by the time she graduates from the current degree program. In the case of Jothika, she has seen job advertisements requesting English language proficiency, and her dream of doing a job related to forensics and pursuing a PhD in the same field has motivated her to improve her English. Meanwhile, Kasun's vision of going abroad for higher studies or a job and Pooja's vision of becoming a biotechnology professor has influenced them to learn English. Thilini mentioned a unique incident that shaped her identity and motivation to learn English. That is, she has done a certificate course on bioinformatics at one of the state universities and has noticed that English is being used in the state sector as well. As a result of seeing her professors use English, she has tried to reach her dreams by improving her English. In contrast to the others, Shashini showed an absence of imagined-self identity as she has joined the current degree program as a last resort, which impedes her from envisioning her ideal self and future.

A common thread running through the responses was foreseeing their future higher education and career opportunities, which made them realize the importance of English. In contrast, one participant failed to imagine her future vividly as she chose the current degree program as her last resort and thereby lacked motivation to improve her English skills, unlike the rest of the participants.

### **Identity within the family**

#### ***My position in the family and my L2 journey***

Thilini brought out the identity within her family and its influence on using English. Her identity as the youngest daughter of a family of three girls has influenced her English language journey positively as well as negatively. Due to the age gap between her siblings and herself, she has observed how they

have learned English from a young age and was aware of the fact that she would also receive private tuition for English. She mentioned that she liked that tuition teacher, and also she was motivated to learn and speak English due to her siblings. However, she mentioned that her parents do not consider her a legitimate English user and always seek the help of her elder siblings despite the fact that she is proficient enough to help them:

In our family, I mentioned it more than once. So, like my elder siblings were always like, my father and mother told me that, okay, they know English. So, even today, they come to me at the last. So, even when I'm home, they go for, they call the elder sisters and ask what should I do for these instructions. There was a letter came from the bank that's all in English, what should I do? Like that, they ask, then they say something and they come up to me like, can you tell me what this says? Like that. So, yeah, I think that's how it works... So, it might be the birth order or something like that. Yeah. They say that the elder sister is good (Thilini)

Traces of the identity within the family and its impact on the L2 journey were seen in Gayani as she mentioned that her father had a dream of seeing her as a medical doctor, which she could not fulfill. As a result, she now dreams of getting the title 'Dr.' by pursuing a doctoral degree in the future. This has provided her with incentives to improve her English as she is aware that English is needed for higher studies. Overall, this sub-theme depicted how one's identity within the family affects one's L2 journey positively.

In summary, the participants of this study negotiated their existing linguistic and academic identities whenever possible during the transition to EMI. When they could not negotiate their identity, they created a new identity or reconstructed their existing identities to facilitate the transition to EMI. Moreover, their imagined-self identity played a role in shaping their linguistic and academic identities.

## 6.2.2 Capital as a Resource or a Barrier in English Language Investment

The second research question of the study is how students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction. Corresponding to this question, the main theme 'capital' is categorized into several sub-themes: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, linguistic capital, university, and technology (See Figure 4).

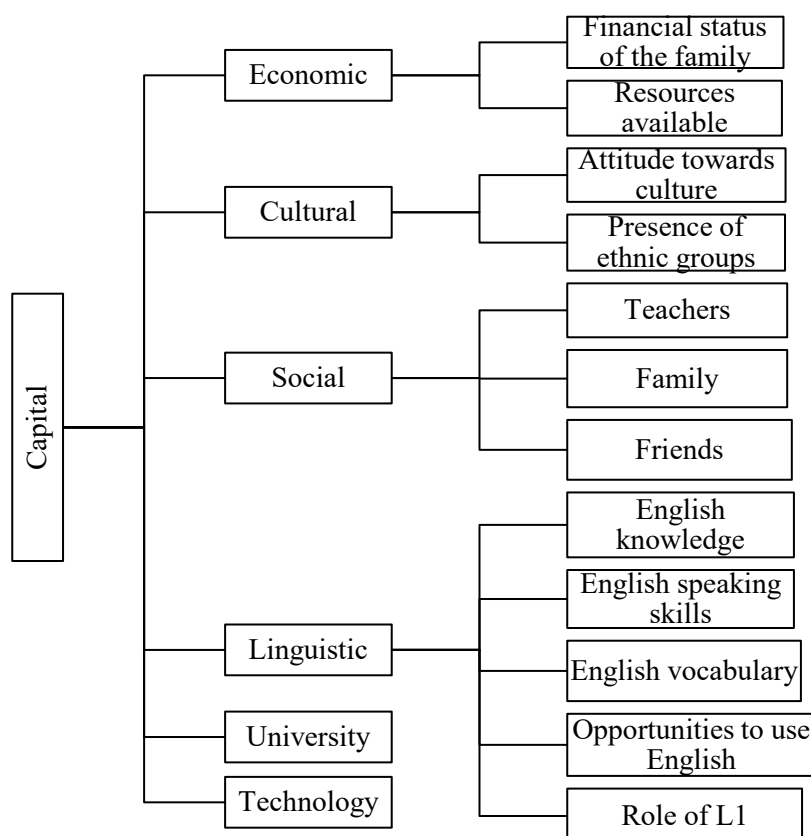


Figure 4 Summary of the theme capital

### **Economic capital**

#### ***Financials of my family and resources available for my L2 journey***

Economic capital includes the wealth of a family, the ability to afford private tuition for English, the ability to study at a fee-levying international school, the ability to acquire resources to study English, and so forth. Although all the participants come from households that earn more than the average monthly income, they are placed at different levels of income, which may reflect in the form of capital that can be used to learn English and learn in EMI. Sashini provides a good example of how the economic situation of her family has affected her learning English. During her school days, her parents had provided her with private tuition for English at her home. Having access to individual private tuition at home seems to be a good source of capital to learn English. However, her tuition class has enabled her only to improve her writing skills and, specifically, how to answer the exam papers at national exams. After joining the university, Sashini joined an online English course with the intention of improving her English proficiency to study in EMI. The course costs Rs. 7000 (20 EUR) for the entire duration of three and half months, which she self-funded by saving money from the daily allowance that she receives from her father. The following quote highlights the correlation between the income of one's family and the affordability of resources to improve English:

I haven't asked for money from my father or mother. I saved some money from the money that my father had given me as an allowance for going to campus. I used those

savings for this course. Because there's an economic downfall in my family these days. That's why I saved money to follow a course (Sashini)

When asked about whether she has faced any financial difficulties in learning English, she claimed that she could not afford a recognized English course after her G.C.E. (A/L) exam due to her family's poor financial situation:

After finishing my A/Ls, there wasn't a stable financial situation in my family to follow a good course for the English language, I mean a course which we can state as a proper qualification when we face a job interview in the future...I was trying to follow an English course at AAA Institute (Pseudonym). I can't afford to enroll myself in that course because of the difficult financial situation of my family these days (Sashini)

Despite the family's financial background, the students can use the university library to improve their English proficiency as it is free of charge. However, Shashini claimed that she does not borrow books for the English language, although she borrows some books for her core modules, suggesting that she does not use the capital provided by the library to the fullest.

The financial status of Pooja's family has provided her with an opportunity to follow Cambridge English courses at a reputed private institute in Sri Lanka. These courses have provided capital in the forms of English language knowledge acquisition as well as speaking opportunities with friends from other ethnic groups in the class. Gayani mentioned several times that she had a good foundation in English due to her English-based preschool. Thereafter, she had private tuition for English, and the teacher of her tuition class had advised her to take the British Council English exams for Starters and Movers, which provided her with a unique opportunity. That is to speak in English with a foreigner for the first time in her life.

Jothika provides a good example of using library resources in addition to private tuition classes to improve English. She has used the library in her town and also the books, including dictionaries, available at her house to improve her English knowledge. Kasun also has a unique form of capital, which is a result of his family's economic background. He could afford an IT diploma in English after completing his G.C.E. (A/L) exam. This EMI diploma program has helped him adjust to the EMI studies at the university, but he claims that he still has issues with speaking in English. During his school days, he bought English dictionaries and novels and used library resources to improve his English knowledge and now, at the university, he uses the university library not specifically to learn English but to support his core subjects. Thilini claimed that she, too, had individual tuition for English at home, and she bought dictionaries when she was in school, and it was not difficult to afford these resources.

Overall, only one participant mentioned how her family's financial situation affected her L2 journey negatively. The rest of the participants have not experienced any significant difficulties owing to their family's financial situation. Meanwhile, only a few acknowledged the use of freely available resources to improve English, and EMI studies suggesting that financial stability is not the only cause

for poor English language proficiency, but individual preferences over the use of existing resources also contribute to the proficiency level.

### **Cultural capital**

#### *I am open to other cultures and people from different ethnic groups*

Cultural capital is another source of capital that can be used to learn English. Simultaneously, one's culture may also affect English language learning negatively. Jothika and Pooja have not considered their Tamil culture as a barrier to learning English and following an EMI degree at the XXX University. Instead, they have used it as an opportunity to interact with the majority of Sinhalese students using English. In addition, Pooja mentioned how she used the opportunity to discuss the Tamil rituals and traditions of the new year during her English lecture at the university. Here, she has utilized her cultural capital to improve her English-speaking skills. Sashini, being a Sinhala Catholic, mentioned that she does not experience any disturbances due to her culture at the university as she has studied in a Sinhala Buddhist school: "Well, I don't have a big disturbance from my culture. I went to a Buddhist school during my A/Ls. So, I had Buddhist friends since my A/L time. Therefore, I don't feel a big difference". Thilini claimed that her culture does not disturb English learning. Instead, it helps her by becoming a driving force so that she gets motivated to learn English:

It's not disturbing, but it enriches, like, so, as a Sinhala Buddhist, it's always in my mind that I have to learn another language, so, if I have to bring my country or my nationality forward, I have to go into the world, so, English is a universal, like, in every country, English is the popular language, so, I know that I have to learn English, and it will make me proud, my country proud, and my culture proud, so, it never disturbed, but enriches (Thilini)

The presence of minority ethnic groups in the vicinity of one's residential area or university can be a source of cultural capital provided that the students use English to communicate with each other thereby improving speaking skills. In the case of Dasuni, there is only one Tamil student in her batch whose English and Sinhala proficiency is weak, and Dasuni has used her existing Tamil knowledge to communicate with him. Due to his poor English proficiency, Dasuni cannot use English to speak with him which could have been a valuable source of capital. Gayani also has used the capital of knowing the Tamil language and Tamil culture as a result of residing in an area where both ethnic groups co-reside. Here, Gayani has communicated with the Tamil students using her existing Tamil knowledge, which is a form of cultural capital however, since they have not used English as the medium of communication, cultural capital has failed to add any value to learning English. Jothika and Pooja, being Tamils, have used their cultural capital and interacted with Sinhalese students using English, which is a good example of how cultural capital works. They now have friends from different ethnic backgrounds, and English is used as a link language.

Thilini, being a Sinhala Buddhist, has also used the cultural capital that is available to her due to the presence of minority ethnic group students at the university. Here, Thilini communicated with

them in English and explained her Sinhala Buddhist culture to her Tamil friends using English, which is a good way of utilizing cultural capital. Kasun also has used the cultural capital available to him. That is speaking in English with Tamil students. However, he has failed to have a great bond like the ones he has with the Sinhalese friends. In contrast to the other participants, Sashini could not use cultural capital as there were no minority ethnic group students in her batch.

A recurring theme among all participants was that one's culture is not a barrier to their L2 journey. In fact, the participants have used the cultural differences as an opportunity to learn about other cultures and communicate with them in English, serving dual purposes: making friends and improving English. It has been noted that the use of culture as a capital depends on the availability of people belonging to different cultures in the vicinity of the participants' residential area, school, and university.

### **Social capital**

Social capital was the most prominent sub-theme identified under the theme 'Capital.' This theme includes the relationships, influence, and help from one's teachers, parents and relatives, siblings, and friends.

#### ***Teachers can be my strength or weakness***

Experience with one's previous English teachers can become a capital and a factor that affects the investment in L2 learning. The friendliness of one's English teachers can have an impact on the learning process. Most of the participants mentioned that their English teachers were friendly. For instance, Dasuni was proud of herself for being recognized as an excellent student by her school English teachers: "I was one of their best students always. I'm sure about that" and converted her positive relationships with her English teacher into capital in her L2 journey. Similar to Dasuni, Shashini also had a good relationship with her school English teachers due to her high performance in English subject among her other Sinhala medium peers and as a result of participating in various English competitions, including prepared speech competitions. Thilini had both positive and negative experiences with her school English teachers. She had encountered a strict teacher when she was in primary school. According to her, the English teacher had blamed the students for making spelling mistakes and so forth, which could have reduced the learners' investment in learning English at a young age. Despite this poor relationship, Thilini was able to become a high performing English learner due to some positive relationships she had during her secondary school. She mentioned that she still remembers how good her grade 6-7 and 10-11 English teachers were. She also highlighted the fact that her English teachers recognized her well due to her better performance: "I already got about 90 to 95 percent of the exams, so my name was always in the front," and a particular English teacher has recommended her to study her G.C.E. (A/L) in English medium which she did not consider due to her apprehensions towards English despite being a high performing learner.

According to Gayani, she had a bad experience with the English teachers during her primary school; however, she was blessed with friendly English teachers during her secondary school. However, her English teachers during her G.C.E. (A/L) study period failed to inspire her due to her teaching style, which focused mainly on the students with lower competency levels and neglected the needs of high-performing students like Gayani “[She explained starting from the basic level in Sinhala. She mostly focused on the weaker students rather than us, the ones who have good marks.]” When the interviewer asked how she managed to obtain an ‘A’ pass -the highest passing grade- for her G.C.E. (A/L) English subject, she replied that her English teacher during the G.C.E. (O/L) study period helped her. Even though she was upset with her allocated teacher back then, she was able to utilize her past relationships with English teachers and capitalize on that to obtain good marks. Moreover, she claimed that in her school, the English teachers specifically selected the students who must sit for the G.C.E. (A/L) General English exam paper based on the fact studying in English medium or opting for English literature during G.C.E. (O/L) study period as most of the students in her school did not take the exam for the subject General English.

Jothika claimed that she had positive relationships with her school's English teachers as she participated in various English competitions representing her school. Pooja reiterated the friendliness and the helpful nature of the school English teachers. She claimed that the English teachers provided their services as school counselors, too. Moreover, she recalled her English literature teacher fondly and claimed that she maintains a good relationship with her to date, owing to that teacher being her mother’s friend. Here, she has utilized her mother as a source of capital in maintaining good relationships with her English teachers in addition to her own identity as a good student.

In addition to the school English teachers, private tuition teachers can also have an impact on the students’ lives. They can become a source of capital for two reasons: by inspiring the learners and by being able to afford private tuition. Almost all the participants mentioned that they have had some kind of experience with their English tuition teachers. In particular, Thilini was fond of her tuition teacher, a gentleman who provided private tuition to her elder siblings, too. From a young age, she knew she would also be getting tuition from him when the right time came. Moreover, he encouraged her and praised her: “he was always praising me, like you are doing good, you are better than your siblings, so I know you will go places like that.” This encouragement resulted in increased motivation and investment in L2 and also the claim that she is better than her siblings might have given her some capital due to her identity within her family.

Similarly, Gayani also had a positive relationship with her English tuition teacher. According to her, the gentleman who provided her with private tuition advised her to take exams conducted by the British Council of Sri Lanka, which provided her with a novel opportunity that was being able to speak with a foreigner for the first time in her life at the speaking exam. Meanwhile, Jothika compared her school English teachers’ and her tuition teacher’s influence on speaking skills. Accordingly, her school English teachers communicated with them entirely in Tamil. Meanwhile, the tuition teacher

used English, which ultimately helped her to improve her speaking skills. Kasun is the only participant who was not satisfied with the tuition teachers. He had been to a private tuition class from grade 3 to 6, and his marks obtained for English exams were good back then. However, his performance started decreasing once he stopped attending that tuition class. When the researcher asked the reason for stopping that tuition class, he just said that he did not like that teacher without giving any particulars. This presents a conflicting situation where his marks were good, irrespective of his dislike of the tuition teacher. This negative experience may have reduced his investment in L2.

Subject teachers at school and private tuition classes can be a source of capital in students' L2 journey. For instance, some subject teachers may downgrade the value of learning English, which may affect the learners negatively. While recalling the level of investment towards learning English during school days, Gayani said that her subject teachers took the English period to teach their subjects depriving the students of learning English and now she regrets thinking that they should have invested themselves more in English and questions the actions of her subject teachers.

Why should we keep a conflict? Why should we struggle even little bit when joining the higher education? Many students struggle once they join higher education due to lack of English proficiency. Most of my friends tell me that “English is the issue”. [We could have and also teachers could have paid more attention to English. When we were doing our A/Ls we focused only on the rest of our subjects not at all on English. We bunked the English period most of the time or else our chemistry teachers took the English period saying that English was not necessary give us that time to do our work. Rather than doing that, it could have been better, if we had paid attention to English as well.] (Gayani)

Meanwhile, Thilini had gained some capital from one of her tuition subject teachers. Her biology tuition teacher had introduced English terms along with the Sinhala terms and had encouraged them to learn the English terms as they would be useful for them when they study for a degree at a university. Since most students dream of getting into a state university during their G.C.E. (A/L) studies, this tuition subject teacher's advice has become a source of capital for a keen student like Thilini.

The quality of the English teachers also acts as a source of capital because the higher the quality of the teachers, the better the learning would be. Jothika and Pooja both mentioned that their English teachers at school taught them English in Tamil, which limited their opportunities to use English. In Pooja's case, their school tried to improve English communication skills by implementing a program where the entire school should use English throughout a particular day of the week. Despite the school's attempts, it was unsuccessful because the students had not considered it a source of capital in gaining speaking skills. Meanwhile, Sashini thinks that the English knowledge provided by the schools was inadequate and failed to support their studies at the university.

University English lecturers can also be considered as a source of capital because they can help students from vernacular medium backgrounds to transfer smoothly to EMI by providing the required English knowledge and help. Thilini said that she had a positive experience with the university English lecturers and that her teacher helped her to adjust to the transition to EMI. Particularly, she recalled how her teacher helped her to improve her speaking skills by giving her

several opportunities to practice giving a speech, pointing out the mistakes, and providing her with suggestions for improvement. She appreciated the calm nature of the English teacher while highlighting the low level of investment students put towards learning English at university as they tend to bunk English lectures. Kasun also mentioned that his university English teacher helped him when he could not speak during his speech test by giving him several chances, which highlights the flexibility of the university English teachers to a certain extent, which can be a source of capital for improved investment.

University subject lecturers can also be taken as a source of capital. For instance, if they encourage the learners to use English and understand the struggles faced by the students when they shift from mother-tongue instruction to EMI, the students could use them as a source of capital in learning English as well as learning in English. Gayani's biology lecturer has given them some tips to learn in EMI. Similarly, one of Thilini's professors has acknowledged the speaking difficulties faced by these students and has provided them with a conducive learning environment where the students could do their presentations without any inhibition. One of her chemistry lecturers also played a key role in adjusting to speaking in English by not blaming the students for their grammar mistakes because if the lecturers had blamed the students for their poor proficiency in English, that would have affected them negatively.

Another effective practice of the university subject lecturers was the use of English as the medium of communication as well as instruction. This can increase the students' exposure to the English language and increase their opportunities to use English. Especially this practice is necessary if there are students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds at the university. Being a Tamil student, Pooja appreciated the subject lecturers' use of the English language exclusively in the lecture hall when delivering and explaining their lectures. The following quote highlights how one's ethnic-mother tongue identity intersects with the ability to convert existing resources into capital:

If you have any doubt we can go to our professors or lecturers and ask about that so they will explain to us in uh mostly in English so even in classrooms they always use English so the first day they have told us um mostly the professors our lecturers are uh Sinhala people but they said they won't use any Sinhala terms during the lecture times they will only use English if we don't get to understand anything we can write it and for the Sinhala people they can go and ask them later but through when the lecture is happening they will only use the English terms (Pooja)

Compared to the experiences of Gayani, Thilini, and Pooja, Dasuni's subject lecturers adopted a different approach. They have encouraged the students to use Sinhala in the class if they are not comfortable in English, which weakens their attitudes towards English as well as deprives the students of opportunities to learn in EMI and improve their English further. Moreover, her subject lecturers translated the content of their delivery into Sinhala, which Dasuni considered helpful. This reliance on L1 may have a negative impact on learning in EMI. However, Dasuni thinks that the subject lecturers should be fluent in both Sinhala and English so that they can explain the English terms in Sinhala.

### ***My family is supportive of my L2 journey***

Parents, siblings, and relations can be a source of capital in learning an L2 and learning in EMI. For example, some parents have a positive attitude towards the English language and recognize its value in society, which may be passed down to their children. Thilini is the only participant who mentioned her parents' attitude towards the English language, and due to the prominence given to the English language by Thilini's parents, she has received private tuition, which is also a form of capital. In addition to instilling positive attitudes towards English and providing their children with private tuition for English, Thilini's parents have become a source of motivation when needed especially when Thilini experienced difficulties in transitioning to EMI during the first few weeks at the university. Her mother's encouragement and reassurance that Thilini is a capable English learner, she was able to thrive in EMI classes:

So in the first few weeks, it was difficult, like I always come home and tell my mom, mom, mom, this is not what I used to do, so I'm a bit scared, like she told me that you learned English, your sisters are also good in English, not everyone is like, not everyone going to succeed in English, but you can just give it a try, so after that, I did, we had lab reports, so that one, I researched and did lab reports well, and I scored well (Thilini)

Dasuni, too, has utilized her family's capital when adjusting to EMI. Her parents' English proficiency and subject knowledge have leveraged capital for her when she encountered difficulties learning in EMI. Moreover, she has received help from her younger sister, who studied in EMI during her school education, unlike her. Further, she has received help from her cousin, which shows that she has utilized capital even from her extended family. Gayani's father specifically supported her during the time she was studying for her IELTS exam by providing necessary material such as links to useful websites and so forth. Jothika, too, has received help from her family. Particularly her sister, a student in the faculty of medicine at a state university in Sri Lanka. Her sister has given her tips for studying in EMI. Compared to the others, Pooja has a unique form of capital; her mother is an English lecturer at a government vocational college. As a result of that, she has received guidance to learn and improve her English from a young age at home. Moreover, her uncle, who works as a Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT), has helped her cope with subject-related matters in the field of biotechnology. He has used English to explain subject-related concepts, which maximizes the capital received.

Siblings' positive attitudes and encouragement can be a source of capital, especially in improving L2 speaking skills. Thilini's siblings have provided her with capital by communicating with her in English, which helped her to adapt to English. On the other hand, Sashini's siblings have failed to add any form of capital. They have rejected her requests to communicate with them in English.

### ***Some friends led their hands to me, but some pulled me down***

Apart from teachers and family, friends also play a role in a student's life, which can turn into a source of capital. Some of Dasuni's batchmates at the university have failed to become a source of capital because they think that it is not necessary to speak in English, which may negatively affect those who

are around them. However, Dasuni has managed to overcome the negativities of her friends and continuously seeks opportunities to speak in English, “[Some of my friends think that there is no need to speak in English]...[I tell them that it’s not connected to them, but I use English because I want to improve my English.] So, I don’t care about those things”. In contrast, some of her friends have helped her by not ridiculing her when she makes mistakes in English, which has given her the confidence to engage in classroom discussions in English and to do presentations in English. Dasuni has received support from a particular student who studied in English medium at school. Her friend has helped her to understand the content by providing her with a simpler meaning in English. Moreover, her friends who studied in English medium at school have helped her in explaining the different usages of English words and colloquial expressions. Similar to Dasuni, Thilini has also received help from her friends who had studied in EMI at school. They have shared their knowledge of the subject-specific terms reciprocally, and her friends have encouraged her to learn English terms. Gayani has received help from her school friends in improving her English language knowledge, especially during the time she was preparing to take the IELTS. Her friends had shared study material and, most importantly, helped her to practice for the speaking component of the exam by speaking in English with her. In addition, her school friends have helped her adjust to EMI, which the other participants have not received from their school friends. This was especially possible due to her friends being EMI students at various other universities. As they had already started learning in EMI by the time Gayani started her degree due to her study gap, she received help and tips from them for topics like giving presentations, communicating in English, and writing answers for assignments.

Similar to Gayani, Pooja has also received help from her school friends, but she has received help in Tamil medium instead of English. This can be taken as a form of capital in learning subject content but not as a source of capital in learning English. Kasun, on the other hand, has mixed experiences with his friends. He said that he received less help from his friends compared to the help he has given to them. However, he values the help he received from them specially, when he faced difficulties in doing the speech test of the English Communication Skills module. Sashini shares a deeper relationship with her university friends than those at her school. Her university friends are willing to help her with anything, and she receives help from them when doing assignments in the form of correcting her writing and English grammar.

As far as friends’ help is concerned, their proficiency in English can be a deciding factor to what extent they could help. Gayani and Pooja mentioned that both of them benefited from the high English proficiency of their friends as they had given them tips to improve their English. Some of the participants were able to acquire new capital through their friends at the university. Especially, Jothika and Pooja, being Tamil, did not have many Sinhalese friends during their school education. However, after joining the university, they have made many Sinhalese friends, and they use English as the medium of communication, which is a form of capital to improve their English skills:

It's developed because I can communicate with English with the Sinhalese people also. So, my friendship circle is now growing with the Tamil people. And also, I got many friends from Sinhalese medium because of this English language (Jothika)

I think it was the first time that I have so many Sinhala friends at the moment because mostly it's the Tamil friends here and only when I'm doing the English courses, I had a few friends. But now there are more people and from different backgrounds, so we get to know about each other and it's really interesting to getting to know about each other (Pooja)

Both Thilini and Dasuni have experienced some changes in their friendships due to their EMI studies at the university. For example, Thilini has both negative and positive experiences with her friends. During her school days, she had used only Sinhala to communicate with her friends, but after starting the EMI degree, she has started using English words and code-switching when she communicates with her school friends. However, her school friends, especially those who are not studying and are currently doing jobs or staying at home, have made some negative comments about her use of English, "In school life, we always hang out and talk in Sinhala. So, when I'm with those people, when I'm talking, like I'm putting, they always highlight that you are not, you are not like early times, like now you are a bit posh". Even though Thilini does not seem to consider their comments as negative or derogatory, they could have discouraged her from using English and reversed the capital she acquired through her EMI studies. Meanwhile, her friends at the university increase her capital for L2 learning because they communicate with each other in English. Dasuni interacts with a student who studied in English medium at school and barely understands Sinhala, which compels her to use English more. In contrast to Jothika, Pooja, Thilini, and Dasuni, Sashini has failed to gain capital to improve her L2 from her university friends. According to her, the 'good' friends she has at the university are 'good' because they communicate with her in Sinhala. She claims that she would not be able to have good friends if the medium of communication is English.

Tutoring received from friends and senior students can also be taken as a source of capital in learning English, provided that these tutoring sessions have been conducted in English. Otherwise, it would provide capital only for learning subject matter and transitioning to EMI studies. In the Sri Lankan context, this type of tutoring done by a more knowledgeable person is called "Kuppi" (a small bottle) in Sinhala. Thilini participated in one of those tutoring sessions organized by a student who had studied in EMI during school education, and he explained the subject concepts using both English and Sinhala. Similarly, Gayani's tutoring sessions were also conducted in both languages, which can be taken as a source of capital in L2 learning because English is used to a certain extent when explaining the subject matters. In contrast, the tutoring sessions attended by Dasuni and Sashini were conducted in Sinhala, which failed to add capital to the L2 learning process.

In summary, the findings related to social capital revealed that most participants believed that English teachers are friendly and flexible. Some participants mentioned their negative encounters with school and tuition English teachers. Moreover, a few participants questioned the teaching style of the

English teachers, claiming that catering the teaching strategies to suit the needs of the poor and average learners affected the high performing learners negatively, and they criticized the use of L1 to teach English. In addition, the majority acknowledged the help they received for their EMI studies from the subject lecturers at the university, while a few participants disdained their school subject teachers' behaviors and actions, which minimized their opportunities to learn English. With regard to family, the majority of the participants agreed that they receive support from their parents, siblings, and extended family. However, a few participants revealed they receive the bare minimum of help from their families for their L2 journey. Friends as a source of social capital revealed diverging views. The majority claimed that they received help from their university friends compared to their school friends to improve their L2 and succeed in EMI studies. However, some claimed that some friends posed negative attitudes towards English and condemned the attempt to use English by the participants. Those who received help from friends received it mainly through L1 and limited English.

### **Linguistic capital**

#### ***My poor English knowledge weighs me down***

Linguistic capital is the second most prominent sub-theme found under the main theme 'capital.' Linguistic capital may include English language proficiency, difficulties faced due to L2 proficiency, opportunities available to use English, and the influence of one's L1. All the participants in the study expressed the difficulties they face with the four skills, grammar and vocabulary. For instance, Gayani said that her knowledge of English grammar is poor despite the fact that she had obtained good results at national level exams for the subject English. She thinks that the grammar she knows is inadequate. When the interviewer questioned the rest of the skills, she replied that she considered those skills also to be average, mainly due to her experiences with the IELTS exam. Unfortunately, she has connoted her IELTS exam results to her actual English proficiency, disregarding the fact that these international exams need ample practice and a unique set of skills that is not equivalent to everyday English skills:

Reading and writing is average. Writing, I can write things, but I did IELTS. At that point, I struggled with speaking and reading and writing part. That reading and writing part is a bit difficult to me than spoken thing. Because at first time, I got 5.5 for reading and writing thing and other for 6. That's why I find out that (Gayani)

Similar to Gayani, Jothika also considers that she lacks competency in English grammar. She said that due to the difficulty of grammar, it is difficult to speak in English as she worries whether she has used correct grammar or not. Kasun is also of the same opinion that grammar is difficult and links his low marks attained at the exams to not knowing English grammar. Moreover, he specifically mentioned that it is difficult for him to apply the tenses correctly.

Several participants in the study mentioned that they could not express what they wanted due to their poor proficiency in English and inadequate speaking skills. This has affected them negatively,

especially during classroom discussions, which deprived them of answering the questions raised by their lecturers or explaining their point during group work despite them knowing the correct answer, “I think using English as the main language of the university is good, but the thing is that we can’t give 100% like I mean um I can’t explain everything that I want to say because of English”. Sashini, too, has faced a situation similar to Kasun's. She claims that her private tuition classes did not help her acquire the capital of speaking English, although they helped her with the rest of the skills. Sashini felt uncomfortable in the class when she could not answer the questions raised by her lecturers despite knowing the correct answer. She was the only student who could not answer the questions in English that day:

Once, our accounting lecturer asked me a question. At that time, I couldn’t answer that in English, so I asked her whether I could answer in Sinhala. Then, she asked me to answer in English and that it could be answered in simple English. At that time, I didn’t give an answer. After that, she asked whether I knew the answer. I said yes, I know the answer, but I don’t know how to tell that in English. Then, she said it was OK to answer in Sinhala. All the others answered their questions in English. I was the one who couldn’t (Sashini)

Although she struggles in adjusting to EMI, she thinks that EMI degree programs are beneficial and must stay and reiterates that the problem lies with the students who lack English proficiency as they have not been accustomed to using English more at a young age, “The issue is our poor proficiency in English. We hadn’t been accustomed to English since our childhood. That’s the issue”.

***I do not have enough credit in my vocabulary bank***

Almost all the participants stated that they face difficulties learning in EMI due to their lack of English vocabulary. Here, they have mentioned that they mostly lack academic and subject-specific vocabulary. Dasuni claims that she has had an issue with a lack of vocabulary since her school days and thinks that the transition to EMI would be easier if they mastered academic vocabulary. Gayani also explained an instance where she faced issues with a lack of vocabulary. That is, when her lecturers ask for the definition of a term, she finds it difficult to say that in English, although she knows the definition in Sinhala owing to a lack of subject-specific English vocabulary. This has led her to be silent in the lecture hall, suggesting that even though she has the capital of subject knowledge, her inadequate English vocabulary has reversed her capital when she is in an EMI classroom:

When the lecturers ask for definitions and things like that, even though we know them we can’t tell them because we find it difficult to convert them into English. We don’t know the English terms. We stay silent even when the lecturers ask questions from us. (Gayani)

Jothika, too, highlighted the difficulty with English vocabulary. That is, she finds it challenging to engage in conversations due to not knowing the meaning of them. Pooja claimed that there is no difficulty in understanding the subject matter except the English terms, suggesting that her existing subject knowledge and her cognition act as a form of capital, but at the same time, her existing English

knowledge fails to provide her with the required capital to study in EMI. Moreover, Pooja states that the school education should have provided some introduction to the subject-specific English vocabulary along with the native language term so that the transition to EMI would be smoother. Sashini also related her difficulties owing to a lack of English vocabulary. She claims that she gets a different meaning of the utterances when she does not know the meaning of a single word. Thilini is a good example of acquiring new capital despite the issues faced with subject-specific English vocabulary. For instance, during the orientation period, she learned the equivalent English term for Sinhala terms, which made her transition smoother. Even though Thilini tried to acquire new capital by diligently studying the subject-specific English vocabulary, she sometimes faces issues, and she compensates for those instances by code-switching to her mother tongue for the word that she does not know:

In laboratory sessions, in A-level times, we used all lab equipments in Sinhala medium, so they gave us a proper introduction on each equipment, but we, we don't remember that one, like, like that, so when, like, they asked us to take the measuring cylinder, so we told it as "minum saraawa", so I, I asked, give me the "minum saraawa", like that, so in the measuring cylinder, like that, so the, in the laboratory sessions, it was a bit hard for me to remember the terms (Thilini)

Furthermore, Thilini sometimes struggles when speaking in English with someone owing to vocabulary-related issues. Unlike the others, she knows general English vocabulary but worries whether she is using the correct word in terms of its formality and usage. All the participants acknowledged that they face difficulties related to English vocabulary. However, several participants mentioned that the English terms are easier compared to their native language terms. For instance, Kasun said that English terms in his subject discipline -biotechnology- are easier to memorize compared to some of the Sinhala terms, which are even difficult to pronounce. Dasuni also mentioned that the meaning of some of the subject-specific terms in Sinhala is confusing for her, whereas she understands the meaning of the equivalent English terms without any confusion:

Sometimes it's easy because of the words we are using. Usually, as an example, we are learning accounting. We learned accounting thing in the campus and also in my O/Ls. So sometimes the Sinhala words we are using "hara bera" I had no idea about these things. But in English, we are talking about "credit and debit". We know what they are talking about (Dasuni)

Similarly, Pooja claimed that Tamil terms in her discipline are quite long, and English terms seemed easier. Moreover, Dasuni and Gayani both claimed that they could have given proper input during their exams and classroom discussions provided that those were done in Sinhala medium, which is their mother tongue, owing to not having a good vocabulary bank in English. Due to this lack of capital, they struggled during their transition to EMI. Particularly, Dasuni could not find synonyms for the words and tended to use the same English word repeatedly when writing answers at exams.

Meanwhile, Gayani faced some difficulties in expressing what she wanted to say during classroom discussions due to her poor English vocabulary, which made her think that studying in L1 would have been better.

### ***I cannot speak in English***

Poor speaking skills are also attributed to poor English proficiency and lack of vocabulary. Almost all the participants acknowledged that they face some difficulties when speaking in English, suggesting that their existing English knowledge has failed to provide a solid form of capital. Thilini provided an instance where she faced issues with speaking in English. During one of the group works, Thilini had to present her group work and faced a difficulty when the lecturer asked an unexpected question due to a lack of English vocabulary and speaking skills which ultimately created a phobia that now whenever she is going to speak in English in the class, the image of this failure appears in her mind:

so in the module, it was safety management, so the ma'am asked us to discuss and come up with normal harms that are presented in a laboratory. There was five members in the group, and they all were introverts, so they asked me to stand up and tell the classroom what we have come up with, so in there, I was a bit shocked, like, there was chemical burns, we were talking about chemical burns, and for that, the ma'am asked, what are we going to use in, as ointments, like, topical ointments, like, we apply them on the skin, so I didn't know what to do, so I was looking around at other groups, and always, they understood my situation, and the ma'am asked, okay, you can have some more time, you can discuss with your people, and still, okay, so after that, I searched again, and I came up with the ointments for that, so it was a very bad thing, and so when I'm going to speak in front of some people, I always use, that scene always comes up to my mind, like, okay, what, what am I going to do, what, if someone asks me a sudden question, so am I prepared for that one, like that, that's very bad (Thilini)

Dasuni claimed that she could have done the presentations better if she did not have to memorize the English speech and instead could have done it in a natural manner. Here, her ability to do a presentation in English naturally was restricted due to her current English proficiency. When the researcher asked who tended to speak more in their class, Jothika said,

absolutely, the person who studied also in English medium. They are the ones who also raised their hands and answered the questions. The sad thing is, I also know the answer, but I couldn't translate at the moment, and I can't explain the lecturers. And I afraid speak in English in front of all of them, the classmates, because if I spoke, if I told wrong answers or wrong vocabulary words or something, some grammar mistake, that thing will affect me. So, sometimes I feel bad for (because of) them (Jothika)

### ***L1 to rescue or marginalization?***

Poor speaking skills in English also lead to the use of L1 in the class, especially during group work. Here the students use L1 because their existing capital with regard to English is inadequate to participate in discussions in English. Dasuni said that they discuss using Sinhala during their group work, and as a result, she does not feel that her language ability has affected her during classroom discussions. Being the representatives of the Tamil ethnic group, both Pooja and Jothika had some concerns regarding the type of language used during group discussions. According to Pooja, the Tamil students had to request a translation when some group members spoke in Sinhala because most of

them did not possess the capital of knowing Sinhala- the mother tongue of the majority of the students. Pooja thinks it is important to discuss subject matters in English because it will help them enhance their knowledge. In addition, she thinks that if they use Tamil in discussing the subject matter, the possibility of having a productive discussion would be limited due to the limitations of the subject-related vocabulary of Tamil. Moreover, she mentioned that both Sinhala and English are used during group discussions as some of her batchmates are comfortable speaking in Sinhala compared to English, suggesting that those students lack English speaking capital. Moreover, when a Tamil student like her says something in English, someone has to translate that into Sinhala. Similar to Pooja, Jothika also mentioned that they use their mother tongue during group discussions as some of the Sinhalese and Tamil students are unable to express themselves and communicate in English. However, Jothika has a special form of capital, which is her ability to speak Sinhala, irrespective of being a Tamil. This capital lets her participate in classroom discussions without any issues, although the use of English is compromised due to the difficulty in speaking English of the group members.

Kasun claimed that he starts the conversations with his lecturers in English but most of the time ends them in Sinhala due to difficulties in communicating in English. Moreover, during the group discussions, he uses Sinhala but manages to do the presentation in English. Similarly, Shashini also explained her difficulties in speaking in English which compels her to use Sinhala. She discusses in Sinhala during group discussions and memorizes her speech by hard for the presentations. Moreover, she claims that she could have explained her points in Sinhala using her own words compared to English. Thilini also mentioned that they use Sinhala during classroom discussions and write the answers in English or present their answer in English. However, when she is with Tamil students, she uses English as they lack Sinhala proficiency. Moreover, she claimed that her Sinhala friends shifted to speaking in Sinhala instead of English.

### ***Facing EMI exams with my limited English proficiency***

Doing exams in English is also an aspect of the transition to EMI and the linguistic capital of a student can have an impact on the success of facing exams in English. The participants of the study had mixed views regarding doing exams in English. For instance, Thilini had not experienced significant difficulties when facing exams in English, either in her core subjects or the English module. However, she seems to have some struggles during the process of note-taking and revising. Similarly, Dasuni also has not faced major difficulties, mainly owing to the fact that there were not any essay-type questions in her core modules, which extensively require English language skills, and she has overcome the difficulties that she had prior to the exam by utilizing the help from her senior batchmates- a form of capital. Pooja said that answering the exam papers in English was not an issue for her, and she claimed that if a person studies the subject matters properly, there will not be any issues facing the exam. Compared to Thilini, Dasuni, and Pooja, Kasun faced some difficulties when answering the exams in English. According to him, he finds it difficult to answer essay-type questions

compared to the MCQs due to his inability to express what is in his head in English, especially due to his lack of English vocabulary, and he believes that he could have obtained better scores had he written the answers in Sinhala suggesting that his existing English proficiency has failed to provide him with the required level of linguistic capital to face exams in EMI. Gayani has managed the exams despite the difficulties she faced in understanding the questions fully. Meanwhile, Jothika claimed that she mainly faced difficulties in writing answers for essay-type questions due to not knowing the exact meaning of the English words included in the question.

### ***Relationship with my LI***

One's relationship with his/her/their mother tongue and the influence of one's mother tongue can be a positive or a negative source of capital when learning English and learning in EMI. For instance, Sashini has a strong attachment to her mother tongue-Sinhala, and she has placed it as the top criterion for making friends at the university and speaks in Sinhala with her friends, minimizing the opportunities to use English. Thilini has experienced that her brain acts as a translator when she hears English. For instance, when the lecturers teach in English, her brain automatically translates them into Sinhala. Moreover, sometimes, both languages fail to provide a form of capital, and she experiences a momentary blankness. On the other hand, Thilini has also experienced a change in her way of speaking in her mother tongue-Sinhala. During her school days, she conversed totally in Sinhala without even using some simple English expressions such as "Sorry." However, once she started her EMI degree, she has started using more English words in her Sinhala conversations.

### ***I wish I had enough opportunities to use English outside the classroom***

The availability of opportunities to use English can be a source of capital, especially for enhanced linguistic capital. Dasuni claimed that EMI studies are important for her life, especially as a Sinhala medium student, she had not received opportunities to use English during her school days. Even though Dasuni understands the importance of using English she has been deprived of such opportunities due to a lack of opportunities at the university as well as her personal preferences. Some of her batchmates are of the opinion that English is unimportant and treat the ones who try to speak in English differently, suggesting a lack of opportunities to use English at the university. On the other hand, her personal preferences have limited the opportunities available to use English. For instance, she uses English to communicate with her friends depending on her mood and she does not communicate in English with her parents irrespective of them being able to speak in English.

Similar to Dasuni, Gayani also revealed that she had been deprived of the opportunities to use English due to society. Here, she had not used English at her school as some of her schoolmates mocked the ones who tried using English. In contrast, the university has provided her with the opportunities to use English, which she has taken as a source of capital to enhance her linguistic capital:

[I mostly used Sinhala when speaking back then because in our school when we use English they get upset, they sort of judge us “oh oh.. this one uses English.” Sometimes, they said “Oh, we couldn’t understand what you said, can you tell the meaning of that word in Sinhala.” Because of those things I had reduced my English usage. ... When we speak a bit in English they get upset, they make different faces. So, we don’t like speaking English because of that. My speaking skills are really low because I didn’t have an opportunity to speak, especially at my school... When I joined the university, I started using English a lot. Now I use English most of the time.] (Gayani)

Although her home environment provides her with a conducive environment to use English, she uses English only with her father and not with her sister, which suggests that she is not taking the full potential of her capital. Gayani was vocal about the lack of opportunities available during her school days to use English and attributed her poor English-speaking skills to the inconducive environment at her school. When talking about the opportunities available at the university, she has felt a sense of inferiority comparing the way she speaks English and the ways her English medium counterparts converse in English. She claims that those who studied in English medium at school had the opportunities to use English, which she never had. Moreover, she stressed the fact that they did not even speak in English with their English teachers at school, suggesting how the lack of opportunities has failed to provide capital:

[ Well, I’m from a Sinhala medium school and when I speak with those who are from English medium schools, I feel that we are way too lagging behind them and it is difficult to interact with them. They had opportunities and we didn’t have much, actually we haven’t spoken in English during school days. We don’t even speak in English with our English teachers. I have faced an issue like that.] (Gayani)

Jothika has used the English competitions at her school as an opportunity to improve her English skills. Similar to Dasuni, Jothika also has not materialized her family’s English proficiency as a source of capital as they communicate in Tamil, irrespective of their good English proficiency. Due to the limited opportunities available to speak in English during her school days, Jothika was unaware of her real capabilities and underestimated her English proficiency. However, the opportunities provided by the university such as assignments, group work, and presentations have made her realize her true potential:

I thought that I can't speak in English that much because no one speaks in English in my district or school or tuition. My friends, we're always talking in our mother language. So, I thought that just, okay, I can't speak in English. Other people can speak in English. But when they gave us assignments or the group presentations, that time I realized that, okay, I can speak in English as well. But I didn't know about that thing. I can't speak in English or like that things. But now I know that I can speak in English and I can improve that more and more. And I want to gain more confidence about this. So, that moment I realized that thing. (Jothika)

Kasun has failed to use the opportunities available at the university to speak English to its fullest, as he uses English occasionally and mostly interacts with others in Sinhala. However, he has tried to utilize his sister’s English proficiency as a source of capital and engaged in short conversations in English with her. Reminiscing on her school days, Pooja mentioned that her English teachers at the school

used Tamil suggesting little opportunities to use English. However, her school has tried to provide the students with an opportunity to practice English by naming a particular day of the week as an English-only day. According to Pooja, this initiative was not successful. Pooja opted for the subject of English literature to seize the opportunity to speak in English with the teacher as she was a Sinhalese teacher who did not know Tamil, which compelled the students to speak in English with her:

So, I really do want to expand my knowledge in English. So, as a literature, if we take that, like through poems, short stories, and novels, we can even get more knowledge about the English language itself. And also, learning it from another, I mean, Sinhala teacher, that means throughout we have to speak in English. And so, there'll be more opportunity to learn it purely from the English, like their English needs (Pooja)

In addition, she has participated in various English competitions during her school days to improve her English. However, she also claimed that the opportunities to use English during her school days were limited because she lives in a residential area where most of the residents are Tamils and the university opened a new avenue for her to speak English as there are students and lecturers from different ethnic backgrounds. Like some of the participants, Sashini has also participated in English competitions during her school days which can be seen as utilizing opportunities to use English. However, she is not using the opportunities available at the university because she speaks in Sinhala with her friends at the university and also does not talk with her lecturers as she must use English. Regardless of not using the opportunities available at the university to the fullest, she claimed that she should have learned English better since her school days. Thilini speaks in English with her friends at the university and thereby utilizes the opportunities available as a source of capital. In particular, she converses with Tamil and Muslim students as she must use English when communicating with them, unlike Sinhalese students. Reminiscing on her school days she claimed that she was hesitant to use English in day-to-day life and she had inhibitions when speaking in English. Compared to those days, now she feels confident in speaking in English even with unknown people like tourists even though there are limited opportunities to use English outside the university.

In summary, all the participants stated that they face difficulties in the EMI degree program due to their poor English knowledge, poor speaking skills, and inadequate English vocabulary. Moreover, the majority expressed difficulties they faced when engaging in classroom discussions or doing a presentation. Meanwhile, some presented issues they faced during exams and the inability to reach their expected grades due to English. All the participants acknowledged the lack of opportunities available to use English, especially during their school days, which in turn affected their current speaking skills. It has also been noted that few participants do not use the capital available in the form of family to improve their English despite the potential. The majority of the participants claimed the use of their L1 to compensate for the deficiency in English. In contrast, the Tamil participants expressed their concerns regarding Sinhalese students shifting to Sinhala during classroom discussions.

### University as a source of capital?

The students transitioning from L1 instruction to EMI can use the university as a source of capital when adapting to the new learning environment. Here, some of the participants mentioned that they were given an orientation from the university, which helped them adjust to the EMI environment. Gayani mentioned that she was surprised by the orientation program offered by the university as it included different learning activities, including presentations and also fun activities such as food festivals. Kasun also acknowledged the fact that he did a presentation during the orientation. Pooja elaborated on how the orientation helped her in adapting to EMI studies. According to her, during the orientation, they have been taught math as a part of the orientation, where she acquired the required math skills and subject-specific terms, which in turn helped her when she started her core modules:

It's really helpful because for us, for biotechnology, we have maths subjects from our first year, second semester. So originally we have studied the bio itself. So we don't have that much kind of teaching experience in maths sector. So, in the orientation, they taught us maths in English medium and so it helped us really well. And now we are doing the same module from our first year, second semester. So, the orientation part was really helpful so that we can understand how it's going to be in the semesters, I mean, the studying era. So that helped us really well (Pooja)

In addition, Pooja suggested that the university should provide all the students with this orientation program as it helps the transition to EMI. Apparently, at the moment the orientation is offered only to one intake of students. Thilini also highlighted the capital she received in the form of the orientation program. According to her, during the orientation, she learned the subject-specific vocabulary, and she learned math and IT in English, which provided her with the fundamentals to start her degree program. Meanwhile, Dasuni, Jothika, and Sashini claimed that they did not receive the orientation program due to the fact they were from the late intake.

In addition to the orientation program, the university offers mandatory English modules for the students, and the number of these modules may differ according to the degree programs. Regardless, the students can use it as a source of capital to improve their English. Dasuni claimed that the English module she had during her first semester at the university was not helpful as it covered what they had already learned during their school days:

It was basically the same thing we learned in school. Well, the first-semester module wasn't that much of a help because it focused on the things that we learned during our school days. I don't know how the second-semester module would turn up (Dasuni)

Jothika talked positively about the capital she received from the English module. According to her, the module included a speaking test, a listening test, and an essay as assignments, which she faced without major issues. Moreover, she claimed that she learned a considerable amount of English vocabulary through this module. Pooja also spoke highly of the English module and asserted that it covered all the aspects of language learning. When asked if she would prefer another English module to be included in her degree program, she agreed wholeheartedly.

Sashini claimed that they bunked the English lectures as they thought that they were not learning anything new from these English lectures as compared to their core modules:

We learned something from that module, but we bunked the English lectures thinking that it is just English. We learn new things from other modules but not in English. Well, we learn things like English grammar from our childhood, and thinking like that, we bunked the lectures very often (Sashini)

In addition, she claimed that she could not perform well on the speech and listening tests, although she obtained good marks for the written exam. Despite the difficulties she faced during the assignments, when asked whether it would be beneficial to have another English module, she said that there is no need for another English module as it would lessen the weight given to the core modules. Kasun is also satisfied with the current English module and does not think there is a need for an additional English module as they could learn English while studying in EMI.

In summary, the participants had divergent views on the university as a source of capital. Some participants received an orientation program, and they valued it highly, while some claimed that they did not receive the orientation due to being late intake. Thus, the possibility of considering the university as a source of capital depended on the intake of each participant. In addition, the participants had divergent views on the English modules offered at the university. Some claimed them to be productive, while the opposing view was that the said module failed to offer anything new.

### **Technology as a source of capital**

Technology can be a source of capital when learning English if used properly. Technology may include the use of technological devices, online study material including videos, online games, online dictionaries, and AI. Dasuni has used technology in an interesting way to improve her English proficiency. She has few online friends and communicates with them in English, which increases her capital:

I have a few online friends from other countries. I have one from India and another one from Paris, France. So, I'm talking with them in English. I started it because I wanted to improve my English (Dasuni)

Gayani mentioned that she uses AI to check grammar mistakes and so forth in her writing in addition to referring to various websites to find additional information on subject matters. She also uses Google to translate difficult sentences and to get similar explanations in English. In addition, she watches YouTube videos and TikTok videos to improve her English as well as her subject matters. Jothika has also used YouTube and online resources. Kasun has uploaded his essays to an AI tool to check grammar mistakes and so forth and has watched YouTube videos especially Indian videos for his subject matters although their English accent was a bit difficult for him to comprehend.

Pooja explained how she uses AI tools in detail. She sometimes uploads the PDF files received by her lecturers into an AI tool and asks the AI tool to simplify the content of that file so it is easier for her to understand. Moreover, she uses AI to polish her writing. She mentioned an interesting

way to improve her English speaking skills, although she has not tried it yet. That is the availability of some AI tools that act as a speaking partner. Even though she has not used these tools yet, she claimed that she would use them in the future as she considers them an excellent way of improving her English proficiency, suggesting that she is aware of her future capital. Sashini, too, explained how she used AI tools. Here, she uploaded her presentation slides to the AI tool and asked for a speech based on those slides, which she memorized by heart and presented later in the class. Thilini has used AI to simplify the study materials provided by her lecturers. She also claimed that she used YouTube videos to learn about her subject matter. Despite that, she has encountered difficulties in comprehending Russian and Indian accents:

I used Google to simplify what the meaning of that English, like, when there's a long paragraph, I put it into ChatGPT and ask, simply explain me this in a simpler way, so, like that, I never translated it into Sinhala...I did use YouTube for my modules in biotechnology modules. So, there I came up with the accent, like in Indian accent, it is a bit like not that clear. And I went for the Russian accent, and it was way more difficult. So, I just thought, okay, now the Indian accent is a bit similar. So, I will go up with the Indian accent. So, in there, it was not hard for me to understand those things. So, only the accent problem was there (Thilini)

In addition to the commonly used technological tools and apps, Thilini mentioned that she has used two distinctive tools. The first method is using the learning management system to its fullest and downloading a compilation of subject-specific vocabulary and their Sinhala meaning which was compiled by senior batchmates. The second method is using a game app on her phone which is similar to Scrabble, during her journey from her home to university and vice versa to practice English vocabulary. Overall, all the participants acknowledged that they use technology to support English language or EMI studies or both. However, the extent to which technology is used and the modes of technology used differ.

### 6.2.3 Constraints and Opportunities Shaped by Ideology in the L2 Learning Path

Ideology is the main theme that emerged under the third research question: How do language and societal ideologies shape the students' investment in English medium studies? Language and societal ideologies are shaped by English as a class marker ideology, the nationalist ideology, and globalization and neoliberal ideologies (See Figure 5).

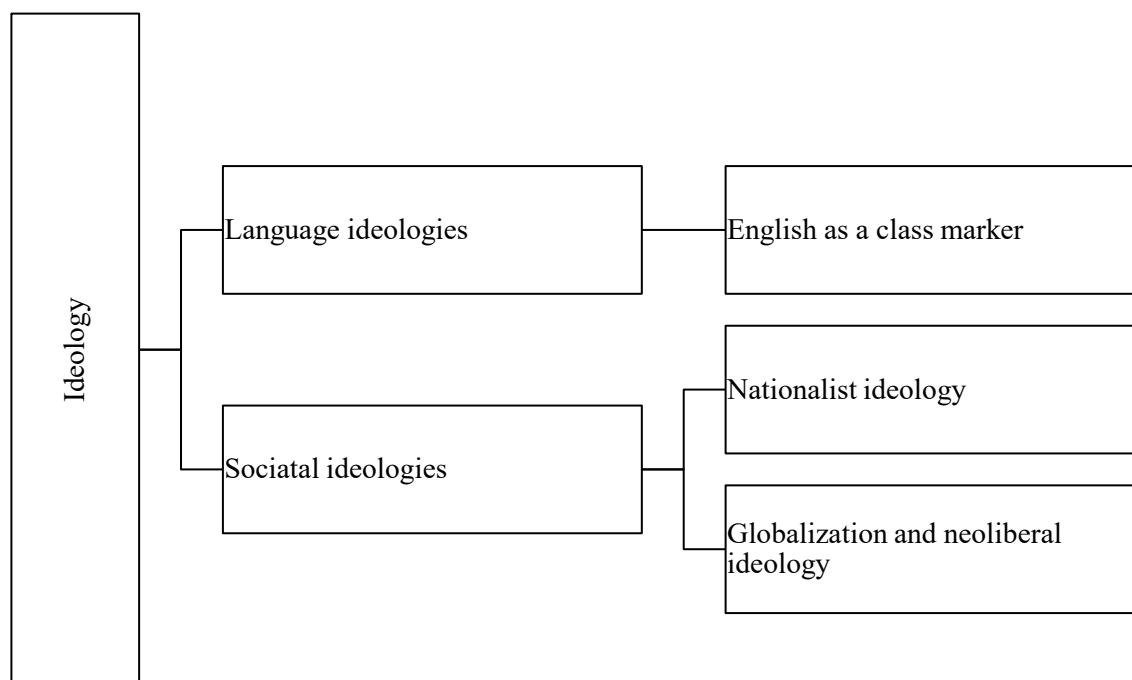


Figure 5 Summary of the theme ideology

### **Language ideology**

#### ***Facing the English as a class marker ideology***

The position of English in society can influence English learners positively or negatively. For instance, if English has a prominent or prestigious status in society, and if the learners consider it as a motivating factor, the level of investment they put towards learning English would be high. Moreover, findings revealed the existence of English as a class marker ideology in the Sri Lankan society. Thilini is a good example of receiving positive influence from the position of English. She was exposed to the idea that English is prestigious and is one of the most crucial factors for one's success from her parents at a young age:

In our family, English is like the premium thing... my father and mother are not that fluent in English, so they always told me to like, see that if this, show me a person like, he's doing a really good job like that, so they told me that you can go to that place, if you learn English and you can do it in English, so they always gave me like this (Thilini)

Growing up with this mindset, she has been motivated to learn English, and she related one incident where she experienced the prestige attached to English. Once, she had been waiting in a queue with her sister, and a person behind her had cut off the line and paid the cashier before her, muttering some derogatory comments suggesting the line was too slow and Thilini and her sister were just wasting time there. Then, she started speaking in English with her sister to show that she was educated and could converse in English. Once Thilini started speaking in English, the other person looked at her

with awe, as if wondering how a 'plain Jane' like her could speak English. According to Thilini, English has given her the power to face different types of people in society:

Nowadays people like, even like in a queue, like people will cut off the queue and come to the front. So, I came up with the situation where in A-Supermarket (pseudonym), I was standing there for five minutes, but the cashier, like the one serving the food was like arranging the food. So, I had to stand there. But the girl behind me was like, " mehema hitiyoth heta thami keema ganna wenne"[if people stay like this, we won't be able to buy stuff today] she was whispering things into my ear and then she like paid before me. So, I thought, okay, now she looks like someone that's not going to make a fuss out of me. So, I'm not going to do anything about it. Then I sat beside her and I talked in English with my siblings. So, it was like she was looking at me like, okay, she looks a bit like not really educated, but she's doing better in life in English. I think even if we come up to a society that where there would be some misunderstanding or something if I use English, people will be like, okay, I should not mess with her. She's like that (Thilini)

In addition to this particular incident, Thilini has also realized that all the prolific researchers and professors at state universities also use English fluently which resulted in an increased level of investment to learn English. Here she has connoted the successful figures with English language proficiency.

Several participants of the study mentioned that they experienced some power dynamics within the class owing to the prestige attached to the English language. There have been certain instances where the vernacular speakers have been affected by this, mainly due to the mere presence of the students who have studied at international schools or those who have studied in EMI at school. Jothika has experienced some positives and negatives with regard to these power dynamics. She revealed that only five or six students are from these backgrounds, and the majority have studied in their vernacular medium. As the lecturers are aware of this fact, she feels that it is a common struggle for students like her. Moreover, she said that her friends who studied in EMI correct her when she makes a mistake in English, which is advantageous. However, she felt powerless when those who studied in EMI at school raised their hands and answered the questions posed by the lecturers, but she could not do that despite knowing the answer. Sashini explicitly explained how the power dynamics due to English made her feel. Those who were from international schools did not mingle with them, creating a barrier between the two groups. In contrast, those who studied in EMI at state schools have helped them and have a good relationship. Those who are from the international schools apparently do not like speaking to the rest in Sinhala. Moreover, she has noticed that from day one at the university, the students who studied in EMI and those who were from international schools answered the questions raised by the lecturers promptly while those who were from vernacular medium backgrounds stayed silent and Shashini felt ashamed of herself in those situations. Thilini also shared a similar insight and repented that she should have done her secondary education in EMI.

In contrast, Gayani shared some incidents where those who studied in EMI or from international schools were subjected to different treatment due to their English proficiency. Apparently, those students have tried to distance themselves from the rest of the crowd despite Dasuni

and her fellow Sinhala medium students' attempts to mingle with them. Also, she has noticed that the batch representative from her junior batch was subjected to discrimination due to his English-speaking background, as he was removed from a WhatsApp group created for communication between batches.

### **Societal ideology**

#### ***I am proud of my nationality, but ...***

Nationalist ideology may affect the investment a learner puts towards learning a particular language. A learner's nationalist ideology may be shaped by his/her/their attitudes towards their own culture and mother tongue as well as their attitudes towards other cultures, including English and Anglophone culture. The participants of this study depicted that they are proud of their own culture despite having some reservations about the use of their mother tongue as the MoI at schools. For instance, Gayani admitted that she loves English more than her mother tongue, which may in turn increase her investment in learning English as she deviates from the nationalist ideologies attached to her mother tongue. Both Kasun and Sashini strongly claimed that school education should have been provided in EMI instead of the vernaculars. This resentment may influence them positively to learn English, provided that they do not possess any hatred towards English. The presence of different ethnic groups in the school, university, or residential area also can impact the level of investment in learning English. For instance, some of the participants mentioned that the presence of Tamil or Muslim students in the university encourages them to use English as a medium of communication, which provides them with opportunities to use and improve their English skills. Sashini is the only participant whose batch does not have any minority ethnic group representatives, which deprives her of investing in speaking in English compared to the others. Thilini, despite being proud of her Sinhala Buddhist identity, claimed that she does not care about the ethnicity of the people whom she interacts with:

So, when I'm being friends with them, I don't always remember that, oh, this one is Tamil, this one is Muslim, so I should treat them differently, like that, I don't think like that, so I mean, like, this is my friend, so it's always, it's just a human, so I don't have to treat them different, or I don't have to harm them or disrespect them like that, so (Thilini)

This mindset, which deviates from the popular nationalist ideologies, helps her invest more in learning and speaking English.

Negative attitudes towards English are also a result of nationalist ideology. For example, some of Dasuni's batchmates have told her there is no need to use and speak in English and have looked at those who try to use English differently, which suggests their strong nationalist ideology. Moreover, Gayani claimed that at her school, most of her friends mocked her when she spoke in English, saying that they did not understand what she said and asked her to repeat it in Sinhala. These nationalist ideologies possessed by the people around these participants have limited the opportunities available to use English.

In summary, the majority of the participants acknowledged the prevalence of some sort of power dynamic within their classroom due to English. They noticed differences between those who have studied in EMI at school and those who studied at international schools, and the ones who studied in vernacular mediums. One participant claimed that marginalization occurs the other way around, too. That is, those studied at international schools are marginalized due to their high English proficiency and use of English.

### ***Living amidst globalization and neo-liberalization***

Globalization has opened the doors for international mobility. If English language learners aspire for global study and career opportunities, their level of investment in learning English would be high. A good example of this is Gayani, who has dreamt of going abroad for her bachelor's degree, which did not happen due to undisclosed reasons. However, this dream has made her continue learning English throughout her entire life. Dasuni dreams of pursuing a master's degree in New Zealand and also prefers to work abroad. Similarly, Jothika also wants to work abroad, and she has realized that nowadays, employers, even within Sri Lanka, ask whether the prospective employees are fluent in English as one of their vital criteria, which made her even more determined to improve her English skills. Kasun also plans to go abroad for higher studies and a job, especially to the USA. Having the vision of moving to Canada, Australia, or the UK for study and work purposes, Pooja thinks that she needs to invest more in improving her English skills. Thilini also plans to go abroad for her postgraduate degree and thinks that English is essential for higher studies. Simultaneously, she revealed that if she does a job in the pharmaceutical industry in Sri Lanka, she will need both English and Sinhala languages- English to communicate with the executive staff and Sinhala to communicate with manual workers.

Shashini, who lacked a clear vision for herself, also acknowledged the fact that English is essential for higher studies and work. When questioned about the future job opportunities available for the graduates of her degree program, she mentioned that they could be actuarial scientists. When the researcher questioned which sector has more job opportunities for actuarial scientists in the country, she claimed that most probably the private sector has more jobs and also acknowledged that the private sector expects fluency in English from their employees.

In summary, most of the participants held some pride in their nationality but showed an openness towards other cultures. The presence of different ethnic groups in the residential, school, and university has negotiated the opportunities available to interact with each other using English as a link language. Only one participant could not benefit from this as her batch did not have any students from minority ethnic groups.

### 6.3 Revealing Layers: Identity Portraits in Dialogue with Interview Data

The second research instrument used in the study is an identity portrait, which allowed the participants to reflect on and decode their identities in a visual format. Only five participants created their identity portraits, and the findings showed similarities and some differences to the details they mentioned during the interviews, validating the use of identity portraits. It allowed the researcher to uncover some new information.

#### **Thilini**

Thilini has included her Sinhala Buddhist identity and her mother tongue-Sinhala- which represents her ethnic, cultural, religious, and mother tongue identity clearly. In addition, she has introduced her gender and age and the fact that she is the youngest member of her family. The remark ‘youngest member of the family’ does not make sense when looking at that alone. However, when it is connected to her interview it confirms that her identity within her family matters to her as her parents do not consider her a legitimate speaker of English as they would always seek help from her elder siblings when it comes to English. Although this has not affected her motivation to learn English, it has affected her self-esteem to a certain extent. She has introduced her multilingual identity by mentioning “Tamil: beginner level and English: Intermediate level” which aligns with her interview. Her self-proclamation of English proficiency at the intermediate level shows that she is somewhat confident in her English proficiency. Further, she mentioned “communicated with siblings using English since childhood” which hints at her identity as a legitimate speaker of English to a certain extent. This fact has been mentioned by her multiple times during her interview, and the inclusion of it in her identity portrait implies that her siblings have been a great source of capital in her L2 journey. Her identity portrait indicated her high performing and motivated learner identity through the wordings “maintaining a good relationship with English” and “school leader,” though she did not mention anything about being a school leader during her interview. Her imagined- self identity is presented as “pursuing postgraduate studies, pursuing a career in molecular biology, medical biology and biochemistry”. This reinforces her interview data and proves that she has a clear vision for her life that most probably motivates her to learn English. Meanwhile, Thilini has presented her attachment to her country through her aspiration of “contributing to develop pharmaceutical industry in Sri Lanka”. This can be traced back to her interview, where she mentioned that she wants to improve her English proficiency to take her country forward. Her free time activities are watching movies, TV series, and dramas. She has drawn a girl at the center of the paper and linked all the descriptions to that figure.

#### **Dasuni**

Dasuni’s elaborate identity portrait (See Figure 6) presents her ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, and nationality. Moreover, she has included her basic demographics such as age and gender.

She has shown her multilingual identity: Sinhala, English, and Tamil (a little bit). In her interview, she claimed that she speaks with a Tamil boy in her batch with 50% Tamil, which reinforces the information in her identity portrait. Moreover, she has demonstrated her high-performing and motivated learner identity through “A member of the school choir, I have participated in the English day competitions at school level and zonal level, I’ve got ‘A’ passes for English both A/L’s and O/L’s...Smart, hardworking girl”. These English exam results and her experiences of participating in various English-related competitions may have provided her with a valuable form of capital when adjusting to EMI. It should be noted that she did not mention that she participated in English competitions at her school during her interview. The inclusion of such information in the portrait implies that those competitions might have played a significant role in constructing her high performing English learner identity. In contrast, she reiterated in her interview about her English exam results, how sure she would get an ‘A’ for English, and her English teachers’ expectations of her obtaining an ‘A’ grade for English. Her imagined-self identity is clearly shown: “gonna graduate with a first class and work at the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in the future”. This corresponds to her interview data suggesting a strong imagined-self identity. The use of “gonna” instead of ‘going to’ in the above quote implies that she is more comfortable with American English. She mentioned during her interview that she struggles with the British accent and prefers to watch movies and listen to songs with an American accent. This depicts how her non-native speaker identity affected her English usage. Her free time activities are reading books and watching documentaries. She has described her relationships as a “Good, obedient daughter, Loving elder sister, Supportive, loyal friend.” Dasuni has used images to the fullest when depicting her identity. Her use of a country map with the flag and Sinhala letters images indicates her pride in her country and mother tongue. Despite this, her interview revealed that she does not have a strong ethnic, religious, or cultural identity as she claimed that she prefers learning subject-specific vocabulary to be in English and not trying to translate the learning material into Sinhala as she finds it difficult to comprehend the meaning of certain Sinhala words mentioned by the translators and not watching Sinhala movies and YouTube videos. Her motivated and high-performing learner identity is shown through an image of an A+ on a test and an image of reading books. Meanwhile, her imagined-self identity is depicted using a word cloud image of ‘Why statistics is important’ and a female office worker working on a computer that is on par with her degree program and her dream job at the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Finally, her attachment to her family is shown through an image of a family.



Figure 3 Identity Portrait of Dasuni (Pseudonym) with permission from the participant

### Gayani

Gayani has included her ethnicity, religion, and mother tongue in addition to her gender and age in her identity portrait. Her motivated and high-performing learner identity is depicted through the various performative roles she had during her school and at the university: “A member of eastern band, A member of senior prefect board, A member of media club, A member of student parliament, A member of student club”. She indicated how she obtained capital through her role as a student club member as she received more opportunities to communicate in English at the university due to her position. During her free time, she prefers “reading, writing novels and poems.” Her imagined-self identity can be read between the lines of “One & only dream; making my mother and father proud.” Her attachment to her family and imagined-self identity was clearly mentioned in her interview as she stated that her father had a dream of seeing her becoming a medical doctor which she could not. As a result, she plans to pursue a doctoral degree and obtain the title of “Dr.” to make her father proud. This level of strong imagined-self identity may have a positive impact on her L2 journey. Her use of an image of a girl writing something corresponds to her free time activities and may also suggest that she is a motivated learner.

### **Kasun**

Kasun included only his ethnicity, mother tongue, and age. The line “Beginner to English speaking” suggests that he does not consider himself a legitimate speaker of English, and he may have inhibitions towards speaking English. This is consistent with his interview data, as he mentioned his poor speaking skills and grammar knowledge multiple times. In his free time, Kasun watches English movies without subtitles and reads books related to his academic discipline. This suggests how he uses existing resources to benefit his L2 and EMI learning. Moreover, being a member of AIESEC and Rotaract, he may be able to acquire social capital. During his interview, he mentioned how he used these club positions to acquire new capital for becoming a legitimate speaker of English by using English in daily life such as at club interviews. He is proud of his achievements as he claims, “I am the family's second child and the first reputed private university student,” suggesting that the EMI university degree has helped him to construct a new identity within his family. It should be noted that there were no instances where he hinted at this achievement during his interview. He has depicted his imagined-self identity strongly, “I like to travel to overseas countries. I want to be a Researcher at the NASA, Applying for Masters in USA” which was also mentioned in the interview as his interest to becoming a researcher and intentions of going to the USA. However, in the identity portrait, his imagined-self identity is strongly depicted compared to the interview. It is clear that his imagined-self identity is closely linked to English language proficiency, which may increase his investment in L2. This is also suggested through the image of a plane and a graduation cap that he used in his identity portrait.

### **Pooja**

Pooja's identity portrait is elaborative (See Figure 7). She has included her ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, age, and gender, suggesting that she values these identities. She has depicted her multilingual identity, “I can speak Tamil, English and little bit of Sinhala as well” and “willing to learn more languages in future”. It should be noted that she did not mention her knowing Sinhala and her aspirations to learn more languages during her interview. This may be due to her ethnic, religious, and cultural identity or due to nationalist ideologies that halt her acknowledging the Sinhala language. Her high performing learner identity is suggested through the fact that she was the deputy head prefect of her school. She claims that she is a “music lover” and “ a big fan of movies and dramas.” She has indicated that she desires to pursue a master's degree in a foreign country and also wishes to live abroad, suggesting her strong imagined-self identity which is related to the English language. She has used an image of a Tamil girl wearing a saree, suggesting her Tamil identity (See Figure 4). Moreover, the girl depicted in the picture has put a dot on her forehead, which is a symbol of Tamil culture. The use of a typical Tamil girl image corresponds with her interview data where she explained how she interacts with Sinhalese friends and explains to them about Tamil culture and the Sinhalese friends'

requests to have those 'dots' and how to drape the saree in the Tamil way. In addition, she has used a graduation cap image, which can be interpreted as her strong desire for education.

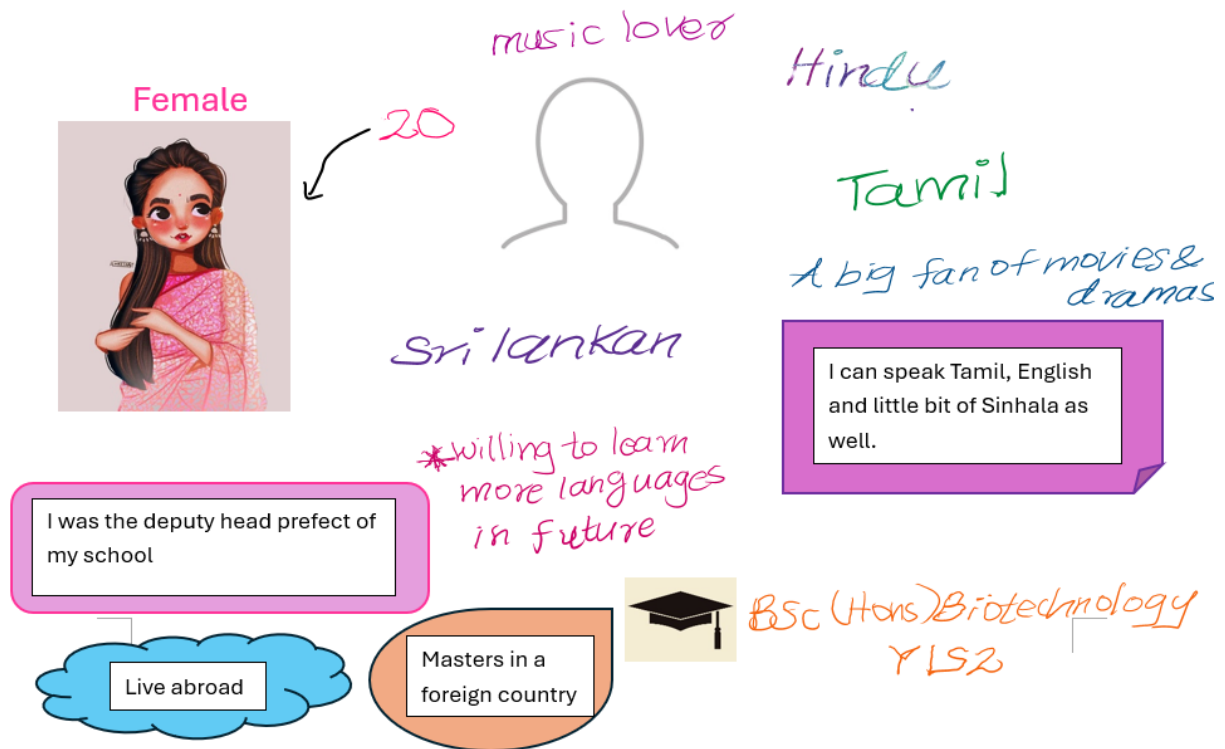


Figure 4 Identity Portrait of Pooja (Pseudonym) with permission from the participant

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

Identity, capital, and ideology are the three main themes identified based on the theoretical framework, and each main theme consisted of several subthemes that emerged from the data analysis. The findings uncovered that the participants' linguistic identity is mediated through their ethnic, religious, and cultural identity; legitimate speaker of English identity, and multilingual identity. The accounts shared by participants revealed that despite being proud of their ethnicity, culture, religion, and mother tongue, the participants have considered learning the English language and pursuing EMI degree programs to be beneficial, which is slightly in contrast to the belief that Sri Lankans tend to be more conscious of their ethnic and linguistic identities as a result of the ethnic war which prevailed in the country for three decades (Herath, 2015). As the participants are in their early 20s, they have lived most of their lives in a war-free country which may have an impact on not having such strong ethnic and linguistic identities.

Some participants suggested that it would be better if the students study in EMI at school, which eliminates the struggles they are facing now. This relates to the education policy of the country in which school education is mainly provided in vernaculars, and only a few receive the opportunity to study in EMI (Aturupane & Little, 2021; Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2024). The participants' suggestion to study in EMI at school also acknowledges the three stages in which EMI can be introduced: early EMI (at primary school), middle EMI (at secondary school), and late EMI (at university) (Richards & Pun, 2023). In addition, the results of the current study diverge from the aspirations of Bangladeshi university students who believe that Bangla medium instruction would have been beneficial even at the university (Islam, 2013). Participants reported that they use English exclusively to speak with fellow students from different ethnic groups as they do not understand each other's vernacular. Therefore, the ethnicity and mother tongue inherited by birth have made them use English as a link language to communicate with the different ethnic groups in the country, which is one aspect of the English as a link language concept of the constitution of Sri Lanka (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). Moreover, the participants' accounts indicated that the Sinhalese students tend to switch to Sinhala during classroom discussions due to difficulties in speaking in English, which places the minority ethnic groups at a disadvantage in participating in such discussions. Shifting to L1 during classroom discussions was also observed in a previous study (Khan, 2013), although in that context, the use of L1 did not marginalize any students as it was homogenous. Marginalization of ethnic groups due to language occurred in Sri Lankan language policies and society during the 1950s, which led to an ethnic war (Dassanayake, 2024; Rajapakse, 2024). Even decades after the ethnic war, it seems that marginalization due to language occurs in subtle ways in society, as in classroom discussions.

Being and becoming a legitimate speaker of English is also a part of linguistic identity. Based on Bourdieu (1977), the concept of a legitimate speaker of a particular language is defined "as (a) speaker (who) speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected,

distinguished by a listener” (Xuan, 2014, p. 10). Furthermore, based on Bourdieu (1977), Norton (1997) claims that “if learners of English cannot claim ownership of a language, they might not consider themselves as legitimate speakers of this language” (p. 422). The level of confidence in speaking English and to what extent the participants use English both inside and outside of their classroom can determine how the participants consider themselves to ‘own English language’ and thereby being considered as a legitimate speaker. The participants have become legitimate speakers of English to a certain extent by communicating with foreign friends, communicating with the academic-nonacademic staff members, communicating with members of different ethnic groups, and using English on various occasions such as at interviews and so forth. As they claimed they had little or no opportunities during their school days to speak English, which is also acknowledged by Indrarathne and McCulloch (2022), it seems that now they have constructed a new identity as a legitimate speaker (partially). It has also been noted that the identity as a legitimate speaker of English is affected negatively due to the use of their L1, as it limits the opportunities to use L2. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the chances of becoming a legitimate speaker of English are challenged by society, especially the participants’ friend cycles who claim that English is not important and discourage the use of English by making derogatory statements or ostracizing the ones who use English which is consistent with Sri Lankan state university context (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Rathnasiri, 2020, 2021) and in society through the concept of ‘watchdog’(Attanayake, 2020). The participants’ use of English was negatively affected by the ‘watchdogs,’ not due to the fear of being ridiculed due to the mistakes they make but due to the ‘watchdogs’ who do not speak English and mock the ones who do which is in contrast to the findings of Attanayake’s study (2020) which claim the other way round.

Multilingual identity is also a part of one’s linguistic identity. Some participants depicted multilingual identities, which impacted their L2 learning journey positively and negatively. Those who could communicate the second national language (Tamil for the Sinhalese and Sinhala for the Tamils) easily negotiated their university life by making new friends from different ethnic groups, and also their multilingualism has helped them to engage in classroom discussions and academic-related work with ease to a certain extent compared to the ones who are not multilingual. A previous study (Benzehaf, 2023) found that multilinguals’ (Arabic (L1), English, French (colonial heritage)) use of their languages depends on the contexts; they tend to use English for study purposes, Arabic for communication outside the classroom and French to ‘show off’ which is in contrast to the findings of the current study. Here, the multilinguals have used either Sinhala or Tamil during their academic work in addition to using it for social purposes. Despite the advantages, their multilingualism has minimized their need to use English, which ultimately affects the investment in L2 learning.

The findings revealed how the academic identity of the participants was mediated through high vs. underperforming learner identity, motivated learner identity, and non-native speaker identity. Some participants mentioned that they received low grades or could not have performed up to their expected level such as achieving a certain grade or a GPA, which suggests the impact of EMI on the

academic identity of learners. This confirms the existing findings in both Sri Lankan and global literature (Al Zumor, 2019; Civan & Coşkun, 2016; Khan, 2013; Vidanapathirana & Gamini, 2009) which claim that English proficiency has a direct impact on the marks achieved for core modules at the EMI degree programs, as well as the sentiments of the students, such as anxiety and belief that they could have performed better in mother tongue instruction. Moreover, the participants' concern about missing a higher GPA was found to be a common concern among Sri Lankan students (Mahawatta & Rassool, 2023) which may be a result of neoliberal thinking, which gives prominence to individuality and performativity (Trowler, 2003). Similar to existing literature, the findings revealed that the participants experienced a change in their academic identity due to the transition to EMI (Mahawatta & Rassool, 2023; Soiferman, 2012) as well as due to the different teaching-learning style at the university (Bragazzi et al., 2016; Evans & Morrison, 2011; McGhie, 2017; Soiferman, 2012).

Being a motivated English learner may depend on the requirements of one's subject discipline (Bukve, 2018; Tsui & Ngo, 2017; Zhang & Pladevall-Ballester, 2023) for example, the extent to which English is required to write answers for exams. In the current context, the participants who are pursuing a B.Sc. in Financial Mathematics showed lesser motivation owing to this fact compared to B.Sc. in Biotechnology participants. The participants depicted difficulties associated with being a non-native speaker of English particularly in comprehending different varieties of English and their accents. The differences in these varieties and accents have affected their use of those resources optimally, which was also highlighted in Evans and Morrison's (2011) study as a factor that leads to difficulties in comprehending lessons.

Imagined-self identity is a subtheme under the main theme of identity, which emerged through the data which the researcher did not expect at the beginning. Some participants depicted clear visions for their future studies and careers, which impacted their level of investment in learning English and EMI degrees. Meanwhile, one participant did not have a clear vision for her future, which reduced her investment in learning L2. It is clear that if the participants can imagine themselves using English in their future higher studies or jobs or through migration to a foreign country, they feel motivated to learn English and excel in their EMI degree programs (Galloway & Sahan, 2021; Mavaddat & Razmjoo, 2020). It should be noted that the imagined-self identity is influenced by ideologies such as globalization and neo-liberalization, suggesting that identity and ideology are interconnected.

'Capital' is the second main theme of the study. It includes the sub-themes of economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, linguistic capital, university, and technology as sources of capital. The findings exposed that although all the participants are from households whose average monthly income is above the country's average, which is Rs. 76414 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2023), they fall into different levels which enable or hinder their L2 journey. Particularly, one participant mentioned that her L2 journey has been negatively affected by the poor financial status of her family. This has deprived her of following a recognized English course after her G.C.E. (A/L)

exam, which could have provided her with more English knowledge and confidence in studying for the current EMI degree. Despite this situation, she has saved some money to follow an online English course by herself without putting the burden on her family. She is trying to acquire new capital through this course. This situation is consistent with the existing work (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Perera & Peter, 2024) in which the students from Sri Lankan state universities expressed their inability to afford private tuition for English, which could have been a great source of capital.

In contrast, some participants were blessed by the financial status of their families (Mavaddat & Razmjoo, 2020) which allowed them to follow Cambridge English courses and exams that provided them with knowledge and motivation to learn English. Almost all the participants have received private English tuition, some of them being the tuition teacher visiting the home of the participant, which is more expensive and contrary to the findings of Mahawattha and Rassool's (2023) study that presented the inability to afford private tuition as a main factor for not receiving enough capital during school days. In line with the findings of Indrarathne and McCulloch's study (2022), which claimed that speaking and listening skills are neglected in the learning process, the findings of this study also revealed that although these tuition classes have provided them with writing skills and the ability to face the national exams for the subject English, highlighting that the participants have studied English for exam purposes only (Teng, 2019). They have not received the speaking skills which could have been a better source of capital at the university. Some participants have mentioned that they use freely available resources such as libraries to improve their English language skills, while others claimed that they use the library resources only for their core subjects, not for English, which is an underutilization of existing capital. As far as the availability of resources is concerned, the findings revealed that the participants used dictionaries and books that were affordable for them. The findings also confirm the earlier work (Kamaşak et al., 2021; Teng, 2019) which claims that previous experience studying in EMI can also be a source of capital as one participant has benefited by studying for an IT diploma in EMI before joining the university.

When the sharing of information between Sinhalese and Tamils occurred, the medium of communication was English, which improves English communication and is in line with the concept of English as a link language (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). Here, the participants have used both their culture and English to acquire new capital, which in this case is knowledge about different cultures and new friendships with people from different ethnic backgrounds. One participant has used her Sinhala Buddhist cultural identity as a motivating factor to improve her English communication, which will help her to enhance the recognition of her culture in the global arena, which is similar to the findings of Pushpakumara et al.'s study (2023).

The sub-theme of social capital includes three parties, namely, teachers, family, and friends. With regard to teachers as a source of capital, the participants emphasized the friendliness of most of their English teachers at school. Similar to the results of Mavaddat and Razmjoo's study (2020), this friendliness has helped them to approach the English teachers easily and get inspired to learn English.

Moreover, some participants had a good relationship with their school English teachers due to participating in various English competitions. Recognition received from English teachers as a high performing learner of English at school was also a source of capital for these participants. On the other hand, some participants expressed their displeasure with some of the school English teachers who blamed them for grammar and spelling mistakes, suggesting that English teachers' behaviors can impact the level of investment put towards learning English, which is also in line with the results of Mavaddat and Razmjoo's study (2020). The findings also revealed that the quality and the teaching style of the English teachers affected the investment in L2 practices. The use of L1 to teach English may be the preference of their teachers, or it can be due to their limited proficiency, as mentioned in the Sri Lankan study (Allan & Mackenzie, 2019). Another issue related to quality was the teaching approach used by the school English teachers. As a result of having mixed-ability classes, these English teachers have focused on the students at the lower end of the spectrum and taught simple grammar points and so forth, neglecting the needs of the high-performing learners of English. Here, the high-performing English learners' perception of "good language teaching" (Norton & Toohey, 2011) may be inconsistent with the said teachers' perception that catering to the majority who are poor or average learners might have lessened the investment of those high-performing learners.

University English lecturers can also be a source of capital. Several participants voiced that their university English lecturers have helped them improve their speaking skills and transition to EMI, which is consistent with Perera and Peter's study (2024) in which ESL learners from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences claimed that their university English lecturers inspired them to learn English. Moreover, they highlighted the flexible and calm nature of these teachers irrespective of the fact that most of the students bunked English lectures. Galloway and Sahan's study (2021) also acknowledged the need for support from university English lecturers. Although some participants of the study acknowledged the support received from the university English lecturers positively, some claimed that they did not teach anything new, which is also in line with the findings of Mahawattha and Rassool's study (2023).

Subject lecturers of the university have helped them improve their speaking and presentation skills by providing them with a conducive environment where the mistakes made by the students were not reprimanded, which is in line with Galloway and Sahan's study (2021) in which the students mentioned that EMI teachers should support them to improve English. Furthermore, it seems that the university EMI lecturers had adopted the 'assessment based on content mastery' approach, as they did not penalize the marks for language errors (Richards & Pun, 2023). One key aspect of the capital received from the subject lecturers was the exclusive use of English in the class, similar to the beliefs of the Thai and Vietnamese lecturers and students (Galloway & Sahan, 2021), which in the current context provides inclusivity to the minority ethnic groups as well as providing exposure to English. The evidence also revealed that some subject lecturers used a different approach by using L1 in their teaching, allowing the use of L1 in class and also translating the material to L1 (Galloway & Sahan,

2021; Jayathilake et al., 2021; Khan, 2013; Sah & Li, 2018). Although the participant who experienced this practice considers this approach to be helpful, it cannot be taken as capital for improving English proficiency and succeeding in EMI in the long run.

When it comes to the family, it can be the influence and help received or not from the parents, siblings, and relations. Several participants indicated that they have received positive effects and support from their families. Similar to the existing literature (Jayadeva, 2019; Perera & Peter, 2024; Sah & Li, 2018; Wettewa, 2016), parents' positive attitudes towards learning English and English being connoted with future success have helped the participants of this study. Furthermore, contrary to the earlier findings of Balakrishnar and Thanaraj's study (2015), the parents' English language proficiency and subject knowledge have helped some of the participants in this study (Perera & Peter, 2024). In addition, the willingness of the siblings to speak in English at home has helped the participants improve their English and also to adjust to EMI. On the other hand, few participants claimed that they received minimal support from the family apart from providing them with English tuition and also highlighted the little or no help received from their siblings in improving their English or adapting to EMI, which is in accord with Balakrishnar and Thanaraj's study (2015).

Like family, friends can also be taken as a source of capital. A common claim used by the participants was that they received help from their friends at university. Adding to the existing body of knowledge (Evans & Morrison, 2011; McGhie, 2017), this study reveals that friends have helped the participants correct their mistakes in English and help them by explaining colloquial English as well as subject-specific English terms. In addition, a participant claimed that she observed changes in her previous friendships due to her EMI experience. Her friends who are not studying in EMI or working have made some negative comments such as she is 'showing off' or trying to be 'posh' because of her usage of English vocabulary and code-switching that she inherited as a result of her EMI exposure (Attanayake, 2020; Rathnasiri, 2020).

Linguistic capital is another form of capital mediated by English knowledge, English speaking skills, English vocabulary, opportunities available for English use, and the role played by one's L1. A common finding was the lack of English proficiency (Dzormeku, 2023; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Kamaşak et al., 2021; Khan, 2013; Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). This finding reiterates the low results obtained for the English subject at the national exams and the study which found that the majority of the Grade 11 students possess CEFR A1-A2 proficiency level (Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, 2023b, 2024; Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). Mainly, the participants admitted that their proficiency in English grammar is poor and inadequate, which leads to difficulties in speaking and difficulties in writing answers for exams (Al Zumor, 2019; Balakrishnar & Thanaraj, 2015; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Khan, 2013; Vidanapathirana & Gamini, 2009). This suggests that their existing English knowledge has failed to become a source of capital when studying in EMI. The majority of the participants have tried to compensate for the inadequate English knowledge by simplifying the meaning in English using AI or an online dictionary tool and claimed

that they avoid translating the lecture material entirely into their L1, which is in contrast to the findings of Al Zumor (2019) and can be regarded as a good method to improve English.

Speaking skills in English also determine the linguistic capital of these participants, and the findings revealed that they experience difficulties in speaking in English, which is in line with the findings of a considerable number of studies (Aizawa et al., 2023; Attanayake, 2020; Balakrishnar & Thanaraj, 2015; Brown, 2008; Bukve, 2018; Dzormeku, 2023; Huang, 2015; Kamaşak et al., 2021; Khan, 2013; Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2018). Furthermore, poor speaking skills are a consequence of neglecting speaking and listening skills in the school curriculum, its practice, and in the assessments, although they are mentioned among the eight competencies a student would achieve after completing Grade 11 studies at Sri Lankan schools (Brunfaut & Green, 2019; Indrarathne & McCulloch, 2022). All the participants mentioned that they face difficulties in speaking in English, which affects their classroom discussions, group work, speech tests, presentations, and answers to questions raised by their lecturers (Brown, 2008; Kamaşak et al., 2021). Here, the students have experienced a sudden change in the skills tested at the university compared to the ones at the school, where the speaking aspect was neglected (Indrarathne & McCulloch, 2022). Moreover, poor speaking skills have led them to memorize what to say during their presentations, which resulted in unnatural delivery and low marks. A common pattern was that the participants stayed silent in the class even though they knew the answer as they could not articulate it in English, and it has led to shame and speaking phobia that is also found in Brown's study (2008). As a result, the participants tend to shift to their mother tongue, which affects negatively when students from different ethnic groups are present in a group that is in contrast with Khan's study (2013) where shifting L1 became a positive factor due to the homogenous context.

Echoing the findings of previous research (Brown, 2008; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Galloway & Sahan, 2021; Islam, 2013; Sung, 2020), the findings revealed that all the participants face difficulties with English vocabulary, especially with academic and subject-specific vocabulary which makes the transition to EMI harder. Linguistic capital is also mediated through the opportunities available to use English at home, school, university, and society (Perera & Peter, 2024; Sah & Li, 2018; Teng, 2019; Wettewa, 2016). The findings brought to light that the participants did not have many opportunities to use English during their school days, which could have been a source of capital when they started EMI studies. Moreover, the participants acknowledged that those who studied in EMI at school and those who studied at international schools were blessed with opportunities to use English, unlike the vernacular medium ones (Wettewa, 2016). Moreover, the limited opportunities available at the school were also influenced by the negative remarks of fellow students who were under the impression that English was unimportant. Few participants have the prospect of using English at home due to their parents' or siblings' English proficiency. Meanwhile, the participants have used the ample opportunities available at the university at varied levels, some using them to the

fullest while some using them according to their personal preferences, suggesting that acquiring new linguistic capital also depends on the individual.

The university can be a source of capital in learning English and learning through English. The findings revealed different viewpoints. Those who received the orientation program were satisfied with its help to adjust to EMI. It covered the fundamentals of IT and Math, which benefited their core subjects immensely. Moreover, they have had some English lessons where they practiced speaking and presentation skills. Providing the students with an orientation to ease the transition is also included in Richards and Pun's (2023) typology of EMI. However, the lack of prominence given to English courses during the orientation (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023) and not offering an orientation program to late intake students deprive them of acquiring a new source of capital. Another finding was the availability of mandatory English modules once they start their semester learning. Some considered these modules to be helpful as they covered all four skills, while some considered those were not helpful, claiming that they covered the content that they already knew since their school days, which made most of the students bunk these lectures. According to the participant accounts, it seems that the English modules delivered by the university are 'independent of the subject discipline' (Richards & Pun, 2023), and they teach English for general purposes, whereas the students' expectation was an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) module that facilitates their subject discipline (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). Dissatisfaction with the English modules offered by the university was also observed in Mahawattha and Rassool's study (2023). Despite the difficulties faced by the participants, the majority claimed that there is no need for more English modules as it would lessen the prominence given to their core modules. This contradicts the findings of Perera and Peter's (2024) study, where the undergraduates recommended 2 years of compulsory English modules as they recognized the importance of English in their professional lives. It should be noted that their context differs from the current study as they pursue their degrees in vernacular medium, and English modules were the only time they have been exposed to English. Existing literature in the Sri Lankan context claims that the state university sub-culture, which includes "ragging," minimizes the opportunities to use English at the university (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023; Perera & Peter, 2024; Rathnasiri, 2020, 2021), which is not found in the current university suggesting that the non-state university students can use the university as a source of capital for L2 practices without any suppression.

The findings revealed that the theme ideology consists of language ideologies and societal ideologies. Language ideologies are defined as the attitudes toward a particular language and how the discourse is constructed pertaining to that which is also related to the social strata (Kroskrity, 2000 as cited in Bergström et al., 2024). The emergence of power dynamics and considering English as a class marker (Jayadeva, 2019; Sah & Li, 2018) and also connoting English with the local metaphor "Kaduwa" (Sword), which suggests the power attached to knowing English and not knowing English (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016; Widyalandara, 2009b) can be considered as a language ideology related to English in the selected context. Although the participants did not reveal the metaphor

“Kaduwa” (Sword) explicitly, it may have influenced them as some ideologies are hidden in society (Darvin & Norton, 2016). Almost all the participants revealed that they experienced some sort of power dynamics due to the English language. For instance, those who have studied in EMI and those who have studied at international schools tend to be more active during the lectures due to their high English proficiency, which is on par with existing literature (Evans & Morrison, 2011) which found that EMI background students faced fewer issues compared to their vernacular medium counterparts. This also suggests that they have the power of knowing English, which also puts them into an elite class in society (Attanayake, 2020; Wijayatunga, 2018) even secondary school students understand that there is a gap between EMI/bilingual students and vernacular students and the existing difficulty in making friends. Secondary school students classified those in the bilingual classes as “posh”(Davis, 2018) referring to a high status. In contrast, the participants with vernacular study backgrounds felt powerless and inferior when they observed how their counterparts spoke English. On the other hand, knowing English can lead to ostracizing, and one participant claimed that sometimes, those with high English proficiency get discriminated against (Rathnasiri, 2020, 2021) among the majority who studied in vernaculars, which is in contrast with Karim et al's findings (2023) where the vernacular speakers get marginalized at private universities with EMI practices. One participant revealed how society sees English as a class marker and how she spoke in English to negate the discriminating behavior stumbled upon her by society. Contradictory to the previous studies (Abeyseena et al., 2024; Attanayake, 2020; Wijetunge, 2008), the participants of the current study claimed that their batchmates did not laugh at them when they made mistakes in English while they were speaking suggests that the phenomenon of linguistic shame is not present at the university which can be converted to good source of capital in improving their English speaking skills.

Nationalist ideology can be mediated through one’s attitude towards his/her/their language and culture, one’s attitude towards other languages and cultures, and one’s attitude towards English and Anglophone culture. Or else through the history of the country. Existing literature on Sri Lanka, its history, and its educational system mentions that the Sinhalese were oppressed due to colonization while the Tamils received favors from the colonizers (Herath, 2015). Based on this, the researcher predicted that the Sinhalese learners may have a negative attitude towards English, which was found to be incorrect. In fact, some claimed that English was their favorite subject, and they love English. The findings also revealed that although the participants are proud of their own culture and language, some had reservations about using the vernaculars as the MOI at school and insisted on using EMI at school. The presence of different ethnic groups has made the participants interact with each other in English, embrace each other’s cultures, and not judge a person through an ethnic/cultural lens, which is a dealignment from the popular nationalist ideology and also a contradiction to the history of Sri Lanka which led to an ethnic war due to language policy and marginalization (Dassanayake, 2024; Rajapakse, 2024). The fact that the participants have lived in a little or no ethnic tension environment for a prolonged time may have shaped them to be open to other ethnic groups. One participant claimed

that her Sinhala Buddhist identity is a driving force to learn and improve her English language proficiency. A similar sentiment was reported in a study where some Sri Lankan state university undergraduates expressed pride in their ethnicity, religion, and culture. The difference between the two findings is that the previous study reported the viewpoints of students studying humanities and social science degree programs, while the current participant is from the biotechnology field (Pushpakumara et al., 2023).

The interviews revealed a pattern that showed the participants' aspirations to go abroad for higher studies and or jobs irrespective of their current English proficiency and their level of confidence in speaking English, and they acknowledged that English proficiency is needed for their future studies and careers (Kong & Wei, 2019). These aspirations are fueled by globalization and neoliberal ideologies, which open global mobility and increase the value of qualifications to obtain better jobs in the private sector (Attanayake, 2020; Islam, 2013; Kong & Wei, 2019; Wettewa, 2016). These findings are in accord with the previous Sri Lankan study in which the students expressed their wishes to go to a European country for postgraduate studies (Pushpakumara et al., 2023) and Zhang and Pladevall-Ballester's (2023) findings, which highlighted both future studies and career options as motivation factors for pursuing an EMI degree.

Although the data analysis was based on Thematic Analysis (TA) (interview) and content analysis (identity portrait), a narrative analysis could also be applied as an alternative method of data analysis. Narrative analysis can be used as a method of collecting data as well as a method of analyzing the data, which explores the stories and episodes told by the participants, paying attention to what happened and how the participants reacted to such incidents (Bryman, 2004). Furthermore, narrative analysis can be done based on four models: thematic, structural, interactional, and performative (Riessman, 2004, as cited in Bryman, 2004). While analyzing the data of the current study, it has been noted that there were several instances where the participants used a narrative style when answering the interview questions and hinted at the possibility of analyzing them using the models of thematic and structural narrative analysis. By doing that, the researcher can explore the experiences of the participants, how they faced the transition to EMI, and their L2 journey. The narrative aspect was most prominent in Thilini's interview. Particularly, she provided a detailed narrative account of three episodes: the episode about identity within her family, the episode about classroom discussion, and the episode about an incident at a supermarket. Each episode corresponds to identity, capital, and ideology. For instance, the episode where she described how her parents do not seek her help and seeking help from her elder sisters is identified as the identity within the family in the TA, while from a narrative lens, it could be explained as her 'yearning for validation.' Likewise, the incident where her existing linguistic capital failed to answer the unexpected questions raised by her professor can be given the narrative arc 'from confidence to crisis.' She vividly explained that she was an extrovert and confident enough to present their group work to the class, but the sudden question led to a crisis that affected her negatively, as this episode comes to her mind whenever she is

going to present something. Her episode at the supermarket can be explained as ‘breaking stereotypes’ as she used English to show that she was educated when the people treated her as a ‘plain Jane.’ Although the narratives were not prominent in other participants, subtle hints were present in some participants. For instance, both Kasun and Gayani had episodes of ‘fulfilling a legacy’ where Kasun is proud of being the first person from his family to attend a reputed private university to pursue an EMI degree, while Gayani’s motivation to improve English and thereby pursue a doctoral degree in future is triggered by her father’s dreams. Meanwhile, Sahsini shared a narrative of ‘navigating shame’ where she felt ashamed as she was the only student who could not answer the questions raised by her lecturer on a particular day due to her limited English proficiency.

As presented in Darvin and Norton’s Model of Investment (2015), identity, capital, and ideology are interconnected (See Figure 1). At the intersection of identity and ideology lies several “positionings” of L2 learners. For instance, the findings of the current study reveal that the nationalist ideology influences the identity of legitimate speaker of English. Particularly, in the current context, nationalistic views have positively shaped becoming a legitimate speaker of English. Moreover, high-performing vs. underperforming English learner and motivated learner identities are induced by globalization and neoliberal ideologies. Particularly, the labor market, which operates under the influence of globalization and neoliberal ideologies, has an impact on the motivation to learn English. In addition, the participants’ imagined-self identity is shaped by globalization and neoliberal ideologies as all of them aspire to go abroad for either higher studies or for jobs. Some even have the idea of migrating.

At the intersection of identity and capital lies the “affordances and perceived benefits” (Darvin & Norton, 2015). The findings of this study imply that the legitimate speaker of English identity is influenced by the opportunities available to use English both inside and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, the ethnic-religious-cultural-language identity is induced by the presence of different ethnic groups in the school, university, and residential areas of the learners. It shapes the willingness to appreciate diverse cultures and the willingness to make friends from different ethnic groups using English as a medium of communication- ‘link language’. The findings further revealed that the participants do not possess any resentment against different ethnic groups that prevailed in the country decades ago. This can be seen as a new development. In addition, identity and capital are connected through the high vs. underperforming English learner and motivated learner identities with social (teachers, family, friends) and linguistic capital (English knowledge, English speaking skills, English vocabulary, opportunities to use English, and the role of one’s L1). For instance, it has been noted that the high-performing learner identity is affected negatively due to a lack of English knowledge, a lack of subject-specific vocabulary, and a lack of speaking skills which ultimately led to a change of one’s original identity.

“Systematic patterns of control” (Darvin & Norton, 2015) connects capital with ideology. The findings imply that the opportunities to use English are influenced by the English as a class marker

ideology. In the present study, the participants were unable to make use of the capital of available opportunities due to their friends who bore the view that English is not important and when someone tries using it, he/she/they try to show off. Moreover, the results implied that nationalistic ideology is influenced by the presence of ethnic groups in the vicinity of an L2 learner, and one's attitudes towards own culture. The more exposure to different ethnic groups, the higher the chances of an L2 learner bearing a neutral attitude towards nationalist ideology or else use own ethnic identity to embrace other cultures and use English as a communication medium.

The findings of the study suggest several implications. The findings implied that linguistic identity, academic identity, and imagined-self identity have an impact on student investment in L2 practices. As far as identity is concerned, the students have a greater responsibility in negotiating and (re)constructing their identities to facilitate L2 learning. It has been noted that some participants lack the motivation to learn English and tend to use their L1, which affects their investment. The students should invest themselves in learning English from a young age and give the same attention and effort as they would pay the other subjects starting from their school days. In particular, they should not neglect the General English subject of the G.C.E. (A/L) exam, which provides them with continued exposure to English after their (O/L) study cycle. At the university, the learners should attend the English lectures regularly to receive the support from university English teachers which would provide them with necessary academic writing conventions that are needed for the university studies. Moreover, irrespective of the socio-economic status of one's family, the use of freely available resources to improve English proficiency is highly recommended. Using every opportunity available to study and speak in English is also highly recommended. Here, they could use support from their families, friends, and society in general.

With regard to capital, both the students themselves and the micro and macro society have a responsibility to facilitate the L2 investment. Here, the teachers play a significant role. English teachers at both school and university should provide optimal support. Increasing the opportunities to speak in English and delivering lessons suitable for the students' English proficiency level are recommended, especially for the English teachers at schools. Meanwhile, the university English lecturers should assess the students' needs and align their curriculum to suit them. They can adapt their lessons to suit their degree programs and focus on EAP and ESP aspects rather than delivering only general English lessons. By catering to these needs the teachers can facilitate the investment of the students. Subject teachers at the school level should not devalue English, instead, they should encourage the students to invest more in English as English would be essential for their future studies and careers. Subject teachers at the university should also foster the use of English both inside and outside of the lecture hall and also make suggestions to improve English. Universities that deliver EMI programs also should take action to improve the students' proficiency in English and smooth the transition. Here, the universities can revisit their existing English modules and evaluate the effectiveness of those modules, and make necessary changes. Moreover, an orientation program that

includes a significant English component should be offered to all newcomers irrespective of their intake. Additionally, an aptitude test for English can be implemented, and group the students based on their aptitude and provide English courses accordingly. English courses offered by the universities should consist of general English, EAP, ESP, and study skills components so the students who experience a transition from L1 to L2 can benefit as they would consider the courses offered by the university to be relevant and meaningful for their EMI studies thereby increasing the level of investment.

Transitioning from L1 to EMI should be addressed at the macro level, as the participants mentioned several concerns regarding the support they received during school days to improve their English proficiency. Here, educational policy developers and the responsible state institutions have a greater responsibility in the areas of revising the existing English syllabi, addressing the provisions made for EMI, and facilitating English learning, which includes all four skills. The current situation seems to neglect both speaking and listening skills, although they are mentioned as learning outcomes in the curriculum. Given the importance of English and EMI in the global arena, provisions can be made to spread EMI education at the school level.

The current study used a single embedded case study method which is limited to one faculty of a particular university. In order to get a clear picture of the gravity of the problems faced by the students who transfer from L1 to L2, the researcher tried to use identity portraits as a research tool to get insights into how the learners deconstruct their identities and represent them in a visual format. However, due to the researcher not being present with the participants physically when they were developing the portraits, the researcher failed to acquire the portraits of all the participants. Although there are students from all ethnic backgrounds of the country present in the selected context, only Sinhalese and Tamil students volunteered for the interview, leaving the input of the Muslim students. As some of the literature suggested, Muslim students might have a different level of investment in L2. This study is limited to students who experience a transition from L1 to EMI, but it could have been broadened as the transition from school to university, which allows the opportunity to gain the perspectives of the students who studied in EMI at school as well. It would have paved the way for a comparison between the impact of prior EMI experiences and vernacular in pursuing an EMI degree. As the findings of this study cannot be generalized due to the qualitative nature, it would have been better to conduct this as a mixed methods study. However, that requires a larger sample size with approximately a similar number of responses for a questionnaire representing all concerned parties (Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, those who studied in EMI at school, and those who studied in vernacular at school). A future study can address these limitations and bring in additional knowledge to address the same research questions.

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore how the transition from mother-tongue instruction to EMI shapes the students' investment (in the forms of identity, capital, and ideology) in learning English and learning through English. The findings of the case study revealed that identity is mediated

through one's linguistic, academic, and imagined-self identities. Capital is shaped through the access and negotiation of economic, cultural, social, and linguistic capital in addition to the university and technology, which act as sources of capital. Language and societal ideologies such as English as a class marker, nationalist ideology, and globalization and neoliberal ideologies shape the learner's investment in L2 practices.

*AI Usage: AI was used for grammar and spelling checking and to get some suggestions for signposting language and some title wordings.*

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions

Type of interview question	Interview question	Corresponding research question	
<b>Starting questions</b>	Experience (or behavior) questions	Describe your experiences related to the medium of instruction at school.	
	Knowledge questions	How would you describe the format of English learning in past school years?	
	Feelings questions	How did you feel when you learned your university courses would be in English?	
<b>Content questions</b>	Experience (or behavior) questions	How has studying in English changed how you think about yourself as a student?	How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction? How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction? How do language and societal ideologies influence the students' investment in English medium instruction?
	Experience (or behavior) questions	How do you bring your culture or language into your English medium studies at university?	
	Experience (or behavior) questions	What resources, skills, or experiences have you relied on to adapt to learning in English?	
	Opinion (or values) questions	How important is English proficiency for your academic and future professional success?	
	Opinion (or values) questions	How do you perceive EMI at university?	
	Experience (or behavior) questions	Have you noticed any power dynamics in the classroom related to language use?	
	Experience (or behavior) questions	How has your desire to learn English changed since you started university?	
	Experience (or behavior) questions	What strategies or methods do you use to understand your English course materials?	

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<b>Closing Questions</b>	Experience (or behavior) questions	What do you do to improve your English in your free time?
	Opinion (or values) questions	How do you see yourself using English for study or work in the future?
	Opinion (or values) questions	If you could give advice to other students making this transition, what would it be?
	Opinion (or values) questions	Do you have any suggestions for universities to better support students transitioning from mother-tongue instruction? Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with English medium instruction?

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## Appendix 2 Demographic data form

### Demographic data form

1) Select your gender.

Male

Female

Other

2) Select the district of your residence.

Ampara		Kilinochchi	
Anuradhapura		Kurunegala	
Badulla		Mannar	
Batticaloa		Matale	
Colombo		Matara	
Galle		Monaragala	
Gampaha		Mullaitivu	
Hambantota		Nuwara Eliya	
Jaffna		Polonnaruwa	
Kalutara		Puttalam	
Kandy		Ratnapura	
Kegalle		Trincomalee	
		Vavuniya	

3) Select your ethnicity.

Sinhalese

Tamil

Moor (Muslim)

Burgher

Malay

Other Please specify.....

4) Select your religion.

Buddhist

Hindu

Islam

Roman Catholic

Christian

Other Please specify.....

- 5) Select your mother tongue (first language).

Sinhala

Tamil

English

Other Please specify .....

- 6) Select the monthly income range of your family.

Less than Rs.50000		Rs.250001-Rs. 300000	
Rs.50001-Rs. 100000		Rs.300001-Rs. 350000	
Rs.100001-Rs. 150000		Rs.350001-Rs. 400000	
Rs.150001-Rs. 200000		Rs.400001-Rs. 450000	
Rs.200001-Rs. 250000		Rs.450001 and above	

- 7) Select your degree programme.

B.Sc. (Hons) in Biotechnology

B.Sc. (Hons) in Financial Mathematics and Applied Statistics

- 8) At what age did you start learning English?

0-3 years old

4-7 years old

8-11 years old

12-15 years old

16-19 years old

20 years old or over

- 9) Select the result you obtained for these subjects.

Examination	A	B	C	S	W/Fail
G.C.E. O/L English Language					
G.C.E. A/L General English					

Examination	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	E
Year 1 semester 1 English module at university												

Please mention your GPA obtained for your degree for the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	
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10) Select the medium of instruction during your school life.

Level of education	Sinhala medium (except English language and literature)	Tamil medium (except English language and literature)	Bilingual (some subjects in mother tongue and some subjects in English)	English medium
Grade 1-5				
Grade 6-11 (G.C.E. O/L)				
Grade 12-13 (G.C.E. A/L)				

11) Rate your proficiency in English language on the scale 0 being low and 5 being high.

Reading	0	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	0	1	2	3	4	5
Listening	0	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking	0	1	2	3	4	5

12) Feel free to comment on anything you need here which I have missed to mention.

### Appendix 3 Interview protocol and questions

Name of the participant:..... Date:.....Time:.....

1. Greet the participant, explain the privacy notice and consent form in detail, and check whether they need clarification.
2. Inform them about the audio recording and start recording.
3. Ask the interview questions.
4. Conclude the interview and remind the participant about the identity portrait component.

Focus	Question	Prompts
<b>Medium of instruction at school?</b>	Describe your experiences related to the medium of instruction at school.	What was the medium of instruction during your school life? From Grade 1 to 5, From grade 6 to 11, From grade 12 to 13 How would you describe learning in that particular medium of instruction? (easy, difficult)
<b>Previous English language learning experiences</b>	How would you describe the format of English learning in past school years?	How would you explain your English language learning experience at school? Tell me about your preparation for English classes at that time Tell me about your effort to learn English at that time (Did you study English at home? Did you study English at a tuition class? Did you watch English movies/TV programs and listen to music as a way of learning English) Tell me about your relationships with past English teachers Tell me about your perceived difficulty in learning English
<b>English medium instruction at university</b>	How did you feel when you learned your university courses would be in English?	Were you excited, nervous, or something else? Why?
<b>Identity</b>	How has studying in English changed how you think about yourself as a student?	Do you feel confident when you study or speak in English? Why or why not? Is it easier or harder to talk to teachers or batchmates in English? How easy is it for you to join in class discussions in English? How does it compare to speaking in your mother tongue? Can you describe a time when you felt really good or bad about participating in classroom discussions in English? Has the way you see yourself as a learner changed since starting university?
	How do you bring your culture or language into your English medium studies at university?	Can you recall a time when you shared a unique viewpoint from your culture during a class discussion? How do others react when you do this? Are there times when you choose not to? How do you navigate cultural differences when working in groups or interacting with professors? Do you ever use words or phrases from your mother tongue in class? In what situations? How does your previous educational background influence your learning style in English classes?

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<b>Capital</b>	What resources, skills, or experiences have you relied on to adapt to learning in English?	<p>How has using English at university affected your connection to your mother tongue?</p> <p>Do you use your mother tongue differently now?</p> <p>How do you balance both languages?</p> <p>Have your feelings about either language changed?</p> <p>In what ways do you feel your cultural identity enriches or disturbs the EMI learning environment at the university?</p> <p>How has your knowledge of English from school helped you at university?</p> <p>What new skills or strategies have you had to develop to cope with the demands of studying in English?</p> <p>Can you talk about any additional support you've received, such as tutoring, online resources, or peer assistance?</p> <p>How do you use your cultural knowledge in your English classes?</p> <p>Can you share a time when your cultural background was helpful?</p> <p>Do your classmates or teachers show interest in your culture?</p> <p>Do you think your mother tongue plays any role in your understanding or performance in English medium instruction? How?</p> <p>How have your friendships changed since starting EMI at university?</p> <p>Have you made new friends? Who are they?</p> <p>Do you spend time with different people now?</p> <p>How do your new and old friendships help your EMI studies?</p>
<b>Ideology</b>	How important do you believe English proficiency is for your academic and future professional success?	<p>Have financial or social resources influenced your ability to adapt to English medium instruction?</p> <p>Have you ever needed to buy extra materials, like books or online courses, to help with English?</p> <p>Was it easy to afford them?</p> <p>Have you faced any challenges because of financial issues while trying to improve your English skills?</p> <p>Do you get support from friends or family to help with your English studies? Can you give an example?</p> <p>How have your relationships with classmates or teachers helped (or not helped) you adapt to learning in English?</p>
	How do you perceive EMI at university?	<p>How important do you think being good at English is for your studies and future job?</p> <p>Why do you feel that way?</p> <p>Can you give an example of when English was important for you?</p> <p>How does this affect your motivation to learn English?</p> <p>What do you think about using English as the main language in your classes?</p> <p>How does it affect the way you learn?</p> <p>Do you think it changes how students interact with each other?</p> <p>What are the positives and negatives you have noticed?</p>

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<b>Investment in general</b>	Have you noticed any power dynamics in the classroom related to language use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who tends to speak more in class, and why do you think that is?</li> <li>• How does language ability affect participation in group work or discussions?</li> <li>• Can you share an experience where language played a role in classroom dynamics?</li> </ul>
	How has your desire to learn English changed since you started university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel more or less motivated now? Why?</li> <li>• Can you describe a moment that changed how you feel about learning English?</li> <li>• What keeps you going when English feels challenging?</li> </ul>
	What strategies or methods do you use to understand your English course materials?	Please elaborate them.
	What do you do to improve your English in your free time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have any English learning hobbies?</li> <li>• How much time do you spend on extra English practice?</li> <li>• What is your favorite way to practice English outside of class?</li> </ul>
	How do you see yourself using English in the future, for study or work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you imagine a situation where you're using English confidently?</li> <li>• What kind of job or study do you think you'll need English for?</li> <li>• How does thinking about your future motivate your English learning now?</li> </ul>
	Closing Questions	<p>Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with English medium instruction?</p> <p>If you could give advice to other students making this transition, what would it be?</p> <p>Do you have any suggestions for universities to better support students transitioning from mother tongue instruction?</p>

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## Appendix 4 Privacy notice

Name of the register	From Mother Tongue to English: Exploring the Transition and Student Investment in an English Medium University: a Case from Sri Lanka.
Data Controller	Jayathri Kalinga, jayathri.c.kalinga@utu.fi
Contact information of the responsible person	Jayathri Kalinga, jayathri.c.kalinga@utu.fi
Purpose and legal basis for the processing of personal data	<p>The research collects students' views and experiences on their English language learning practices and how their ideologies, capital and identity influence their L2 learning.</p> <p>This is a qualitative study which includes an interview and an identity portrait. The interview is a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The identity portrait is created by the participants using any symbols, texts, colours, pictures, photos etc. depicting Gender, age, ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, any other languages you speak, different roles played by you in the society (in your family, school, university and larger society), your future aspirations and your experiences and relationship with English language.</p> <p>First, an invitation to participate in the study will be sent to the students via their learning management system. Then a form to fill in their basic demographic data and information on how to create their identity portrait will be sent via email to the students who expressed their interest in participating in the study.</p> <p>The demographic data includes gender, ethnicity, place of residence, mother tongue, monthly income of the family and the results obtained for their English exams.</p> <p>The interviews involve collecting information on the students' experiences and views on their journey from school to university with special reference to English medium instruction and their investment in English learning practices.</p> <p>The legal basis for processing personal data in the Article 6 of the EU General Data Protection Regulation is:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Processing is necessary for scientific research (public interest, Point 1a of the Article 6)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Data subject has given their consent to processing personal data (consent, Point 1e of the Article 6)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, what _____</p>
Processed personal data	<p>The following information of the data subjects is stored in the register:</p> <p>Email address, gender, age, ethnicity, mother tongue, monthly income of the family, results obtained for English exams</p>

Recipients and recipient groups of personal data.	The data will not be transferred or disclosed to parties outside the research group.
Information on transferring data to third countries	Personal data will not be disclosed to parties outside the EU or the European Economic Area.
Retention period of personal data or criteria for its determination	The recorded interviews will be transcribed into text files and the recordings will be destroyed. Simultaneously, the research data will be pseudonymized. Personal data, interview transcripts, and identity portraits will be kept in a secure place which is solely accessible to the researcher and all data will be disposed securely at the latest by 31 <sup>st</sup> June 2030.
Rights of the data subject	The data subject has the right to access their personal data retained by the Data Controller, the right to rectification or erasure of data, and the right to restrict or object the processing of data. The right to erasure is not applied in scientific or historic research purposes in so far as the right to erasure is likely to render impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the objectives of that processing. The realization of the right to erasure is assessed on a case-by-case basis. The data subject has the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority.
Information on the source of personal data	In order to send the invitations to the interview, email addresses or the possibility of forwarding a message are requested from the universities. The other data is collected directly from those who participate in interviews for the study.
Information on the existence of automatic decision-making, including profiling	The data will not be used for automatic decision-making or profiling.

## **Appendix 5 Consent form**

### **Consent to participate in research**

I am a student following the master's degree program in education and learning in the Faculty of Education, University of Turku, Finland. The title of my research is "From Mother Tongue to English: Exploring the Transition and Student Investment in an English Medium University: a Case Study from Sri Lanka". This research is conducted as a partial fulfillment for the Master of Arts in Education and Learning degree.

### **The objective of the study**

This study seeks to explore how the students perceive English medium instruction and their experiences with transitioning from mother tongue instruction to English medium.

### **Structure of the study**

This study has two parts: (1) a one-on-one interview, (2) an identity portrait.

Before the interview, I will give you a short questionnaire in which you answer to some basic demographic questions such as your gender, mother tongue, ethnicity, results obtained for your G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) English subjects and also the results obtained for the English modules offered by your degree program and a brief description of your family. Moreover, you will be creating your identity portrait before the interview.

The interview is a one-on-one semi structured interview where I will be asking several questions related to your previous experiences of learning English, your current experiences of learning in English medium, how your identity, capital and ideologies influences your investment in learning in an English medium environment. The interview will last for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The interview will be conducted online and will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. The interview will be conducted in English and Sinhala. You have the freedom to select your language, and you can switch between the two languages during the interview.

The identity portrait is an illustration which will be drawn by you on a piece of paper provided to you by the researcher. You can use any symbols, texts, colors, pictures, photos etc. when creating your identity portrait. You will be indicating your identity markers, different roles played by you in the society (in your family, school, university and larger society), your future aspirations and your experiences and relationship with English language in this portrait. This is just a sketch, and you do not have to be a great artist.

### **Use of personal data**

You will be given a pseudonym (a different name) when presenting your data. Moreover, the findings will be reported in such a way that it is not possible to identify the participants securing your privacy and identity.

**Storage, access and disposal of data**

Your interview recordings and the identity portraits will be kept on University of Turku, Seafire of Jayathri Kalinga (jayathri.c.kalinga.utu.fi) during the term of studentship and thereafter will be kept at a personal secure place which will eventually be disposed securely latest by 30.06.2030. The recorded interview and the identity portrait will be pseudonymized and stored securely and solely accessible by me. The transcribed interview will be sent to you for confirmation.

**Right to withdrawal**

Participation in the study can be withdrawn at any moment. Moreover, participating in this study and withdrawing from this study will not affect your studies and grades at SLIIT university.

Please state whether you agree to participate in the study (interview and identity portrait):

- I agree to participate in the interview and create an identity portrait and give my permission to quote my ideas directly and to paraphrase.
- I do not agree to participate in this study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

**Contact person for more information**

Jayathri Kalinga (jayathri.c.kalinga.utu.fi)

## Appendix 6 Information for the Identity Portrait

### Identity portrait

**Purpose:** The purpose of drawing your identity portrait is letting you to express your identity in a visual manner and also it helps you to illustrate them in any way you want which allows you to analyze how the characteristics of your identity play a role in relation to English language learning. Please use the illustration below to create a portrait of your own identity. You can use any symbols, texts, colors, pictures, photos etc. when creating your identity portrait. You may get some ideas from the sample which I have provided to you. Please include the following information in your identity portrait:



## Appendix 7 Invitation to participate in research

### Invitation to participate in a research study

Dear students,

I am Jayathri Kalinga, who previously worked at the Faculty of Science XXX University. Now, I am pursuing a master's degree in education at the University of Turku, Finland. I am writing this to invite you to participate in a research study titled "From Mother Tongue to English: Exploring the Transition and Student Investment in an English Medium University: a Case Study from Sri Lanka". My study seeks to explore how the students perceive English medium instruction and their experiences with transitioning from mother-tongue instruction to English medium.

#### Important information:

**Who can participate:** If you are a first year students following one of the following degree programs, and you have studied in either Sinhala or Tamil medium at your school, you can participate:

BSc (Hons) in Biotechnology, BSc (Hons) in Financial Mathematics and Applied Statistics

**How to participate?** By facing a one-on-one interview and creating an identity portrait (a simple sketch of your life characteristics and studying English)

**When?** A convenient time for you during the month of January 2025

**Where?** A zoom meeting

**In which language?** You can speak in either Sinhala or English. (you can mix both languages too)

**Time required?** The interview will be between 30 minutes to 1 hour. You can draw your identity portrait leisurely.

**Type of participation?** Participation in this study is voluntary. Participating in this study, and withdrawing from this study will not affect your studies at XXX University.

**Privacy?** You will be given a pseudonym (a different name from your original name) so that the readers of my study will not be able to identify you. All the information provided by you will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of this study.

Your insights and experiences are invaluable to this research, and your participation would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at [jayathri.c.kalinga@utu.fi](mailto:jayathri.c.kalinga@utu.fi)

If you are willing to participate, please send me an email by 25 January 2025.

Thank you for considering this invitation. I look forward to your positive response.

## Appendix 8 Themes and coding for research question 1

Research question	How do students negotiate and (re)construct their linguistic and academic identities as they transfer from mother-tongue instruction to English medium instruction?
<b>Main theme</b>	Identity
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Corresponding codes</b>
<b>Type of learner</b>	Good and motivated learner Motivation to learn English Transitioning to EMI Different learning styles at school and the university Strategies used for learning English Strategies used for learning subject matter Ways of learning English outside the class
<b>Legitimate speaker of English</b>	Use of English in the class/ outside the class/in the society Confident in speaking English Not confident in speaking English Apprehension towards English Use of L1 in the class Use of L1 in the university Use of L1 in the family/society
<b>Ethnic and religious identity</b>	One's own ethnic and religious identity Presence of other ethnic groups in school/university/residential area
<b>One's mother tongue</b>	Positive attitude towards one's mother tongue Negative attitudes towards one's mother tongue
<b>One's culture</b>	Positive attitudes towards one's culture Negative attitudes towards one's culture
<b>Imagined self</b>	Vision for one's future Unsure about one's future
<b>Multilingual identity</b>	Learning another national language or any other language
<b>Identity within the family</b>	

## Appendix 9 Themes and coding for research question 2

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**How do students utilize their existing capital and acquire new capital during their adaptation to English medium instruction?**

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<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Capital</b>	
<b>Sub themes</b>	Corresponding codes	
Economic capital	English courses followed	
	Resources available/not available	
Cultural capital	Positive attitudes towards one's culture	
	Negative attitudes towards one's culture	
	Use of cultural knowledge (use or don't use)	
	Presence of minority ethnic groups in school/university/residential area	
Social capital	Teachers	Bad experience with school English teachers Good experience with school English teachers Bad experience with English tuition teachers Good experience with English tuition teachers Good experience with university English teachers School subject teachers' influence/ impact Subject tuition teachers' influence/ impact University subject lecturers' influence/impact Quality of the English teachers
	Family	Parents' and relations' attitudes towards English Parents' and relations' help to learn English and subject matter Positive influence from siblings Negative influence from siblings Help from siblings
	Friends	Negative influence from friends

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		Help from friends
		Friends' English proficiency
		Relationships with friends
		Tutoring "Kuppi" sessions
Linguistic capital	Lack of English knowledge	
	Lack of English vocabulary	
	Influence from L1	
	Easier to learn in English	
	Easier to learn in Sinhala/Tamil	
	Doing exams in English is difficult	
	Doing exams in English is easy	
	Relationship with one's L1	
	Difficulty in speaking English	
	English terms are easy compared to Sinhala/Tamil terms	
	Opportunities available to use English (using them / not using them)	
	Use of L1 in the class	
	Interaction with each other	
University	English modules offered at the university (helpful)	
	English modules offered at the university (not helpful)	
	Orientation program	
Technology		

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## Appendix 10 Themes and coding for research question 3

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**How do language and societal ideologies influence the students' investment in English medium studies?**

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<b>Main theme</b>	Ideology
<b>Sub themes</b>	Corresponding codes
Nationalist ideology	Positive attitude towards one's mother tongue Negative attitudes towards one's mother tongue Presence of different ethnic groups in school/university/residential area
English as a Class Marker ideology	Position of English in the society/ English as a class marker Power dynamics: international school students/EMI students
Globalization and neoliberal ideologies	English is essential for future career English is essential for future studies Intentions for migrating for study or career purposes

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## Appendix 11 Content Analysis of Identity Portraits

Code	Pooja	Thilini	Gayani	Dasuni	Kasun
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Tamil	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala
<b>Religion</b>	Hindu	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	-
<b>Mother tongue</b>	Tamil	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala
<b>Nationality</b>	Sri Lankan	-	-	Sri Lankan	-
<b>Age</b>	20	22	23	21	22
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female	-
<b>Multilingual</b>	Little bit Sinhala, willing to learn more languages in future	Tamil: Beginner, English: intermediate	-	Tamil: little bit	-
<b>Motivated learner</b>	-	maintaining good relationship with English, positive learning experience	-	-	-
<b>High Performing learner</b>	Deputy Head Prefect at school	school leader	A member of eastern band, A member of senior prefect board, A member of media club, A member of student parliament, A member of student club	A member of the school choir I have participated in the English day competitions at school level and zonal level I've got 'A' passes for English both A/L's and O/L's	-
<b>Legitimate speaker of English</b>	-	communicated in English with siblings from a young age	-	-	Beginner to English speaking.
<b>Imagined-self identity</b>	Do masters abroad, live abroad	pursuing postgraduate studies, pursuing a career in molecular biology, medical biology and biochemistry".	One & only dream; making my mother and father proud	gonna graduate with a first class and work at the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in the future	I like to travel to overseas countries. I want to be a Researcher at the NASA, Applying for Masters in USA

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<b>Leisure: music, drama, movies</b>	music lover, fan of movies and dramas	dramas tv series movies	-	I also like to watch documentaries about mysteries	I love to watch English movies without subtitles
<b>Leisure: reading writing</b>	-	-	Reading, writing novels and poems	I love to read books at my leisure time.	read books related to my academic work.
<b>Family &amp; friends</b>	-	youngest	-	Good, obedient daughter Loving elder sister Supportive, loyal friend Smart, hardworking girl	I am the family's second child and the first reputed private university student.
<b>Responsible adult in the society</b>	-	“contributing to develop pharmaceutical industry in Sri Lanka”, responsible adult in the society, at university a bit older caring one	-	-	I like to volunteer for society. Member of clubs like AIESEC and Rotaract
<b>Images used</b>	A Tamil girl in a saree with a motto, graduation cap	A hand-drawn cartoon girl	An image of a girl writing something	Country map with the flag, Sinhala letters image, Why statistics is important word cloud, girl reading books, a girl working on a computer at an office, image of a family, image of A+ from a test	A plane, graduation cap

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## Appendix 12 Residential district and the self-proclaimed English proficiency

Participant	Residential district	Self-proclaimed reading skills		Self-proclaimed writing skills		Self-proclaimed listening skills		Self-proclaimed speaking skills	
		0=low	5=high	0=low	5=high	0=low	5=high	0=low	5=high
<b>Thilini</b>	Gampaha	4		3		4		2	
<b>Dasuni</b>	Kandy	3		3		2		1	
<b>Gayani</b>	Puttalam*	4		3		4		2	
<b>Sashini</b>	Gampaha	4		3		1		1	
<b>Kasun</b>	Kurunegala	4		3		4		1	
<b>Pooja</b>	Colombo	5		4		4		4	
<b>Jothika</b>	Batticaloa*	4		4		4		3	

\*These two districts are identified as 'educationally disadvantaged' by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka (University Admissions Handbook, 2023)