

## DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR LOCALIZED CHINESE LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN SRI LANKA

Noel Dassanayake\*

Department of Languages, Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka  
PO Box 02, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka  
noel@ssl.sab.ac.lk

Received: 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022/Revised: 04<sup>th</sup> October 2022/Accepted: 04<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**How to Cite:** Dassanayake, N. (2022). Development of an evaluation checklist for localized Chinese language textbooks in Sri Lanka. *Lingua Cultura*, 16(2), 257-269. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v16i2.8778>

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### ABSTRACT

*The research analyzed the limitations of existing Chinese language textbooks in Sri Lanka and proposed a tentative checklist for evaluating localized Chinese language textbooks. The discourse on the effectiveness of global textbooks in local contexts and the need for evaluating such textbooks had seen new paradigm shifts in parallel to the transformations in new language environments. A majority of the institutes and programs teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in Sri Lanka were using global CFL textbooks as their main study material, and their effectiveness had not yet been evaluated by researchers. The research conducted a quadruple perspective analysis, including an online survey with learners and teachers to examine the issues in existing CFL textbooks, a review of existing literature on textbook evaluation, an analysis of existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka, and an examination of existing language textbook evaluation criteria. The findings of the survey indicate that global textbooks have not catered to the specific language requirements of the informants. Insensitivity to the local and regional cultural content, minimal utilization of learners' L1 repertoire, ambiguous inapt translation of vocabulary, and market-oriented presentation of teaching-learning content is found to be core issues, and high pricing and inaccessibility also are influential issues. Based on the quadruple perspective analysis, the research has developed a tentative evaluation checklist of 37 items with a specific emphasis on localization and culture sensitivity.*

**Keywords:** teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Sri Lanka, global textbooks, evaluation, localization

### INTRODUCTION

A textbook is a material that is designed to incorporate the basic principles of a respective study area which may serve as the basis for instruction (Devi, Kumar, & Rao, 2004). Further, a textbook is a central element in the language teaching-learning process (Bori, 2020); a good textbook has to be a model of excellent teaching that can facilitate students' language learning (Yu, 2020). Along with the recent developments and transformations in pedagogy, its approaches and the role of teacher and learner, the need for updating textbooks on par with such developments has drawn the attention of educationists, textbook developers, and researchers.

The preparation of textbook evaluation checklists has been the most popular and efficient method of

analyzing the efficacy and eligibility of textbooks. As clearly stated by Mohamed (2013), employing a written checklist is one of the most effective methods of choosing a textbook which ensures that the needs of the learners are catered to with meticulous attention. As claimed by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2012), textbook evaluation is more convenient, objective, and valid when it is based on a reliable instrument. A number of textbook evaluation checklists have been produced recently for evaluating textbooks in various second and foreign languages, most of which are particularly prepared for ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks.

Along with the recent developments in China-Sri Lanka bilateral relations, which have acquired 'increasing regional and global significance' and have

'risen sharply' in recent years, particularly in areas such as economic development, the military, and diplomacy (Irfan & Fowsar, 2020), there has been a rapid increase in the demand for Chinese language studies in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the development of methodologies, materials, and aids that could particularly address the needs of Sri Lankan CFL (Chinese as a Foreign Language) learners has seen only a sluggish development. Most teaching materials used are global textbooks which hardly address the specific pedagogical issues in TCFL (Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language) in the South Asian region. While there is the fundamental requirement of developing localized textbooks and teaching material intended to address such distinct requirements, there is also the critical requirement of evaluation criteria to assess such material. The research is an attempt to develop a fundamental framework for evaluating localized Chinese language textbooks in Sri Lanka in the form of a checklist. Data from a questionnaire distributed among a group of forty ( $n=40$ ) undergraduate students and from a focused group interview conducted with a group of five ( $n=5$ ) teachers are used for the research.

## METHODS

The process of developing the tentative checklist comprises five stages. Stage 1 is an online survey with learners and teachers to examine the issues in existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka from a teacher-learner perspective; stage 2 is a review of existing literature on foreign language teaching, pedagogy of the Chinese language, and textbook development and evaluation; stage 3 is the analysis of existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka; stage 4 is the examination of existing textbook evaluation criteria and checklists; and stage 5 is the design and production of a tentative checklist for evaluating localized CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka.

Based on the recent research findings such as Woodward, Lloyd, and Kimmons (2017); Alhamami and Ahmad (2018); Ramadhana, Indah, and Suhardi (2019), it is gathered that both the teachers' and learners' viewpoints have significant roles to play in the development of language textbooks. Thus, the present research participants include students and teachers ( $n=47$ ). The student group comprises undergraduates ( $n=41$ ) following a BA Honors Degree program in the Chinese language at a state university in Sri Lanka. Since the total population of the major students is manageable in size, the total population sampling method is used. The age range of the student sample is 20-25. The group of key informants also comprises Chinese language teachers ( $n=6$ ) in Sri Lanka, both from high schools and higher education institutes.

A need analysis questionnaire is employed to evaluate the opinions of the sample towards existing CFL textbooks and their attitude towards localizing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka. The validity and reliability of each item in the questionnaire are ensured. Table 1 shows the composition of the need-

analysis questionnaire.

Table 1 Composition of the Need Analysis Questionnaire

Dimension	Type	Items
Demographic information and situation of existing CFL textbooks	Multiple Choice	7
Deficiencies in existing CFL textbooks	5-point Likert Scale	8
Learners' attitude towards improving and localizing CFL textbooks	Multiple Choice	5

Semi-structured interviews (Jamshed, 2014) are utilized as the method of collecting qualitative data from the group of teachers. Eight open-ended questions are asked by the teachers, for which the answers are recorded and abridged. The questions are mainly focused on three aspects related to the research questions. The first two questions are on the teachers' teaching-learning context and the general issues in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Sri Lanka. Questions 3 to 5 are concerned with existing issues in CFL textbooks used in Sri Lanka. Questions 6 to 8 are the teachers' opinions on improving the textbooks and developing new localized textbooks specifically designed for Sri Lanka students.

SPSS Statistics 21 is used for statistical data analysis. Mean standard deviation and frequency are measured using the software to ensure the reliability of values. Data analysis is conducted with a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Clark, 2011), where quantitative data from the questionnaire and qualitative data from the interviews are compared and contrasted. Existing guidelines on language textbook evaluation, such as Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011); Yazdanmehr and Shoghi (2014), are used as reference material in data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Hosseinzadeh, Heidari, and Choubasaz (2021), textbook design, development, and publication could be considered a controversial task as it primarily needs to comply with a variety of obligations such as educational, ideological, commercial, and even local obligations. Commercialization of education has a profound impact on modern-day pedagogy. Many institutions and teachers are compelled to resort to global commercial textbooks resulting from a lack of language learning materials (Alhamami & Ahmad, 2018). Despite the vast popularity of global textbooks, it has been controversial whether such textbooks may fit into all contexts for numerous reasons. For instance, Subekti (2017) has clearly demonstrated how the autonomous use of a single commercial textbook in an educational institute has failed to accomplish the ILOs

of a course.

One of the key issues in global textbooks is their limitations in appealing to the particular socio-linguistic features of different regions. The role played by L1 is totally neglected where global commercial textbooks are employed. Taki and Soghady (2013) have asserted that Iranian EFL learners have significantly resorted to L1 to decode L2 idioms. Although, in some cases, the cross-linguistic transfer is perceived as having a negative impact on the acquisition of L2, modern linguists tend to believe that it could act as a moderator between L1 and L2. Zaretsky (2016) has claimed that the relationship between L1 and L2 is bidirectional, and their strength depends on the stability of L1 and the length of exposure to L2.

As claimed by Kramersch (1993), culture becomes the very core of language teaching if it is perceived as a social practice, and cultural awareness has to be perceived as not only enabling language proficiency but also as the outcome of reflection on language proficiency. While there is no doubt that culture is an integral aspect of language learning, there has always been the issue as to what role does the native culture of foreign language learners play in language learning. Shrestha (2016) has asserted that culture encompasses language as a part of it which finds its survival in the expression of languages; thus, both are intricately interwoven. It further claims that knowledge of both indigenous culture and the local culture of foreign language learners can influence language learning and that it is of paramount importance to incorporate them in the process of teaching languages.

The emergence of translanguaging as a substitution for traditional monolingual, bilingual, and total immersion models of teaching second and foreign languages could be observed as the most significant turn in the history of teaching languages. As claimed by García and Kleyn (2016), translanguaging refers to the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire, which does not in any way correspond to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages. In light of the understanding that monolingual education and total immersion compel the learners to adopt the dominant cultures and struggle to imitate such systems, translanguaging facilitates a safer space for the learner's linguistic and socio-cultural space. As claimed by Fu, Hadjioannou, and Zhou (2019), translanguaging aims to bridge the social divides between emergent bilingual communities and the dominant-culture context of larger societies.

Perhaps the most striking deficiency of global textbooks would be the hegemonic and ideological outlook they entail, mainly prompted by the mass cultures and the popular lingua franca. Based on empirical findings, Ulum & Köksal (2019) have claimed that inner and expanding circle cultures manifested in textbooks are infused with ideology and hegemony in which outer circle countries are excluded and marginalized. Tafazoli and Egan (2022) have proposed that EFL textbooks should be devoid of political and ideological embeddedness where possible

to avoid antagonism between cultures. As clearly evidenced by Hagai et al. (2017), ideology could also work its way into local textbooks if manipulated by the governing authority. The research shows how the Vietnamese authorities have deliberately manipulated textbook content as a means of promoting national unification. In contrast, Ali, Hassan, and Hanan (2019) have perceived ideology in EFL textbooks in Pakistan as a positive force that may make people more patriotic, peaceful, courteous, civilized, educated, and more social.

As clearly emphasized in the Global Education Monitoring Report, the exclusion of minorities and marginalized communities in textbooks could occur in two ways: omission and misinterpretation. They further claim that the depiction of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and indigenous minorities in textbooks largely relies on historical and national context (UNESCO, 2020). Hall (2012) has claimed there are fundamental flaws in the education curricula and approaches developed at the turn of the 20th century. There is a critical necessity to devise pedagogical approaches and teacher training to cater to a 'truly multicultural' learner population.

Another key issue in textbooks, in general, is the representation of gender which is one of the most popular topics of discussion in globalized education. Ensuring gender equity and equality in education is a key prerequisite for preparing learners to become global citizens. Llorent (2012) has proposed that the school can have a direct influence on the way in which men and women are represented, and textbooks are specifically influential on the development of students. Davies (1995) has said that gender biases in existing school textbooks are not necessarily inspired by intentional gender biases but rather are in consequence of stereotypical ways of speaking and writing, which are taken for granted. Dorji (2021) has demonstrated how gender biases have influenced textbooks in Bhutan, where the representation of the female character does not reflect the true self of women in Bhutan. It proposes the use of gender screening tools to ensure that text and visuals in the material are gender sensitive.

As stated by Mohamed (2013), textbook evaluation has been approached through three methods, namely the impressionistic method, the checklist method, and the in-depth method. The impressionistic method is employed by analyzing a textbook based on general impressions, and the second method, which in contrast, is more systematic, involves employing a checklist. The in-depth method involves the meticulous examination of all representative features of a textbook. Some case studies, such as Shahid, Qasim, and Iqbal (2021), and Mohammadi and Abdi (2014), have utilized questionnaires as a method of evaluating textbooks. This method could also be considered as an effective means of identifying the issues in a textbook from the perspective of both the teachers and learners.

Not only have different approaches been adopted in designing criteria for evaluating textbooks, but the indicators included in such criteria also

differ. Munir, Suzanne, and Yulnetri (2021) have proposed ten indicators to be included in English textbook evaluation criteria, namely (1) aims and approaches; (2) design and organization; (3) content; (4) skills; (5) vocabulary; (6) exercises and activities; (7) methodology; (8) attractiveness of the textbook and physical make-up; (9) teacher's manual; and (10) practical consideration. Ramadhana, Indah, and Suhardi (2019) have emphasized the layout and physical appearance, content, objectives, language type, language skills, activities and tasks, structures and vocabulary, cultural values, and teachers' needs as prominent indicators in the English language textbook evaluation.

Current trends towards multiethnic societies have compelled contemporary approaches to language textbook evaluation to specifically address the issues in the representation of socio-cultural attributes of learners. Wahyuni et al. (2020) have claimed that the present-day demand for language competence has taken a more comprehensive outlook which includes understanding the culture, norms, and values of the society along with competence in conversational routines. On the basis of an evaluation conducted on Indian ELT textbooks, Bose and Gao (2022) have emphasized the need for textbook compilers and teachers to develop an ethnographic stance that could lead to cultural awareness among learners. They further suggest the incorporation of a higher number of instances of hybridization and critical reflection. Khodabakhshi (2014) has proposed that a textbook should address the specific purposes, needs, interests, age, and cultural characteristics of a desired group of learners.

Several studies on language textbook evaluation have brought forth some significant implications for language textbooks and textbook evaluation. Bouzid, Erguig, and Yeou (2016) have emphasized the importance of learner-centeredness, knowledge-centeredness, assessment-centeredness, and community-centeredness in a language textbook. Ayu and Indrawati (2019) have proposed that while textbooks could have their strengths and weaknesses, it is the teacher's responsibility to be 'more critical and creative' in gaining mastery over the limitations of a textbook. Woodward, Lloyd, and Kimmons (2017) have explored the significance of incorporating students' voices into the textbook evaluation and propose that its quality can encompass a variety of dimensions for students.

The most popular method of evaluating language textbooks in the modern-day era is the preparation of an evaluation checklist. López- Medina (2016) has proposed that checklists are specifically important when novice teachers evaluate textbooks. As claimed by Soori, Kafipour, and Soury (2011), an effective method of conducting a systematic and more thorough examination of a textbook is utilizing a checklist. Roberts, Aziz, and Matore (2022) have emphasized the importance of establishing the validity and reliability of textbooks, apparently, which are not addressed by

existing textbook evaluation checklists. They have examined the incorporation of the Rasch Measurement Model for ensuring validity and reliability in the Malaysian English Language Textbook Evaluation Checklist (MELTEC).

Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011) have critically analyzed the drawbacks of existing textbook evaluation checklists. It has been clearly stressed by them that textbook evaluation checklists have to be supported by empirical evidence. Further, most existing textbook evaluation checklists are rendered impractical by the high number of items in them. Nimehchisalem and Mukundan (2015) have claimed that despite the importance of available English language textbook evaluation checklists, their validity and reliability are hardly ever checked, and those that are validated are rarely tested for practicality. Yazdanmehr and Shoghi (2014) have said that even though there are many textbook evaluation checklists available, the visual aspect of textbooks has been hardly addressed by them. Bouzid, Erguig, and Yeou (2016) have spotlighted the need for a radical shift in textbook evaluation towards active models, which could entice teachers to reflect collaboratively on their textbooks.

From these literature reviews, it is clear that although textbook evaluation has been extensively discussed and a number of approaches have been developed during recent decades, all evaluation criteria may not necessarily be effective in all contexts. Especially there is the critical requirement of developing textbooks and evaluation criteria that could specifically address the socio-linguistic features of different regions and communities. Not only do specific socio-cultural aspects and the identities of learners from diverse backgrounds need to be considered, but there is also the need to incorporate intercultural competence into the study material. As clearly stated by Rodríguez (2015), the traditional perception of culture as a 'static entity' is not only stereotypical but also inaccurate in the 'current process of global communication'.

Based on these theoretical insights from previous literature, the data gathered are analyzed. All the respondents belong to the age group 20-25, of which only 2,43% ( $n=1$ ) are male, and the remaining 97,57% ( $n=40$ ) are female, which clearly demonstrates a gender discrepancy in the sphere of language learning in Sri Lanka. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of Chinese and English proficiency of the samples (see Appendix 1).

Items 2 and 3 (see Appendix 2) focus on understanding the learners' language profile. In a general sense, the data clearly demonstrates that the learners' English proficiency is relatively higher than their Chinese language proficiency. While 56,1% ( $n=23$ ) of the learners have responded that their English proficiency is 'good', the remaining 43,9% ( $n=18$ ) have responded that their English proficiency is at an 'average' level. On the contrary, only 26,8% of the informants ( $n=11$ ) have responded that their Chinese

proficiency is at a 'good' level, while 63,4% ( $n=26$ ) have responded that their proficiency in Chinese is at an 'average' level. 7,3% of the informants ( $n=3$ ) have responded that their Chinese language proficiency is at an 'excellent', and the remaining 2,4% ( $n=1$ ) have recorded that their proficiency in Chinese is at a 'poor' level.

Table 3 shows the situation of existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka (see Appendix 1). Three important conclusions could be drawn from the description in Table 3. Firstly, the learners have a mixed attitude towards using global textbooks for learning Chinese in Sri Lanka. However, they have also stressed the need to localize CFL textbooks. Thirdly, most learners are using textbooks that do not have translations in their mother tongue.

Several significant findings could be inferred from Table 4 (see Appendix 1). From the learners' point of view, the most dominant issue in existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka is that English explanations of their new words are difficult to comprehend for the learners. Students also strongly feel that they find it difficult to understand the cultural terms in their textbooks. From the responses to items 6 and 8 (see Appendix 2), it could be inferred that the learners strongly feel that the exercises are not interesting and that there is not much variation in them. Most learners have also responded that the new words in the textbooks are not properly sequenced. The informants have not demonstrated a strong negative attitude towards the attractiveness of lessons and the illustrations of the book.

Items 17 and 18 (see Appendix 2) are dedicated to obtaining informants' opinions on including translations of words in their mother tongue. 82,9% ( $n=34$ ) have responded that they prefer Sinhala translations in CFL textbooks, while the remaining 17,1% ( $n=7$ ) are against including Sinhala translations in the textbooks. 27% of the informants ( $n=10$ ) have responded that they need Sinhala translations for grammar, and the same number of informants have responded that they need Sinhala translations for new words. While only 5,4% ( $n=2$ ) have responded that they only need Sinhala translations for lesson text. 40,5% ( $n=15$ ) have responded that they need Sinhala translations for all four aspects mentioned.

The final section of the questionnaire is dedicated to obtaining the informant's opinion on including words related to local culture in CFL textbooks, comprising a total of three items. To the question of whether words related to South Asian culture are included in their textbook, most students 70,7% ( $n=29$ ) have responded that such words are not included in their textbooks, while the remaining 29,3% ( $n=12$ ) have responded that such words are included in their textbooks. Item no 20 (see Appendix 2) questioned whether words related to Sri Lankan culture are included in the textbooks, and 82,9% ( $n=34$ ) have responded that words representing their local culture are not included in the CFL textbooks they use, while 17,1% ( $n=7$ ) have responded that such words are available in the textbooks they use. 92,7%

( $n=38$ ) have claimed that they prefer to have words representing their own culture or South Asian culture in CFL textbooks, and only 7,3% ( $n=3$ ) prefer not having such words.

Several important issues are inferred from the teachers' responses in the interviews conducted. 75% of the teachers teach the Chinese language in Sri Lanka in rural or suburban areas, while only 25% teach in urban settings. Only two textbooks are used by the informants as the main textbook, which are Yang (2006) and Xun (2010). The responses from the teachers regarding the existing issues in CFL textbooks and possible solutions are mainly organized under several sections. All informants are using global textbooks as the main textbook for teaching Chinese. Lesson content and context of relevant textbooks are the first areas of concern, and according to the respondents, vocabulary sections are not arranged in a sequential manner. More importantly, while some rudimentary words are omitted in the textbooks, rare or less frequently used words are included. Informants 1, 3, and 4 have also claimed that the number of vocabulary items provided in the early sections of the textbook they use are not sufficient.

Most informants claim that the grammar sections in the textbooks consist of a sufficient number of grammar topics and are well organized. However, the teachers also claim that students from rural backgrounds whose English competency remained at unsatisfactory levels find it difficult to comprehend English translations in textbooks. In addition, the informants reveal that they find it more difficult to explain some grammar terms that are specific to the Chinese language, such as 'complements' in their mother tongue. Situational dialogues are an integral aspect of most foreign language textbooks, which also contain passages referring to different contexts. A key issue raised by the teacher group is that most global CFL textbooks they use only contain proper names of Western origin apart from proper Chinese names.

Monotony is the most prominent issue in the CFL textbooks, as claimed by the informants. The teachers who are using *Hanyu Jiaocheng* reveal that the students easily get bored with the phonetic exercises given in the preliminary lessons. Informants 2 and 6 have specifically stated that exercises in the textbooks are not put together in a way that could accurately and comprehensively test students' language skills on the key topics of the lessons. Another key issue in the activities section is hardly any diversity between activities, most of which are limited to fill-in-the-blank exercises. In addition, most activities are excessively structured and hardly encourage learners to think creatively.

Most informants have responded that the layouts of the textbooks they use are favorable. Although illustrations are printed in grayscale, probably considering cost-effective printing, they are designed in an acceptable quality. However, 75% of the informants have claimed that the illustrations in the textbooks lack creativity and are not eye-catching.

All the informants reveal that the learners are satisfied with the text formatting of the textbooks. Line spacing, indent, text size, fonts, and other page setting standards are well managed so that the text is easily readable to the learner.

Although there is no marginalizing or contempt towards any ethnicity or nationality in the global textbooks that the informants use, they reveal that there is a lack of inclusiveness in them. The informants further illustrate that there are no any references to South Asian culture in the textbooks. Names of places, cities, people, and cultures are limited to Chinese and East Asian or Western cultures, whereas South Asian culture is largely neglected. The informants strongly feel the need for localizing CFL textbooks to incorporate vocabulary and situations related to local cultures. From data gathered from the two groups of informants, it is observed that there are multifaceted issues in existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka, most of which are global textbooks.

The research has evaluated CFL textbooks used in Sri Lanka from multiple perspectives to find out their strengths and weaknesses. It proposes the following implications for developing a checklist for evaluating localized textbooks for Sri Lankan Chinese language learners. Existing studies on the pedagogy of foreign languages, language textbook development and evaluation of language textbooks have been extensively referred to in producing the checklist. This section illustrates the rationale behind each section of the checklist.

In an era when traditional teacher-learner roles and approaches have taken a dramatic shift along with the popularization of learner-centered education, not only do learners need to be involved in the 'decision-making process about textbooks' (Doyle, 2012), but more importantly, textbooks should be prepared in a way that they facilitate student autonomy. Thus, it is expected that the lesson content should be planned and arranged in a way that facilitates learner and learning-centered teaching. The situation of most CFL textbooks used in Sri Lanka is similar to that of the situation stated by Nata (2003), who claims that most English conversation textbooks written by native English speakers are 'old and boring' and 'culturally out of step' with modern day language usage. Therefore, the contemporaneity of the language and vocabulary used in textbooks should be ensured and evaluated.

Vocabulary is one of the crucial elements of a language textbook and is very specifically important in teaching the Chinese language since letters are replaced by picto-phonetic characters in Chinese. Thus, vocabulary teaching in a CFL classroom extends well beyond the mere acquisition of meanings since each new logogram introduced to the learners creates a new form-sound-meaning relationship, unlike in alphabetical languages. Further, as claimed by Scott, Miller, and Flinspach (2012), fostering learners' flexible application of word knowledge goes beyond the mere introduction of heaps of words which can only be achieved through nurturing strategic and motivational

aspects of word learning. One of the key issues raised by both student and teacher informants is that the learners are offered very little or no opportunities to learn words related to their own culture, and South Asian culture is mainly neglected in CFL textbooks.

Acquisition of tonal variation and multisyllabic liaison in Chinese is a challenging task for South Asian CFL learners, and existing global textbooks do not seem to have successfully addressed the needs of learners of diverse language backgrounds. All global CFL textbooks used in Sri Lanka have introduced the Mandarin Chinese phonetic alphabet using phonetically similar sounds in English words. However, since there are phonetically more similar sounds in Sinhala for some Chinese sounds, such as the ph, th, kh, which could be used as phonetic pilots in localized textbooks. One key issue found in the textbook analysis concerning pronunciation is that apart from introducing the phonetic alphabet in the first lessons, much less attention is given to pronunciation practice and review in the latter parts of these textbooks. As stated by Triskova (2017), pronunciation is perceived as a skill acquired during the first stage of learning L2 and mainly neglected during the latter stages of study programs. Teachers often tend to ignore the variety of features of connected speech which accomplish important 'linguistic, communicative and pragmatic functions'. Thus, the unmitigated continuous attention to pronunciation should be an essential aspect of CFL textbook evaluation criteria.

The grammar aspect of language textbooks needs to be paid adequate attention to; authors must attempt to create texts that 'resemble natural speech' and allow easy flow from one sentence to another (Akyel, 2000). Wei (2021) has said that since Chinese is a formless language in which both word order and vocabulary are equally important in conveying the meaning, and although word order reflects a particular syntactic form and logic, its essence lies in the meaning that should be the core concentration in instruction. Some researchers, such as Tubayqi and Al Tale' (2021) and Sun (2018), have revealed how the learners' L1 repertoire could be positively utilized in their acquisition of L2. Thus, a localized textbook could use the advantage of the learners' ability to understand L1 structures to grasp L2 structures better.

According to Chapelle (2016), although different approaches have been taken by authors to incorporate culture into foreign language textbooks, such textbooks 'reflect the goals of the profession to teach culture' as part of the introductory language courses. Kramersch and Vinall (2015) have revealed how the role of foreign language textbooks has shifted from the beginning of the twentieth century and how national cultures and individual communicative competence are 'reinscribed in a new discursive frame'. Despite the very challenges posed by the highly intricate multicultural and, more importantly, multilingual societies, it is paramount to identify the role of native culture(s) in a particular textbook. Gender equity and equality should also be ensured

in a textbook with no marginalization of any gender. As clearly stated by Norova (2020), taking Uzbek EFL textbooks as a sample, the underrepresentation of females in textbooks is a clear indication of the perpetuation of patriarchy, eventually leading to the disempowerment of women in society.

Ulum and Köksal (2019) have said that although culture has been the most prevalent factor in globally and locally written textbooks, particular ideologies are often infused with implicit or explicit biases. Afzal et al. (2021) have revealed how the PTB English textbook authors in Pakistan have attempted to present a particular religion as the dominant religion of the country, concentrating particularly on the ideology of Pakistan. Tafazoli and Egan (2022) have proposed that curriculum and textbook designers must ensure that their own cultures are preserved through textbooks while incorporating maximized constructivist opportunities. The analysis of the existing CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka reveals that although they do not hegemonize any dominant culture in the world, there is less cultural diversity depicted in the textbooks. All of the proper names are selected from either East Asian or Western settings.

Dassanayake (2021) has proposed that a partial immersion or a translanguaging instructional model would preferably be more appropriate for teaching foreign languages, specifically in teaching the Chinese language in Sri Lanka. Another key issue raised by the informants is that they quite often find the English translations in global textbooks incomprehensible and misleading. As stated by Lopez-Jimenez (2010), marketing yield often gets the upper hand over pedagogical yields in global textbooks, which have clearly influenced the translation of vocabulary into learners' L1. Based on the responses of informants and existing research findings, the present research proposes that the inclusion of L1 translations for vocabulary is essential in evaluating localized CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka.

Undoubtedly, the appeal of the teaching material, including the size, colors, fonts, illustrations, tables, and others, has an impact on learners' acquisition of their content. The logograms of the Chinese language have a unique visual appeal that differs much from the orthography of other languages in the world in which Chinese calligraphy plays a vital role. However, it is doubtful whether the maximal use of the artistic value of Chinese characters has been utilized by global CFL textbooks to make them more appealing to the readers. Even though Chinese culture is rich with images, symbols, and ancient traditional artworks, which have a spiritual appeal apart from their visual allure, such visual imagery has hardly been utilized in global CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka.

Taking the situation of Zimbabwe, Mhone et al. (2022) have revealed that owing to factors such as import duties on foreign textbooks, yearly revision of textbook editions and financial constraints of learners, most textbooks are beyond the reach of learners. The situation of CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka is much

similar to this, and most learners are unable to afford original textbooks due to the same reasons mentioned. The authors and publishers also have to consider the financial situation of local contexts before designing textbooks, where they have to compromise between factors such as size, paper quality, image colors, and the final market price for the consumers. However, it is paramount to ensure that a certain standard in printing is maintained to ensure the durability and appeal of the textbooks.

Based on these quadruple perspective analyses; the present research proposes a tentative checklist that includes 37 items for evaluating localized CFL textbooks in Sri Lanka. In addition to the items discussed, cohesion and coherence among lesson content, progressive arrangement of lesson content, clarity of language, and usage of transcription factors have been considered in preparing the checklist. The checklist items have been divided into four major sections, general attributes, lesson content, localization and culture sensitivity, layout and appearance that can be seen in Table 5 (see Appendix 1).

## CONCLUSIONS

Teachers should attempt 'cultural localization' of 'culturally unfamiliar, alien or inappropriate' cultural elements in global material so that the learners can relate to them (McGrath, 2013). While the cultural aspect is only one serious challenge for local learners, the inability to comprehend translations in lingua franca, exclusion of vocabulary related to the local context, and most importantly, neglecting the advantage of learners' L1 repertoire in learning the new language system are critical issues in using global textbooks. With the many deficiencies and incompatibilities identified in global textbooks, the critical need for localizing Chinese language textbooks suitable for Sri Lankan context is stressed by both teachers and learners. The tentative checklist proposed by the present research has been designed to establish a fundamental framework for evaluating such localized CFL textbooks. Further research is essential to identify the specific issues faced by learners of different ages, contexts, and CSP courses to design localized textbooks suitable for their requirements.

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## Appendix 1

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Chinese and English Proficiency of the Samples

	N	Minimum	Maximum	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>
Chinese Proficiency	41	1,00	4,00	2,6098	0,66626
English Proficiency	41	1,00	2,00	1,4390	0,50243
Valid N (listwise)	41				

Table 3 The Situation of Existing CFL Textbooks in Sri Lanka

		Foreign textbooks are suitable		There is the need of a localized textbooks		Sinhala translations are included in textbooks	
Valid	Yes	22	53,7	37	90,2	3	7,3
	No	19	46,3	4	9,8	38	92,7
Total		41	100,0	41	100,0	41	100,0

Table 4 Deficiencies in the Existing CFL Textbooks in Sri Lanka

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>
I find explanations of new words difficult to understand	41,5	36,6	14,6	7,3		1,878	0,927
The lesson is not interesting	12,2	29,3	22	31,7	4,9	2,878	1,144
I find it difficult to understand English explanations of grammar points	46,3	12,2	29,3	12,2		2,073	1,126
The outlook and images in the textbook are not appealing	14,6	26,8	24,4	29,3	4,9	2,829	1,159
The new words are not properly sequenced	14,6	34,1	26,8	24,4		2,609	1,021
There is no variation in exercises	29,3	19,5	24,4	24,4	2,4	2,512	1,227
I do not understand some of the cultural terms	53,7	4,9	26,8	14,6		2,024	1,193
Exercises are not very interesting	17,1	24,4	34,1	22	2,4	2,682	1,082

Table 5 Categories of Items in the Tentative Checklist

No	Category	Key concerns	No of items
1	General Attributes	Cost-effectiveness	01
		Student autonomy	01
		Language level	01
		Achievement of ILOs	01
		Durability of material	01
		User-friendliness	01
		Contemporaneity of language	01
2	Lesson Content	Pronunciation	05
		Vocabulary and Characters	05
		Grammar and Syntax	04
		Exercises	05
3	Localization and Culture Sensitivity	Localization	03

Table 5 Categories of Items in the Tentative Checklist (Continued)

No	Category	Key concerns	No of items
4	Layout and Appearance	Culture-sensitivity	04
		Illustrations	01
		Fonts	01
		Use of Chinese calligraphy	01
		Highlighting, transcription, acronyms	01
		<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

## Appendix 2

### Checklist for Evaluating Localized Chinese Language Textbooks in Sri Lanka

5	Very Satisfactory
4	Satisfactory
3	Neutral
2	Unsatisfactory
1	Very Unsatisfactory

- Marks will be allocated by adding the Likert scale gradings for all 37 items together. A textbook which obtains a minimum of 111 marks with an average above 28 marks for section 3 is considered as a suitable localized CFL textbook.

SER	Criteria	Scale				
		5	4	3	2	1
<b>Section 1 - General attributes</b>						
1	The price of the textbook is affordable					
2	Student autonomy and learner centered learning is facilitated by the textbook					
3	Chinese language of the textbook is appropriate to the level of the target group					
4	The textbook facilitates achievement of ILOs					
5	The textbook is printed using durable, standard material					
6	The textbook is user-friendly from an overall perspective					
7	Chinese language used in the textbook is not outdated					
<b>Section 2 - Lesson Content</b>						
	<b>Pronunciation</b>					
8	Sounds in the pinyin chart is given a suitable example from L1 or L2					
9	Pronunciation practice is continued in advanced sections					
10	Pronunciation is practiced both in isolation and synthesis					
11	Tonal variation and multisyllabic liaison are given adequate attention					
12	Place and manner of articulation of sounds are illustrated					
	<b>Vocabulary and Characters</b>					
13	Vocabulary is graded considering difficulty, necessity and typology					
14	Form-sound-meaning relationship of Chinese characters is explained					
15	Stroke order and character writing is well explained					
16	Each lesson includes a set of supplementary vocabulary					
17	Simple and comprehensible translations and explanations are given for vocabulary items					
	<b>Grammar and Syntax</b>					
18	Grammar explanations are clear and allows easy comprehension					
19	Syntax is explained in comparison to word order of L1 and L2					
20	Grammar lesson text is interesting and contextualized					
21	Parts of speech are well defined					
	<b>Exercises</b>					
22	An adequate number of exercises are given after each lesson					
23	Exercises are interesting and has variety					
24	There are clear instructions for exercises					
25	Exercises are graded and sequenced according to difficulty levels					
26	ILOs are reflected through the exercises					
<b>Section 3 – Localization and Culture-sensitivity</b>						

SER	Criteria	Scale				
		5	4	3	2	1
	<b>Localization</b>					
27	Words related to South Asian culture and Sri Lankan culture are included					
28	Sinhala /Tamil translations are given where necessary and appropriate					
29	Learners' L1 repertoire is maximally utilized					
	<b>Culture-sensitivity</b>					
30	Culture-loaded terms and specific jargon are adequately explained					
31	Gender equity and equality are ensured throughout the textbook					
32	The textbook promotes inclusiveness of learners of all ethnicities					
33	Learners can develop intercultural competence through the textbook					
<b>Section 4 - Layout and Appearance</b>						
34	The illustrations used in the book are attractive, high quality and creative					
35	Font size and type are easily readable and attractive					
36	Chinese calligraphy is utilized to enhance attractiveness					
37	Appropriate formatting is used in highlighting, transcription, acronyms etc.					