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**Project Title:** Early bilingual language and literacy skills in English and Tamil for primary students

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## Heritage Language Maintenance with regard to Tamil language in Singapore

### Background

- Because English is increasingly becoming a dominant language in Singapore, mother tongue languages may be considered as heritage languages in many cases.
- Factors such as **early oral language development, home environment, one's confidence and interest, teachers' beliefs and practices** have been identified as important to the maintenance of heritage languages.
- The role of such factors in maintaining students' Tamil use in Singapore is currently under researched.

### Research Questions ?

- 1a. Is there a similar pattern of students' Tamil use at home and in the classroom?  
1b. Does the perceived confidence and interest of students' use of Tamil reflect the amount of actual language use in and out of classrooms?
2. Which beliefs and aims about Tamil language use (SST and WT) do teachers hold with regard to its maintenance in Singapore?

### Methodology

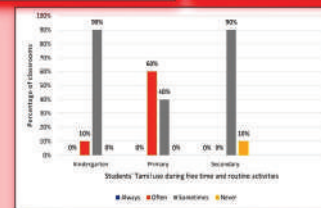
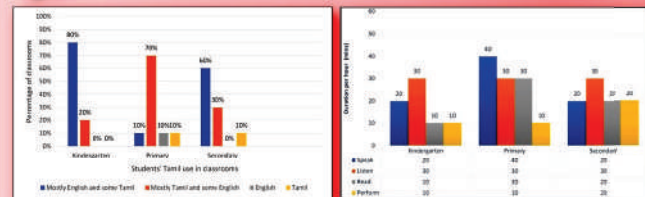
- Online teacher questionnaire
- A **quantitative summary** and a **qualitative review** of questionnaire responses was undertaken to gain a more holistic approach.
- A **pilot phase** was used to help gauge the effectiveness of the questions, receive feedback and revise the questions to yield a more succinct and clear survey.
- 30 teachers, 10 from K, P, S, respectively participated in this anonymous online survey.

### Conclusion

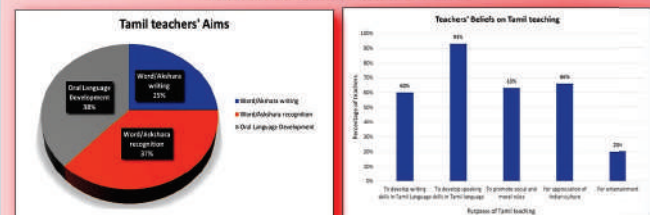
- Similar patterns** of students' Tamil use at homes and in classrooms.
- Perceived confidence and interest of students' use of Tamil **coincides** with the amount of actual language use in and out of classrooms.
- Factors related to heritage language maintenance are also **key contributors** to current students' Tamil use in Singapore.
- In contrast to prior studies, the findings highlight that **students' Tamil usage increases as they grow up**, through school experiences and conversations with peers.
- Possible suggestions to ensure Tamil language thrives as a living language in Singapore could be **encouraging early exposure, sensitising parents** in using Tamil at home and **involving the Tamil community** in Singapore.

### Findings

#### Pattern of Tamil use in and out of classrooms



#### Teachers' Aims and Beliefs



- Oral language development and developing speaking skills as most relevant purposes of teaching. Reasons spanned across themes such as **early exposure, language acquisition, confidence and making Tamil a living language.**