

Investigating the Presence of Tamil Language in English Language Classrooms

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Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study investigates the presence and pedagogical function of Tamil in English language classrooms in Tamil Nadu, India. Situated within debates on translanguaging, bilingual education, and the Grammar Translation Method, the paper examines how teachers' language choices and instructional resources reflect differing learner profiles across curriculum contexts. Data was collected through classroom observations, field notes, teacher discussions, and analysis of instructional materials in three secondary English lessons in a private school: two International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) English-medium classrooms and one Tamil-medium state-syllabus classroom. The findings reveal a marked contrast between the two contexts. In the IGCSE classrooms, Tamil was absent from both teacher talk and resources, reflecting teachers' perceptions of English as the necessary language of exposure and their students' stronger English proficiency. In the state-syllabus classroom, however, teacher talk was predominantly in Tamil, especially when explaining grammar concepts such as direct and

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indirect speech, while published resources remained entirely in English. The study argues that translanguaging practices in these classrooms are shaped less by broad policy positions than by teachers' perceptions of learner needs, students' home literacy practices, institutional norms, and uneven bilingual proficiency. It proposes a spectrum of translanguaging practices, ranging from separate bilingualism to explicit translanguaging pedagogy, to account for the observed differences. The paper concludes that Tamil can function as a valuable scaffold for English learning when used purposefully, but its role must be understood as context-sensitive rather than universally applicable across Tamil-speaking educational contexts.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Grammar Translation Method, Learner Needs, Tamil, Tamil-Speaking Classrooms, Translanguaging

1. A Multilingual Approach to Language Education

With multilingualism having become the norm of the modern world, bilingual education has become widespread across many schools in many countries (Cenoz, 2012). Bilingual education essentially refers to “the use of two, or more, languages in the instruction and assessment of learners” (Garcia & Woodley, 2014, p. 1). Under this form of education, the argument that has been traditionally put forth is that languages should be kept in isolation from one another and only the target language should be used in the language classroom (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In fact, there are several terms that are coined to describe this, such as, “separate bilingualism” (Creese & Blackledge, 2008) and “parallel monolingualism” (Heller, 1999) (as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105). The use of more than one language in a language classroom is “rarely institutionally endorsed or pedagogically underpinned” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105).

Nevertheless, there has been a growing awareness about this rigidity in bilingual education (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Alongside this, the importance of adopting a multilingual approach to language education has gained increasing attention. Such a multilingual approach is known as “Translanguaging”. It refers to “the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 3). As Conteh (2018) mentions, translanguaging can be deemed as two main forms. One would be as a form of interaction, reflecting the “complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals” (Garcia & Lin, 2016, p. 117).

Another would be as a form of language pedagogy of which the benefits are immense (Conteh, 2018). Most importantly, translanguaging is not simply about the switching between languages but also about leveraging a unified “linguistic repertoire” (Garcia & Lin, 2016, p. 120) for meaning-making and identity construction (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

India is characterised by extensive linguistic diversity, with multiple languages used in everyday communication (Durairajan, 2017). As Pattanayak (2014) notes, no single language can adequately meet the country’s diverse communicative demands (as cited in Durairajan, 2017). Consequently, bilingualism is widely regarded as the norm in India (Kalia & Reese, 2009). Classroom contexts therefore tend to be inherently multilingual. In Tamil Nadu, formal schooling is organised as bilingual education, with Tamil taught as the first language and English as the second. Schools are broadly categorised by medium of instruction as either English-medium (EM) or Tamil-medium (TM) schools.

While recent studies shows that the enrolment rate in English medium schools is on the rise, it has also been reported that many students lack sufficient English proficiency to learn only through that language (Deivanayagam & Sanjeeviraja, 2025). As a result, teachers who teach such students tend to resort to the usage of the first language, Tamil. This is known as “unofficial bilingualism” (Deivanayagam & Sanjeeviraja, 2025, p. 81) or also referred to as a “weak version of translanguaging” (Garcia & Lin, 2016, p. 124). These terms describe the practice of language teachers engaging in translanguaging practices instinctively, simply based on their understanding of their students’ learning needs even though it is not officially endorsed (Vijayakumar et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study examines the extent to which Tamil is used in English language classrooms in Tamil Nadu, with particular attention to teachers’ language choices and the use of instructional resources in bilingual settings. The study addresses the following research questions:

- (i) To what extent is Tamil used in English lessons across teacher talk, learner talk, and instructional materials in International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and state-syllabus secondary classrooms?
- (ii) In what ways does Tamil, through translanguaging and Grammar Translation Method (GTM) practices, facilitate English language learning in these lessons?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Translanguaging as a Pedagogy

The effectiveness of translanguaging pedagogy in language classrooms, is a topic that has been widely debated upon (Vijayakumar et al., 2023). Although, the findings from research have thus far been contradictory (Almoayidi, 2018), translanguaging pedagogy is effective when it is employed with intentionality and while being cognisant of learners' needs (Cahayan et al., 2016). In this situation, the use of the first language in the teaching and learning of the second language can yield significant benefits (Conteh, 2018). Such a multilingual approach to language learning improves understanding and stimulates students' activity in both languages (Lewis Jones & Baker, 2012). The Welsh researchers, who had played a significant role in the early developments of translanguaging concluded that in translanguaging "both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organise and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy and, not least, learning" (García & Lin, 2016, p. 118). Baker (2001) highlights four key potential educational advantages to translanguaging and one of them is emphasised on translanguaging's role in helping the development of the "weaker language" (as cited in García & Lin, 2016, p. 118).

Most importantly, the "linguistic repertoire" (García & Lin, 2016, p. 120) of a bilingual can be used as a vital resource in the teaching and learning of languages. This is explained by Hornberger (2005) as she states that "bi/multilinguals' learning is maximised when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills, rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices" (p. 607). In relation to Hornberger's idea, Cummins (1981) introduces the notion of "common underlying proficiency" (as cited in Benson, 2017, p. 102) referring to the literacy and cognitive skills/knowledge that are being developed in one language can be made accessible to the learner in another language as that additional language is being learnt. Through deliberate comparison and contrast exercises, this exchange of literacy skills within languages can be facilitated (Benson, 2017, p. 102). An example of such exercises can be seen from Sanmuganathan's (2014) study on the impact of first language on English as Second language (ESL) writings of undergraduates of the University of Jaffna. He discusses the importance of English teachers providing explicit form of instruction on the grammatical differences between Tamil and English languages to create "syntactic awareness among students" (Sanmuganathan, 2014, p. 180).

Similar to Cummins' notion, Sen (1993) explains that the “more enabled language” of a student is known as his/her “intrinsic capability” that needs to be leveraged for the “wellbeing of the child” (Sen, 1993, as cited in Durairajan, 2017, p. 309). It is therefore imperative that teachers value what students bring into the classroom, as education involves not only the transmission but also the co-construction of knowledge. Essentially the capabilities of the first language can be used as a scaffold in the teaching and learning of the English language (Brunner, 1985).

2.2 Grammar Translation Method

Translation is a major aspect of translanguaging and has been one of the most pertinent tools in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (Bolkvadze, 2023). Given that, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is a form of translanguaging pedagogy that has had a central role in the teaching and learning of English especially in English classrooms of TM schools where students require additional help in improving their English language proficiency (Deivanayagam & Sanjeeviraja, 2025). Specifically, it has a significant role in aiding students acquiring a “deep understanding of grammar rules, sentence structures and the written language” (Abduraximova & Arikan, 2025, p. 1). Explicit grammar instruction, vocabulary memorisation and translation exercises are aspects which this method strongly emphasises on. One of the most salient aspects of GTM would be that the lessons being taught using this method are mostly done in the mother tongue, with minimal use of the target language (Prator & Celece-Murcia, 1979). The use of mother tongue helps the students understand complex grammatical structures, which eventually is useful when it comes to interpreting literary texts (Abduraximova & Arikan, 2025). Apart from that, translation holds a key role in this method whereby, texts are translated word for word from English to the native language. Through this, students can acquire a strong sensing about the functionality of words and phrases in both languages. Particularly, they can “internalize new vocabulary, recognize patterns in sentence structure, and understand the nuances of meaning between languages” (Abduraximova & Arikan, 2025, p. 2). Beyond just helping in the mastery of the target language, it also aids in developing the “metalinguistic awareness of the learners” (Deivanayagam & Sanjeeviraja, 2025, p. 90). As such, in GTM, translation is viewed as an essential pedagogical tool (Priya & Jayasridevi, 2018). However, it is also important to note that, while GTM is undeniably a form of translanguaging pedagogy, the premises of translanguaging

are not succumbed to only that. It goes beyond structured translation and includes spontaneous, flexible classroom discourse that centres student agency.

In a study done by Priya and Jayasridevi (2018), the benefits of using translated texts were widely discussed. Specifically, an example of how short stories written in Tamil and their translations were used in English language classrooms in Tamil Nadu was reported in the study. The Tamil texts were given as pre-reading resources before class and the translated texts were being read aloud in class as a form of “round robin reading” (Priya & Jayasridevi, 2018, p. 121). This exercise had apparently, improved students’ listening as well as reading and pronunciation skills. The study further explains that such translation exercises enable students to easily remember large number of grammatical rules and acquire a wide range of vocabulary. Moreover, they are able to gain a deep understanding of the “linguistic structure and the linguistic phenomenon of (the) two languages” (Priya & Jayasridevi, 2018, p. 121).

2.3 Previous Studies on the Use of the First Language in English Language Classrooms

There are multiple studies on the use of first language in the teaching and learning of English language. Durairajan’s (2017) study on using first language as a resource in English classrooms, explores various situations from different parts of India in which the first language can be seen present in the English language resources. For instance, she reported about a study regarding the usage of Tamil and English to create self-instructional bilingual reading materials for first-generation learners. Another example cited was, the use of “multiglossaries” (Durairajan, 2017, p. 312) whereby the first language was used as a resource to explain the meaning of sophisticated words in English. Apart from that, Durairajan’s study provides a deep analysis into the benefits of using first language in English language resources. One significant benefit that she highlights apart from the typical consequential benefits of translanguaging was that the students “moved from being ‘silenced and dumbled’ to feeling either empowered or at least confident” (Durairajan, 2017, p. 313). While this study strongly emphasises the need for the inclusion of first language in especially the materials used for English language teaching as the “knowledge of word and world is best accessed” (Durairajan, 2017, p. 309) through the more enabled language, the context of Tamil Nadu classrooms was not widely discussed.

Ramamoorthy (2020) studied teachers’ attitude towards the use of Tamil language in English classrooms higher educational institutes. His study analysed the multilingual education

context and students' profiles in Tamil Nadu. Given that many of the students' exposure to English only takes place in schools, many struggle when they have to learn everything in English (Ramamoorthy, 2020). The study reports that majority of the English teachers' who participated in this study preferred bilingual teaching in both school and graduate education, considering the needs of such first-generation students. Several participants highlighted that even beyond the students' home language, the culture that they are very much accustomed to can be used as a scaffold in their English language learning. For instance, one of the participants' responses was related to how the use of Tamil movies, references and comedies can be used to enhance students' conceptual knowledge in English (Ramamoorthy, 2020). While this study is pertinent to understand the need for a multilingual approach to teaching in the Tamil Nadu context, much of the study's focus was confined to the context of students in higher educational institutes.

One essential factor that many of these studies have taken limited consideration about would be the diverse and changing student profile in Tamil Nadu. Some of the papers tend to overgeneralise that all the students in Tamil Nadu are first generation speakers, hence unconsciously creating the perception that all of them lack English proficiency. However, the reality is that the number of English-speaking families have started to increase and thus, there is a significant portion of the students who are sufficiently proficient in English due to their home literacy. In view of this, it is important to understand the extent to which the first language, Tamil, is being used in English classrooms in Tamil Nadu. Do all classrooms adopt the translanguaging pedagogy, considering the diverse student profile? This is an essential question which the paper aims to address. Specifically, this study examines this question across syllabus differences as well.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative design to analyse the extent of the presence of Tamil language in both the language choice of the teacher as well as the resources used at the secondary level. The site of study was a private school in Tamil Nadu. The school offers education under several different syllabuses. As for this study, a total of three classrooms and three of the respective teacher participants (Selvi, Priya and Kavitha) were chosen, upon receiving consent. Out of the three, two classrooms which were the 7th grade and 9th grade used the IGCSE syllabus.

The third classroom was a 12th grade one in an affiliated government school that used the state syllabus. The IGCSE classrooms were English-medium (EM) ones, whereas the state-

syllabus classroom was a Tamil-medium (TM) one. Classrooms of two different syllabus types were chosen so that the study can be conducted across a wider range of student profiles. Each classroom was observed for one full English lesson, with field notes focusing on language choice, instructional moves, and resource use.

The primary data for this research was collected through field notes from the lesson observation of the three classrooms. Moreover, pre- and post-observation sessions with the respective teachers took place in tandem with the lesson observations. These sessions took place mainly to understand what the teachers' preferred choice of language in both their instructions and resources was as well as the rationale behind it. To seek clarification regarding these, the teacher participants were asked two main questions, which are "To what extent do you use Tamil in your teaching and resources. Why?" and "Do you think that using the first language would enhance English language learning among your students".

The field notes collected from these sessions also constitute to the primary data. The photographs taken of resources used during the lesson observations and resources that were shared by the teachers during the pre- and post-observation sessions were also included as part of the primary data. The resources could be anything within the realm of, "coursebooks, videos, graded readers, flash cards, games, websites and mobile phone interactions" (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 143). The selection of teacher participants was done by the school. The lesson observations were done with the consent of the participants. A limitation of this study is that the study was conducted in only one city in Tamil Nadu.

The field notes from the classroom observations and teacher discussions were organised and examined to identify recurring patterns in teachers' language choices, the use of Tamil in explanations, and the role of instructional resources. Particular attention was given to moments where teachers moved between English and Tamil while explaining concepts or giving instructions, as these instances showed how translanguaging practices occurred in the classroom.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the use of Tamil in English language classrooms varied considerably across the observed lessons. In the published instructional resources used in all three classrooms, no form of Tamil was found. However, the use of Tamil differed significantly in

teacher talk. While no Tamil was observed in the teacher talk of the two IGCSE classrooms, the teacher talk in the state-syllabus classroom was predominantly in Tamil.

(a) IGCSE Classrooms

The lesson that was conducted in the 7th grade IGCSE classroom was on the ‘History of English Language’ as well as a recap of ‘errors of agreement’. The main resource that was used was slides, which contained videos, GIFs, comics, pictures aiding the content. No physical resources, such as textbooks, were used during the lesson.

On the other hand, 9th grade IGCSE classroom’s lesson was on ‘Review writing’. Students were asked to sit in pairs and write a review of an English movie they had watched in one of their previous lessons. The resources used included notebooks in which they did their review writing as well as the whiteboard which was used by the teacher to write information regarding the movie. Afterwards, an English movie named ‘Rio’ was played for the students to watch.

Across both IGCSE classrooms, all instructional resources were in exclusively in English. During the post-observation sessions, the teachers shared the coursebook and workbook, *Cambridge IGCSE, English as a Second Language* as well as notes prepared by the school’s EL department. Upon reviewing them, no form of Tamil was found in the resources. Moreover, upon observing both the teachers’ teacher talk, no form of spoken Tamil was found. Spoken Tamil was not required at all to aid the students’ English language acquisition.

(b) State Syllabus Classroom

The lesson conducted in the state-syllabus classroom focused on the two different types of speech, ‘Direct speech’ and ‘Indirect speech’ as well as grammatical changes that occur while changing sentence structures. Examples illustrating these changes were written on the blackboard and students followed the lessons with their English textbooks. Both the textbook and the blackboard resources did not have Tamil included in them. However, upon reviewing the some of the students’ textbooks, Tamil translations were found handwritten by the students, which served to aid their understanding of the particular English text. While all the resources were entirely in English, the teacher talk was predominantly in Tamil, with conversational English being used occasionally.

The differences between the IGCSE and state-syllabus classrooms in terms of curriculum context, medium of instruction, and instructional resources are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of IGCSE and State-Syllabus Classrooms

Component for Comparison	State Board	IGCSE
Overview of curriculum	Developed by each state's Department of Education. Follows National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) guidelines	Based on international curriculum that is heavily UK-based Developed by the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) which is part of the University of Cambridge in UK.
Syllabus	Specifically set in the context of the state Created with a more regional and national focus	Consists of a more international focus and is globally relevant
Medium of Instructions	Use of regional language which is deemed to be relatively easier for students to understand (except of English medium schools where both English and the regional language tend to be the mediums of instructions)	Only English as it caters to the international standards of the syllabus
Focus on languages	Greater emphasis on regional language to help students who have trouble grasping English by giving them the opportunity to study the syllabus in their native language	Equal emphasis on English and other offered languages
Resources	'Samacheer Kalvi' Textbooks produced by the Tamil Nadu (TN) state board	Cambridge International Textbooks published internationally

These findings are discussed based on three main factors which are, teachers' perceptions, changing home literacy practices and lastly, learners' needs.

4.1 Teachers' Perceptions: Constraints vs Openness

Based on the data collected from the two classrooms of the IGCSE syllabus, no form of Tamil was observed in either the language choice of the teacher or the resources used. As such, clarification was sought from the teachers regarding their choice of language in the classrooms during the post and pre observation sessions. Priya responded:

It (using first language) would eventually cause the students' attention to deviate and may result in them starting to speak in their mother tongue during the lesson. Since English is the "business language", our focus would mainly be on providing exposure to only that and not compromising it in any way.

This shows that, the teacher believed that using the first language would act counterproductive and hinder students' progress in the learning of the English language. This perception mirrors what Creese and Blackledge (2010) term as "emotional implications" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105) for insisting on separate bilingualism in language classrooms. Moreover, the teacher's perception of English being the "business language", resonates with the sentiment of English being the "societal language of power" (Hornberger, 2002, p. 19) that is being shared about in many studies with regards to multilingual education. For instance, Chimirala (2017) essentially explains this as: "Teachers operate in a context of overt linguistic hierarchy that places English at the top of the pyramid and every other language subservient to it" (Chimirala, 2017, p. 164). Hence, given the teacher's perception that the first language is seen as a deterrence to the learning of English language, this could be seen manifested in both the teachers' choice of language in their instructions and resources.

Despite this, when probed about their impression about translanguaging, it was interesting to find out that, they seemed open to it. For example, Selvi mentioned that she has considered using "Tamil humour" and "Tamil advertisements" as forms of resources to teach persuasive writing in English. She acknowledged the need for multilingual resources because, the use of mother tongue could ultimately be used to connect with the students at an "emotional level" and potentially enhance their learning. This can be correlated with idea about how translanguaging can contribute to identity construction as students will be able to form a sense of identity when they are given the opportunity to relate back to their mother tongue (García & Wei, 2014). Moreover, Selvi's idea of using Tamil media to enhance students' learning is evident in Ramamoorthy's (2020) study as well. However, her perception of English language seems to outweigh the possible benefits of translanguaging. Most importantly, while both Selvi and Priya seemed open to the use of first language, at the school level, students are only encouraged to speak in English in English classrooms. Chimirala (2017) terms this as the teachers' "obligation to abide by institutional norms" (p. 151).

4.2 Home Literacy Practices

Secondly, the factor of home literacy practices had a deep influence on determining whether the first language was used in the English language classrooms. Both Selvi and Priya who teach in the IGCSE classrooms mentioned that they did not have to use Tamil in their teaching because their students are proficient enough in the language to be directly taught in that. They attributed this to the fact that, “More and more students come from a household where they gain their Tamil proficiency from their grandparents and English proficiency from their parents” implying that the number of English-speaking families are on the rise. This can be linked to the idea of “Parental involvement” that Kalia and Reese (2009, p. 124) have highlighted as an aspect of home literacy practices where “(p)arental involvement is similarly related to children’s oral language skills...(and) creates opportunities for learning experiences in home by making literacy-related materials available to the children.” (pp. 124-125). Both Selvi and Priya further mentioned that with improving socio-economic status, English literacy is gaining more prominence in families in Tamil Nadu. With enhanced socio-economic conditions, the students tend to have more access to learning resources which contributes to enhancing their English proficiency even beyond the classroom (Sen & Blatchford, 2001). Thus, with home literacy practices having contributed to students’ development and improvement of their English proficiency, the teachers mentioned that they do not require the aid of Tamil in their language education. However, the teachers also highlighted that this is not the case for all the students studying in Tamil Nadu and mostly applies to students studying in private schools. This is evident in the study by Mohanty (2017, p. 271) on multilingual education where he explains that,

Good quality EM schools belong to upper and middle classes and... language socialisation practices in their homes usually provide a considerable degree of early attitudinal and proficiency development support to children both before and after they join school.

This concept of home literacy practices determining whether the first language is needed in the teaching of English language was also acknowledged by the Kavitha who teaches in the state syllabus classroom. According to the data collected from this classroom, the use of Tamil was significantly observed in the teacher’s instructional language. Crucial explanations of grammatical

concepts were mainly done in Tamil, except for when it came to stating specific terminology. In fact, conversational English was very rarely observed between the teacher and students. When questioned about the teacher's choice of language, Kavitha said the following:

Majority of the students need the aid of their mother tongue in order to comprehend concepts in English.

She attributed this profile of her students to their home literacy practices mentioning that many of them “lack reading habits” and come from families that are “predominantly Tamil speaking”. Hence, this causes a gap between the students' ability in the English language and the school's language practice, which as a result must be bridged using their home language in the classroom. In other words, the students' varied home backgrounds and home literacy practices result in the existence of a diverse student profile with language learning needs differing from student to student. This is in fact highlighted by Mohanty (2017) who points out that the “contexts of English literacy development are quite complex and the nature of school practices divergent” (p. 272).

4.3 Learners' Needs

The learning needs of the students play a key role in determining the usefulness of translanguaging pedagogy. This was evident in especially the state syllabus classroom where the teacher constantly needed use Tamil that essentially is a form of the students' prior knowledge.

For example, during the lesson observation, when Kavitha was teaching about the two different forms of speech, ‘Direct speech’ and ‘Indirect speech’, she first began her explanation by translating them:

In Tamil, we say direct speech and indirect speech as நேர் கூற்று (ner kootru) and அயர் கூற்று (ayar kootru).

Similarly, while explaining about the four different types of sentence structures which are ‘Declarative’, ‘Interrogative’, ‘Imperative’ and ‘Exclamatory’, the use of translated terms in Tamil was observed as well. Students appeared to follow the explanation closely which suggests that the translation helped to anchor the grammatical concepts in familiar terms. Hence, the use of GTM

to explain grammar rules was predominant throughout the lesson. Deivanayagam and Sanjeeviraja (2025) report a similar case study of the use of Tamil translations and terms this method as “Building on student’s knowledge” whereby the first language is used to “build on the learner’s knowledge” (p. 90), similar to the concept of scaffolding.

This inevitably proves the underlying idea of translanguaging that the first language can be used as a resource to improve the “weaker language” (Baker, 2001, as cited in García & Lin, 2016, p. 118). Moreover, it even coincides with the idea of how the first language can be used in the co-construction of knowledge (Bruner, 1985). However, the first language usage was observed only in a classroom with students who tend to be more proficient in their mother tongue as compared to the English language, unlike what was observed in the IGCSE syllabus classrooms, it shows that use and benefits of translanguaging pedagogy vary depending on the learners’ needs. This aligns with the argument that translanguaging must be context-sensitive and responsive to students’ repertoires, rather than being uniformly applied across all classrooms (García & Lin, 2016).

Another interesting observation in the state syllabus classroom was that the first language was only observed in the instructional language. No form of Tamil was observed in any of the resources used, such as the blackboard or the textbooks. When clarification was sought regarding this during the post-observation session, Kavitha responded that,

It is not a great idea to have Tamil in the resources because it will only lead to students keeping only their mother tongue in mind. In fact, the English textbooks that are being provided by the government are good and sufficient.

This can be seen reflected in what Hornberger (2002) has to say about multilingual resources which is that, while teachers are more accepting of using the first language in their teaching and learning, when it comes to resources, they are not very accepting. Moreover, this can be seen as a sign of employing translanguaging practices with intentionality. Kavitha is well-aware of her students’ learning needs and knows exactly the areas in which the aid of first language is needed and not. This ties in with the argument by Creese and Blackledge (2010) that, the learning of target language may get replaced by the first language, if teachers are consistently reliant on it and use it without “instructional purpose” (as cited in Vijayakumar et al., p. 8).

(a) Spectrum of Translanguaging

Based on the classroom observations, the three teachers demonstrated different levels of translanguaging in their instructional practices. As part of the analysis of the study's findings, a spectrum of translanguaging was devised to illustrate these differences. As shown in Table 2, the teachers can be positioned along a continuum reflecting varying degrees of translanguaging use. This spectrum serves as a visual aid to show the extent to which translanguaging was used in the two classroom contexts and where teachers stand in terms of their decision to employ translanguaging pedagogies.

Table 2. Spectrum of Translanguaging Practices Observed in the Classrooms

Translanguaging Position	Description	Teacher
Separate bilingualism	Strong emphasis on keeping languages separate. The first language is not used in teacher talk or instructional resources.	Priya, Selvi
Separate bilingualism with limited translanguaging	Languages are generally kept separate, but the teacher may be open to using the first language occasionally when necessary.	<i>Not observed</i>
Unofficial bilingualism	The first language is used instinctively to support students' comprehension, without deliberate pedagogical planning.	Kavitha
Unofficial bilingualism with intentional translanguaging	The first language is used with some degree of instructional purpose to support learning.	<i>Not observed</i>
Explicit translanguaging pedagogy	Deliberate and systematic integration of both languages in teacher talk and instructional resources.	<i>Not observed</i>

5. Conclusion

Overall, research literature has shown that the benefits of translanguaging as a pedagogy are significant. However, in practical terms, its usage and effects vary across different classroom contexts. According to the data produced by this research, the main factor that ultimately determines the extent of the usage of translanguaging is the students' profile. Teachers' perceptions of using the first language are in fact influenced by their understanding of their students' English proficiency levels. Secondly, through this research it is evident that the vast difference in student profile is attributed to the differences in home literacy practices. This eventually determines whether students do need the aid of their mother tongue in enhancing their

learning of the English language. Lastly, the effectiveness of translanguaging pedagogy can be seen in the case of uneven bilingualism. In the case where the students' level competency in the English do not match their proficiency in their home language, the latter could effectively be used as a resource to improve the former. This is explained by the factor of learners' needs which ultimately constitutes to student profile.

In the context of Tamil Nadu, the practicality of using translanguaging as a language pedagogy is admittedly far more complex than just taking a handful of factors into consideration. Specifically, the situation of highly diverse student profile in the secondary classrooms as well as institutional norms and language policies in Tamil Nadu (Deivanayagam & Sanjeeviraja, 2025), preventing the use of home language in English language teaching, may potentially hinder language teachers from being able to reap the maximum benefits of translanguaging pedagogy.

As an exploratory study of translanguaging practices across two syllabus contexts, the analysis relied primarily on classroom observations and teacher perspectives, and opportunities to analyse extended learner talk were limited. While the field notes provided insights into teachers' language choices and instructional practices, future research could build on this work through longer-term classroom ethnography, including audio-recorded classroom interactions and more systematic documentation of learner talk. Such studies would allow for a deeper understanding of how translanguaging practices emerge in classroom discourse and how learners themselves engage with multiple linguistic resources during learning.

Apart from that, an important finding of this research would be regarding the use of multilingual resources. Even in the classroom where the first language is used in the instructional language of the teacher, it cannot be observed in the resources. As such, future research can be done to further understand why teachers are not as open to using multilingual resources as much as using the first language in their instructional language.

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