



MONASH University

**Talking Tamil, Talking Saivism:
Language practices in a Tamil Hindu temple
in Australia**

தமிழ் பேசல் சைவம் பேசல் :
ஓர் அவுஸ்திரேலியத் தமிழ் சைவ கோவிலில் பின்பற்றப்படும்
மொழி நடைமுறைகள்

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Monash University on 23 January 2017

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Abstract

The role of religion for migrants in Australia has generated much interest in recent years. A growing area of scholarly inquiry is how religion can assist in migrant language maintenance. This thesis looks at the interaction between language and religion within the goal of heritage language maintenance and how this plays out in a particular migrant religious institution and for a particular ethnoreligious group, namely Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus. It is the result of an 18-month ethnographic study situated in a Tamil Hindu temple in Australia.

The study investigates the role of the Tamil language in the temple, the types of language practices that the second generation employ in the space, and the relevance of the Tamil language and Hindu religion in the lives of second-generation devotees. It provides an insight into how migrant youth skilfully use their heritage language and English to achieve communication and index their hybrid identifications as they grow up in Anglo-dominant, multicultural Australia. It also highlights the important role played by the temple in supporting these migrants.

At a macro-level, this study shows how the temple, as a religious institution, not only provides a space for Hindu worship, but one for socialising, cultural identification and the transmission of language, religion and culture. In Sri Lanka the Tamil language and Hindu religion are closely linked in a Tamil Hindu culture and this strong language-religion ideology is reflected in the language practices of the temple. However, in the Australian setting, the temple faces sociocultural change including an increasingly ethnically and linguistically diverse congregation and disengagement by the second generation. Therefore there is a tension between the extent to which the temple remains linked to its Tamil identity and to which it must change its policies to accommodate those who do not speak Tamil.

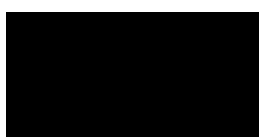
On the micro-level, as an insight into language practices for the second generation, the thesis focuses on one class in the temple's Tamil-medium religious school. Naturalistic linguistic data collected from a small class of teenage devotees reveals that translanguaging is the usual code for interactions. While English is dominant in the students' lives, practices in the classroom show that approximately 30 per cent of their speech contains Tamil, thus evidencing the language-religion ideology being transmitted to the next generation. English and Tamil features perform particular but also overlapping functions in the classroom. The students and teacher create a safe space where they can use their individual repertoires to explore and challenge their beliefs and positions in terms of their heritage culture and religion. Through the analysis of selected linguistic extracts, the multicompetence, creativity, criticality, cooperation and subversion of the students is evident in their language use.

While pure Tamil is not necessarily used in the class, the ways in which Tamil features are adopted to signal a connection to Tamil culture, the ethnoreligious community and to perform a Tamil Hindu identity are highly significant. It forms part of the picture of a group of second-generation migrants who can practice their heritage language, religion and culture with confidence in Australian society, and at the same time, bring their strong proficiency in English into these expressions of heritage, identity and faith.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Acknowledgements

My sense of personal achievement in submitting this thesis is accompanied by humility and appreciation for the intersection of so many people's efforts, for the opportunities afforded to me as a student, and for the favourable conditions that brought this PhD to fruition. Firstly, I wish to say that this thesis is the result of one migrant's journey in Australia, a nation founded on the denial of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty and thick with a history of colonialism, migration and multiculturalism over the past 230 or so years.

Thank you to the people at the Saiva Temple who I cannot acknowledge by name for reasons of confidentiality. The project would not have been possible without the access granted to me by the board of directors. I am so grateful to the individual directors, volunteers and devotees who helped me during my visits, answered my questions, and went out of their way to involve me in temple activities. I would like to thank the teacher and students of the Year 9 Saiva class of 2015 for allowing me into their classroom. It was truly delightful to know them and to witness their lively interactions. I also thank the parents at the Saiva School for their cooperation and for taking the time to educate me about Tamil Saivite culture in Sri Lanka and Australia.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project has been meeting Sri Lankan Tamil migrants who, in their varied roles, have been willing to share their own stories, passionately discuss issues and connect me with the wide network of community members who share similar interests. I am especially grateful to Ravi and Nithiya Anandarajah, Niro Kandasamy, Kulam Shanmugan, Thiru Thirunanthakumar and the staff at the (unnamed) Tamil language school. Along with the people at the Saiva Temple, their help has greatly contributed to a richer analysis and presentation of the data in this thesis.

I have been very fortunate to study under the supervision of Drs. Louisa Willoughby, as principal supervisor, and Simon Musgrave, as associate supervisor, and this thesis is a result of their enduring commitment. I would like to deeply thank them for providing the guidance, feedback, belief and enthusiasm that was critical to its creation. In addition, thank you to Dr Julie Bradshaw who contributed to the inception of the study. I am grateful for the academic, administrative and financial support provided by staff at the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics; for the excellent services delivered by Monash University Library; and for the Australian Postgraduate Award provided by Monash University. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the School of Culture, History and Language at Australian National University during the first year of my candidature.

This thesis would be incomplete without the work of Dr Surjani Uthayakumaran, who not only painstakingly transcribed and translated the Tamil linguistic data, but acted as a Tamil language consultant and provided invaluable input for my analysis. Professor Suvendrini Perera acted as an external advisor to help guide my project so that it was sensitive to general Sri Lankan Tamil concerns.

When it comes to the “after hours” emotional and practical assistance provided by family and friends, I could write a chapter. Alastair Harris has been my right hand man and continues to support me in generous and unlimited ways. I would like to thank my family, especially my parents Virasmi and Leslie Perera, who in many ways inspired this research based on our individual Sri Lankan hybridities and migration journeys. To my friends and relatives in Braidwood, Cairns, Colombo, Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere who have offered encouragement, advice and diversion when necessary, over many years, I say *mikavum nanRi* (thank you very much).

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1 Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 The context of this study

This thesis broadly concerns heritage language maintenance for migrant groups in Australia and the factors that affect this practice. More specifically, it explores the interaction between language and religion within the goal of language maintenance and how this plays out in a particular migrant religious institution and its congregation. The study focuses on Tamil Hindu temple that has been given the pseudonym of the Saiva Temple.

In her book on linguistic diversity and social justice, Piller (2016) talks about a rhetoric in migrant destination countries like Australia that celebrates the resultant linguistic and cultural diversity. However a different rhetoric places that same multicultural diversity in a negative light – multiculturalism is blamed for a decrease in social cohesion (despite the many factors involved), and seen to be eroding what some call a true “Australian” identity (often based on Anglo-Australian norms and generally ignoring the primordial status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations). For example, in his maiden speech to Federal parliament in 2016, Senator Bob Burston, a member of One Nation, a far-right political party that is gaining popularity in Australia, was specific in criticising Islam and supporting a selective migration policy based on ethnic and religious grounds. He said “Now, in Australia, ethnic and religious identities are at the forefront of politics, part of an aggressive multiculturalism” and that “Sydney and Melbourne are patch quilts of ethnic and religious groups as people choose to live among their own kind” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016, pp. 58, 62). The inference of the latter sentence is that “other” people living “among their own kind” can only lead to problems. While some think that assimilation is an obsolete concept in Australia’s discourse around multiculturalism, Burston’s words indicate that this is not the case.

While we can argue that the appreciation of Australia's linguistic diversity has come a long way in the last few decades, the same is not so apparent for religious diversity. The public discourse around religion today often refers to radical Islamism, growing Islamophobia and citizens protesting against the erection of a mosque in their locality. Bouma (2012, p. 283) writes that by law, "Australia has a very inclusive definition of religion which is used to include rather than exclude religious groups". Omoniyi (2006b, p. 124) describes this inclusiveness as "societal multifaithism", where intra- and "inter- network variation in religious practice and in behaviour directed towards religion" is recognised by society and the state. But, in Senator Bob Burston's words, religion is now one of the main aspects of multiculturalism that is seen as a challenge to social cohesion. While much of the criticism has been unequivocally directed at Muslims, such comments highlight the need for an understanding of the heterogeneity of religion in Australia in general, especially the role of non-Christian religions in contributing to the settlement of migrant groups and the maintenance of their diverse linguistic, religious and cultural practices. Such understanding can assist Australian society to shift to a multifaithism that encourages accommodation and participation in more than one type of religion (Omoniyi, 2006b). When we consider current research is pointing to the higher incidence of psychotic disorders, due to marginalisation from mainstream society, amongst immigrant groups in multicultural urban centres, the significance of language, religion and culture is not to be taken lightly (see University of Cambridge, 2016 for Hannah Jongsma's study).

In his essay on the dangers of essentialising "world religions" Geaves (2005, p. 87) advises that "ethnicity and religion are notoriously difficult to define" and are not fixed concepts especially in the migration context. Furthermore we should not view religious groups as unified or homogenous. At the same time as we acknowledge that identity is fluid, we must not forget that those identities still matter to people and can have long-term relevance (Geaves, 2005). Bouma (2012, p. 281) proposes that to create informed social policy

we need “an awareness of the religious profile of a society and sensitivity to its religious diversity and to the ways services are delivered”.

To fully understand Australia’s religious diversity we must also investigate how immigrant religions adapt and change when they are brought to the West. Bouma (1996, p. 57) observes that “It is not possible for any cultural element, let alone a religion, to become part of another society without itself changing in some ways”. In addition, Baumann (2009, pp. 149–150) says, “continuing the transplanted religion without acculturation and changes will alienate the very tradition to later generations of the immigrants”. Thus, not only do these transplanted religions face the challenge of adapting to suit the requirements of Australian society, they must also contend with the challenges of transmitting the religion, which may be viewed negatively or in an essentialised fashion by larger society, to the next generations. One factor in passing on the religion is whether and how it incorporates the transmission of an associated heritage or community language to the next generation. While religion is assumed to promote the maintenance of a heritage language there can be a tension when one aspect, either religion or language, has to be given priority over the other. Baumann’s (2009) view is that the language of a religion inevitably shifts to the language of the country of residence to prevent alienation of the younger generations. Furthermore, the mixed messages about linguistic diversity in Australian society could certainly be contributing to many young migrants’ preference for English.

Piller (2016) warns about the covert ways in which linguistic homogeneity (towards English) is normalised, often in what we call “linguistically diverse” or “super-diverse” (cf. Vertovec, 2007) cities like Melbourne and Sydney. While linguistic diversity in these so-called “multicultural” societies is seen in a positive dimension it is often located “in the people who are imagined to not fully belong” while marking the other group as “normal” (Piller, 2016, p. 20). Piller (2016, p. 29) points out that when it comes to social acceptability, we “create the linguistic homogeneity of the standard

language as the imagined ideal against which the diverse repertoires of individual speakers are judged". She adds, "repertoires that deviate from the imagined standardized norm, and particularly repertoires characterized by language contact and language change, are usually rendered invisible" (Piller, 2016, p. 29). As Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001, p. 243) put it "a dominant ideology of homogeneity in heterogeneous societies raises questions of social justice, as such an ideology potentially excludes and discriminates against those who are either unable or unwilling to fit the norm". Herein lies one of the problems I hope this thesis will address. I hope to provide a case study of how a community of people who are defined along ethnoreligious lines, namely Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus¹, are promoting the visibility of their ethnic language (or linguistic repertoires) against the landscape of linguistically diverse yet Anglo-dominant Australia. In particular I hope to show that the linguistic repertoires of young Sri Lankan Tamil people, which are characterised by language contact and change, more than adequately allow their speakers to prosper in Australian society. The young are able to strategically and skilfully employ their languages to not only function in and contribute to mainstream society but to also maintain strong ties to their Sri Lankan origins and Tamil Hindu identities, thus helping them to be confident, well-adjusted "hybridised" young people of Australia. The need for their repertoires to normalise towards English is neither warranted nor helpful for their sense of identity and wellbeing.

Hall (1990, p. 235) says the diaspora experience is not defined by "essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity ... by hybridity". He refers to Kobena Mercer (as cited in Hall, 1990, p. 236) who talks about a syncretic dynamic across cultures such that those minority cultures can critically appropriate "elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture". He adds "this hybridising tendency is most

¹ At this point I should mention that I am a Sri Lankan migrant who has been raised predominantly in Australia, however I am not Tamil nor am I a Tamil speaker by birth. I will expand on my own identity and position in Chapter Three in regards to the methodology of this study.

apparent at the level of language itself” and can destabilise the linguistic domination of English. While Mercer was writing about Black Independent cinema in Britain, there is a parallel between what Hall (1990) and Piller (2016) highlight – that through their creative use of language, diasporas can in fact change the way that normalised language is perceived in an Anglophone nation like Australia and allay the “normal” group’s fears about the former groups’ bilingual or diverse repertoires.²

The intersection between language and religion in Australia is an under-researched area. While there has been an in-depth sociolinguistic study into the maintenance of migrant languages in ethnic Christian churches (cf. Woods, 2004), it is timely to investigate how non-Christian institutions such as mosques or Hindu temples³ play a role in the maintenance of migrant religions, languages and cultures with a view to arguing how they can contribute to social cohesion in multicultural Australia. With the rapid rise in Hindu migration into Australia since the turn of the millennium, it is opportune to focus on Hindu religious organisations. Han (2013), in a study of language in a Canadian Baptist Chinese church, referred to a call from Winter and Pauwels (2006) to shift our focus to language maintenance outside of the home and family domains, especially regarding the language and identity practices of the second generation. She added that “Religious institutions are generally recognized as comprising important social spaces facilitating language shift or maintenance (cf. Wang 2002), but we know relatively little about how it happens” (Han, 2013, p. 102). This study aims to address this gap in the research.

In summary, this thesis is about how a Hindu temple adapts its activities in Australia; how language, religion and culture are pushed to change in the

² This is not only pertinent for Australia’s non-Anglophone migrant groups but for its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in cases where Kriol or Aboriginal English are viewed as substandard varieties of English.

³ Islamic mosques and Hindu temples both have a ritual language, Arabic and Sanskrit respectively, but they are also sites for migrants to gather and thus, there is potential for some heritage language maintenance to occur among ethnolinguistic groups in such congregations.

diaspora setting. It aims to cover four interconnecting themes; the interaction between language and religion for one ethnoreligious migrant group and one Hindu temple in Australia; the ways that the temple facilitates language maintenance for the second⁴ generation; the context-specific, individual and hybridised linguistic practices that the second generation employs (which challenge the normalisation of English as the language of “Australians”); and the way this connects to their identification according to ethnicity and religious affiliation. As Clyne (2003, p. 2) said:

Linguistic behaviour in relation to languages in contact is both an expression of multiple identity and a response to multiple identity. It also constitutes the satisfaction of a need to communicate and act in particular situations and follows an understanding of language as a resource.

This thesis will highlight how language in contact is used as both a symbolic and functional resource by Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in a temple in Australia.

1.2 Overview of the literature

Before I present the research questions that this thesis aims to address, I will outline the main areas of sociolinguistics that provide a paradigm for the study.

The thesis is firmly positioned as a study in the sociology of language and religion with a focus on the role of the religious institution and religious education in a migrant setting. I will summarise the main developments in this relatively recent conceptualisation of language and religion. However I also want to show how religion and the study of the sociology of language and religion connect to the broader framework of language contact and maintenance when it comes to discussing immigrant religions. In addition, as part of understanding migrant language maintenance, it is important to

⁴ Those who are born overseas and migrate as children are sometimes referred to as the 1.5 or 1.75 generation (such as in Rumbaut, 2004). But I will use the term “second generation” to include those children who are born in Australia (to first-generation migrant parents) and those who migrated to Australia under the age of 18.

highlight the recent thinking on hybridised language practices, popularly termed as translanguaging, since this phenomenon is central to discussions about the interplay between language and religion for second-generation migrants.

Thus, the literature review is divided into three parts: the general area of heritage language maintenance; the factor of religion and how it interacts with language (especially for Tamils); and mixed language practices.

1.2.1 Migrant language maintenance

Clyne (2003, p. 1) said that “language contact is a multidimensional, multidisciplinary field in which interrelationships hold the key to the understanding of how and why people use language/s the way they do.” The study of migrant language maintenance and shift was significantly developed by Joshua Fishman and is recognised as a separate research area in the sociolinguistics of language contact, sitting alongside related research in bilingualism and code-switching (Clyne, 2003). Borland (2006, p. 24) defines *language maintenance*, in an immigrant context, as the continued use by a migrant person, in the country of their settlement, of a language that they have used prior to their migration. She differentiates language maintenance from *intergenerational language transmission*, the latter meaning that the aforementioned migrant person passes that language onto the next generation through formal and/or informal methods. For the purposes of this thesis I will apply Borland’s (2006) definition of language maintenance but use it to encompass second-generation migrants who learn the heritage language⁵ in the country of settlement. Thus language

⁵ I use the term *heritage language* in this thesis as defined by Hornberger and Wang (2008, p. 6) for the US context: a language other than English to which an individual has familial or ancestral ties. This is comparable to the concept of language inheritance proposed by Rampton (1990) and to the term *community language* (Clyne, 1991) which has been used widely in Australia. While not without its issues (see Blackledge et al., 2008 for example) I will use *heritage language* since this is the most popular term and, as Pauwels (2016, p. 23) acknowledges, *community language* carries a different implication in the Northern Hemisphere, as the national language of countries in the European Union.

maintenance means the transmission and continued use of the heritage language, in the country where the first generation has immigrated.

Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels (1995, p. 115) say that *language shift* can mean a gradual change in the balance between two languages used in a number of areas or “domains” in a person’s life or it can mean the total replacement of one language by another in all domains. This can happen over a number of years or generations or very quickly. The concept of domains was utilised by Fishman (1991) and is defined as “contextualised spheres” or “interactional contexts of communication” such as within the family, workplace, neighbourhood etcetera (Clyne, 1991, p. 47). Generally there is adequate research (Veltman, 1983, for example) now to show us that language shift increases markedly with the second generation and by the third generation, many groups have moved to the language of the host country. However a few studies (such as Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002) in the US, and Sofu (2009) in Turkey) show that this is not a foregone conclusion pointing to external factors, like close contact with the ethnolinguistic community in the host country or a focus on education, bringing awareness of language maintenance to the third generation. In the Australian context, Borland (2006) found that, for the Maltese migrant community, the motivating factors of a desire to maintain engagement with the homeland and to participate in localised practices of diasporic membership, including church attendance, assisted in some third generation members maintaining the language to an extent.

1.2.1.1 Factors influencing language maintenance

Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels (1995) studied the factors influencing migrant language maintenance and shift in an Australian context,, building on the work of Kloss (1966). The authors found that many factors can be ambivalent as to whether they help or hinder language maintenance, with the outcomes for different ethnolinguistic migrant groups depending on a complex interplay of factors, conditions and circumstances. Kipp et al. (1995) also noted that some factors can affect the individual (such as

whether they were born in the home versus host country, their age, period of residence in host country, gender, education and qualifications, exogamous versus endogamous marriage and reason for migration) while other factors affect the speech community as a whole (including size and distribution of ethnic group, policy of the host community towards the language, position of language within the cultural value system of the ethnic group and the typological distance of the language from English).

Smolicz (1999) developed a well-known theory regarding the cultural value systems of an ethnic group, known as core value theory. He proposed that an ethnic group will have particular values that are regarded as fundamental by its members and provide a structure for that group's cultural identity. These are aspects of culture such as language, religion, family structure or attachment to the homeland. Other aspects may not be as significant to the group and therefore, "may be altered or shed altogether without the danger of rupturing the whole cultural fabric of the group" (Smolicz 1999:27-28). While the theory is critiqued for treating culture as a static rather than dynamic phenomenon (Kipp, Clyne et al. 1995:129-30), it is useful in highlighting the importance of certain aspects of identity to, at least, particular sections of an ethnolinguistic community.

The absolute and fundamental role of home and family in maintaining the heritage language has been asserted by many scholars particularly by Fishman (1991, 2005). Pauwels (2005, p. 125) says that any external government policy to strengthen the maintenance of migrant languages will only be of value if "the family initiates CL (community language) acquisition and provides a practice ground for its continued use". More recently, the centrality of family has been promoted by King, Fogle and Logan-Terry (2008, p. 907) in their work on family language policy defining it as "the explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members". They stress the critical role of parental language ideologies and parental modelling in heritage language transmission. Furthermore, Fogle and King (2013) remind us not to neglect the agency of

the child in shaping how language maintenance and shift occurs in the home.

Outside of the home domain there is the role of ethno-specific institutions in providing an, often social, forum for the use of the heritage language. As part of Fishman's (2005, p. 427) theory towards reversing language shift, he listed in his Graded Intergenerational Dislocation Scale, the significance of Stage 6, "the organization of intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood efforts as the basis of Xish mother-tongue transmission". Fishman (2005, p. 416) wrote:

Without such self-supported, self-protected and self-initiated islands of demographically concentrated local non-English language-and-culture transmission, ... non-English mother tongues lack "safe houses" or "safe harbors" wherein the young can be socialized according to the languages, values, and traditions of sidestream [as opposed to mainstream] cultures.

Fishman (2005) saw Stage 6 as the key key point where a diglossia could be established for a community such that the heritage language would have a strong presence in such "cultural" domains outside of the private sphere even if the dominant language was present in domains outside of the Xish community.

This research project, conducted in the Saiva Temple, very much focuses on one of Fishman's (2005, p. 416) "safe harbors" in promoting a diglossia between Tamil and English for the second generation growing up in Australia. However my study also incorporates the important role of home and family in supporting the cultural domains. I will show how parental ideologies not only impact on the language policy of the family (cf. King et al., 2008) but on that of the temple and the temple's religious school.

At this point, I will briefly address the use of terms like speech community, ethnolinguistic group, ethnoreligious community and migrant group in this thesis. While I use these terms for the purpose of referring to the temple devotees of Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in my study, I acknowledge the

tension around using concepts like “group” or “community” to describe these subjects, given that they imply a certain amount of homogeneity and wholeness (cf. Blommaert & Backus, 2011). While I do make general statements about the people connected to the temple as a whole, I understand that the “whole” contains a diverse group of people with, at times, varied interests and motivations (as this thesis will show in part). Such groupings are not fixed and one’s membership may change through different stages of life as well as change in the value one places on them at a particular time in life. As Blommaert and Backus (2011, p. 24) put it, linguistic repertoires are the property “of people whose membership of social categories is dynamic, changeable and negotiable, and whose membership is at any time always a membership-by-degree and ratified by the judgments of others.”

In this sense when I use such terms as listed above I am in fact referring to a community of practice. As defined by Wenger (2001, p. 2339) “a community of practice is a group of people who share an interest in a domain of human endeavor and engage in a process of collective learning that creates bonds between them”. Membership requires three components: a minimum level of knowledge of that domain, engaging in joint activities and information sharing, and accessing a shared repertoire of resources or having a shared practice which is developed over time. Wenger (2001, p. 2341) suggests that it is useful to look at a linguistic group as a “constellation” of communities of practice. Rather than a uniform group, it is a “complex set of interconnected communities of practice, each with its own local ‘mini-culture’”. This point will become more salient as we progress through the thesis and see the particular behaviour attributed to one small group within the larger Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu community.

1.2.1.1.1 Particular conditions for Sri Lankan Tamils

Having outlined some general theory on the factors influencing language maintenance, I want to highlight some conditions which are specific to Sri

Lankan Tamil migrants. In particular, the factor of reasons for migration is a significant one. As will be expanded in Chapter Two, socio-political conditions in Sri Lanka, including the discriminatory Sinhala Only language policy, have had lasting effects on how Tamils view their heritage language.

In Perera (2015) I investigated the role of homeland conditions in influencing language maintenance and shift for Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhalese migrants in Australia, based on a series of interviews with first generation migrants in Melbourne. My study found that one's experience of English in Sri Lanka (via socioeconomic status, access to an English education, and whether it was the language of the home) determined one's willingness to shift to English after migration. For Tamils specifically, the role of English changed with the civil war as English proficiency became a means of emigration, both in terms of employability and gaining visas to enter Anglophone nations. Canagarajah's (2008) study of language maintenance for Sri Lankan Tamil families in Canada, the UK and US found similar complexity with the prestige attributed to English in post-colonial Sri Lanka. He also noted a shift in the diaspora where maintenance efforts focused on cultural maintenance rather than language maintenance as a more achievable goal for the next generation. This shift in focus impacted on the family's ability to control language transmission (Canagarajah, 2008, p. 171).

My study also found that a sense of nationalism, partly resulting from the division reinforced by the civil war, was at play in the motivation for some migrants to maintain their heritage language, while others actually shifted to English partly because of their aversion to nationalism and ethnic divisions (Perera, 2015). Lastly, the role of religiosity was explored, and the study found that a devout faith in the ethnic religions of Buddhism and Hinduism supported heritage language maintenance. Language had a specific role to play in the practice of one's religion, however, religion and

language were also seen as two ways of maintaining moral values in a new country, particularly for the second generation (Perera, 2015).

1.2.2 Religion

In the study of diaspora identities and practices, religion has been recognised as a key influence. As Anderson (1991, p. 13) writes, all the great religious communities are imagined through a sacred language which is seen to be linked to a “superterrestrial order of power”.

At the same time, the mention of religion has been somewhat sporadic in sociolinguistic research on language maintenance of the past. In Kloss’ (1966, p. 209) seminal research on German-Americans he found that religion led the German-American Catholics to establish their own parochial schools with German as the medium of education which, in turn, assisted German language maintenance. In his work on language shift, Fishman (1991, pp. 16–17) wrote about the positive conditions for language maintenance when the language is associated with a “distinctive religious tradition dissimilar from and discontinuous with those religious traditions surrounding it”.

Since the new millennium, the tide is turning with more scholarly studies recognising the significance of religion. In fact, Vaish’s (2008, p. 451) study of religion in Singapore found it to be “the only domain which strongly maintains mother tongue use, followed by that of family and friends”. Thus religion is increasingly being viewed as worthy of investigation for its strong influence on heritage language maintenance in diaspora communities.

In this section, I will introduce the study of the nexus between religion and language, initially as a broad area of research, before focussing on the specific area of religion and language maintenance for migrants.

1.2.2.1 The sociology of language and religion

In 2003, Spolsky wrote an overview of the research to date regarding language and religion. He acknowledged the plethora of work on religious language⁶ and earlier work on the translation of sacred texts, the linguistic effects of the spread of religion, and the historical language use patterns of different religions. But he pointed out that “the way that religion and language interact to produce language contact is virtually virgin territory” (Spolsky, 2003, p. 81). In support of this view Spolsky (2003) noted that the first *Encyclopedia of Language and Religion* (edited by Sawyer and Simpson in 2001) did not include articles dealing with “bilingualism, multilingualism, language contact or language policy and planning” (p. 81). In a similar vein, Jaspal and Coyle (2010, p. 18) noted that “contemporary thought on language and religion has largely been anglocentric [*sic*]”. However, Spolsky (2003) wrote of hope for further study and theoretical development in this new area of multilingualism, partly due to the organisation of the first international colloquium on the sociology of language and religion held in 2002.

The publication of *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion* (Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006) which resulted from the inaugural meeting marked the beginning of the sociology of language and religion as a field of inquiry. The editors wrote about developing a “new path of scholarship” and a theoretical framework for the sociolinguistics of religion “which considers religious language and religious domains for language use” (Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006, pp. 4, 7). In the introduction, Omoniyi and Fishman, as well as Spolsky, all write about the tentative nature of the theories, taxonomies and principles put forward for study in this new field given the exploratory and diverse range of topics of research that fall into it. However Fishman’s

⁶ Darquennes and Vandenbussche (2011) state that the term “religious language” has been defined by various scholars. It can be a language that “is consistently used with religion” or within a religious domain of language use (Samarin. 1987, as cited in Darquennes & Vandenbussche, 2011, p.6) and also as the language that allows people to participate in religious custom.

(2006, p. 24) decalogue of theoretical principles for the sociology of language and religion (“largely drawn from the sociology of language”) was put forward as the starting point. Fishman (2006, p. 24) concluded that his principles needed to be expanded, modified, abandoned and added to in order to develop a “theoretically anchored and empirically supported sociology of language and religion”.

Since that first publication in 2006, further work has been done to develop and capture the progress of the field including another edited book (Omoniyi, 2010b), two dedicated journal issues (one in *Sociolinguistica* (Darquennes & Vandebussche, 2011) and the other in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (Mukherjee, 2013)) as well as work to bring identity into the study of language and religion (Souza, 2016a, 2016b). Ten years after Omoniyi and Fishman’s (2006) edited volume, a small group of scholars (including myself) convened at another colloquium for the sociology of language and religion as part of the Sociolinguistics Symposium 21 in Murcia, Spain, to revisit Fishman’s seminal decalogue of theoretical principles. At the conclusion of the meeting, scholars acknowledged that while empirical evidence and scholarship in this sub-field is building, work on some common theoretical bases still needs to be done.

In Souza’s (2016b, p. 196) summary of the work in this field, she highlights research by Gregory, Choudhury, Ilankubaran, Kwapong and Woodham (2013) as showing “the importance of learning heritage languages in providing children with access to the religious and cultural membership of their communities”. Souza (2016b) also discusses work on researching religion as a dimension of identity. She states that “one fundamental issue in the studies of language and religion is that both aspects play an important role as identity markers” (Souza, 2016b, p. 207). Religion as a marker of community membership and identity for migrants are two themes that will be revisited in this thesis.

1.2.2.2 Religion and language maintenance in the migrant context

Spolsky (2003) first wrote of the dearth of research into immigrant experiences of language maintenance and shift in various religious denominations but, more recently, this has changed. I will briefly outline some of the studies which share similar interests with my own study.

Much of the research has focussed on Christian religions in migrant destination countries. There have been studies into ideologies and institutional-level policies behind language use in specific ethnic churches, such as in Australia (Woods, 2004), the UK (Souza, Kwapong, & Woodham, 2012), the US (Chai, 1998) and Canada (Han, 2013). Both Woods and Souza have formed theories to conceptualise the relationship between religion and language and these will be discussed further in Section 1.2.2.4.

When it comes to non-Christian religions, there are fewer sociolinguistic studies. One of the few located in a Hindu temple was in the Netherlands, and looks at the tension between the use of Dutch, Sarnami and Hindi for the institution and its devotees (Kroon, Kurvers, & Remie, 2011). However other studies of non-Christian religions and language tend to be on a broader level, not confined to specific congregations, such as Gogonas' (2012) study of the role of Islamic and Coptic religions in the use of Arabic by second-generation Egyptian migrants in Greece or Wang's (2002) exploration of how religious affiliation correlates with mother-tongue retention for Chinese migrants in Canada. In addition, Pandharipande (2010) investigates how the languages of Hinduism are adapting to the US at a national level. Her focus is on the ideologies that are helping English to become a language for Hindu practice. There have been a few studies that specifically look at Tamil Hindus and the use of Tamil in their religion and these will be outlined in Section 1.2.2.5.

Of particular interest to my own study is research which looks at religious institutions as sites for heritage language maintenance. As Han (2013, p.

126), concludes in her study of a Baptist Chinese church in Canada, “participation in minority (religious) institutions in general may contribute to minority language maintenance as long as these institutions constitute spaces and opportunities for youth to interact in minority languages informally and/or formally, with peers intra-generationally and/or with adults inter-generationally”. Specifically, this thesis complements the growing number of studies of religious institutions that provide religious education in a heritage language. Most studies are from the UK including Souza et al.’s (2012) aforementioned work on the language of faith lessons in ethnic churches and the tension between the ideology of the institution and the language medium of the classroom as played out by the teachers and students.

There has also been a focus on the processes involved in gaining faith literacy at a young age and the learning of religious texts. Gregory et al. (2013) describe how migrant children committedly practise reciting key texts with perfect pronunciation and delivery for the purpose of performance in front of the congregation. The subjects of the study are identified as Bangladeshi British Muslim, Tamil Hindu, Ghanaian Pentecostal and Polish Catholic. The same researchers have also studied how young Tamil Saivites develop their faith literacy through the playing of games and re-enactment of temple rituals (Gregory, Lytra, & Ilankuberan, 2015), and the strategic use of language by a teacher in a Tamil Saiva classroom (Lytra, Gregory, & Ilankuberan, 2016a). These studies will be revisited in subsequent chapters.

Rosowsky (2014) looks at how the reading of sacred texts is taught in the associated language in selected Jewish, Muslim and Sikh complementary schools in the UK. In these scenarios, the ability to decode the “classical” or “liturgical” language of the religious texts, recorded in non-Roman scripts, is the emphasis of teaching, with students learning to read through phonics but not gaining an interpretation of the meaning of each word. Rosowsky

(2014) concludes that while the teaching methods are not necessarily directly assisting in heritage language maintenance, the practice of reading and decoding the classical texts is seen to be culturally and spiritually significant and an important aspect of identifying with the ethnoreligious group. In Owodally's (2011) study of language practices in Sunni madrassahs in Mauritius, she also found this phenomenon of literacy without reading for Arabic texts. However she noted the additional use of Urdu, Mauritian Creole, English and French as languages used to create meaning and comprehension between teachers and students, and thus reflecting the complex multilingualism of Mauritius and identities of the participants.

In the US context, a study of how Mexican immigrant children learn to read and memorize key Catholic texts, in what is called "doctrina" or Spanish-based Catholic religious education, found that the teaching and learning of the texts becomes a ritual process in itself. Unlike Rosowsky's (2014) findings, part of this ritual involves the children and teacher interpreting and constructing relevant personal meaning from the texts through the use of Spanish (Baquedano - Lopez, 2008).

Lastly, in Singapore, Chew's (2014) study looks at the language choice in three Muslim madrasahs⁷ and finds the language medium chosen for religious education is a reflection of the religious identity that each institution wants to portray. In simplistic terms, the medium of Arabic represents a more traditional pedagogy in one school whereas English in another represents a more liberal approach. The Malay medium in the third madrasah is seen to promote an authentic Muslim and indigenous Malay identity at the same time (Chew, 2014).

⁷ Note that, in the case of Singapore, Islam is not an immigrant religion. However it is a minority religion that is mainly practiced by the Malay ethnic group. The long-established Chinese immigrants are the dominant ethnic group.

In the context of the studies mentioned in this section, my own research is situated as an investigation into language use in a non-Christian setting, a particular religious institution, and a particular religious education context, in Australia. It not only looks at macro-level ideologies about the relationship between a heritage language and its associated religion, but it also draws on ethnographic work to systematically investigate naturalistic linguistic data with a view to demonstrating how language and religion interact for the second generation. While other studies look at the learning of language of classical texts (Baquedano - Lopez, 2008; Gregory et al., 2013; Rosowsky, 2014), this thesis will explore the modern spoken variety of the heritage language and how the religious class provides a forum for its innovative use.

1.2.2.3 Adaptations to religion and language for migrants

Research into the connection between religion and language for migrants in a diaspora context inevitably incorporates the notion of how the religion adapts to the host country, mostly in more affluent Western settings (for examples in the sociology of religion, see Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000c; Warner & Wittner, 1998). Bouma (1996, p. 53) states that the concept of *religious settlement* subsumes four essential sub-processes:

- a. religion as a source of motivation, assistance and support provided to the migrant*
- b. religion and the individual migrant's settlement and identity formation in a new society*
- c. building a religious community in a new place*
- d. the processes by which a new religion, or new variant of an existing religion, finds a place in a society including the reactions of the new group, larger society and the state.*

As we can see from the Australian senator's quotes in the introduction (page 1), religious settlement can be a fraught and complex process. A religious group or institution must contend with not only complying with all the requirements of practicing their faith in a "foreign" environment but also finding a way to perform a multitude of roles and services for an often more

heterogeneous congregation than the homeland. Thus, the actual religion is affected by the process of settlement. Through this thesis, I will highlight ways in which the Saiva Temple and religious practice within its confines is going through gradual change as part of its adaptation process in becoming established and sustainable in Australian society.

Kurien (2014) writes about how the Hinduism brought to the US by groups from India, became transformed into a markedly different “American Hinduism”. This outcome was a result of the first generation realising the need to make deliberate formalised efforts to transmit the religion and ethnic identity to their children. Therefore, the non-congregational aspect of Hinduism in India was changed in order to bring families together; Hindu student organisations were established; and local and national Hindu umbrella organisations were formed “with the goal of uniting, educating, and mobilizing Hindus of different backgrounds in support of Hindu interests” (Kurien, 2014, p. 530). Religious leaders worked to “simplify, standardize, and codify the religion to make it easier to understand, articulate and practice” (Kurien, 2014, p. 530). As part of this “Americanisation”, Pandharipande (2010, p. 63) found that English, which was viewed as a “spiritually polluted language” that could not be used in Hindu rituals in India, entered the domain of religion in the US. She found cases of Sanskrit-English code-mixing in home and public religious practices and the recitation of English translations of Hindu scriptures and prayers. This was within the context of a country where “religious difference continues to be an obstacle for non-Christian groups despite the rhetoric of religious tolerance and multiculturalism” (Chen, 2002, p. 221).

The process described above has parallels with what Omoniyi (2010b, p. 3) termed the “popculturization of religion” which signals “a certain degree of accommodation of secular culture” in order to attract youth. In Australia, Bilimoria and Bapat (2009, p. 333) call it “protestantisation”; an attempt to

diminish one's religious "otherness" amidst a diversity celebration/intolerance environment,⁸ and, to address the aspirations of the younger generation (and this includes language shift) to integrate with the host society. They also mention a more recent development, which is the increased politicisation of Hindu fervour in India, as a catalyst to distinguish the local practice of Hinduism from that of the homeland (Bilimoria & Bapat, 2009).

Mullins (1987) addresses the survival of migrant religious institutions in his study of the life cycle of ethnic churches in North America. He writes about how churches have to choose between accommodation and extinction as part of their assimilation process. While they may start out as churches that are dominated by the language, culture and clergy from the home country, they must gradually move to the second stage where bilingual religious leaders, English language services, and religious education are adopted in order to retain the younger generations. As the first generation begins to disappear a church then needs to move to stage three where it becomes a multi-ethnic organisation and "de-ethnicizes" from its original identity in order to attract new recruits. Two conditions that may counter the need to move to stage three may be a new wave of migration from the home country or a rise in social exclusion which brings the "acculturated generations" back to the ethnic church (Mullins, 1987, p. 328). In the case of the Saiva Temple, its life cycle seems to have a different trajectory to Mullins' theory. While there is evidence of some elements from stage two (bilingualism), we will also see that the temple is in stage one (Tamil dominant), and yet, becoming multi-ethnic at the same time.

1.2.2.4 Conceptualising the connection between language and religion

Clyne (1991, p. 131) speaks of the two dimensions when it comes to the use of a heritage language and religion – one is in the private, personal domain

⁸ By this I refer to the conditions that Piller (2016) noted in Australia where multiculturalism is generally celebrated but, at the same time, migrants are sometimes blamed for the diminishing social cohesion.

and the other is the collective domain “intertwined with identity, ethnic culture and group cohesion”. In this section I will outline some frameworks put forward by scholars to help conceptualise the relationship between language and religion. Each is mainly concerned with the ideologies and resultant language policies of religious institutions, that is, the collective aspect of language and religion. However, they have relevance for people’s personal domains as well. As Woods (2004) points out, language plays an important role in people’s spiritual experience of a religious denomination but the ideology of the religious institution determines how language is imposed on the congregation.

Woods (2004) conceptualises the relationship between language and religion as the language-religion ideology (LRI). In her study of ethnic Christian churches in Australia she found that some ethnic churches place a strong link between language and religion and have the view that only one specific language can be used in worship. However other churches apply a weak link if importance is placed on maintaining a personal relationship with God, such that the worshippers’ vernacular(s) are appropriate for communication. She described ideology as a religious denomination’s “actions, attitudes, traditions and official/unofficial policies which pertain to language” (Woods, 2004, p. 42). Furthermore, Pandharipande (2010, p. 60) sees ideology as represented in the “traditional ‘authority’ of scriptures” and the “internal logic of the religious system”.

Pandharipande (2010) measures ideology by the “variability” of a religion and a particular language. For example, the correlation between Islam and the Arabic language is relatively invariable. But if the relationship between the language and the religion is seen to be more variable then it will be easier to substitute one language for another. This is the case to an extent in Hinduism where Sanskrit was the initial language of the religion, but over time, regional variation in religious practice allowed a diglossia to develop, with the high language, Sanskrit, used for formal ceremonies and

the low language, comprising the regional vernaculars (such as Tamil), used for personal worship (Pandharipande 2006).

Liddicoat (2012, p. 122) differentiates between two orientations towards language use in religious contexts which he calls “sacrality” and “comprehensibility”. The former refers to cases where the use of a religious language is seen as a form of religious expression and the latter refers to the practical nature of communicating information and enabling comprehension by worshippers. He states that both orientations can co-exist in a religious institution’s language planning but there could also be a tension in balancing the sacred and the practical especially if a language is considered to be divine in its origin. Thus sacrality has parallels with a strong LRI and high degree of invariability of religion and language; and comprehensibility aligns with a weak LRI and high degree of variability. Overall, these frameworks conceptualise the negotiation of the medium and the message (cf. Woods, 2004) for migrant religious institutions.

Souza (in Souza et al., 2012, p. 111) proposes a framework to connect the three relevant aspects of identity - religion, ethnicity and language – which are negotiated in the language planning and policy of ethnic churches. This negotiation is presented in the form of a REL (religion ethnicity language) triangle which places each aspect of identity at one of the three points on the triangle to map out whether there are strong or weak links between each connecting pair of aspects of identity. The triangle shows that while some churches believe that a specific language enables them to connect with their ethnic background and religious identity, other churches focus on the spread of their religious beliefs to “outsider” people and therefore, place more emphasis on English and religion rather than their ethnic and linguistic links to their homelands (Souza et al., 2012).

These frameworks outline that there are two main reasons for weakening the relationship between language and religion; one is to attract a wider, linguistically diverse congregation, and the other is to maintain the

engagement of the younger generation of migrants who may be more comfortable with English. Thus, while the heritage language may hold great significance for the first generation, this strong LRI may be dispensable in the long term (Clyne 1991). The frameworks are useful in theorising what happens for migrant religious institutions, however it must also be pointed out that there can be different and even contradictory opinions, practices and approaches in some contexts. For example different generations may view the relationship between language and religion differently and different voices in the community may place more importance on one feature over the other. In other words, it is not always straightforward to pinpoint a single ideological position for an institution. In this thesis I will not be evaluating the Saiva Temple according to these frameworks, however I will use the ideas expressed (especially the LRI) here to inform the discussion of language-related issues in the temple.

1.2.2.5 Religion and language maintenance in the Tamil diaspora

In this section I will discuss previous studies that have investigated language maintenance in the Tamil diaspora and that specifically discuss the role of religion.

In Australia, the main study of Tamil language maintenance was conducted by Fernandez and Clyne (2007) in Melbourne where they compared the language practices of Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils according to their Christian or Hindu faith. They cited 2001 census data that showed that Tamil people born in India and Sri Lanka who are Hindus have the lowest rate of language shift (to English) amongst the various religious affiliations. The study concluded “the distinctive cultural ideology of the Hindu religion promotes the maintenance of Tamil by those who identify themselves as devout Hindus” (Fernandez & Clyne, 2007, p. 186).

This was in line with Smolicz, Lee, Murugalan and Secombe’s (1990) study of Indian-origin university students (including Sri Lankans) which found

that the Tamil language was perceived as a core value amongst the devout Tamil Hindus but not for the Tamils who identified as nominal Hindus or Christians. The devout Hindus saw Tamil as essential for their religious practice whereas it was not used in Christian practices. As one Hindu participant stated “the devotional singing helped a great deal in my Tamil proficiency as I had to brush up on my Tamil to be able to understand the lyrics” (Smolicz et al., 1990, p. 238). Similarly, in my own prior research on Tamil language maintenance amongst Sri Lankans in Melbourne, I found that families who were maintaining Tamil in the home domain were devout Hindus whereas those who had shifted to English were Christian (Perera, 2015).

Other studies have found that the Hindu religion is not necessarily a positive influence on language maintenance. In Amarasingam’s (2008) study of Sri Lankan Tamil youth in Ontario, some respondents stated that a spiritual relationship with God did not require proficiency in Tamil. The reasons for this were twofold – firstly, the ritual language is Sanskrit; and secondly, the respondents did not view Tamil as the specific language of Hinduism, since the religion is practiced by many ethnolinguistic groups. This point seems to contradict the very reason given for maintenance by one of Smolicz et al.’s (1990) respondents above. What it shows is that there are different views on the centrality of the Tamil language for Tamil Hindus, especially in the second generation.

Most of the discussion thus far has focussed on studies that look at the way the Hindu religion motivates the use of the heritage language. In Das’ (2008) study of language purism in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Quebec, we see a case of the religion directly influencing the variety of language that is taught to the second generation. Her data comes from a Murugan (Saivite Hindu) temple in Montreal that runs a Tamil language (not religious) school for second-generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth. In this setting the students are taught to read, write and speak a formal variety of Sri Lankan Tamil which is seen to be the “ancient, purist and religiously

moral literary language” (Das, 2008, p. 11). Das provides an example of the pre-class assembly where the principal code-switches between different varieties of Tamil to move from the recitation of a prayer in Classical Tamil, to the singing of the school song in Literary Tamil, to metadiscursive commentary that occurs in Modern Tamil. While the children are most proficient in the modern spoken variety of Sri Lankan Tamil the school encourages them to maintain the purity of literary Tamil in their speech (Das, 2008).

In a Sri Lankan Tamil Saivite temple in London, we see a similar juxtaposition of language. Lytra, Gregory and Ilankuberan (2016b) observed Modern Tamil as the language of communication between priests and devotees, a mix of English and Tamil for communication between parents and children, and Literary Tamil reserved for prayers and devotional hymns. They reported that, as part of learning about the religion, the young children use English to explain stories about the Hindu deities but they strategically deploy Tamil for key concepts associated with the religion. As part of the same study, as mentioned in Section 1.2.2.2, the authors talk about how importance is placed on young Tamil children learning to recite and perform significant Tamil prayers and songs in the temple as part of learning “the value of the Tamil language in the religion” (Gregory et al., 2013). They also show the creative and individual ways in which children interpret and learn⁹ about Saivism, and how they “actively syncretize languages” to do this (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 323).

Canagarajah’s (2008, 2012a, 2013) research into language maintenance for Sri Lankan Tamil families in Canada, the UK and US, found some nuance in how religion interacts with language for Tamil Christians and Hindus. While other studies reported on the higher likelihood for Hindu families to

⁹ Souza (2016b, p. 200) refers to this as “faith literacies” defined as practices which involve the reading of written texts (scripts), the use of oral texts (discussions about the faith, interaction with a deity or other members of the faith community), the performance of faith through actions (silent or not), and knowledge (including theological, geographical and historical information about the faith).

maintain Tamil, Canagarajah (2008) also reported of English-proficient Christians actually reigniting their use of Tamil in the diaspora in order to connect with other Tamils in their community.

As with Gregory et al.'s (2013) findings, Canagarajah (2012a, 2013) noted the importance placed, by the first generation, on the second generation performing Hindu prayers and hymns in Tamil. However, like Rosowsky (2014), he found that this did not equate to Tamil language maintenance as many children were memorising the texts from English transliterations of Tamil script and did not necessarily understand the meaning of each word. Nonetheless Canagarajah (2012a, p. 260) argued that these “emblematic uses of Tamil” still perform “significant functions in relation to ethnic identity”. The lack of language proficiency did not limit the second generation’s ability to participate in religion. In both temple and church, they used “multimodal communicative resources” to enact the appropriate gestures and actions at the appropriate times (Canagarajah, 2013).

In summary the various studies on Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus identify some complexity in the area of how the faith assists Tamil language maintenance. Firstly, many devout Hindus view the language as an essential part of their faith and religious practice, thus it is viewed as critical to know and maintain Tamil. However, for other less devout Hindus, they do not see the language as essential for following the religion since the rituals are performed in Sanskrit and they can conduct their personal prayers in any language. When it comes to the second generation, language shift does not necessarily exclude them from the religion. The young can even learn to recite sacred prayers and hymns in Tamil without knowing the meaning and they can attend and participate in religious ceremonies through non-verbal actions. When they are learning about the religion, they develop their religious understanding by using the Tamil language to discuss religious concepts and stories, but also adopt English to explain and evaluate such

stories. This brings the discussion to the topic of multilingual language practices which is outlined in the next section.

1.2.3 Code-mixing, translanguaging and other multilingual language behaviour

In Section 1.2.2 I discussed religion and how it interacts with language, especially in the area of heritage language maintenance for migrants in the religious domain. In this section I want to focus on the second generation in the religious education setting of the temple and outline some of the concepts that will be used to discuss their language practices, in particular, their language mixing.

The study of language mixing is awash with terms to describe the phenomenon, each with different nuances and emphases. The most familiar are code-switching and translanguaging, but scholars have also used code alternation (Auer, 1995b), medium (Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001), flexible bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), polylinguaging (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011), code meshing (Canagarajah, 2006), translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2012c) and metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010).

Code-switching has been defined as the “alternate use of two (or more) languages within the same utterance” (MacSwan, 2005, p. 283) or similarly, “the kind of discourse in which words originating in two different language systems are used side-by-side” (Backus, 2005, p. 307). However the usefulness of the concept of “language” in such definitions has been questioned by many sociolinguistics scholars (cf. Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Gafaranga, 2005; Ofelia García & Li Wei, 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2011). Such scholars agree that language is an abstraction and that languages cannot be so easily separated and categorised as they have been in past research. Gafaranga (2005, p. 289) states that the concept of language assumes those things with names are not only “delimitable” but also

“correspond to equally delimitable groups of people”. Similarly, Jørgensen et al. (2011, p. 27) write:

the idea of separate languages as bounded systems of specific linguistic features belonging together and excluding other linguistic features is found to be insufficient to capture the reality of language use, at least in late modern superdiverse societies, and perhaps altogether.

Scholars have offered alternative terms to language such as “semiotic system” (Auer, 1995b), “linguistic repertoire” (Blommaert & Backus, 2011) and “feature” (Jørgensen et al., 2011). Blommaert and Backus (2011) state that individuals’ linguistic repertoires can read like biographies that represent each person’s life experience as they move between different groups and sections of society. Han (2013, p. 106) conceptualises this as a “materialist and processual view” that “stresses the socially structured nature of individual life trajectories and corresponding multilingual resources”. The resources in one’s repertoire are indexical and communicative competence in these resources does not rely on having a complete linguistic ability in a named language (Blommaert & Backus, 2011).

These concerns have seen the concept of code-switching evolve, and scholars have adopted new terms such as translanguaging to more appropriately describe what is happening in practice. García (2009, p. 140) defines translanguaging as “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximise communicative potential”. García and Li Wei (2014) stress the individual speaker’s use of “original and discursive practices” and they posit that translanguaging is a common worldwide practice and is the norm for bilingual people (cf. Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001). Both García and Li Wei (2014) and Canagarajah (2011) stress that bilingual speakers have one integrated system for communication that does not differentiate between monolingual systems. This shift in focus emphasises the speaker rather than the language at the core of the interaction (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Compared to the other concepts for

language mixing mentioned above, García (in García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200) distinguishes translanguaging as being transformative, “attempting to wipe out the hierarchy of languaging practices that deem some more valuable than others”.

In 2015, Otheguy, García and Reid refined the definition of translanguaging because they noted that it was still being used interchangeably with code-switching. They proposed that translanguaging is “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283). Therefore, if a person’s full linguistic repertoire is seen as their idiolect, then code-switching is not actually occurring. While idiolects are individual, the authors recognise that there can be great overlap in the linguistic features used by people who share similar group memberships, geographical locations, cultural or historical identities etcetera (Otheguy et al., 2015).

Through this revised definition the authors differentiate between languages as social constructions and “sets of lexical and structural features that make up an individual’s repertoire and are deployed to enable communication” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 286). The implication for language maintenance is pertinent. Language maintenance is thus not seen as an attempt to “preserve a pure, well-bounded and essential collection of lexical and structural features, but rather a cultural-linguistic complex of multiple idiolects and translanguaging practices that the community finds valuable” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 299).

Such a nuanced definition of translanguaging presents challenges for the way language practices are analysed in this thesis. Otheguy et al. (2015) point out that they do not want to deny the existence of named languages (and the importance speakers attach to them) but they do want to restrict the use of named languages when it comes to analysing translanguaging.

However, it is important to not discard the significance of named languages altogether. Blackledge and Creese (2015, p. 25) note, “if languages and identities are socially constructed, we nevertheless need to account for the fact that at least some language users, at least some of the time, hold passionate beliefs about the importance and significance of a particular language to their sense of ‘identity’”.

Similarly, Li Wei (2016, pp. 7–8) recognises the interconnectedness between “human beings’ knowledge of language and their knowledge of human relations and human social interaction, which includes the history, the context of usage, and the emotional and symbolic values of specifically constructed languages”. Therefore, in this thesis I take the position that it is useful to differentiate between Tamil and English features in order to paint a picture of the participants’ translanguaging behaviour and the resources contained in their individual repertoires. I apply the labels of “English” and “Tamil” regularly in the knowledge that, when it comes to the individual speakers concerned, I can neither assume (nor deny) that they are always and consciously “watchfully adhering” to the boundaries of named languages when they speak. However, there are also times in this thesis where I suggest that the interlocutors are highly aware of what is an English or Tamil feature and make judgments about their language use accordingly. I will point out how certain features can index certain positionings according to established and, at times, static views of different cultural identities associated with the labels of “Tamil and “English”. The participants’ willingness to identify named languages is also evident in the interview data. Such metaawareness of the named languages is therefore significant to our understanding of the participants’ perspectives on language maintenance and shift.

In Chapter Three I will expand on the analytical frameworks I will be using to deconstruct translanguaging behaviour amongst the second generation in the temple.

1.2.3.1 Conceptualising migrant youth's language and identification practices

When it comes to understanding identity in multilingual contexts, Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) remind us that, there are many times when people do not sound the way they are expected to given the basic demographic facts or identities placed upon them. Thus, “researchers need to pay more attention to local and constructed – rather than expressed - aspects of identity” (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 243). In accordance with this approach, formative ethnographic research into innovative language use by young migrants, usually in multi-ethnic and multilingual urban settings, has come out of Western nations in recent decades.

While some studies (Chun, 2009; Harris, 2006; Jaspers, 2011; Rampton, 2006) have analysed young migrants' naturally occurring speech in schools in Belgium, the UK and US, Willoughby (2009) has focussed on the connection between reported language practices and the social networks of young migrants in a multi-ethnic high school in Australia. In addition, scholars have investigated the multilingual behaviour of youth in ethno-specific complementary language schools in the UK (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Li Wei & Wu, 2009; Martin, Creese, & Bhatt, 2003). A common thread through these studies relates to the young's expression of various “hybrid” identities in their late modern existences and how this challenges fixed and essentialised notions of authentic ethnicity (often imposed by members of the first generation or the wider society). Omoniyi (2005, p. 730) reminds us that this notion of hybridity is not confined to the switching of linguistic codes but expanded to any semiotic code such as dress, religion, gender, music and so on.

Harris' (2006) study of language use among youth, mainly of South Asian descent, in West London in the 1990s found a situation where these young people began their lives speaking their heritage language but by their teens had shifted to predominantly English. As part of this process, the heritage culture and language were performed in a “variety of complex ways in

specific contexts with specific people; with varying degrees of proficiency but limited literacy, and linked with an even wider range of linguistic influences through their diaspora families” (Harris, 2006, p. 10). He wrote about the two markers of broad cultural influences evident in the subjects’ language behaviour: that of the “traditional” (residual linguistic markers connected with their heritage language) and that of the “emergent contemporary” (locally acquired markers not only representing a British/Londoner identity but also their contact with other ethnic formations such as Jamaican) (Harris, 2006, p. 11). In addition, Harris (2006) mentions the “global” influence of popular culture evident from the use of African American Vernacular English.

This complexity of language use and experience by youth in London brought about “emerging configurations of identity” which encompassed their deep rooted Britishness as well as their allegiance to their religion, heritage language and diasporic links (even though their proficiency or connections in these areas were sometimes limited) (Harris, 2006, p. 13). Rather than seeing these young people as caught between two worlds, Harris (2006) pointed out that these worlds were not entirely separate and a person did not switch on and off between one and the other. In this vein, when he describes their language behaviour as “fragmentary multilingualism” there are parallels with the concept of translanguaging (Harris, 2006, p. 132)

Similar to Harris’ study, Canagarajah’s (2012b) research on Sri Lankan Tamil youth in Canada, the UK and US found members of the second generation using language in acts of “self-styling” to index their “in-group” membership of the Tamil diasporic community. While members had limited proficiency in Tamil, their identity and bond with other members was achieved in alternate ways such as through displays of their receptive competency, through the use of Tamil linguistic tokens for certain effects (such as name-calling) and by their participation in Tamil cultural activities (Canagarajah, 2012b). Like Harris (2006), Canagarajah (2012b, p. 125) states that the young can perform their ethnicity through identification

practices that they “strategically and creatively achieve in context-specific ways”. As part of this, Tamil youth use different languages to serve different purposes (cf. Canagarajah, 2011). While there was mention of the young’s participation in religious activities, religion was not a focus of Canagarajah’s study of Tamil identity.

Religion brings an added dimension to the negotiation of identities.¹⁰ As young Sri Lankan Tamil second-generation members have to navigate a path through the “Australian” and “Sri Lankan Tamil” dichotomies, they must also develop a stance on their relationship with the Hindu Saivite religion which is inherited from their parents. Therefore, religious identity can be complex and dynamic since it interacts with other social identities (Hemming & Madge, 2012). Religious identity could refer to “a system of religious beliefs and to religious/spiritual experience” whereas for others it might be a form of cultural identity (Jaspal & Coyle, 2010, p. 19).

Hemming and Madge (2012, p. 40) conceptualise religious identity as multi-faceted, having four dimensions which are both private and public: “1) affiliation and belonging, 2) behaviours and practices, 3) beliefs and values and 4) religious and spiritual experiences”. In their review of the research, Hemming and Madge (2012) point out some of the key influences on religious identity in the young: devout parents, religious education in mainstream schools, peers of the same religious group, and experiences of places of worship and their associated communities of practice. The authors emphasise the agency of young people in determining their own identities and in selecting those aspects of the religion that they personally enjoy. They use their agency in the way that they negotiate their own community’s as well as wider society’s norms regarding religion. In turn, they shape “the religious identities of their families and friends, and the nature of religion in

¹⁰ Brubaker and Cooper (2000, p. 70) have stressed the problems in using the term “identity” as being at times “rigorously categorical” and not allowing for “mixed or ambiguous forms”. In addition to the term identity, I will also use suggested alternatives like “identification” and “self-understanding” to reflect a less bounded and variable notion of identity.

their schools, communities and wider society” (Hemming & Madge, 2012, p. 45). In terms of belief, there have been studies into how young people construct their personal beliefs based on their orientations to family and friends (Day, 2009) and how they negotiate a position on their inherited religion which aligns or contrasts to that of their parents to varying degrees (Hopkins, Olson, Pain, & Vincett, 2011).

In summary, one of the main concerns in this thesis, as part of understanding the adaptation of the religion in the diaspora and the influence of the religion on language maintenance, is to investigate the translanguaging behaviour of the second-generation members in the temple. Like Harris’ (2006) and Canagarajah’s (2012b) studies we will see how the students draw on in-group tokens to index their heritage, and how they use language creatively as part of their hybridity. However, the students’ close involvement with their religion, through their attendance at the temple religious school, means their hybrid language practices are set to be different from that of the Tamil youth in Canagarajah’s (2012b) study. The significant influence of, and alliance with, the Hindu religion has implications for their language behaviour and for their identifications.

1.3 Research questions

Having outlined the main research and theoretical frameworks which inform this thesis, I present the aims of my research project.

The aim of the study is to investigate the interplay between the Hindu religion and Tamil language in the setting of a migrant religious institution. The focus will be on how the connection between heritage language and religion manifest in the language practices of the second generation. This will provide an insight into how the Hindu religion can influence Tamil language maintenance for Sri Lankan Tamils in Australia.

The key questions for the research project emerged through an ethnographic study in the Saiva Temple. These are:

- What role does the Tamil language have in a Tamil Hindu temple in Australia?
- What linguistic practices are the second generation employing in the temple?
- What relevance does the Tamil language and Hindu religion have in the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils?

Through the ethnographic study, a number of connected questions were addressed. These include:

- What are the heritage languages and linguistic repertoires of the temple devotees?
- What tensions exist in the temple's language policy in light of larger sociocultural changes?
- What adaptations does the temple make to the heritage religion, language and culture to cater for the diaspora setting?
- How do the young interpret their religion and ethnoreligious identity in the temple space?
- What tensions exist for Tamil language maintenance in Australia?

1.4 Overview of thesis chapters

This thesis comprises eight main chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. In Chapter Two I introduce some background and context relevant to the language, religion and group of people who come under this study. In other words, I provide some details about the Tamil language, and the historical and socio-political conditions for Tamils and Hinduism in Sri Lanka, Australia, and the broader Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.

Chapter Three is devoted to the discussion of methodology. I outline the principles of ethnography and linguistic ethnography that are applied to the study as well as the components of data collection. Methodological and analytical considerations are outlined including representation of the Tamil

language, my role as a Sri Lankan researcher, and the use of Conversation Analytic techniques.

Chapter Four is the first of the six results chapters of the thesis. It is devoted to an introduction to the Saiva Temple, the religious institution under study. I provide a short history and profile before moving to a close look at the functional distribution of language in the temple. I then outline some of the main language-related issues facing the temple and how the temple is addressing them through its policies and programs.

In Chapter Five I introduce the focus of the remainder of the thesis, which is the Year 9 class at the temple's Saiva School. I provide details about the school and class format before introducing each of the students and the teacher, as part of a window into their variant biographies and linguistic repertoires. I then provide some findings on the students' language practices within the home domain and outside with attention given to the multitude of Tamil activities that the students attend in their community.

In Chapter Six we begin to look closely at the naturalistic data taken from a series of classroom video recordings. This chapter acts as an introduction to the habitual language practices of the students and provides an idea of the frequency of each student's speech and the balance between the use of English and Tamil features, sometimes as monolingual units of speech and sometimes as mixed. I look at general patterns in the use of English and Tamil and particular functions these two bounded language systems play in the classroom.

Chapter Seven begins an exploration into the nature of the discourse in the classroom. In this chapter we investigate the notions of multicompetence and creativity displayed through the students' translanguaging practices. We look at how translanguaging is used for the purposes of cooperation to achieve mutual comprehension, and subversion for the purposes of humour,

play and indexing hybridised teenager identifications. The use of repair and politeness are also highlighted in the classroom discourse.

In Chapter Eight we interrogate the students' use of translanguaging to "talk" Saivism. This chapter focuses on the students' search for meaning and interpretation of the religion, and how Tamil and English play key functions in helping the students through the process of deciphering the religion and culture. Their ability for criticality of their own and other communities of practice is shown through their strategic use of Tamil and English to position themselves in alliance or opposition to some views.

In Chapter Nine, the final results chapter, we look more specifically at how the students challenge the religion and culture through translanguaging in the classroom. They employ narratives to position themselves and their beliefs in relation to others in the community, and use their experiences within and without the ethnoreligious community to develop informed, considered and hybridised views known as syncretic acts. In this chapter we focus on the students' identifications and try to assess the role that Tamil and Saivism play in this matter.

Chapter Ten is the concluding chapter of the thesis where I revisit the three main research questions and highlight how this thesis has contributed to our knowledge of the interface between religion and language for Sri Lankan Tamil migrants in a Hindu temple in Australia.

2 Chapter 2 - The context for Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in Australia

In this chapter, I provide background on the language, religion and people this study is concerned with. This is by no means a simple task – when depicting all the conditions that shape the lives of a group of people there is much complexity and, in the task of making the complexities cohesive, there is risk of losing nuance. When telling the history of Sri Lanka there are also the issues of political bias and orientalism which can be challenging to filter through. Having said that, this chapter will provide some details of the particular conditions that shape the existence of the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu diaspora. I will focus on three factors: Tamil as a language and the socio-political conditions for the language, Hinduism and Tamil people in Sri Lanka; the story of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora; and in particular the migration trajectory for Sri Lankan Tamils and Hinduism in Australia. The information provided in this chapter is important for our understanding of the significance of religion for Tamil Hindus and the macro-level factors that impact on language use in the Saiva Temple.

2.1 Sri Lanka

2.1.1 The Tamil language

*i dream of an english
full of the words of my language.
an english in small letters
an english that shall tire a white man's tongue
an english where small children practice with smooth round
pebbles in their mouth to spell the right zha
(Kandasamy, 2006)*

In the excerpt above, the poet Meena Kandasamy highlights some of the features of her language, Tamil, that cannot be replaced by English. Globally, Tamil is a strong language but the encroachment of English is evident in this poem's sentiment. Tamil is spoken by over 68 million people (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015) and has a long literary tradition going back over 2000 years (Das, 2011; Elizier, 2001; Hock & Bashir, 2016). It is a

member of the Dravidian language family alongside other South Indian languages like Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada; and it is markedly different to Sanskrit-based languages like Hindi and Sinhalese of the Indo-European family.

Tamil has official language status in Tamil Nadu (seen as the Tamil stronghold) and the Union Territory of Puducherry in South India as well as Sri Lanka and Singapore. Due, in part, to migration for trade and indentured labour, long-standing Tamil speech communities are also found in Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam, eastern Africa, South Africa, Guyana and islands in the Indian Ocean, South Pacific and Caribbean (Encyclopaedia Britannica Editorial, 2010).

Tamil is known as a pluricentric and highly diglossic language. There are different scholarly perspectives on the nature of the diglossia and the mutual comprehensibility between the low and high varieties. A major study undertaken by Britto (1986) classified Tamil as having two diasystems that constitute its diglossia; a Low diasystem containing the spoken varieties, Substandard Colloquial Tamil (SubCT) and Standard Colloquial Tamil (SCT), and a High diasystem comprising a Literary (or written) Tamil and a Classical/Pandit Tamil (found in classical and religious texts and seen by many as the archaic and purest form). SubCT and SCT are misleading terms since Britto (1986, p. 129) argues, “there are no clearly defined norms of phonology, lexicon and grammar that people can consciously imitate”. SCT is seen as the low variety that is unmarked by caste, region or religion while SubCT refers to local dialects (Saravanan, Lakshmi, & Caleon, 2007). Generally there is agreement that the two main languages in use are Spoken Tamil (*peeccu tamizh*) for oral communication and Modern Literary or Written Tamil (*eluttu tamizh*) for media, formal

and written communication (Das, 2011; Saravanan et al., 2007; Schiffman, 2003).¹¹

Furthermore, there are differing opinions as to the number of varieties of Tamil which are seen to mainly differ according to caste and region (for a comprehensive list of the varieties in Tamil Nadu see Britto, 1986). For example, in Sri Lanka, Jaffna Tamil dominates the north while Batticoloa Tamil is found in the east, and these two varieties are seen to differ from Upcountry Tamil which is the variety spoken by Indian Tamils who came to Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries to work in the tea, coffee and rubber plantations of the central “hill country”. The Tamil spoken by Muslims in Sri Lanka is also seen as a separate dialect of Spoken Tamil (Suseendrarajah, 1973). Schiffman (1998, p. 359) wrote of the existence of a Standardised Spoken Tamil (SST) which he found in Singapore and Tamil Nadu, a type of lingua franca for the divergent spoken varieties of Tamil,

spoken by educated people of various castes and regions to one another; people learn it by listening to the dialog in plays and films, and by working on communicating with one another in college hostels and other places where educated people come together and try to communicate in Tamil.

However he sees Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil as very distinct varieties so it is likely that SST does not fully encompass Sri Lankan Tamil. What is clearly evident from these descriptions is that the Tamil language cannot be viewed as a “discrete, bounded, impermeable, autonomous” system (cf. Creese & Blackledge, 2015, p. 25).

Scholars have noted the influence of English and Sanskrit on Tamil. Research has found that Jaffna Tamil (the dominant Tamil variety in Sri Lanka) is characterised by many borrowings from English (Karunakaran, 2011; Suntharesan, 2013). In Tamil Nadu, Tamil code-mixing with English is common for children (Krishnasamy, 2015) and mixing with non-standard

¹¹ In this thesis I will use the terms Spoken Tamil, Written Tamil and Classical Tamil to differentiate between the three main varieties.

English in Tamil films and advertisements is seen as a way of attracting youth (Kazim, 2013). There has been a strong post-colonial Dravidian nationalist movement to resist the impact of Sanskrit and Hindi on the Tamil language in Tamil Nadu (Das, 2008; Jones, 2014) and this movement has also influenced the Tamil language in Jaffna (Suseendrarajah, 1980).

In the diaspora, varieties of Tamil mentioned above tend to be subsumed under the categories of Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil. The generalisation is that Indian Tamil is closer to the spoken variety, and characterised by more English borrowings, while (spoken) Sri Lankan Tamil is closer to the written form, although they are considered mutually intelligible. Das (2011, p. 779) writes “Brahmin Tamils and Jaffna Tamils, as the caste and class elites of their respective Indian and Sri Lankan societies, rarely come into contact except in the diaspora” However she points out that the extent to which these two languages are different is often exaggerated for the purposes of ethnonational differentiation and the resultant social standing in the host society, as is the case in Montreal. Even though “folk” discourses see Sri Lankan Tamils as speaking the pure and grammatically correct literary Tamil, Das (2011, p. 781) writes;

their vernacular is better described as a Jaffna style of colloquial Tamil that has retained a significant amount of classical lexicon and a large number of literary syntactic features. It is thus grammatically distinct from all written forms and genres of Tamil.

In the context of the Saiva Temple in this thesis, varieties of Tamil from India and Sri Lanka come into contact, but the dominant variety for temple communication is Jaffna Tamil. The topic of contact between the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil varieties in the temple will be revisited in Chapter Four.

The Tamil syllabic alphabet contains 12 vowels (including two diphthongs), 18 consonants and one unique character (known as the *aaytham*) (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.a). Each vowel is represented by a symbol when occurring on its own or word-initially, and then takes on a different symbol, or grapheme, to represent each consonant-vowel combination. The

symbol for each consonant has an inherent vowel combination (consonant + a) but this vowel can be muted by the use of the diacritic (Ager, 2016). In total there are 247 letters. These grapheme-syllable correspondences make the Tamil script an abudiga writing system (Daniels and Bright, 1996 as cited in Rosowsky, 2014).

A unique phoneme in Tamil is the *zha* that Kandasamy, the poet at the beginning of this chapter, refers to which is generally described as a central retroflex approximant [ɻ] and written as ழ (Keane, 2004). Another distinctive sound is the rhotic liquid which is represented by ற and ள but Keane (2004) says opinion is divided as to whether these two letters reflect a phonetic contrast in colloquial Tamil. Tamil also has two orthographic representations for the alveolar nasal [n], one found almost exclusively word-initially, ன, and the other, ன், found elsewhere. There is a velar nasal, ன் [ŋ], which occurs only before a single voiced velar obstruent (see Keane, 2004 for further explanation). The Tamil alphabet does not have a letter for [s] since this phoneme is mainly found in borrowed words. However ஸ [tʃ] is often used in its place. Alternatively, a grantha letter ஸ is used for [s] (Keane, 2004). Grantha letters are Sanskrit-based consonants that have been added to the Tamil alphabet to allow for the orthography of sounds from Sanskrit and English words. They include: ங [dʒ], ஞ [h] and ட [ʃ].

While this alphabet is used across all written varieties of Tamil, there is no standard orthographic system for recording the spoken varieties. In fact, Britto (1986) states that for centuries the spoken varieties were written according to literary conventions, causing it to appear as the high variety when it was in fact, the low one. The script is written from left to right and the word order is SOV - subject object verb. Furthermore, Tamil is an agglutinative language. Therefore, what might take a few words to express in English could be represented by a single word in Tamil by adding suffixes to the lexical root to signify case, number, person and tense.

2.1.2 Tamil people

Sri Lanka has a population of 20.4 million (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2014). Sri Lankan Tamils form the largest minority ethnic group and comprise 11.2% of the total population. Sinhalese people make up the majority at 74.9% of the population, and other minorities include Sri Lankan Moors (9.3%) and Indian Tamils (4.1%). Buddhism is the dominant religion of the island and accounts for 70.1% of the population, followed by Hinduism at 12.6%, Islam at 9.7% and Roman Catholicism and other Christians at 7.6% (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2014). Some Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils follow Christianity, however, the two main ethnic groups are generally described along ethnoreligious lines as Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus (Gamage, 1998). The Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka (2014) reported that for the period of 1981 to 2012 the proportion of Tamils and Hindus in the population decreased by 1.5% and 2.9% respectively while Sinhalese and Buddhists grew by 0.9% and 0.8% respectively. This period covers the duration of the Sri Lankan civil war.

The long and brutal civil war in Sri Lanka and subsequent mass emigration of its citizens, especially Sri Lankan Tamils, to India and Western nations has received worldwide attention. In this sub-section, I outline some of the key aspects of Sri Lanka's recent history to provide a background of the socio political conditions, especially around language, which have impacted on Tamils in Sri Lanka. As Herath (2015, p. 247) writes "it is crucial to examine how the negation of language rights historically was a primary factor in the turmoil that led to inter-ethnic violence and, eventually, a civil war."

2.1.2.1 Colonial language policy

Sri Lanka has a history of colonisation by the Portuguese (1505-1658), Dutch (1658-1796) and British (1796-1948) (Wickramasinghe 2006). During the period of British control, as in other colonised nations, the English language, culture and literature made its imprint on the people

(Coperahewa 2009). English was the official language of the country, in administration and education, from 1815 to 1956.

Following the Colebrook-Cameron Commission report in 1831-1832 (commissioned by the British to make economic reforms in Ceylon, the name of the country at the time), the colonial government introduced strict policies around education and partnered with Christian missionaries to deliver English education (Wickramasinghe, 2006). Their aim was to impart Western knowledge through English, but only to a minority of the population (Wickramasinghe, 2006). According to Coperahewa (2009, p. 98), “a system of English schools was introduced for the purpose of creating a loyal, westernized native elite, who could be employed cheaply in the lower echelons of the colonial bureaucracy.”

Between 1870 and the 1920s, the share of administrative government jobs favoured the minority communities mainly the Burghers (descended from European settlers) and Tamils because of their higher proficiency in English (Wickramasinghe, 2006). As DeVotta (2001, p. 76) points out “the ethnic favouritism displayed towards the Tamils was consistent with Britain’s divide-and-rule policies”. This favouritism was rectified for the Sinhalese who were given more access to education by 1946, but it fuelled resentment between those groups, at least, in the realm of the higher classes. Wickramasinghe (2006, p. 146) writes “the 1930s witnessed a change in relations between elite members of different communities. Allegations of favouritism, discrimination and canvassing were now made openly, and this sowed the seeds of future tensions between the political elites”.

When the British imposed English in the country, the non-urban-elite Tamils and Sinhalese were united in their dissatisfaction with the privileged position held by English-educated Sri Lankans of all ethnicities. This led to the *swabhasha* (meaning “own language” in Sinhala) movement, in the early twentieth century, that campaigned for the use of the vernaculars in administration and education instead of English. However a

concurrent movement was the Sinhala Buddhist revival (Coperahewa, 2009).

The British played a role in the process of forming a Sinhalese nationalist identity (Wickramasinghe, 2006). In the 1940s the government encouraged the study, preservation, publication and translation of Sinhala texts and treated Buddhism with a new deference. “The decades preceding independence witnessed sporadic outbursts of violence that pitted a more forcefully gelled majority community against minority communities ... Ideas of a superior race were combined with perceptions of injustice meted out by the colonial administration” and language was a key component in this tension (Wickramasinghe, 2006, p. 150).

In this context English became a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was the language of the coloniser and thus, the fight for independence called for English to be overthrown. On the other hand, English held power and prestige, thus it was used by politicians to fight for independence. English became the necessary neutral language when different linguistic groups had to unite against the British (Herath, 2015).

As independence neared, the swabhasha demand was transformed into a question of official language. In 1943, the State Council voted in favour of making Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka over English; however this was soon amended to include Tamil as well. On the eve of independence in 1948, the understanding was that Sinhala and Tamil would be the official languages having “parity of status” (Coperahewa, 2009).

2.1.2.2 Sinhala Only Act

In 1951, the Governor General appointed an Official Languages Commission to investigate the transition from English to Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages of Sri Lanka. This coincided with attitudes starting to shift from a generally united attack against the privileged position of English, to a clash between ethnic communities (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 112).

There were three groups divided by the language issue: those who wanted to maintain English as a lingua franca, those who believed national unity could only be forged through a single language, Sinhala, and those who supported adopting both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages (Wickramasinghe, 2006).

The country's general election in 1956 brought the language debate to a head, with S.W.R.D Bandaranaike promising "Sinhala only" and in "twenty four hours". He was successful in being elected as prime minister at least in part based on this promise. The Official Language Act in June 1956 made Sinhala the sole official language of Sri Lanka. This was to be a critical time in Sri Lanka's social and political history. The Communist Party described this act as doing "grievous wrong to the Tamil-speaking people" (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 113). Uyangoda (2001, as cited in Coperahewa, 2009, p. 113) pointed out that while this was a "policy measure aimed at correcting an injustice to a people who had suffered under past colonial rule" the "justice done to the Sinhalese masses turned out to be an immense injustice to ethnic and linguistic minorities". A non-violent protest against the bill was organised in Colombo by Tamil politicians but Sinhala mobs attacked the participants and Tamil civilians around the city (Wickramasinghe, 2006). In addition, police and armed forces tried to suppress the protest as a way of enforcing the newly found status of Sinhala (Canagarajah, 2005).

The Act also impacted on two aspects of accessibility for Tamils and other minorities. Under a new rule for university admission (to accommodate a growing demand from the Sinhalese), Srimavo Bandaranaike, widow of the assassinated S.W.R.D Bandaranaike and the country's successive prime minister, enforced higher university admission requirements for Tamil students (Herath, 2015). Similarly government workers had to learn Sinhalese or face losing their jobs. This was most felt in Colombo, while Tamil was still in use in the Tamil-dominated areas like the north and east.

In August 1956, the Federal Party outlined its main demands on behalf of the Tamils, calling for autonomy for the northern and eastern provinces and parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil languages. This led to some recognition of Tamil in the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act however, it also spurred more ethnic riots in May 1958 (Coperahewa 2009:117). When Tamil migrants in the UK reflected decades later on the effect of these riots they spoke about “a sense of having lost out in Sri Lanka after independence” and yet having to continue to live on in some way (Ratnapalan, 2011, p. 1554).

The implications for language in this situation are intriguing and complex. Against the new colonising threat of Sinhala, English became the lesser of two evils, and thus Tamils focused their resources on mastering English (Canagarajah, 2005). While Tamil was a strong language on a worldwide basis with many more speakers than Sinhala, there was a sense that it was now under threat in Sri Lanka.

2.1.2.3 Civil war

The Sinhala Only language policy is seen both as a symptom of linguistic nationalism and a major contributor to ethnic division and the subsequent civil war in the country (Coperahewa, 2009; de Silva, 2005; DeVotta, 2004). In 1972 the first constitution of the Sri Lankan republic was adopted, naming Sinhala as the official language. The use of the Tamil language was still mentioned in the aforementioned Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, however some Tamils were not happy with the distinction that Sinhala was a constitutional fact whereas Tamil could be amended by ordinary legislation. In addition, the constitution gave the Buddhist religion special status and declared it the duty of the state to protect Buddhism (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 119). That same year saw the formation of the Tamil United Front (TUF), a moderate political party.

At the same time, many Tamil youth were feeling marginalised and started to make demands for an independent and sovereign state envisioned in the name of Tamil Eelam. In 1975 the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam), a radical Tamil nationalist party, was formed to carry out an armed struggle for this separate state in direct competition with the TUF. In 1978, a new Sri Lankan government under J.R. Jayawardene attempted to reconcile the language issue in the drafting of a 1978 constitution. The constitution still maintained Sinhala as the official language but gave Tamil “national language” status along with Sinhala. It re-established an Official Languages Department in 1979 to implement a policy of bilingualism instead of Sinhala Only. In addition the constitution guaranteed the freedom to use one’s own language without suffering any disability (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 121).

However by this time it also became clear that it was no longer the moderate Tamil leadership who were influencing Tamil reactions to government, but the separatist groups who promoted violent outbreaks by their youth followers. Such outbreaks were met with violent responses by the Sri Lankan army. It was in such a climate that a relatively minor attack by the LTTE killing 13 Sinhalese soldiers triggered “the most ferocious episode of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka's recent history” the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983, also known as Black July (de Silva, 2005, pp. 693–694).

During these 10 days of widespread violence, the lives and property of innocent Tamil civilians were destroyed. Government sources say between 300 and 400 people died while unofficial sources put the number up to 3,000. Refugees were up to 200,000 in number (Wickramasinghe, 2006). The riots had a profound effect on the collective Tamil consciousness. For many it led to their exile as refugees overseas, for others a heightened sense of alienation from the state, and for others it contributed to an erasure of identity. Many Tamils blamed a single body: the Sinhalese, as being responsible for what happened (Wickramasinghe, 2006, pp. 285–287). This time is commonly cited as the official start of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

For 26 years, between 1983 and 2009, Sri Lanka experienced a civil war played out by the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE. In 1988, Tamil was

finally raised to the status of an official language in the constitution and English was given the position of a “link language” (Coperahewa, 2009, p. 121). However this action was not sufficient to satisfy the aspirations of the LTTE. For almost three decades, Sri Lanka was marked by violence and became known for the frequent suicide bombings undertaken by the LTTE and violent reprisals from the army and Sinhalese paramilitary. This period also marked the time of mass migration for citizens who sought refuge from persecution, civil stability and better economic opportunities in the West. By 2008, the Rajapaksa government started a military campaign against the LTTE-controlled areas of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. In the final months of the war around 330,000 Tamil civilians became caught in the no fire zone of the north as the army and LTTE continued to fight (United Nations, 2011). It is difficult to estimate the number of casualties but reports agree around a figure of 40,000 civilians were affected in the no fire zone (United Nations, 2011). After summarily executing most of the LTTE leadership, in May 2009, the government declared the war over (United Nations 2011). The extent of war crimes and human rights abuses against Tamil civilians in these areas, by both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in the final months of the war, remains an unresolved issue to this day.

After May 2009 President Rajapaksa spoke of the importance of maintaining trilingualism to promote unity and reconciliation. However as Davis (2015) notes this was possibly a strategy to distract from his refusal to find a political solution that encompassed the minority groups of Sri Lanka. Since the end of the war, there was a report issued by the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission in 2011 that recommended Sri Lanka become a trilingual state so that its citizens become proficient in English, Sinhala and Tamil. It is recommended that children compulsorily study the language which is not of their heritage, Sinhala or Tamil, during primary and secondary school (see Herath, 2015 for more on post-war language policy).

Since the end of the war, Sri Lankan Tamils have continued to leave Sri Lanka to seek asylum in countries like Australia. Despite media reports on their ongoing plight in Sri Lanka and the causes of their mass departure, the Rajapaksa government strongly denied any claims of continued persecution or torture (Daniel, 2013; Dias, 2014). In Australia, consecutive governments' strict border protection policies have had disastrous results for those seeking refuge. The detention at sea, for a month, of 157 Tamil asylum seekers in 2014 (Doherty & Farrell, 2015) and the return of asylum seekers back to Sri Lanka are two examples of this. In 2016 there continued to be claims of torture and displacement for Tamils in the north and east as they waited for the Sri Lankan army to return occupied lands (Slee, 2016a, 2016b). The selected reports I have included in this section are an indication that there is much left unresolved in post-war Sri Lanka and that reconciliation is far from accomplished for those in the most war-affected areas.

2.1.2.4 The language policies of the LTTE

From 1990 till the end of the war the LTTE established a de facto regime in the north and east of Sri Lanka (Herath, 2015). In these places they imposed a language policy of Tamil Only and Pure Tamil, in part to distinguish their policies from the elite bilingual middle-class Tamil politicians. They saw the Tamil politician's accommodation of English and Sinhala as too moderate and lacking commitment to the plight of Tamil people. Thus, a monolingual and monocultural Tamil ideology was a representation of their commitment to the cause (Canagarajah, 2005).

LTTE officials insisted on the use of Tamil Only in all domains of the community. New Tamil alternatives were created to replace borrowings from English, Sanskrit or Portuguese, signage became monolingual, people would be reprimanded for using "mixed" Tamil by officials, and LTTE officials would warn people of the damage that would be done to Tamil culture if English words and cultural influences were to enter the vernacular (Canagarajah, 1995, 2005).

Like the enforcement of the Sinhala Only policy at the Tamil protest in Colombo in 1956 (see page 46), this was language policy by coercive military force. Through this policy Canagarajah (2005) personally witnessed a shift in society where Tamil monolinguals became the elite and previous English-dominant bilinguals shifted to be Tamil dominant in order to establish solidarity. However he also found that the language practices in everyday life still included the use of English (an unmarked “Englishized Tamil”) which was strategically injected into conversations for functional and symbolic purposes, although these were kept away from the ears of the LTTE regime (Canagarajah, 1995, 2005).

Against this backdrop of Pure Tamil enforcement and Sinhala hegemony, English in Jaffna was connected with positive values, seen as the language of education, socioeconomic mobility, transnational connections and liberal values (Canagarajah, 2005). What started as unity between ethnic groups against the power of English in Sri Lanka sadly moved to a competition for status between Sinhala and Tamil. This, in turn, caused a resurgence for English as the language for opportunity and emigration. In my own past research, Tamil migrants in Australia reported choosing English over Tamil as their home language as a way of disengaging with the language war (Perera, 2015).

Having outlined significant times in Sri Lanka’s history that have impacted on the Tamil language and people, we now turn to a look at the main Tamil religion in Sri Lanka, Hinduism.

2.1.3 Hindu religion

Since almost all Hindus in Sri Lanka are of Tamil ethnicity, the largest numbers are found in the districts of Jaffna (in the north), Batticaloa (in the east) and Nuwara Eliya (where Indian Tamils of the central tea plantations are located). In the last census, Jaffna accounted for 484,000 Hindus, Nuwara Eliya for 361,400 and Batticaloa for 339,000 (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2012). Sri Lanka has a government department of

Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs whose mission is “to actively contribute to preserve, promote and propagate the Hindu Religion, Hindu culture and arts and Hindu religious education” (Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs, 2016). Its website says it has been in operation since 1986 and, perhaps tellingly, it functions under the Ministry for Buddhasasana (Buddhism) and Religious Affairs.

Hawkins (2004) wrote that early European scholars coined the term “Hinduism” to conceptualise the various religious expressions of India but had difficulty in defining the fundamental commonalities of a Hindu religion. More recently, scholars have argued that Hinduism does not exist, but rather there is a “constellation of ‘Hinduisms’” that share a common cultural matrix but are distinct enough to be considered separate religions (Hawkins, 2004, p. 13). Regional variation in Hinduism is the norm and ethnolinguistic groups tend to incorporate their culture, language and their *sampradaya* (focus on a particular deity) into their practice of Hinduism (Jones, 2016). As Jacob and Thaku (2000, p. 232) put it, “Hinduism is, in essence, a family of sects, each with its own deities, theology, scriptures, temples and rituals”.

There has been critique of the way that religious scholars and anthropologists have categorised Hinduism by dichotomies of “high” versus “low” or “official” versus “folk”, denoting a secondary status to folk religion. Geaves (2007, p. 5) sees this bias towards official religion is “not only an orientalist construction with regard to Indian traditions but privileges the worldview of a particular Brahman orthodoxy when making such value judgments as to what is considered normative belief and practice”. In this thesis I do not intend to make a value judgment about the adaptation or practice of Saivism in the context of the temple under study but show the “divergent paths by which forms of Indian traditions can resettle in the western diaspora and the heterodox nature of the ‘religion’ defined as Hinduism” (Geaves, 2007, p. 4).

One of the main branches of Hinduism, and certainly the most popular for Tamils in South India and Sri Lanka, is known as Saivism (or *Saivam* in Tamil). Followers of Saivism, known as Saivites, believe Lord Shiva is the preeminent God while Vaishnavites, devotees of Vaishnavism, hold Krishna in the same position. Saivism is marked by a strong devotion to Lord Murugan, the second son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.¹² Since Lord Murugan¹³ is known as the Tamil god (Geaves, 2007; Good, 2001) a majority of Tamils perceive the worship of Murugan as part of Tamil cultural practice (Eulberg, 2014) and Murugan himself is seen as an icon of Tamil cultural resistance against the perceived domination of North Indian Hinduism (Geaves, 2007; Jones, 2016). Lord Murugan is known as the lord of the hills so temples dedicated to him are often located on elevated land (Kandiah, n.d.).

Tamil Saivism is a particularly distinct form of Saivism based on the Saiva Siddantha school of theological philosophy. In this school, ritual is seen as “the supreme form of pragmatic action, whose efficacy derives from Siva himself” (Davis 1991 as cited in Good, 2001, p. 493). Bhakti, or the attainment of union with God, is achieved through loving devotion to God (McGlashan, 2010). The sacred texts of Saiva Siddantha contain the Vedas, 28 Agamas which provide the foundation for Saiva rituals, 12 books of the Tamil Saiva canon known as Thirumurai which contains poetry of medieval Saiva bhaktas (devotees) and 14 Saiva Siddantha Sastras (rules or precepts). While the Vedas are written in Sanskrit, the Agamas, Thirumurai and Sastras are in Tamil (Geaves, 2007; McGlashan, 2010).

In India and Sri Lanka, Hinduism is seen as a “highly individualized religion” (Jacob & Thaku, 2000, p. 232) and much of the daily rituals of

¹² Ganesh (or Pillaiyar in Tamil) is the first son of Shiva.

¹³ Murugan is known by many names including Muruga, Karthikeya, Skanda and Subramanian. In Sri Lanka is also known as Kataragama deviyo by other ethnoreligious groups such as the Sinhalese Buddhists.

Hindu devotion are performed at a small shrine in the home, not in the temple (Baumann, 2009; Hawkins, 2004, pp. 26–27). Specific rites to mark one's lifecycle (such as birth and death) happen in the home, administered by a visiting Brahman priest (Baumann, 2009). In fact it is common that devotees might not attend a temple for most of their worship (Baumann, 2009).

Good (2001) and Kingsley (1982) outline the principal stages of the puja ritual, the main form of worship in Hinduism, and describe how different stages are situated in different parts of the Saiva temples in Tamil Nadu. A puja is defined as “an offering of flowers, food, and/or drink to a deity or spirit, and also includes lighting incense, chanting, reciting prayers, and lighting fires” (Jacob & Thaku, 2000, p. 232). Pujas in large temples include elaborate rites such as waking the deity with bells, feeding him, bathing him and even putting him to bed (Kingsley, 1982). Devotees seek *darshan* of the deity, meaning that they try to get a glimpse of the deity's image while it goes through these rites. The food offerings that are made to the deity are considered blessed and are then offered to devotees for consumption, known as *prasad* (Kingsley, 1982) (or *prasatham* in Tamil).

2.1.3.1 A selective history of Hinduism in Sri Lanka

There is not a vast amount of scholarly work on Hinduism and Hindu temples in Sri Lanka. A chronological history is not possible in this section but I will mention a few studies that highlight different aspects of the religion and its presence in Sri Lanka.

Much of the writing focuses on religious tensions which have gone through different phases through history. For example, Wickramasinghe (2006) reported on the Buddhist and Muslim riots of 1915. The religious division that was evident in the late 19th and early 20th century was between Buddhists and Christians who fought over the use of space to practice their religions. However there was no evidence of violence between Hindus and Buddhists during this time (Wickramasinghe, 2006).

While it is difficult to say when Hindus and Buddhists started to see themselves as different, at the time of Portuguese colonisation they collectively felt like a religious community under threat (Wickramasinghe, 2006). This was due to the Portuguese imposition of Catholicism in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese destroyed numerous Buddhist and Hindu temples and passed those lands to the Catholic Church, seen to be part of their work at combatting evil (Wickramasinghe, 2006). One of the long lasting legacies of the Portuguese was the conversion of Tamils and Sinhalese to Christianity and converts at the time were given special privileges such as tax exemptions and access to mission schools with instruction in both Sinhala and Tamil (Wickramasinghe, 2006, pp. 20–21).

Canagarajah (2005, p. 439) states that in pre-colonial times, one could be Tamil but also Sinhala-speaking and Buddhist, “a combination that has become difficult now”. Meegama (2010) adds that as late as the eighteenth century in Sri Lanka, it was possible to be both Tamil and Buddhist and these identities were not seen to be mutually exclusive. During colonisation Tamils made religion their core value in order to resist the strength of the Christian missionaries (Canagarajah, 2005). Hindu reformists even started their own English schools to compete with the missionary schools (Chelliah 1922 as cited in Canagarajah, 2005). Hindu revivalism, inspired by a similar movement in India as well as a resistance to Christian proselytisation, was promoted by several scholars who spread their doctrine in the 1870s and 1880s. The most well-known advocate was Arumuga Navalar who caused a literary revival in the Jaffna peninsula. “He undertook large-scale revision and purification of Saiva Siddhanta, pioneered a Tamil prose style, and wrote commentaries on grammar for Hindu children” (Wickramasinghe, 2006, p. 84). He mainly appealed to the Hindu Vellaalars, known as the wealthy, land-owning caste and mainly located in Jaffna (Geaves, 2007).

Further scholarly commentary on the commonality between the Hindu and Buddhist religions in Sri Lanka has focused on the shared worship of particular gods. Burgio (2016) cited Obeyesekere (1984) and Stirrat (1992) as saying that all religions in Sri Lanka (except for Islam) had the propensity to mix practices before the civil war. Meegama (2010) writes about the Hindu temples of Polonnaruwa, said to be created by Chola (South Indian) rulers, patronised by Sri Lankan kings, and in the present, bring both Sinhalese and Tamils together for worship. There is also the annual pilgrimage by Buddhists, Hindus and other religious groups to the Murugan temple in Kataragama (Geaves, 2007). In addition, Holt (2004) writes about the common worship of Vishnu by Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka and the transformation of Hinduism in Buddhist-populated areas. However, with the onset of the civil war, hardline Buddhist monks started to turn such commonality into controversy (Holt, 2004).

There have been reports of opposition to the presence of Hindu temples by Buddhist nationalists. Meegama (2010, p. 31) writes about how the art historical discourse of the twentieth century viewed Hindu temples as intrusions upon a pre existing, "purely Sinhala civilization" and ethnicised the architecture of temples by inventing the oppositional binaries of "Sinhalese" versus "Dravidian" and "Buddhist" versus "Hindu". Bastin (2005) provides an example of the way in which the erection of a Hindu temple in the central highlands of Sri Lanka was heavily opposed because of claims that the site was archeologically significant to Buddhists. He said such religious sites become territorial markers to reinforce the precedence of Buddhism in the country. In this context of conflict, the temple is not merely a site for religious practice but a symbol of ethnic power and identity (Bastin, 2005).

Apart from the abovementioned studies of religious harmony and tensions, one particular study of religion and language in Jaffna (the district from which most Sri Lankan Tamil devotees at the Saiva Temple originate) is

very significant to this thesis. Suseendrarajah (1980, p. 347) found that the Tamil language and Saivism have co-existed and co-functioned for centuries such that Tamil people “believe from generation to generation that Tamil means Saivism and Saivism means Tamil”. The author noted that Jaffna Tamil language in fact subsumes different varieties or dialects which are based on caste and that this hierarchy is fundamental to the organisation of Hindu society. Saivism also promotes the use of certain Tamil “terms, phrases, idioms, proverbs and similes” that have a religious bearing (Suseendrarajah, 1980, p. 354).

When Suseendrarajah asked villagers in the Jaffna area what their religion was, people gave the answer “Tamil” in reference to Saivism. “For them, their language does not exist without their religion” (Suseendrarajah, 1980, p. 347). There were religious-based schools which taught children that Lord Shiva made the Tamil language and this was seen as the cause of survival and strength of the language (Suseendrarajah, 1980). This is especially pertinent given the Sinhala Only language policy in Sri Lanka.

The divinity of the language is engendered in children from a young age when a special ceremony is performed in the temple to initiate them to the Tamil alphabet (Suseendrarajah, 1980). Saivites also look at Tamil language as a deity in itself, known as *tamizh taay* or Mother/Goddess Tamil (Burgio, 2016; Suseendrarajah, 1980). However after the British departed Sri Lanka, Saivites gradually diminished this strong connection between Tamil and Saivism. In the face of a threat to their language rights, they did not want to exclude Tamils of other religions from the common goal of maintaining Tamil as a language of Sri Lanka (Suseendrarajah, 1980).

Suseendrarajah observed that Sanskrit was not commonly used in Hindu society in Sri Lanka. It was relegated to the temple where a Brahmin or Vellaalar priest used it for chanting of mantras during pujas and other rituals. So it is only in the temple context that Saivites are exposed to

Sanskrit. “There are a few who do not like the use of Sanskrit in temples and they have been agitating for replacement of Sanskrit by Tamil” (Suseendrarajah, 1980, p. 353). While knowledge of Sanskrit was seen as a mark of scholarship amongst Saivites in Jaffna in the late 19th century, this changed with the Tamil purist movement that called for the expulsion of Sanskrit from the Tamil language.

Having provided some key aspects of the journey of the Hindu religion in Sri Lanka, we now move away from the homeland and into an outline of the conditions for Sri Lankan Tamils in the diaspora.

2.2 The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora

The 1990s is seen as the period for Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora¹⁴ consolidation, a diaspora of around one million people (Fuglerud, 1999; Venugopal, 2006).¹⁵ Although not all emigration was prompted by violence (Tamils migrated for employment and education prior to that time) (Orjuela, 2008), the impact of the war is frighteningly telling in the following statistics. In 1995, three-quarters of the non-Indian Tamil population of Sri Lanka had either been internally displaced or sought asylum overseas. Seven hundred thousand were officially classified as displaced within Sri Lanka and another 320,000 people had sought political asylum in Europe and North America (Wickramasinghe, 2006, p. 265). Geaves (2007, p. 88) wrote that between the period of 1983 to 1991 about 160,000 Tamils went to India, less than 10,000 went to Australia, and under 3,000 went to Singapore and Malaysia. More recently it has been found that over one-quarter of the Sri Lanka Tamil population lives overseas (Orjuela, 2008; Venugopal, 2006; Wickramasinghe, 2006) and that 90% are from the Jaffna peninsula (Wickramasinghe, 2006). Thus, “the collective experience of the

¹⁴ I note that the term diaspora is seen by some as problematic (cf. Bilimoria, 2007) but I follow Baumann’s working definition of diaspora as a “a group of people that perpetuates a recollecting identification with a fictitious or faraway geographic territory and its cultural-religious traditions” (Baumann, 2009, p. 153).

¹⁵ Venugopal (2006, p. 236) states that in 2001 the estimated size of the diaspora was 600,000 to 800,000.

trauma of civil war strongly characterizes Tamils of Sri Lanka and differentiates them from those [Tamils] originating from other countries” (Burgio, 2016, p. 110).

Within Europe, France, Germany and Switzerland are the most popular countries for Sri Lankan Tamils. By 2007, almost 60,000 had arrived in Germany (Luchesi 2008 as cited in Ganesh, 2014). Estimated populations in France are 100,000 with 90% in the Paris region (Goreau, 2014) and 45,000 in Switzerland (Eulberg, 2014). It is predicted that the majority of these populations are Hindu.

Apart from India, the main centres of the Tamil diaspora are Canada and the UK. In Canada, about 300,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have arrived since 1983 (Baumann, 2009) and it is estimated there are about 180,000 in London (Ratnapalan, 2011). Scarborough in Toronto and East Ham in London are known as two Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora hubs. Orjuela (2008) states that in the diaspora, local Tamil television and radio stations, newspapers, internet sites, language and dance schools, temples, churches and social organisations all provide a meaningful social environment for migrant Tamils. Burgio (2016) makes the point that much of the Tamil content media originates from Tamil Nadu even though it is consumed by Tamils of various national backgrounds. Thus, “a set of shared interests and themes that reinforce a sense of mutual belonging and identity” creates a situation where the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are not only connected to Sri Lanka and their host country, but to a diasporic community, a sort of shared “Global Tamilness” (Burgio, 2016, pp. 109–110).

Wickramasinghe (2006) makes two salient points about defining Tamilness for Sri Lankans today – one is that defining Tamilness on national terms is problematic because in the diaspora, Tamils also have varying allegiances to their new home countries as well as to Sri Lanka and to the dream of Tamil Eelam. Within Sri Lanka, the Tamil community is a diverse one with divisions along historical lines (Jaffna Tamils as opposed to Indian Tamils),

religious and caste lines. Wickramasinghe (2006) concludes that “even if commonalities exist between the Tamil speakers of Sri Lanka, Tamil culture and politics are laced with deep divides” and “any account of Tamil nationalism should try to avoid illusory lines of continuity and query the representativeness of those who speak in the name of Tamil consciousness” (p. 255). Orjuela (2008) says that one cannot understand the Sri Lankan conflict through a dichotomized government-LTTE or Sinhala-Tamil opposition, that there are intra-Sinhala and intra-Tamil divisions. Burgio (2016, p. 113) adds that divisions based on class, gender, village of origin, education, date of migration, reason for migration, legal status in the countries of destination, and degree of integration in the new society also characterise the heterogeneity of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, despite the all-encompassing label of “Tamil”. As Davis (2015, p. 100) put it we must be aware of “the impact of colonial rule in fixing stable ethnic labels to what were much more fluid religious, caste, regional and linguistic categories”. Just as sociolinguists see linguistic repertoires as individual biographies (cf. Blommaert & Backus, 2011), in this context, individual Tamils are not representatives of a “culture” per se but the result of their specific life stories (Santoro, 2004 as cited in Burgio, 2016, p. 120).

Orjuela (2008) writes about the politicisation of Tamil life in the diaspora even though there is diversity and conflicting interests and loyalties when it comes to supporting the LTTE. While many gave willingly to the cause, there were those who resisted and came under threat for doing so. Wickramasinghe (2006) found that the LTTE had succeeded in radicalising Tamils in the diaspora, evidenced by fundraising and rituals to link the LTTE to the diaspora such as the Great Heroes’ Day (*maaveerar naal*) to commemorate those who died for the cause of Eelam. Both Orjuela (2008) and Wickramasinghe (2006) write of the connection between Hindu temples in the diaspora and the LTTE. Temples in Germany (Ganesh, 2014), France (Goreau, 2014), Switzerland (Eulberg, 2014) and London (David, 2012) were seen to have political connections to the homeland. This is curious given

that the LTTE was neutral with regards to religion, wanting to focus on language and ethnicity in promoting the cause to all Tamils (Goreau, 2014).

In the diaspora, the Hindu religion has experienced a sort of revival. Ganesh (2014, p. 234) wrote, “The trauma of war and exile has imbued Tamil religiosity with urgency and intensity, carving for itself a strong political and cultural presence”, “in the form of a powerful temple-centred devotional Saivism”. Sociologists looking at religion in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have found that the temples have assumed the role of community centres and taken on cultural and social functions (Baumann, 2009; David, 2012). It has been reported that immigrants tend to become more religious after migrating and this is especially true for new migrants including refugees¹⁶ (Ganesh, 2014) because of the role of religion in maintaining links with the homeland (Jones, 2016). Thus, while it has been noted that temples are not core to religious practice in the homeland, they become more central to Tamil Saivites’ lives in the diaspora.

An interesting phenomenon is that, unlike some of the main Christian denominations, Hinduism does not have an authority that sanctions changes in the religious tradition (Pandharipande, 2010). The resulting absence of a universal practice makes Hinduism particularly open to local modifications in the diaspora (Kurien 1998). However, while some aspects of worship need to change to suit the secular environment of the host country, it appears that religious organisations aim to run temples the same way as is done in Sri Lanka to maintain continuity (cf. Ganesh, 2014). Thus, many aspects of the religion, including language and ritual, are maintained.

¹⁶ Cheran (2006) states that asylum seekers and refugees have been key players in the making of diasporas and transnational communities. This is a significant point for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, however, as will be outlined in Chapter Three, the means by which the Tamils in the Saiva Temple came to Australia will not be a focus of this study. At the same time, I wish to acknowledge the particular significance of this group in shaping the diaspora.

When it comes to Tamil language maintenance for Sri Lankans in the diaspora, the situation is more complex, partly due to a predisposition in Sri Lanka to English because of its prestige and the access to education and opportunity it provided prior to independence (Canagarajah, 2008; Perera, 2015). Intergenerational transmission has been impacted by the fact that grandparents might be proficient in English from their Sri Lankan education and thus converse with their grandchildren in English (Canagarajah, 2008). In addition, the damage of the Sinhala Only policy and fight for Tamil linguistic rights in Sri Lanka had the unexpected effect of a widespread attitude of *aankila mookam* (English craze) that led parents to enforce English proficiency on their children, at the cost of Tamil, in order to be able to leave the country and to survive in the West (Canagarajah, 2008, p. 155). More tragic is Canagarajah's (2008, p. 171) observation that

It is this way that we can explain how Tamil families in Sri Lanka willingly send their children to die as suicide bombers for language rights, but may encourage their children to acquire English and move away from Tamil when they settle down in a diaspora location.

For Tamils who left Sri Lanka as refugees the prospect of returning to the homeland is low and therefore the utility of Tamil is diminished in the diaspora (Canagarajah, 2008).

In summary, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is strong in numbers and in fervour to continue connections to the homeland via religion, language and a transnational sense of Tamil identity which, for some but not all, includes support for a separate Tamil state. In this context, while Hindu temples take on a more prominent role, the situation for Tamil language maintenance is more complex given the need for English to access opportunities in the West. The heterogeneity of the diaspora is also noted by researchers who say, despite the sense of Global Tamilness, that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is divided along many lines including caste, religion and regional origins.

2.3 Australia

We now turn to the situation for Sri Lankan Tamils and Hinduism in Australia. In this section, I will outline the different vintages of Sri Lankan migrants that exist in Australia and some of their likely language maintenance and religious practices. Then I will provide a short history of the growth of Hinduism in the country to show where Sri Lankans and their Saivite temples are situated.

2.3.1 Sri Lankan migration to Australia

To begin, I will outline the history of migration for all people from Sri Lanka, since there are some common patterns, and since Sri Lankan ethnicity has not always been specified in Australia's census data.

It has been reported that in the late nineteenth century about 500 to 1,000 Sri Lankans (ethnicity was not recorded) came to Australia, mostly as contractual labourers to work on sugar plantations in North Queensland (Pinnawala, 1984; Weerasooria, 1988). Apart from these initial migrants, Sri Lankan migration into Australia has occurred in three waves. Under Australia's restrictive immigration legislation, known as the White Australia Policy, the only Sri Lankans who were given entry were the Burghers, descendants of the European colonists, who felt that the changes that came with Sri Lanka's independence would adversely affect them (Gamage, 1998, p. 39).

Following the loosening of the White Australia policy in the mid-1960s and its final removal in 1973, economic migrants of Sinhalese and Tamil ethnicity started arriving under a qualified Asian entry policy (Weerasooria, 1988). At this time, Sri Lanka was experiencing economic and political instability associated with the new socialist-oriented Bandaranaike government and this pushed many professionals to emigrate. This group has been generally described as coming from the more affluent, English-speaking and educated classes of urban Sri Lanka and are mostly Christian (Gamage, 1998; Pinnawala, 1984).

The next wave of migrants arrived while the civil war played out in Sri Lanka in the period from the 1980s into the twenty-first century. During this time skilled migrants continued to leave the country, as well as those taking advantage of Australia's family reunion visas, whilst refugees began to emerge. Most refugees were Tamil but some were also Sinhalese who fled violence in the late 1980s caused by an insurgency conducted by the ultra-left political party known as the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) or People's Liberation Front (Gamage, 1998). It is mainly members of this third wave that come under focus in the study of the Saiva Temple.

The post-1983 migrants are mostly educated in their heritage language (Tamil or Sinhala) and are devotees of their ethnic religion (Hinduism or Buddhism) (Gamage, 2002). This group is seen to be more proficient in Sinhalese and Tamil than their earlier counterparts (Bradshaw, Deumert, Burrridge, Willoughby, & Izon, 2008) and it is this wave that is seen to be responsible for creating a stronger Sri Lankan cultural presence in Australia through the building of temples and formation of ethno-specific cultural associations (Gamage, 1998, 2002). Evidently, the connection between language, religion and culture is stronger for this more recent vintage of migrants. As an indication of language shift for Sri Lankans in Australia, in 2011, 26.7% of all Sri Lankan born people spoke only English in the home (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013). In fact English-language proficiency amongst Sinhalese and Tamil people in Victoria has been found to be very high compared to other migrant groups (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

The 2011 census revealed that the largest increase in Sri Lankan migrants occurred between 2006 and 2011 with 26,221 people arriving in Australia (ABS, 2013). This group of migrants marks the period of the end of the civil war and the efforts by the former Rajapaksa government to reshape the Sri Lankan nation. We are yet to learn whether this recent vintage holds different characteristics based on their particular socio-political context.

According to the last census, Sri Lankans form the 13th largest migrant group in Australia (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2012). There were 86,415 Sri Lankan born people in Australia in 2011, of whom 42,655 lived in Melbourne and 22,128 lived in Sydney (ABS, 2011a). While the census did not differentiate between Sri Lankan Tamils and other ethnic groups of Sri Lanka, we can estimate the number of Sri Lankan born Tamils by looking at the results for language spoken in the home. In the 2011 census, 19,857 Sri Lankan born people claimed to speak Tamil in the home (ABS, 2013).¹⁷

The number of Sri Lankan born people in Australia who identified as Hindu was 15,382 or 17.8% of the total (ABS, 2011a). In New South Wales, 8,020 Sri Lankan born people or 33.8% identified as Hindu, making it the largest religious group for Sri Lankan born people in that state (ABS, 2011b). In Victoria, however, only 4,998 Sri Lankan born people identified as Hindu whereas 18,297 identified as Buddhist and 14,453 as Christian (ABS, 2011c). This gives us a more accurate picture of the number of first-generation Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus, however it does not include those second-generation members born out of Sri Lanka.

2.3.2 Hinduism in Australia

There was a small presence of Hindus in Australia in the 19th century, however, from 1901 the White Australia Policy helped to discourage any assertion of a Hindu religious identity in the country (Bilimoria, 2013). The arrival of Hindu gurus and swamis in the early 1960s were the first signs of institutional development of the Hindu religion in the form of ashrams and centres for Hindu teaching, yoga, spirituality and meditation (Bilimoria, 2013). The first Hindu temple was opened in the early 1970s by the Hare Krishnas. As Indian Hindus arrived in larger numbers, following the

¹⁷ The total number of people speaking Tamil, across all nationalities, at home was 50,150. New South Wales accounted for 21,527 Tamil speakers while Victoria accounted for 17,451 (ABS 2011b, 2011c).

abolition of the White Australia Policy, they began to set up their own worship groups in temporary spaces (Bilimoria, 2013). Their earliest temples were established in Auburn in 1977 (Sri Mandir, n.d.) and Helensburgh in 1985 (Sri Venkateswara Temple, 2014) both in or near Sydney.

Mainly due to the influx of a large number of students, Indians and Hindus are now the fastest growing immigrant community in Australia (Bilimoria, 2013). Christianity is still the predominant religion of the country at 61% of the total population and Buddhism remains the largest non-Christian religion, followed by Islam (ABS, 2012). But Hinduism has experienced the fastest growth since 2001, increasing by 189% to 275,500 people in 2011 (ABS 2012). About 83% of the Hindu population are born overseas (Bilimoria, 2013). India accounts for more than half of the Hindus, followed in order by Fiji, Nepal and Sri Lanka, which is the source of close to 7% of all Hindus (Bilimoria, 2013).

What is interesting for the practice of Hinduism in the diaspora is the fact that members of this heterogeneous religion who would not meet in the homeland, are brought together in Australia. Temples have the “complex task of bringing together within the one religious community many different groups with their various national and cultural traditions” (Batrouney, 1996, p. 27). For this reason it has been found that temples in Australia tend to “be more ecumenical, in that major deities worshipped by different (often rival) sects are here housed under the same roof or in adjoining halls” (Bilimoria, 2013, pp. 196–197). There are 46 Hindu temples in Australia (Bilimoria, 2013) that cater to different geographical areas, worship different gods and represent different forms of Hinduism. In Australia there is no umbrella organisation to claim jurisdiction over Hindu organisations. However there has been a Hindu Council of Australia for over ten years which attempts to integrate the many and diverse Hindu organisations and communities (Bilimoria, 2013).

Considering Sri Lankans make up a smaller proportion of the total Hindus in Australia, they have been prominent in establishing some key Hindu temples in the capital cities. Their generally high level of education, employment and English-language advantage has enabled Tamil Hindus to deal effectively with bureaucracies and enlist high-level support for their temple-building projects (Bilimoria, 1996). There have been reports of some connections to the LTTE (Bilimoria & Bapat, 2009) but unlike in the UK and Europe, this has been kept very private.

There was neither congregational Murugan worship nor a Murugan temple in Australia prior to 1985 (Kandiah, n.d.). Now, there are six Murugan temples by name: one each in Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney and Perth; and two in Melbourne. In addition, there are Saivite temples dedicated to other gods, and some house a shrine to Murugan. Hindu temples recognise the many festivals (or *utsavams*) of the Hindu calendar and Murugan temples focus on the ones that are significant for Lord Murugan such as *Thaipuucam* in January, *Navaratri* in September/October and *Kanda Shasti* in October/November. Each temple holds an annual ten-day festival which probably draws the most visitors.

2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I provided details of the complex and multifarious history and trajectory for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, especially in regards to the Tamil language and Hindu religion. I firstly highlighted some features of Tamil and showed it to be a strong language. At the same time, when we look at the history of Sri Lanka, we see how the Tamil language, people and culture came under threat.

The division of the Sri Lankan population along ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious lines was assisted by the presence of colonial governments that blurred the unity that existed between Sri Lankans. We saw the detrimental effects of the Sinhala Only language policy which was a catalyst

for further ethnic division and the long civil war. This war led to the formation of a large Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and embedded further complexity for the role of English, Sinhala and Tamil in the lives of Sri Lankans within the country and overseas. The damage inflicted on the Sri Lankan Tamil identity has in part translated into an enthusiasm for language and religious maintenance in the diaspora.

I provided some background about the Hindu religion in Sri Lanka and the development of the particular form of Tamil Saivism which is strongly connected to the Tamil language, partly due to the fierce proselytisation efforts of the Christian missionaries and the Sri Lankan language policy. I outlined some of the characteristics of the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu diaspora including the important roles that temples play for migrants and the interest they hold in Sri Lankan politics.

In Australia, even though the population of Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus is relatively small compared to other Western nations, and compared to the total Hindu population of Australia, Sri Lankans have been successful in establishing key Saivite temples. These Sri Lankans, generally from the post-1983 vintage, are enthusiastically committed to see the language and religion continue in the host country. At the same time, language shift to English is seen as high compared to other groups and this is due to the complex role of English in Sri Lanka. Hinduism has grown rapidly in Australia in this millennium and new migrants seek out the Hindu temples as beacons of religious expression and ties to the homeland. The establishment of Murugan temples by Sri Lankans forms part of the history of Hinduism in Australia.

3 Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological considerations in this research project. The methodological approach for the study can be defined as ethnographic, with a leaning towards the relatively new field of linguistic ethnography. I take the position that my study is not necessarily a textbook case of a linguistic ethnography (LE) but one that applies an eclectic mix of techniques and principles that are familiar to LE and the broader ethnography methodology.

In this chapter I will lay out the principles and data collection methods adopted to investigate the main research questions (as outlined in Section 1.3).. I will also provide details of the research site and participant selection and the ethical considerations surrounding these decisions. Some of the challenges and methodological decisions that I faced through the study will be outlined, mainly concerned with my influence as the researcher and how data has been analysed and transcribed.

3.1 Research site selection

This section outlines the process for selecting and approaching a temple site for the ethnography. I believe that this is the first time a linguistics research project has been conducted in a Hindu temple in Australia. The temple was chosen as a suitable site to investigate the influence of the Hindu religion not only because it provides access to a large group of Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus, but also, as an institution, its goals, language policy and various programs can be analysed in terms of how they contribute to Tamil language maintenance for devotees. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Hindu temples have become key sites for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.

In October 2013, I conducted a pilot study of three Sri Lankan Tamil Saivite temples in Australia.¹⁸ The purpose of the pilot study was to get an overview of some of the language, religious and cultural maintenance issues facing the temples and to scope for a suitable research site. The temples were chosen because they are consecrated to the deity Murugan, and are therefore popular amongst Tamils. The temples were founded in several sites around Australia by Sri Lankans.

Through the pilot study it became apparent that one temple, referred to in this study as the Saiva Temple,¹⁹ would be the most suitable site for an ethnographic study. From my scoping, it appeared to be more organised in terms of its programs, governance and its activities for young people. It also had a well-developed communications system which allowed me to keep updated on its weekly events. In April 2014 I contacted the director of education at the temple, whom I had interviewed for the pilot study, with a request to conduct further research at the temple. A letter from The Saiva Temple board approving the main project was provided in May 2014. The Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee then approved the project on 9 June 2014.²⁰

3.2 Methodological approach: Ethnography

My research focuses on the activities of one particular temple and a group of people that can be seen as belonging to a particular migrant, language, ethnic or religious community. Blommaert (2014) stresses the centrality of the notion of mobility when it comes to this type of research. He states that modes of conversational arrangement are sensitive to mobility, so as people move around the world their communicative resources are affected and recontextualised, becoming more complex and blended. As a result, there is

¹⁸ The study was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Approval CF13/2395 – 2013001266.

¹⁹ This is a pseudonym. The location of the temple has been withheld to help preserve anonymity.

²⁰ MUHREC Approval CF14/1012 – 2014000414.

a certain degree of unpredictability in what researchers observe and this calls for “close ethnographic inspection of the minutiae of what happens in communication” (Blommaert, 2014, p. 6). Ethnography’s aim is to gain a rich, holistic, multi-perspective, insider view of language in its natural setting (Dörnyei, 2007). It allows the researcher to obtain insights into the cultural context of language, and how larger social, political and historical factors impact on individual users. In this way, ethnography presents language as a sociological phenomenon and not purely a grammatical construction. In the words of Creese and Blackledge (2015, p. 33), this kind of study of multilingual communication “starts not from the code, but from the speaker”. In addition, such an approach views various identities as linked to “particular contexts and practices rather than to predetermined overarching categories” and as being “fluid and constructed in linguistic interaction” (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, pp. 244, 246–247).

As Dörnyei (2007, p. 130) states, the aim of ethnography is to provide a thick description²¹ of the target culture and describe the cultural meanings and beliefs the participants attach to their activities and behaviours, that is, to provide an emic rather than etic perspective. Auer (1995a, p. 423) notes that cultures are heterogeneous in nature, and therefore should be viewed as heterocultural: “members of such communities are never full participants with omniscient cultural knowledge, but ‘investigators’ in their own culture”. When asked to describe their cultural behaviour, research participants may report what they think is expected of that culture rather than how they actually behave or they may be unaware of what they are doing or be unable to articulate it (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). Ethnographic fieldwork aims to uncover these aspects by not just interviewing subjects but through observation, participation and the collection of naturalistic data.

²¹ a term coined by Geertz (1973, p. 6) who borrowed it from Gilbert Ryle.

Ethnography incorporates several principles into its methodological approach which are applicable to my own research. Firstly, I planned for prolonged engagement, that is, to be involved in regular and continuous research at the site over a period of approximately twelve months. The key to this aspect was to spend as much time as possible in the temple space in order to build relationships with devotees and maximise the potential for gaining insights that could contribute to an emic perspective.

Secondly, ethnography adopts a range of data collection methods (outlined in Section 3.4) appropriate for different groups or activities in the temple. This follows the principle of triangulation in data collection, that is, using more than one method to answer similar questions as a way of crosschecking findings. It helps guard against one of the criticisms of qualitative analysis in that it checks what people say against what they do, and at separate moments in time.

Thirdly, ethnographic research is emergent in its nature in that the hypotheses and relevant theories about what is happening actually evolve over the course of the research. This is what Erickson (1988, p. 1089) refers to as a “process of progressive problem-solving” or what Davis (1995) calls a cyclical process where the study often changes directions in terms of the questions being asked and the broader theoretical perspectives which are brought into the study.

The final principle is that of aiming for a reciprocal relationship with research participants. The researcher should consider what services s/he could offer to participants during the research process. On a formal level, I addressed this by disseminating information about my research project in the wider Sri Lankan community via Sri Lankan migrant associations; and providing progress reports and regular updates to the temple’s board. I offered my research services to the board via the temple president and, while this offer was not responded to, the president did inform one piece of

data collection (see Section 3.4.2 on the survey). On an informal level, I tried to be available in small ways such as taking photos at a devotee's request or having discussions with individual parents about their concerns for their children's education or language and religious maintenance by sharing my own experience and findings.

Having described the ethnographic principles guiding the study, I turn to a particular theoretical and methodological stance towards ethnography called linguistic ethnography (LE). LE draws on several traditions such as linguistic anthropology, applied linguistics, cultural studies and sociology (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 61). The combining of linguistics and ethnographic approaches aims to use a "wide range of established procedures for isolating and identifying linguistic and discursive structures" with a "non-deterministic perspective on data" (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 63). Similarly, Rampton (2014b, p. 2) sees LE as an umbrella term for different research traditions upholding two basic methodological tenets: that the contexts for communication should be investigated rather than assumed, and that the analysis of the internal organisation of verbal (and other kinds of semiotic) data is essential to understanding its significance and position in the world.

The component of my own research which applies LE is in the collection of recorded interactions in the Saiva classroom, and this has been combined with the general principles of ethnography to devise the methodology for this study. I have drawn extensively from LE's analytical methods to approach my own data analysis (see Section 3.4.3.1). For my study, the strength of LE is that it focuses on how macro factors such as political, social and power differences can be evident in the micro interactions between people and that it is "a relatively open discursive space" where researchers can draw from different approaches "according to their needs and interests" (Rampton, 2014b, p. 4).

3.3 Participant recruitment

The ethnographic study involved investigating several activities in the temple complex and thus, a range of participants. On the general level my observations of activities in the temple space involved many temple devotees who happened to be going about their business on that given day, and although I had permission to be there, a lot of these people were unaware that they were being observed for research purposes. However the core of my research focussed on the students, parents and teachers involved in the Greenfields Saiva School (a pseudonym), one of the temple's religious schools.

The Saiva Temple runs two weekly religious schools known as Saiva Schools. They are open to any child Saiva devotee but the majority of students come from Sri Lankan Tamil families since classes are conducted in the Tamil language. In May 2014 I initially observed the Saiva School located in the temple complex at Desiville (a pseudonym), but found it to be quite small and relatively free-form in structure. After time abroad to attend conferences and summer schools, I returned to the temple in September 2014 and visited the Saiva School at Greenfields (a pseudonym). The Greenfields Saiva School appeared to be larger and more organised in its operations (it operates quite separately to the Desiville Saiva School) and thus seemed a more suitable site for the ethnography.

At Greenfields Saiva School, I observed a few different grades to get an idea of the composition and format of the classes; a kindergarten/Year 1 class, a Year 8 class and a Year 9/10 class. In order to focus on identity-related issues it was appropriate to work with older students who could articulate and reflect on such concepts. I was drawn to the Year 8 class because it had more students than the Year 9/10 class and it had a lively atmosphere. The students seemed to have a good rapport with each other and their teacher and my initial impressions were that the students' use of both Tamil and English in the classroom would provide sound data for investigation of the

second generation's linguistic practices. Therefore I decided to seek permission to spend 2015 as a researcher in the Year 9 class (which had five regular students).²²

The students of the Greenfields Saiva School are not representative of all Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu children in Australia or in the Saiva Temple. Rather, they represent those families that are highly engaged in religious, language and cultural activity in the Tamil diasporic community. I will expand on this topic in Chapter Five but suffice to say that the research subjects are the *best-case-scenario* children for religious, language and cultural maintenance.²³

3.3.1 Ethical considerations

There were a myriad of issues to consider in ensuring sensitivity and the maintenance of ethics, confidentiality and protection of the participants in this study. In focusing on children under the age of 18, there were certain requirements such as providing a Working with Children check and gaining consent from the students, parents and temple board to conduct the research, which would include recording videos of the Year 9 class.

I believe that this was the first time the temple had been approached by an “outside” researcher to conduct intensive on-site research and with children. Unlike other institutions that may have a process for approving such research, this appeared to be a new path for the temple and thus, negotiation to undertake the data collection was ongoing throughout the study. As Creese (in Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 65) observed in her own ethnographic fieldwork, conveying the research aims to one's participants is a gradual process and gaining consent is not a “one-off bounded event” but

²² From hereon I will refer to the Year 8 2014 class as the Year 9 class since this became their grade in 2015, the time of naturalistic data collection.

²³ As a contrast I note that Athukorala's (2014) study of a range of second-generation Sri Lankan participants (of variant ethnicities, ages and religions) in Australia did not find religion to be a significant factor in their identity formulations. This highlights the heterogeneity evident in the Sri Lankan diaspora.

achieved through a series of continuous conversations throughout all phases of the research project. Despite one's best efforts to communicate their research topic, especially when dealing with a large uncontained congregation, consistent understanding or consent cannot be assumed (Copland & Creese, 2015). This is possibly more of an issue when the research topic is generated by the individual researcher, as in my case, and not instigated by the research participants or concerned community (cf. Wilkins, 1992).

While the temple board was open to my research project, there was also some uncertainty about my presence in the temple from some members. I will discuss this further in Section 3.5 but the repercussions were that a lot of care and attention was taken into remaining transparent about every step of my research. For example, all material including questions to be asked to the temple devotees had to be approved by the board. In initial conversations with some directors, concern was raised about whether I would ask either questions connected to the civil war in Sri Lanka (for example, asking people their reason for migrating to Australia was considered too sensitive) or information that was considered to be the private business of the board and its members such as financial details. Given the reports of temple connections with the LTTE (see Section 2.2), the temple president made it very clear to me that the Saiva Temple is an apolitical organisation and that the board did not want me to delve into Sri Lankan politics with devotees. I also had to make repeated assurances that I would not act in a way that would disturb potential participants whilst worshipping or that I would not collect material in a dishonest way.

Despite this, temple devotees were generally very willing to engage with me and showed interest and pleasant surprise in my research project. My consistent attendance at the Greenfields Saiva School and temple events helped me to gain a level of trust with the students and their parents and, I

believe as a result of this, they were willing to consent to their children participating in the study.

Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson (1993) suggest that researchers look for the opportunity to take their process beyond the principles of ethics and advocacy to that of empowerment. Empowerment entails involvement of “the researched” throughout the research process such that the roles of researcher and informant are “context-dependent identities” which are negotiated as part of that process (Cameron et al., 1993, p. 87). For example, informants could play a role in setting (perhaps not core but some) research agendas and could contribute meaningful insights by being involved in the data analysis stage. It is important to share expert knowledge with informants so that they can choose how to use this information to progress their own advocacy interests (Cameron et al., 1993). In my own research experience I attempted to use such interactive methods where possible, but I also learnt that challenges such as power differentials and limited access (see Section 3.5 on role of researcher) meant the ideal was not entirely achieved.

All in all ethical considerations are not just a matter of gaining approval from the university’s ethics committee but require ongoing checks to ensure that participants feel protected, informed and respected for their knowledge and contributions to this research project. In this regard, accountability to the temple board was a critical determinant of my access to the temple and its devotees.

3.4 Research design

This section outlines the various methods used as part of the ethnography in the temple. The temple is a very busy space and it is common to have, at any given time, several different activities occurring simultaneously in different parts of the complex. Therefore, to gain a holistic view of the temple, it was important to incorporate the various programs and activities

into the study. Each activity had a slightly different target group, thus, different methods were applied as deemed appropriate and ethical.

3.4.1 Observation, participant observation and field notes

Observation as an ethnographic method was critical to this research project. Firstly, observation of different activities in the temple provided an overview of what happens in the space, how frequently such things happen, who tends to be involved and when and where the activities take place. These observations helped me to form an understanding about the why and how of such activities (and as a non-Hindu, it gave me an education about temple rituals and practices). Importantly, my time spent as a participant observer in the temple allowed me to forge my identity as a researcher and to get to know several devotees.

Following the initial visit to the temple for the pilot study in October 2013, I made 56 visits to the temple space until April 2016 and spent a total of 121 hours observing and at times, participating, in temple activities. Time spent in the temple spaces enabled me to become known as a student researcher and to meet with various devotees and have off-the-cuff conversations that proved extremely valuable. The types of activities I observed at the temple were:

1. Regular pujas – although the temple is open every day of the week, my observations of the regular pujas mostly occurred on Friday evenings and weekends, the busiest times for the temple.
2. Festival days – While all Hindu festivals are recognised at the temple, the particular Tamil Saivite festivals and auspicious days are considered very special occasions and see large numbers of devotees attending the temple.
3. Cultural programs – the temple's cultural hall is used throughout the year to host various cultural events such as music and dance performances or religious lectures.

4. The temple canteen – the large canteen is a key area for socialising during the weekends (when it opens) and festival times.
5. The Saiva Schools

The idea of being a participant observer means that one actively participates with those being observed. However “the border-line between nonparticipant and participant observation is nonetheless difficult to draw” (Auer, 1995a, p. 431). The level of participation can be viewed along a continuum with minimal participation involving a presence during the events in the natural setting and maximum participation involving the researcher acting almost like the other participants in the research (Erickson, 1988).

Perhaps due to my shared Sri Lankan background, it was virtually impossible to remain as an observer through the study. Gregory et al. (2012) talk about the difficulties for one Tamil Saivite researcher who was conducting research in her own temple because she had to participate in the private experience of faith and worship, as well as risk being seen as insensitive or even disrespectful by documenting such personal experiences at the same time. This was not the same situation for me since I am not a member of the Tamil Saivite community. However, as someone present in the temple so often, I did feel the expectation to participate in group worship and adhere to group norms of behaviour, in order to appear respectful and “blend” in. Due to my similar appearance and dress to devotees, I was not instantly recognisable as an outsider so I tried to behave as any other devotee, following the process of the rituals and taking part in processions. At the Saiva School, even though my role as the researcher was much more prominent, I still participated in the morning puja and in the mantras at the beginning of class as a sign of respect. During class, I was not a ratified participant in the dominant communication, however there were occasions when I was involved in subordinate communication known as “crossplay” (Goffman, 1981, pp. 133–134), that is, when the teacher

changed footing to address me, as a bystander, with a question or to translate something she had said in Tamil into English for my benefit.

My experiences and observations were recorded as field notes, on voice recorder or on paper, directly after the activity. These were then typed up within 24 hours of the activity enabling me to recall as much as possible about my observations. The experienced ethnographer Ben Rampton's advice was that one's approach to keeping field notes should be "slow and small" in terms of detail.²⁴ The 24-hour timeframe gave me some time to reflect on the experience and to add to my cumulative understanding of what was relevant or interesting for the project. In this way, the "diary" aspect of the notes became the record of how my perspective and approach to the research evolved over the course of the study. Once data collection was completed I read through all the field notes to reflect on whether the original research questions were in alignment with my observations and where there was evidence of new foci emerging (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 43). For analysis, I thematically coded and categorised key points in the field note data.

The temple publishes a vast amount of literature mainly in the form of program booklets that accompany events in the cultural hall. There is a regular newsletter although this was not always accessible since it is generally only for the temple's financial members. Such publications supplemented my field notes and provided information on the religious institution's stance on topics such as intergenerational transmission of religion and culture.

3.4.2 Survey of devotees

In my initial discussions with members of the temple board, I learnt that while they had a clear idea about the demographics of the devotees, the

²⁴ Personal communication during the Ethnography Language and Communication course coordinated by Ben Rampton at Kings College London in July 2014

organisation had not actually collected any statistical data about them. This was the impetus to undertake a small survey of devotees as verification for the board and for my own research purposes.

The survey was undertaken in January and March 2015. I conducted the survey in the temple canteen on three weekend evenings to get a snapshot of who visits the temple on weekends. The canteen was selected as the most appropriate location for collection in order to avoid disturbing devotees while they were worshipping in the temple. I generally approached one adult member of most groups/couples/families that entered or were sitting in the canteen. Ideally, the questionnaire would have been available in multiple languages such as Tamil, Hindi and English. However for efficiency, the questionnaire was written in plain English and included close-ended questions (where the participant had to tick the applicable answers) or questions that only required one- or two-word answers. There were a small handful of canteen patrons (of the older generation) I approached who declined to complete the survey as they were not literate in English. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Section 12.1.

A total of 100 completed questionnaires were collected over the three days. While the survey sample is relatively small and the survey was taken in the canteen, not the temple, it was seen as a first step to understanding the multi-ethnic and multilingual nature of the temple devotees. I provided a report about the findings of the survey to the Saiva Temple board. While it can be argued that I was not telling board members anything they didn't already know, this action does fall under Cameron et al.'s (1993) principle of empowerment in the research process. The report shows scientifically based results to complement the knowledge of the board members, which could then be used by the board for its own purposes. The results will be discussed briefly in Section 4.4.1

3.4.3 Naturalistic data

For the purposes of understanding the linguistic practices of the best-case-scenario second-generation members, naturalistic data was collected in the Year 9 class at Greenfields Saiva School. I started observing the class in October 2014 and began taking video recordings in March 2015. I was able to collect 12 video recordings of the class in 2015 which provided 10.5 hours of data (details will be provided in Chapter Six).

It took some time to reach the stage of recording due to the uncertainty of who would attend a given class. Since some Year 9 students only attended intermittently, and students from other classes were also placed in the Year 9 class at the last minute if their teacher was absent, it could be difficult to ensure parental knowledge and consent, and thus, planned recordings had to be cancelled. As an outsider, I felt fortunate to be permitted by the students and teacher to video their class however, at first, there was some awkwardness evident from “being watched”. The “observer’s paradox” was certainly apparent as students were initially hesitant to speak in front of the video camera. However with time, and my reiterations that I was equally interested in their use of Tamil and English, not only Tamil, this reluctance eased.

In summarising the use of video as a primary data source in social research, Erickson (2011, p. 186) points out that the video recording is not data in itself but “an information source from which data can be identified” therefore, the uses of the “human eye, ear and brain in the discovery and analysis of video data” is the key to gaining leverage from the video recordings. This treatment of video data will therefore be investigated in the next two subsections.

3.4.3.1 Analytical frameworks

In this section I will outline the main theoretical frameworks which I have drawn from to analyse the naturalistic linguistic data. The focus of the

analysis is the phenomena of translanguaging but the techniques used were initially developed at a time when code-switching was actually the phenomenon under investigation. However, I do not see transferring the code-switching analytical techniques to translanguaging as problematic for this thesis. Rather than abiding by one particular framework, I will acknowledge a few types of analyses which have informed my approach to the data. These can be summarised as Conversation Analysis (CA), Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) and Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS).

When the analysis of language alternation or code-switching first started to receive much attention from sociolinguists, there was debate about how best to understand why code-switching takes place. Rational Choice approaches to analysing code-switching, such as Myers-Scotton's (2006) Markedness Model, are limited because they heavily rely on an external analyst to interpret whether and which particular identities, rights and obligations are indexed in an interaction. These assumptions about the speakers' intentions are made without necessarily providing any concrete evidence (Li Wei, 2005).

On the other hand, scholars like Auer (1995b, 2000) and Li Wei (1998, 2005) apply a Conversation Analytic approach to code-switching. This perspective views code-switching as a contextualisation cue that contextualises turn-taking, parallel to the way in which features like prosody and non-verbal gestures act as contextualisation cues in monolingual speech. Thus, Auer (1995b, p. 129) argued that the "politically, socially or simply personally motivated preferences for one language or the other are made visible in conversational sequences of language negotiation" and the external analyst does not have to assume any predefined connections. CA is seen as a way to provide a "sequential account for language choice" (Auer, 1995b, pp. 119–120), and it demonstrates how "mutual understandings" are "created through a sequential architecture of subjectivity" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006,

p. 60). In the same vein, identity is seen as something constructed in interaction, an “emergent feature” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 51). The emergent and recurrent patterns of identification and indexicality found through CA analysis have informed the themes to be discussed in the results chapters.

Gafaranga (2005) also took a CA approach to analysing language alternation but drew from Membership Categorisation Analysis (such as in Sacks, 1974) to support his view that language does not reflect social structures but is itself a social structure, and like identity, it is a resource that people use in interaction. Through talking, speakers are constantly positioning themselves and one another into groupings in order to accomplish an interaction. Thus, for bilingual speakers, language preference becomes a membership categorisation device and participants are “claiming membership to the categories defined by the languages they are using” (Gafaranga, 2005, p. 294). As in CA, analysts cannot assume that identities are relevant at the outset, but must show how parties are oriented to a categorisation device in producing the very conduct that composed the progressive realisation of specific identities (Schegloff, 2007, p. 475)

Despite the strength of its micro-analysis, CA has been criticised as narrow and limited for its lack of concern with background, contextual, or wider cultural and political influences on the interaction. Especially in different cultural contexts, “people do not always make the referencing explicit, and the workings of power and oppression are often necessarily implicit” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 64). In accounting for the “non-linguistic”, Li Wei (2005, p. 387) concludes that what is needed is a dual-level approach which systematically links the sequential analysis of code alternation (seen as the micro) to the Rational Choice analysis of social motivations (the macro). In a similar vein, Gafaranga (2005, p. 297) calls for a “whole-conversation” approach to bilingual talk that includes the study of language interaction as well as wider non-linguistic social structures which impact on

the interaction. This gap is something that Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) can address.

While, like CA, IS looks at the meaning that is negotiated in speakers' turn-taking in a communicative event, it differs in that it also focuses on "the context and culturally specific situated inferences" that members draw on to convey their message (Gumperz, 1999, p. 458). IS micro-analysis takes into account the positions that participants occupy in "larger/longer/slower social processes, seeking to reveal how these more established identities can be reproduced, contested and maybe changed by human agents interacting" (Rampton, 2006, p. 24)

As Rampton (2014a) makes clear, CA is one of the analytic resources employed by IS along with ethnography, linguistics and discourse analysis, Goffmanian interaction analysis and other public and academic discourses. He states:

when these resources are pulled together in the empirical analysis of recordings of interaction, the goal is to produce an account that respects the uniqueness, deficiency and exuberance of the communicative moment, while, at the same time, describing how participants handle specific forms, strategies and materials, considering the ways in which their use feeds into the communication overall, and trying to understand how this feeds off and into local social life more generally (Rampton, 2014a, p. 4)

As stated earlier, I attempt to draw on three frameworks (CA, MCA and IS) to shape my approach to data analysis. I adopt some systematic adherence to CA techniques and some reference to the use of membership categorisation devices. But like IS, I rely on data triangulation, afforded through the ethnography, to inform my interpretation of what speakers are indexing and why they may be switching languages at a given moment.

Before I continue, it is important to highlight some considerations of my approach to analysing identities that are indexed through language. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) remind analysts that the variable under investigation by a researcher, say religion in my case, should not imply that

the variable is an omni-relevant category significant to every interaction and every case of code-switching. In a similar vein, Omoniyi (2006a) makes the point that a hierarchy of identities is usually in place at any given moment of an individual's speech. He states "an individual's various identity options are co-present at all times but each of these options is allocated a position on a hierarchy based on the degree of salience it claims in a moment of identification" (Omoniyi, 2006a, p. 19). Thus while I focus on identifications like Tamilness, Saiviteness, teenager or female at particular moments of speech, that is not to say that these are the only relevant identities to an individual. In addition, my focus on a collective identity label such as "second-generation Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu" should not be taken to be an indisputable identity formation and the only pertinent social variable against which forms of social behaviour or linguistic usage can be measured (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 24). There are a multitude of identities intersecting in multidimensional ways for the Year 9 students and my ethnography has not elicited a picture of their entire lives but mainly of their behaviour in the temple classroom. Thus I am looking at a very local, community of social practice within that collective identity label.

3.4.3.2 Transcription

For the relatively small corpus of naturalistic data that was collected through the video recordings, transcription became a major component of the research project. As Copland and Creese (2015, p. 191) advise, transcription, like other aspects of ethnography, requires the researcher to be reflective and reflexive so that decisions about the representation of speech can be discussed and defended. For this reason, I will outline some of the main considerations and decisions in preparing the linguistic data that is the basis of analysis in much of this thesis.

Between May 2015 and April 2016, I worked with a Tamil interpreter to transcribe and translate the Tamil content in the video recordings. Through the Tamil network I was introduced to a Sri Lankan Tamil woman who had been working as an interpreter and agreed to undertake the project. There

are not many Tamil interpreters available in Australia and they tend to be older males²⁵ or Indian Tamils, so to find a Sri Lankan Tamil woman was very fortunate. Many hours were spent in Surjani's home working together on the transcription. The task required both of us to be present so that I could operate the ELAN software and provide context and questions while she undertook the transcription. The process became quite organic – since Surjani is a Christian and grew up in Colombo, there were times where we had to consult with her husband from Jaffna over language questions, or with our contacts who are Hindus and Tamil teachers.

Since we were transcribing Spoken Tamil and what might be called Tamil that was grammatically incorrect at times, this posed difficulties for transcription. As Copland and Creese (2015) point out, decisions have to be made about how one represents idiolects. One has to weigh up between portraying someone's speech in a negative light and preserving the local flavour of what was said. This difficulty was heightened because there is no standardised orthographic system for Spoken Tamil. Therefore we decided to take the approach of recording words as closely as possible to how they were heard. Sometimes this coincided with Written Tamil and was straightforward to transcribe, but at other times, when students might have mixed up a word or conjugated a verb in a non-standard way, we decided to reflect this as accurately as possible. Thus, what might appear to be inconsistent transcription has been done deliberately in the pursuit of authenticity. While this thesis does not elaborate on every error or variant uttered by the participants, the transcription endeavours to reflect their speech verbatim.

Another issue for transcription relates to the fact that, in Spoken Tamil, it is open for debate whether certain words are segmented into two or combined into one. For example, if the preceding word has a final vowel

²⁵ Certain cultural conventions made it much easier for me to work with a woman closer to my own age so that we could have open debates and work alone in her home.

sound and the next word has an initial vowel sound, some speakers might link the two words together in their speech. In such cases, these words were transcribed as one word. For example *appellaarum* (then everyone) could be transcribed as one word instead of two, *appa* (then) and *ellaarum* (everyone). As Himmelmann (2006) states, relying on native speaker intuition for word segmentation is a useful method for decisions about word transcription. Thus it was Surjani the interpreter who determined whether a word was spoken as one or in its separate parts.

After Surjani transcribed the speech using Tamil script, I entered it into ELAN and transliterated it into Roman letters. Tamil does not have a standardised transliteration scheme for Romanisation so there are a variety of approaches by scholars. Most in anthropology and sociology follow the Madras Tamil Lexicon. One shortfall of this system is that it does not provide as clear a phonetic representation of Tamil as other systems, and given this is a linguistics-oriented thesis, this was an important consideration. The Madras Tamil Lexicon also uses diacritics which proved difficult to enter into ELAN.

I consulted with a few Tamil linguistics scholars such as Suresh Canagarajah and Seetha Lakshmi to find they are using their own, either simplified or elaborate, transliteration systems. In the end I decided to use a system based on the work of Harold Schiffman (1999) who wrote a grammar on Spoken Tamil and whose work features on the University of Pennsylvania's website for learning and teaching Tamil (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.-b). The appeal of this system is that long forms of vowels are represented as a sequence of two same vowels (e.g. *அ* is a and *ஆ* is aa) and that similar sounds are differentiated without diacritics (e.g. *ந்* is n, *ன்* is n2 and *ந்* is N). The transliteration system is included in Section 12.2. The system also displays those Tamil characters which may have two Roman realisations due to their placement next to certain consonants or vowels or

due to variations in pronunciation, for example, some speakers pronounce ɻ as [tʃ] or [s].

Another decision concerned the inclusion of the Tamil script in the thesis. Ideally, the transcripts would contain three lines for each intonation unit: one for the Tamil script, one for the transliteration and one for the translation. In their study of complementary schools in the UK, Creese (in Copland & Creese, 2015) said that Roman transliteration was employed for some languages while for others it was important to use the script. This was the case when wanting to differentiate between Chinese varieties through the use of traditional and simplified scripts, something that could not be depicted through transliteration. However in the case of this thesis I have decided to exclude the Tamil script for two reasons. Firstly, I experienced difficulties in Tamil font rendering in Word software and secondly, for ease of reading, and for a multilingual academic audience, a Romanised transliteration would be more efficient. However I note the value of providing the Tamil script to predominantly Tamil audiences or scholars. In Section 12.3 I have provided a sample transcript showing the Tamil script to highlight the transformation from Tamil to Roman alphabet.

An additional issue arose when providing English translations for speech turns containing Tamil. Because the transcripts divide speech by intonation unit (IU), there are times when the English translation cannot directly match the corresponding Tamil IU due to the fact that English has a word order of Subject Verb Object and Tamil's is Subject Object Verb. How this manifests in the transcripts is that an English translation for several Tamil IUs may have to be presented on one line and not directly match the corresponding Tamil IUs which are placed on several lines. Where this has occurred I have used an asterick to indicate that the English translation is relevant for subsequent IUs in the turn.

In talking about her research in complementary language schools, Creese (in Copland & Creese, 2015) said that the research team didn't follow the conventions of bolding or underlining transliterated text to highlight different languages because they wanted to emphasise the speaker's repertoire rather than the switching of languages. This raises a tension in my own study. While I acknowledge that we are looking at speakers' full linguistic repertoires in situ, there is still a need to highlight where the switches take place as part of the CA and probe into indexicality and identity positioning. Therefore attention to what "language" is being spoken is necessary for such discussion. As a result, I have decided to use font formatting to categorise words as English or Tamil, even though this is not always strictly possible.

Lastly, in Section 12.4 is the list of transcription symbols used in the linguistic extracts. Since I adopt CA tools in my data analysis, the transcription system is based on the CA system. I have had to make some slight alterations, mainly to cater for the use of capitals in the transliteration system, which are generally used to denote loud speech in the CA conventions. I note that in preparing the transcripts for this thesis I have avoided displaying every applicable transcription symbol and tried to limit it to the ones that are relevant to the discussion. This, like the omission of the Tamil script, improves the readability of the transcripts.²⁶

3.4.4 Student questionnaire

In designing the data collection methods for the second-generation members who were under 18, certain ethical and practical considerations had to be taken into account. I had to consider what kind of access the temple board and parents would be willing to permit. In a context like the Saiva School, opportunities for informal conversations with students were not forthcoming due to the tight schedule of activities. There was limited opportunity to

²⁶ I have used the same transcription conventions and symbols to transcribe the interview data. However interview data has not been segmented into intonation units for presentation, but into turns.

approach the students for a chat as there were no breaks between sessions. As Creese (in Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 30) observed, it is not always appropriate to approach a child after class to ask for an explanation of what has just transpired. Furthermore, there was the issue of gaining access to students' time in their busy weekend schedules. Thus, any interviews would have to be kept short in duration.

A two-step process was designed so that the Year 9 students could complete a written questionnaire in their own time at home, and that this could prime them for the group interviews. The rationale was that the questionnaire could ask students for preliminary information that could assist me in formulating the interview questions. According to the categories outlined by Pauwels (2016) the questionnaire set out to gather sociodemographic information, linguistic histories, language use, language attitudes and beliefs. While the collection of deep knowledge from questionnaires is limited because of the predetermined categories imposed on participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) they can however be a way to gather basic data and to prime the students for further discussion in the group interview. The language of the questionnaire was English as students held high English literacy skills. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Section 12.5 and results will be discussed in Chapter Five.

3.4.5 Interviews

I conducted a range of semi-structured interviews with devotees who had different roles in the temple. As mentioned in Section 3.2, the interviews focus on the “what people say they do” aspect of data collection rather than “what they actually do”. The interviews were a critical part of the triangulation technique important to ethnography as results were compared with the findings from the observations, questionnaires and naturalistic data (cf. Erickson, 1988). At the same time, I note that interviews are not neutral and are interaction events where knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and interviewees, thus when analysing the data, the influence of

the researcher is still present (Copland & Creese, 2015; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Table 3-1 shows the details of the interviews and the interviewees. In total, approximately six hours of recorded interview data was collected.

Table 3-1 Formal interview schedule

Name (pseudonym)	Role	Date	Length (h:m:s)
Students			
Chitran, Raja, Thiran	Year 9 male students	6 Sep 2015	22:13
Raja, Thiran	Year 9 male students	13 Sep 2015	01:51
Jeya, Meena	Year 9 female students	19 Sep 2015	50:35
Jeya	Year 9 female student	19 Sep 2015	09:01
Meena	Year 9 female student	12 Oct 2015	18:46
Adults			
Mrs Chandran	Year 9 teacher	6 Sep 2015	30:24
Nanthika	Saiva School parent and volunteer	11 Oct 2015	39:24
Hamshana	Saiva School singing teacher	8 Nov 2015	14:02
Nishanthan	Saiva School director/temple director of education	25 Oct 2015	45:00
Barani	Temple president	18 Sep 2015	20:37
Veerasamy	Tamil school principal	1 Aug 2015	44:46
Arjun	Saiva School director/temple director of education (for pilot study)	7 Oct 2013	1:12:00

When designing the student interviews, I considered that individual interviews are not necessarily the most effective way to elicit explanations from teenagers, especially in the case where the interviewee is a young male who might feel shy to reveal personal thoughts to an interviewer who is an older woman. As an alternative, group interviews are becoming popular when working with vulnerable groups such as children or when time is short (Copland & Creese, 2015). While I had planned to interview the five Year 9 students as a group, due to absences, it worked out that I interviewed the boys and girls as two separate groups. This yielded interesting results in that the boys' interview was much shorter than the girls'. The gender difference between the boys and myself, as the interviewer, could be one reason for this difference, but as will be shown in

Chapter Five, the female students were generally more talkative and willing to engage in deeper discussion on issues. The purpose of interviewing the students was to attain their perspectives on the Tamil language, Saiva religion, Sri Lankan background, and their identifications in Australia. I had some subsequent short meetings with Raja and Thiran to ask a few follow-up questions and with Jeya and Meena individually, because Meena had to leave the initial girls' interview before it finished.

Interviews were conducted with other players in the Greenfields Saiva School: Mrs Chandran, the Year 9 teacher; Nanthika, who is a parent of two children at the school and who volunteers to help coordinate the school; Hamshana, who is also a parent of children at the school, one of the religious singing teachers at the school, and a professional singing teacher in the community; and Nishanthan, the director of education, to provide information on temple policy towards the school. To provide a more macro perspective, I interviewed Barani, the temple president, for information about the overall temple operation; and Veerasamy, the principal of the Tamil language school (a separate institution to the temple) and long-time active member in the community, for his perspective on second-generation language maintenance. Table 3-1 also includes Arjun who was the director of education who participated in the pilot study.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed except for Nishanthan, the director of education, who declined permission to be recorded. All interviews were conducted in English. Since I was familiar with the adult interviewees prior to the interviews, I judged that our ability to communicate in English was sufficient enough to be the medium of the interviews. I offered the option of having an interpreter present to the Year 9 teacher, who was not as fluent in English, however she declined. A copy of interview questions is included in Section 12.6.

My approach to analysing the data from the interviews was to adopt the method of inductive thematic analysis. I see this as a systematic analysis used to identify common themes which are then compiled into a system for the purpose of qualitative description (cf. Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2015). As part of the process I read through and coded all interview data before reviewing it for common patterns and themes. These themes were then properly defined and named, and formed the categories for discussion in the results chapters. While there are more themes than can be discussed in this thesis, I have selected the ones that correspond with the results from the naturalistic data analysis for the purposes of triangulation.

3.4.5.1 Building relationships with key actors in the local Tamil community

Building of contacts and relationships with interested members of the broader Sri Lankan Tamil community was a more organic, less structured, process. While I initially approached some people whom I thought could assist me with my research, generally, contact with the most helpful community members came from word of mouth. For example, initial contact with a Tamil PhD student conducting research in the Tamil language school, led to my meeting a key organiser in the state Tamil teachers' federation and to presenting a short paper at the federation's inaugural conference.

Over the course of the study I was fortunate to meet with Sri Lankan Tamils who were not necessarily temple devotees, but were part of the diaspora. This included a Tamil playwright, postgraduate students, Tamil writers, former Tamil language teachers, Tamil Christians and Sri Lankans working towards reconciliation in the diaspora.. Meetings with such actors have been very beneficial to my understanding the context of Sri Lankan Tamils and the temples in Australia. While a lot of these discussions have happened informally and are not recorded as interviews, they have provided valuable data for the research in the form of field notes and the field diary.

3.5 Researcher's role and influence on the research process

In an ethnography, the researcher has a direct influence on how and what data is collected and on how the findings are presented. While a positivist approach to research assumes that there is a “reality independent of the observer’s perception” and this “interference” must be minimised so as not to “contaminate” the research (Cameron et al., 1993, p. 86), an ethnographic approach encompasses the reality of the researcher. In this section I will scrutinise the “researcher’s own positioning and performance while in the ‘field’” as part of the ethnographic principle of reflexivity (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 59). I will highlight aspects of my ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and “insider/outsider” position that have impacted on this study.

As an ethnographic researcher, Hornberger (in Cumming et al., 1994) discusses the importance of striking a balance between the insider and outsider perspectives. In addition, Auer (1995a, p. 426) highlights that there are three perspectives that the ethnographer moves between: that of a lay person and member of his/her own culture, that of the culture to be investigated, and that of the scientific discourse s/he is part of. In a similar way, my experience as a researcher moved between these various perspectives and were accompanied by shifting degrees of power such that there was “usually more going on in the relationship of researcher and researched than a simple and oppressive “us/them” opposition” (Cameron et al., 1993, p. 89).

There was complexity to my identity which led to a variety of reactions when people found out about my presence and research in the temple. As a Sri Lankan, one’s ethnicity and religion are significant markers of identity. In these terms I am a mix of Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Malay ethnicity, with a surname that is generally attributed to Sinhalese, and I am a non-practicing Catholic. While this identity means that my experience is

different to the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus who are the subject of my study, there is still a considerable amount of shared cultural knowledge. Therefore, depending on the individual, my ethnic and religious difference can be seen as anywhere from minimal to extremely significant.²⁷ While Gregory et al. (2012) highlight some studies which talk of the difficulties of being able to conduct research unless accepted as an insider to the faith, this was not so much an issue in my research. At the same time, my lack of knowledge about the Hindu religion meant that I was ignorant of much of the religious aspect of what was going on unless participants made it explicit to me.

In general I can say that, as a Sri Lankan, devotees responded to my presence in the temple with openness and positivity. I think that many who did not know me assumed I was a Tamil Hindu, from my appearance, because I was often addressed in Tamil. Some devotees in the temple expressed their approval that as a “Sinhalese” person, I was interested in learning the Tamil language and in studying Tamils. While there is certainly mixing between Tamils and Sinhalese in the Sri Lankan diaspora and in the temple, given the ethnic tensions in post-colonial Sri Lanka, this issue had the potential to affect my relationships in the temple community. For example, in negotiating the terms of my research in the temple, a few directors did express to me that some devotees might question why a Sinhalese person would want to do research on Tamils. Stories circulating in the community about spies being sent to Australia by the Sri Lankan government were cited as a reason for suspicion. With some Tamils experiencing persecution or violence at the hands of Sinhalese people during the civil war, it is not inconceivable that people might have an aversion to disclosing information to a Sinhalese person. My strategy to address this was to be present at the temple as much as possible for consistency and to

²⁷ I do not fall into the dominant group of Sinhalese Buddhists, and given the reasons outlined in Chapter Two, this could have been to my advantage in the temple. However, I note that Sinhalese Buddhists were present in the temple so it appears that acceptance into the temple community really depended on the individual and their experiences of relationships with non-Tamil Sri Lankans in Sri Lanka and Australia.

be open about my identity. If people asked, I shared details of my family and connections to Tamil and Sinhalese members of the Sri Lankan community in Australia and in Sri Lanka. I tried to be clear about my research project when talking to individual devotees and reiterated the confidentiality and ethical standards that I would uphold.

While I did not face any overt suspicion from temple devotees, I was aware of some hesitation on the part of the board. Part of “responsible linguistics” calls for the researcher’s accountability to those who are being researched, but how it plays out for the individual researcher can at times be a “political minefield” (cf. Wilkins, 1992). The board members I liaised with made it clear that my transparency and agenda in the temple had to be clearly communicated and while I attempted to abide by this direction, sometimes factors beyond my control did slow down the process of data collection. For example in conducting the survey of temple devotees, I had attempted to follow protocol by consulting with the temple president about my methodology, sending a letter for approval by the board, and receiving the go ahead from the president. However in the middle of doing the survey I was approached by two of the board members who asked me to terminate collection because they were not aware of permission being granted for me to be there. It appeared a gap in communication had resulted in these board members not being informed of the survey. Events such as these made me question whether my identity was a factor in the delay. However when I consulted with a trusted community member about this issue, she informed me that this was likely to be a result of board politics rather than my identity. Regardless of the reason, I was even more cautious in the way I conducted my research from that point.

As mentioned earlier, the board directed that I could not approach the topics of Sri Lankan politics and that I should refrain from asking people’s reasons for emigration from Sri Lanka. While this would have been useful data to inform the motivation for language maintenance (cf. Perera, 2015) this

aspect of the issue had to be left alone. I am not sure if my identity was a factor in this limitation and perhaps if I was a complete insider of the group, asking such questions might have been considered more appropriate.

In addition to my ethnicity, I occupy the identity of a mature Sri Lankan woman. This aspect of my identity positions me as somewhat of an insider given my similar cultural background. Therefore I adhere to certain “in-group” gender-based expectations as part of positioning myself as culturally close to the group. While degrees of Westernisation are certainly accepted, in achieving my aim of gaining rapport and access to devotees, I decided to suppress my level of Westernisation in the temple space. For example, if I was to wear the Western attire of my everyday, while acceptable, this might impede my ability to build relationships with first-generation women in the temple. Given that most of the teachers in the school are women and most of my conversations occurred with the mothers of students, I dressed as they do to display “sameness”. In addition, the temple leadership is predominantly first generation and male. While the second generation are changing such systems, the patriarchy evident in the culture of the temple has had some impact, I believe, on my interactions and accessibility with some male board members. Gregory et al. reported of similar issues in other studies of faith practices conducted by female researchers; “As women, they were aware of the exclusive nature of certain practices, which dictated where they were allowed to visit, who they were allowed to talk to, and what they were allowed to do, as well as the propriety expected of them” (2012, p. 199).

Hornberger (in Cumming et al., 1994) states that ethnographic researchers have the advantage of being able to move between the emic and etic viewpoints and thus develop more informed interpretations. Similarly, the outsider aspect of my duality provided the opportunity for devotees to share their opinions with me about the temple in the knowledge that I was not connected to anyone inside the leadership. As some devotees became aware

that I am interested in the topic of language maintenance, they were willing to share stories of language shift and cultural loss without a sense of shame. Also, I think the parents of the students at the Saiva School saw me as a second-generation migrant who had experience growing up as a Sri Lankan in Australia. Therefore, they were open to discussing some of their worries regarding their own children.²⁸

One of my main strategies in gaining an insider perspective was to learn the Tamil language. I attended a six-week intensive Tamil summer school in South India in 2014. By the time I started visiting the Saiva School, I was able to conduct some basic conversation in Tamil with devotees, and gained support and encouragement for my efforts. I also became known as a person who was interested in learning about Saivism and Tamil. This positioning as a learner went some way to addressing any perceived power imbalance as a researcher/expert entering the temple space but more importantly, it gave me a foundation on which I could interact with devotees. In 2015, I received private Tamil lessons from the mother of one of the Year 9 students. This education gave me the added benefit of access to the student's family and a deeper understanding of practices in the home domain.

As suggested by Davis (1995), I approached a Tamil academic, Professor Suvendrini Perera, to act as an informal advisor to my research and to provide her macro-level perspectives on any issues I encountered. While we only had a few meetings during the course of the project her guidance was valuable given her identity as Sri Lankan Tamil woman from Jaffna and

²⁸ Second-generation engagement with Tamil language and culture and the temple was generally a popular topic of conversation for the first generation, but I had a sense that the news of Myuran Sukumaran's recent execution in Indonesia made the issue even more pertinent. Sukumaran was a Sri Lankan Tamil who had grown up in Australia and was convicted of drug trafficking in Indonesia. It is rare for Sri Lankan migrants to be associated with criminal activity in Australia and Sukumaran's story was confronting for parents as it highlighted the possible risks of losing children to Western influences. As a side note, after Sukumaran's death it was revealed that he experienced racial abuse on a regular basis as he grew up in Australia and an opinion piece written by his mentor postulated that this could be why Sukumaran went down the path of drug trafficking (Quilty, 2016). Sukumaran's story connects to my comments on the social exclusion of migrant groups from sectors of Australian society in Chapter One.

her own research on Tamils. She was also able to connect me with other Tamils in her network.

Overall my individual attributes and experiences highlighted in this section demonstrate the influence I could have on the data that is collected and how I have adopted some strategies to address some of the issues. In terms of power, Cameron et al. (1993, p. 89) observe that “researchers are not always powerful in an unqualified way. Often the researched can exert power over researchers by virtue of what they know that researchers do not”. My experiences of gaining research access to the temple and, at times, the strict monitoring of my movements by the board can be viewed as signs of an empowered management body at the temple. These experiences led to me behaving somewhat tentatively and meant that the process of collecting data was perhaps slower and more gradual than other researchers’ experiences. However with time and the building of relationships I believe that I proved my integrity to the board, and on an interpersonal level at the Saiva School, and this brought multiple benefits to, not only the quality of data but also, my experience as a researcher in this space.

Cameron et al. (1993) wrote that one of the demands of conducting linguistic research such as this is to ensure that the results are disseminated to the participants and stakeholders in the researched community. As Wilkins (1992) points out, the academic expectation of PhD theses are sometimes in conflict (at least in style if not content) with the knowledge aspirations of the researched, thus there can be challenges in highlighting the relevance of the findings to those who have contributed greatly to it. In this way, my role as a researcher in this particular community will require tasks that succeed the submission of this thesis.

3.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I provided an overview of the methodological considerations of this research project. I outlined details of a small pilot study which led to

the selection of the Saiva Temple as the research site, and the process which led me to situate the bulk of my research in one of the temple's religious schools known as the Greenfields Saiva School.

A repertoire of methods under the umbrella of “ethnography” was applied. The decision to undertake an ethnographic study with a leaning towards the principles of linguistic ethnography was deemed the appropriate way to approach research on the interplay of variables like language, religion and culture for a broad community of practice in an institutional setting which has a community orientation. Ethnography provides the benefit of acquiring a rich and thick description of what is occurring with an attempt to provide an emic perspective in terms of what language, religion and culture mean to those being researched.

Abiding by the ethnographic principle of triangulation meant that methods for data collection were diverse. The significance of participant observation, ad hoc conversations with temple devotees, and relationships with Sri Lankan Tamils within and outside of the faith community were highlighted. Interviews and a general survey provided a picture of first and second-generation perspectives, and a questionnaire targeted at the Year 9 Saiva School students, all assisted in gathering information on “what people say they do”.

To address the ethnographic principle of finding out “what people actually do”, the naturalistic data video recordings in the Year 9 class were the main focus for data collection and analysis. I outlined the rationale for the application of techniques from particular analytical frameworks, namely, Conversation Analysis, Membership Categorisation Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics. This mix of techniques fits within the scope of linguistic ethnography and allows for an understanding of how meaning is co-constructed by participants in the interaction, and how identities and macro-level influences are indexed or evident in the discourse. I also

highlighted key methodological decisions regarding the transcription and representation of the classroom discourse.

Lastly, I looked at some of the ethical considerations for this project. While some ethical issues such as the study of minors and gaining consent are across all research on humans, other issues were connected to my own identity. I outlined how my ethnic and religious identity impacted on my ability to gather and understand data and how my identity, in the larger socio-political context of Sri Lanka, was potentially a hindrance in gaining access to further knowledge. However I note the positive steps I took to ensure ethical conduct within the temple, and the acceptance and support the project received from members of the temple leadership, the Saiva School, the general congregation and members of the wider Sri Lankan Tamil community.

4 Chapter 4 - Overview of the Saiva Temple

In the first of the results chapters of this thesis I provide an introduction to the religious institution that is the Saiva Temple. After detailing the context and practices of this Hindu temple in an Australian city, I explore the main language-related issues. Firstly I take a holistic look at the functional distribution of language in the temple to understand how the Tamil language – Saiva religion ideology manifests in this diaspora context. In discussing temples in the diaspora I look at the phenomenon of templeisation that is occurring for Hindu and other religious institutions in mainly Western settings. Lastly I outline some of the key challenges for the institution in maintaining the religion for younger generations and the degree to which language is part of the puzzle for the long-term sustainability of the temple. A recurring theme of discussion in this chapter is how Hindu temples, such as the Saiva Temple, and the associated religious practices, are adapting in the West.

Information for this chapter was sourced from data gathered over the length of the study and thus has temporal implications. For example, an interview with Arjun, the director of education in 2013, informed the scope of my research project whereas interviews with Barani, the temple president, and Nishanthan, the director of education, in 2015 served the purpose of explaining phenomena that I had already observed or heard about. For specific quotes or anecdotes I have cited the relevant source, however other information is presented without a source because it was taken from a recurring narrative told by or known to several or more insiders of the temple.

4.1 History and introduction to the temple

Virtually every migrant community in Australia uses shared religious identity as its first point of anchor.

(Debien & Calderwood, 2016)

Like the histories of other Hindu temples in Australia, the Saiva Temple came from humble beginnings and is the result of a protracted effort from members of the Sri Lankan community. In the early 1980s there was a critical mass of Tamil Saivites who were looking to worship according to their traditions instead of at the only Hindu temple of the time which was located a long distance from the city and which followed different Hindu practices.

In the same decade²⁹, at the same time as the civil war officially began in Sri Lanka, one family brought out to Australia a statue that was to become the first deity of a small Saiva prayer group that met once a week at the local high school. The prayer group continued for years and at one point the parents started holding a religious class for children every week before the prayer group meeting commenced (Interview, director of education, 2015).

Shortly after, an organisation was formed, the Murugan Foundation (a pseudonym), with the aim of raising funds (through membership) to open a Saiva temple in the city. A large block of land was purchased in a suburb close to public transport and the residences of many new migrants. Initially the foundation worked on erecting a Tamil cultural hall. This then became the site for the prayer meetings and over the years deities were brought out from Sri Lanka while the temple was under construction. By 2000 the temple was consecrated (known in Tamil as a *kumbabishekam*) and officially opened as the Saiva Temple. The temple was dedicated to Lord Murugan.

The Murugan Foundation is responsible for the operation of the Saiva Temple. It has a large number of financial members³⁰ and is managed by a board of directors elected by the members. The number of devotees who

²⁹ Specific dates have not been supplied to protect the identity of the temple.

³⁰ While the majority of members are Sri Lankan Tamils, membership is not limited to that group. Lord Murugan is also venerated by Sinhalese Buddhists so there are a few Buddhist members too (Interview, director of education, 2013).

frequent the temple is not known by the foundation. As estimation, 300 to 500 devotees attend the evening puja on Friday, the auspicious day for worshipping Lord Murugan. Certain festival days throughout the year (such as Tamil New Year or the annual festival) draw larger crowds up to 3,000 in number (Interview, director of education, 2013). At such times the temple becomes alive with noise, music and activity. Its ongoing operation is the result of a continued effort from a large group of volunteers, many from the first generation of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants.

These field notes, taken from one of my first visits to the temple, which coincided with its annual festival, illustrates what the temple can look like to the outside observer:

It is the evening of the sixth day of the ten-day Thiruvizhah. The car park is full and people are flowing in from the surrounding streets. As I approach the gate there are young men handing out flyers for cheap mobile phone plans. Inside the temple there is constant noise, activity and ceremony going on – a puja, singing, music, blessing, procession, and the cleaning, washing and decorating of the lamp. There are a lot of people, I think about 500 inside.

Many women and men are dressed up, in the shiniest sarees or veshtis (sarongs). People are talking while the priests are conducting the puja. I wonder if other devotees mind. Some people are socialising, others sitting quietly and observing, others praying and prostrating next to them, others walking around to worship each deity oblivious to what the priests are doing. These peculiar juxtapositions – solemnity and bustle. You have the kids that come into temple with their parents and stick close to them and the ones who go off to play outside. But most are dressed in their best Tamil clothes.

Outside the temple people are milling around everywhere. At the front of the temple some are decorating a shrine. In the courtyard, others are socialising, chatting around the drinks stall, setting up the tables for prasatham (blessed food), supervising the young kids who are running around playing hide and seek. And then more people are arriving and entering the temple, joining the line to apply vermillion and ash on their foreheads.

(Field notes, 13 March 2014)

The extract highlights, not only the busyness and activity at the temple, but that it is a site for gathering and socialising. The Murugan Foundation sees its role as providing a place specifically for Tamil and Saivite activities. Its stated objectives are to provide a place for worship, prayer and religious activities in Saivism and Tamil; to maintain Lord Murugan, the Tamil God, as the presiding deity; and to maintain the role of Tamil in religious, cultural, educational and community activities. These objectives highlight the preeminent role of Lord Murugan for Tamil Saivites and the close connection between the Tamil language and Saivism for the Saiva Temple.³¹ Such objectives point to a strong language-religion ideology (LRI) as will be discussed later in this chapter. However this chapter will also delve into the nuance and complexity in the goals of enhancing and preserving the Tamil language in the Saiva Temple.

4.1.1 Layout

The Saiva Temple is not a single building but a complex, incorporating several structures and spaces, on a major road in the suburb of Desiville. Within the complex is the temple, a large courtyard, car park, Tamil cultural hall, canteen, library, office, and other rooms devoted to security, first aid, festival preparations, washing and tea-making.

While most of the Murugan Foundation's activities take place in the Saiva Temple complex, some events and programs occur at external venues when larger performance or meeting spaces are required. As will be explained later, one of its religious schools is held in a different part of the city, in a suburb called Greenfields, an area with a high concentration of Sri Lankan Tamil residents. In addition, the foundation has purchased some properties surrounding the temple. Some are used to accommodate priests but also form part of a plan for future expansion of the complex.

³¹ Objectives have been paraphrased to protect the identity of the temple.

4.1.2 Main activities in the temple

The temple is open every day from early in the morning till night. The main worship ceremony is the puja (or *puuca*i in Tamil). The puja is conducted by the priests five times a day, lasting about 45 minutes each time. Group devotional singing sessions (known as *kootu valipaadu*) happen twice a week in the evening. One of these sessions occurs during the popular Friday evening puja and so attracts a number of devotees.³² However devotees also visit the temple at other times to conduct their personal worship.

It is important to note that the traditional practice of Hinduism in South Asia is not congregational. Therefore devotees can choose to attend temple while the puja is conducted by the priests but they are more observers rather than participants. Thus, Singer (1972, p. 113, as cited in Vertovec, 1992, p. 253) found in South India that “worshippers come according to their religious urge; they are under no obligation to come or not to come. Even if a person does not come, he is not considered irreligious or bad”. As I observed at the Saiva Temple above, while the puja is being conducted or group devotional singing takes place, devotees are free to move around the temple and perform their individual worship.

There are numerous auspicious days and festivals throughout the year and so it is common that every week there are special pujas that take place in line with Hindu astrological timing. There are a number of other services provided by the temple which an individual or family can request and pay to have performed by the priests. Rituals such as *archana*³³, *homam*³⁴, *abishekam*³⁵, and special pujas generally involve an offering to a deity in

³² In his interview Nishanthan, the director of education (2015), mentioned that the singing used to occur after the puja but they had recently inserted it into the middle of the puja. This upset some devotees because it lengthened the duration of the puja and thus people had to spend longer at the temple. I highlight this example as a sign of the changes to worship occurring in the diaspora and the pressure to shorten the time of such ceremonies due to busier schedules.

³³ Devotional worship of deity with flowers or saffron (Ron Geaves, 2007, p. 184)

³⁴ Sacrificial ritual involving fire (Ron Geaves, 2007, p. 184)

³⁵ Ritual washing of deity with oil, milk, ghee and other items (Ron Geaves, 2007, p. 180)

order to make a specific request of that deity, and can coincide with life milestones such as birthdays, a new birth or engagement. This is an important source of fundraising for the Murugan Foundation.

In another part of the temple complex is one of the busiest operations, the temple canteen. Open on weekends and during festival times, Tamil vegetarian food is cooked in a large open kitchen and eaten at plastic tables in a bustling and noisy environment. The canteen is run by volunteers, and although a source of fundraising, it is also seen as a form of community service because the price for meals is kept at a minimum. The canteen itself draws a wider group of people into the temple complex – those who may not be temple devotees but who come to purchase Sri Lankan food. Most visitors are of South Asian descent.

Another important building in the complex is the cultural hall. The hall is used for various purposes: a religious school, numerous dance and music performances during festival times, religious discourses (or lectures), competitions, weddings and even saree sales. In this extract, from an interview with the temple president, a key function of the hall is emphasised:

Interview extract 4-1

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 12:05.166

Barani: that cultural hall name is Tamil Educational and Cultural Centre

Niru: yes ok

Barani: the reason they put it there just to preserve the Tamil and yeah Tamil and Hindu- ah Saivism

Niru: ah I see so from the-

Barani: but it doesn't mean ((other)) Saiva people can't come

The president highlights the fact that the hall is for Tamil purposes so, while non-Tamil Saivites or other interested people are not prevented from

attending events there, it is seen as having a specific role for Tamil education and culture. Shortly after these comments, Barani went on to explain a tension amongst devotees about the hall being a Tamil-language space:

Interview extract 4-2

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 12:33.140

Barani: there are some people who comment. sometime they are little bit, little bit annoyed. but can't help it because ah the people, yeah definitely they put it there because they want to maintain the culture=

Niru: yeah that's the- that's like a different part to the temple

Barani: =Tamil culture

Barani explains that those who cannot understand Tamil can get annoyed because they are excluded from activities in the hall. But Barani's view is that the hall was erected for the purpose of being a Tamil space so that role should be preserved. While Sri Lankan Tamils are reported by many in the temple to no longer be the dominant group in terms of numbers they do hold the majority of positions on the board, and due to the history of the temple, the hall remains a Tamil-oriented space. This point leads us to a discussion of the role of different languages in the Saiva Temple and how this affects the language-religion ideology in this diaspora setting.

4.2 Language-Religion Ideology at the temple-level

Language choice as exercised by religious institutions is also inevitably a choice of religious identities.

(Chew, 2014)

Having outlined the main activities of the Saiva Temple, we can now look at the functions that various languages serve in different parts of the complex. While the connection between the Tamil language and Saivism is seen as unbreakable in Sri Lanka (Suseendrarajah, 1980) there is a question about how this relationship can be maintained in the Australian context,

especially when the next generation is not raised in a Tamil-dominant environment. Can the Tamil language continue to be maintained as the language of Saivism or will there be a gradual shift to English for the next generation?

Other studies of language shift for Hinduism report on varying degrees of English influence in Western settings. In the US, Pandharipande found “an unprecedented connection between English and Hinduism is being established” (2010, p. 76). There are US temples where announcements are made in English, priests explain the rituals in English (after they have been performed in Sanskrit or another Indian language) and religious discussions occur in English. In some cases, the language of rituals has even changed to English. This shift is seen as a way to popularise Hinduism among linguistically diverse migrant groups (Pandharipande, 2006). However in the Saiva Temple, I found that Tamil maintains a dominant status overall with Sanskrit, English and other, mainly Indian, languages performing limited and specific functions in the temple space.

In Perera (2016) I report on the results of the pilot study for this PhD project where I conducted interviews with leaders of three Saivite temples in Australia about the use of Tamil in their temples. The answers given by The Saiva Temple’s representative in the pilot study come from the director of education at the time, Arjun, and are featured in this section. I note that his answers regarding language, religious and cultural maintenance were overwhelmingly similar to those of the leaders of the two other Saivite temples and this acts as evidence that Saivite temples in Australia have not shifted to English in the same way as reported for Hindu temples in the US (cf. Pandharipande, 2010).

In Table 4-1 below I outline the functional distribution of the three main languages in the Saiva temple: Tamil, English and Sanskrit. The results here are based on interviews and conversations with first generation Sri

Lankan Tamil devotees. To an extent this distribution would be similar for Indian Tamil devotees however, since members of this group were not interviewed, this cannot be confirmed. What has been excluded from this table is the matter of other (mainly Indian) languages which are used in the temple for personal worship and interactive communication by non-Tamil devotees. This will be addressed later in the chapter.

Table 4-1 Functional distribution of language in the Saiva Temple

Function	Performed by	Language/s
Saiva rituals (including pujas)	Priests	Sanskrit
Religious sermons	Priests	Tamil
Communication with priests	Priests and devotees	Tamil but individual priests also speak English and/or Hindi
Group devotional singing and prayers	Devotees	(Classical) Tamil
Personal prayers	Devotees	First generation: Tamil Second generation: Tamil or English
Announcements in the temple	Priests and temple organisers*	Tamil
Conversations in the temple	Devotees	First generation: Tamil or a mix of Tamil and English Between first and second generation: Tamil or a mix of Tamil and English Second generation: English
Proceedings of events in the cultural hall	Temple organisers	Tamil
Religious discourses/workshops in the cultural hall	Visiting scholars	Generally Tamil but some in English
Communication at the canteen or information counter	Devotees, temple organisers and visitors	A mix of Tamil and English
Written signage in temple	Temple organisers	Tamil and English
Written notices about events	Temple organisers	Tamil and limited English
Newsletters	Temple organisers	Tamil and limited English
Website and Facebook	Temple organisers	English with some key Tamil documents
Religious education	Teachers and parents	Tamil

* Temple organisers include temple board members and volunteer staff

The table shows a heteroglossia ³⁶ present in the temple's linguistic repertoire, with Tamil being the prominent language. In accordance with homeland practices, Sanskrit is the ritual language of the temple but serves no other function. Generally the priests are the only ones with knowledge of Sanskrit. The Saiva Temple has six priests, all of whom are sourced from South India and Sri Lanka, to ensure that contemporary religious practices in the homelands are maintained, and that the priests can cater for the linguistic and cultural needs of both Sri Lankan and Indian devotees. While the core parts of rituals are conducted in Sanskrit, it was pointed out that the puja also contains Tamil songs so there is now a bilingual element to this particular ritual (Interview, temple president, 2015). The use of Tamil and Sanskrit in the temple was described thus:

Interview extract 4-3

7Oct13	Arjun	Timecode: n/a
<p>Arjun: See the tradition is Sanskrit (.) where in Sri Lanka or India they do that in Sanskrit but in India in some temples they are doing it in Tamil (.) now if you go to Malaysia one or two temples they do it in Tamil (.) ah here they are doing ... pujas in Sanskrit but they will recite Tamil songs</p>		

As Jacob and Thaku (2000) point out, Sanskrit is a classical language and not native to any ethnic group, so most Hindus do not actually know it. Some first-generation devotees commented that they had knowledge of Sanskrit from being exposed to the mantras in the rituals for a long time, while others understood the inference of ritual language but not the meaning of each word. Devotees' main vocal expression of worship in the temple is through singing particular types of devotional hymns known as *pannisai* and *kootu valipaadu* (also known as *bhajans*) which are all recited in a form of Classical Tamil. Such singing is seen as an integral part of Saiva practice.

³⁶ The term has various nuanced definitions, but I use it here to broadly mean the presence of different languages and codes as a resource (based on Bakhtin, 1981, as cited in Blackledge & Creese, 2014).

In the quote above, Arjun refers to some Tamil temples in India and Malaysia where the ritual language has changed from Sanskrit to Tamil. This is indicative of a movement for a shift to Tamil pujas in Tamil temples worldwide, and was identified as an aspiration for some Saiva devotees in Sri Lanka decades ago (Suseendrarajah, 1980). Some have seen the changing of the ritual language to Tamil as a way of asserting a Tamil identity in opposition to Sanskrit hegemony (Jones, 2016; Pandharipande, 2006). In a discussion with two first-generation temple devotees about having Tamil instead of Sanskrit pujas, one reasoned, “you need to be able to communicate with your god” (Personal communication, 2015). However with Tamil temples in the West there is an extra dimension and that is the potential for the ritual language of Sanskrit to be replaced by the dominant language, in this case, English. Thus those same devotees commented that, overall, Sanskrit would be the preferred alternative in a multilingual and multi-ethnic setting like Australia because it maintains religious symbolism and it doesn’t discriminate amongst devotees in the sense that no one understands it. Pandharipande (2010) found that while English is seen as essential for the communication of Hindu beliefs in the US, Sanskrit is still viewed as essential for marking the Hindu identity and the sacredness of the religious discourse. This highlights the complexity in selecting the languages of worship and ritual in the diaspora and the tension in balancing sacrality and comprehensibility (cf. Liddicoat, 2012). At the time of this study, there was no sign of English playing a role in the rituals at the Saiva Temple.

For other functions performed by the priests such as giving religious sermons and explanations of some festival rituals, or talking with individual devotees, the default language is Tamil. Woods’ (2004, p. 148) found evidence of bilingual services and code-switching (between the heritage language and English) in sermons in some ethnic churches in Australia as

an attempt to reach younger members of the congregation. However, there is no evidence of code-switching in the priests' sermons in the Saiva Temple.

As mentioned earlier the priests regularly conduct private rituals and ceremonies for individual devotees. While the ritual formalities occur in Sanskrit, priests try to use the preferred language of the devotees, if they can, for interpersonal communication. This is where a priests' knowledge of another language like English or Hindi is integral to catering for the non-Tamil devotees. However not all priests are proficient in English. The interview with the temple president confirmed this separation of language:

Interview extract 4-4

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 00:05:23.730

Barani: like Sinhalese come or even um Nepalese come or even even some other country, Burmese people come, so whoever come who believe in Hindu even Buddhist people Buddhist devotees come. because both religions are almost same so they come. they do ah archana ((ritual)) so they do it in English they talk in English so priest can

Niru: so with the priests they can talk in English, Hindi

Barani: but ah when they do the archana they do it in Sanskrit

Niru: ah

Barani: but when they talk

Niru: ah

Barani: so the puja will be in

Niru: in Sanskrit?

Barani: Sanskrit. when they talk they talk the language the devotees knows

When it comes to the role of Tamil, one reason for its strong connection to the religion is the highly-celebrated, large quantity of Tamil Saivite literature that has shaped the practice of Tamil Saivism. Here, Arjun comments on the extent to which Tamil is embedded in the practice of Hinduism for Tamil devotees:

Interview extract 4-5

7Oct13 Arjun Timecode: n/a

Niru: practicing Hinduism do you think the Tamil language is an important part of the religion for them?

Arjun: yes yes (.) the reason is because we don't study Sanskrit

Niru: hmm

Arjun: so all the books and ah all the rhymes you know about 1400 years or 1500 years back ah we have all those ((Tamil)) books over here (.) they have sang those songs (.) those are the things that we normally recite (.) bhajans also we do the same thing

Niru: ok all in Tamil?

Arjun: yep

While Sanskrit is the language of the classical Hindu texts such as the Vedas, Tamil Saivites have been generally educated in the Tamil religious literature created by Tamil saints and poets (Suseendrarajah, 1980) such as the twelve books of the Tamil scriptural canon, known as the *Thirumurai* (compiled between fifth to 12th century (Johnson, 2009)). For this reason Tamil is the only language appropriate for group singing and group prayers in the Saiva Temple. For personal prayers (or talking to) God, members of the first generation use Tamil but the second generation uses a mix of English and Tamil. When asked if it is important to use the Tamil language rather than English to practice Hinduism, Arjun responded:

Interview extract 4-6

7Oct13 Arjun Timecode: n/a

Arjun: yeah it is the first language (.) err (.) well to me if I can speak in Tamil that is very easy easily understand (.) I may not know all English words so Tamil is the one that ah we prefer to talk

As suggested by Arjun, the religion cannot necessarily be accurately understood or conveyed in English for devotees, especially when certain

Tamil terms and phrases have a religious bearing (cf. Suseendrarajah, 1980).

In some parts of the temple English is deemed necessary for communication. While public announcements are broadcast in Tamil, areas where one-on-one communication is likely to occur with non-Tamil speakers, such as at the information counter or in the canteen, allows for the use of English. However other areas of the temple are seen as distinctly Tamil like the cultural hall. Events in these spaces, such as the cultural music and dance performances, are presented solely in the Tamil language and performed in Tamil or another Indian language (with no sign of this tradition changing to English). Thus, compared to what Pandharipande (2010) reported for the adaptation of Hinduism in the US, the Saiva Temple is maintaining a strong LRI.

While the worship functions in the temple are performed in the same manner as in Sri Lanka (that is, in Sanskrit and Tamil), some administrative functions in the temple show evidence of the shift towards English. This is most evident in some of the written communication such as the bilingual signage and notices. However a closer look at the numerous paper notices placed in the temple through the year, that provide details of events and special rituals, reveals that only a limited amount of information is supplied in English such as the date and time. Further details are supplied in Tamil script and this suggests that Tamils, and specifically first-generation Tamils, are the main group targeted through such notices. At the front counter there is a large LCD screen which mainly features English messages (such as “please do not take photos”) and the times of activities, and there are books and pamphlets on religion which are mainly in Tamil. The distribution between Tamil, Sanskrit and English in the temple building is similar to that of a Saivite temple in London (cf. Lytra et al., 2016b).

When it comes to the matter of communicating with the second generation, we see evidence of English to accommodate for a lack of Tamil proficiency. Arjun commented that although the second generation can understand Tamil, their preferred language for speaking, reading and writing is English. In the temple space they communicate with each other in English, and with the older generations in Tamil if necessary. Arjun gives the rationale for this accommodation here:

Interview extract 4-7

7Oct13 Arjun Timecode: n/a

Arjun: Sometimes if you want the youth ((to)) get involved we try to conduct those things in English also (.) so um we will give some sort of translation in Tamil but if it is youths involved we prefer to have it in English so that they will get the message

Thus, notices about events such as the cultural performances tend to contain more English since they aim to attract the younger audience. While not common, there are events targeting adolescents and young adults such as yoga workshops and, thus, these are advertised as bilingual events. A booklet produced for a youth day in 2004 consisted of mostly English articles about Saiva practice.

Online communication shows more evidence of English shift. Posts on the temple's Facebook page are mainly in English, suggesting an attempt to reach not only the second generation but also the non-Tamil literate devotees and wider public. The temple's website has English as the main language although several documents on the site, such as the newsletter, are predominantly in Tamil. The regular religious discourses and workshops in the cultural hall are mostly given in Tamil however the notices about such events tend to at least indicate whether English or Tamil will be used. Such adaptations are evidence of an awareness of the evolving linguistic diversity of the temple devotees.

For the second generation, Tamil dominates in the domain of religion but it is not necessarily used for all religious functions. For group worship, such as singing devotional songs (*pannisai*), Tamil is the only appropriate language and the LRI is strong in this aspect. Being able to perform the *pannisai* is considered a core skill for them to acquire. However for the function of personal prayer, in the temple or elsewhere, English comes into play for a direct conversation with God.

The dominance of Tamil means that some second-generation members are positioned at the periphery of temple life if they cannot speak or understand Tamil. However it is not known exactly what proportion fall into this category. It is known that, city-wide, enrolments in Sri Lankan Tamil language (or complementary) schools have reached over a thousand students. We also know that there is a smaller proportion of the second generation who are highly engaged in the temple and are still performing religious activities in Tamil. When it comes to religious education, Tamil is the medium of instruction, and this will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

In this section we have investigated the strong LRI in the temple. If we consider the LRI to lie on a continuum, where a strong link between language and religion is on one end and a weak link between language and religion is on the other; we can say that the link for Tamil and Saivism remains strong but with signs of movement towards the centre, especially for the second generation. Tamil and Sanskrit are maintained as the religious and ritual languages (with a high degree of invariability (cf. Pandharipande, 2010)) but English is also evident when it comes to languages used in the religious domain. We have seen how the temple is playing a significant role by providing a space that supports the maintenance of Tamil in the second generation and by expanding the domains in which Tamil can be used outside of the home environment. In

the next section I will explore the changing role for diaspora temples and how language is a key factor in adaptation to the host country.

4.3 Templeisation in the diaspora

The creation of an immigrant church or temple often provided ethnic communities with refuge from the hostility and discrimination from the broader society as well as opportunities for economic mobility and social recognition.

(Hirschman, 2004, p. 1)

The temple is no longer just a centre for devotion, but is an oasis of Indian culture in an alien environment.

(Jackson, 1981, p.66, as cited in Vertovec, 1992)

The Saiva Temple's history and impact on the lives of Sri Lankan, and more generally Hindu, migrants charts the story of how an immigrant religion can be so critical to the settlement of migrants (especially in cases where political and/or social hardship has forced emigration from the homeland). The Murugan Foundation board aims to run the worship functions of the temple as closely as possible to the way it is done in Sri Lanka (Interview, temples president, 2015) and this has been the aim of other Tamil temples in Europe (Goreau, 2014). However it is evident that the role of temples in the diaspora is markedly different, in Australia (Perera 2016), Paris (Goreau, 2014), Germany (Baumann, 2009), Switzerland (Baumann, 2009; Eulberg, 2014), the UK (King, 1984; Jackson, 1981, as cited in Vertovec, 1992) and the US (Jacob & Thaku, 2000).

The term *templeisation* (coined by Vasudha Narayanan at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in 2006), used by Baumann (2009, p.154), describes the growing importance of the temple space (over the home) to Hindu migrants in the West. Whereas the practice of Hinduism in the homeland of South Asia is more non-congregational, in the diaspora setting, the temple becomes a site for some communal worship practices

(Vertovec, 1992).³⁷ Leaving one's country of birth accentuates one's awareness of their identity and this increases the need for religious belonging as a way to maintain homeland ties and orient their lives in the diaspora (Baumann, 2009; Goreau, 2014). As Anderson and Frideres (1981, as cited in Mullins, 1987, p. 322) observed "religion contributes to a sense of identity in an age of depersonalization; it may be a nationalistic force and assume the role of the protector of ethnic identity" (cf. Lord Murugan being a symbol of Tamil cultural resistance in Jones (2016)).

In the host country, the temple acts as a central location for socialising with people from the same culture (Baumann, 2009). Baumann (2009) refers to several temples in Germany and Switzerland that have added cultural and wedding halls to the temple complex as part of a trend to incorporate culture into their roles. Clothey's (2006, p. 212) study of Tamil Hindu spaces in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Mumbai and Pittsburgh highlighted the universal desire to create venues not only for worship but for "the serving of food, display of dress, and the performance of music, lecture and dance". Eulberg (2014, p. 123) adds that the temple structure can exhibit the "prestige of Tamil Hinduism", and act as "a way to get recognition and legitimacy" (Goreau, 2014, p. 230) in mainstream society. The temple building acts as a stabiliser for social life, providing a type of physical security after what would have been an instable period for those who experienced the civil war in Sri Lanka (Eulberg, 2014). Evidence of this stabilising feature of the Saiva Temple is given by Arjun here:

Interview extract 4-8

7Oct13

Arjun

Timecode: n/a

Arjun: we don't do counselling like in Christian society they do (.) but in here this is a meeting place so that people can come to know (.) so as they can tell their stories and ah get some consolation and ... we can introduce

³⁷ However Vertovec (1992) also points to an exception - a Hindu temple in London which doesn't encourage group-oriented worship practices and thus, acts more like temples found in India.

someone so if they want to err get some work

The access to informal social networks is seen as a critical role for the Saiva Temple. When I interviewed the temple president and asked about the role of the temple, he gave a broad answer, and markedly, did not mention religion or worship:

Interview extract 4-9

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 00:01:13.570

Barani: temple is a place where you, you meet people you learn ah new things, you learn peace, you everything everything. it is a place where um you- you- you become as a man like ah i- i- i- it is where you can you can ah learn the culture, different culture, face people and understand the human so

Barani also emphasises the opportunity the temple provides as a peaceful gathering place for Sri Lankan Tamils and Hindus. In the next interview extract, Nishanthan, the more recent director of education, makes a comparison between the highly-resourced Saiva Temple and ones in the homeland:

Interview extract 4-10

25Oct15 Nishanthan Timecode: 00:08:26.200

Nishanthan: In Sri Lanka there are hundreds of thousands of temples but not a lot of facilities. Here in ((city name)) we have a temple with all the facilities.

The three quotes above provide evidence of the multi-faceted role for the Saiva Temple. In addition to providing a space for traditional Saiva worship, the performance of rituals and recognition of religious festivals, the diaspora temple provides a space for Tamils (or Hindus) to meet and socialise, to benefit from the experience and networks of more established migrants, to practice Tamil culture, to maintain the Tamil language, and to

gain comfort from what may have been a traumatic experience in the homeland and in the process of migration and settlement in Australia.

Significantly, the temple also becomes the space that can assist in educating and exposing the second generation to Tamil Saivite culture. As Lytra et al. (2016b) observed in the London Sri Murugan Temple, it is a space where children can observe and learn from the more competent members of the faith community and thereby cultivate their own religious routines and practices. They state, “Through iterative visits to the Temple, children participated in culturally valued practices and routines mediated by symbols and sacred objects and rooted in enduring cross-generational relationships with expert members of the faith community, their parents, grandparents, faith teachers and priests.” (Lytra et al., 2016b, p. 155).

As a way to attract the second generation, David (2012) found that Bharatanatyam dance classes were being conducted in Hindu temples in the UK, rather than in independent dance schools, as would have happened in India. This adaptation is another sign of the cultural role that is developing for Hindu temples across the diaspora. Such a large and varied role for diaspora temples brings with it several challenges for first-generation temple leaders and volunteers who try to service the broad needs of the faith community while at the same time enable a successful settlement experience for themselves and their own families.

4.4 Challenges faced by the Saiva Temple

With globalisation, increased migration and technological advancements, the Saiva Temple, like any other religious institution, is facing rapid change in its congregation and social context. As Fishman (2006, p. 18) proposed in his seminal decalogue of theoretical principles for the sociology of language and religion, “all sources of sociocultural change are also sources of change in the sociolinguistic repertoire vis-à-vis religion, including religious change per se”. In this section, I wish to outline some of the main language-related

challenges facing the temple and how these impact on the way the religion is practiced, and vice-versa.

It should be mentioned that the Saiva Temple has grown rapidly in a short period of time. The mainly volunteer-run temple has become so popular and large an operation that the board and volunteers must work concertedly and constantly to provide the services of the temple's mandate. It appears that some of the issues presented in this section have been put aside while plans for expansion to meet the growing and ceaseless demand for services take the fore.

4.4.1 Multilingual devotees

Being Hindu is important, but to maintain that identity one must practice Hinduism according to the customs of one's regional ethnicity.

(Jacob & Thaku, 2000, p. 237)

The Saiva Temple was founded and continues to be managed by Sri Lankan Tamils, however the turn of the millennium has brought significant change to the ethnic make-up of temple devotees. The influx of Indian migrants since 2000 and the fact that Hinduism is now the fastest growing non-Christian religion in Australia has meant that more Indian Hindus are visiting the temple. While Hindus from South India would be familiar with Lord Murugan and Saivism, those from North India would not necessarily know either. In the homeland, North Indians and South Indians would follow their regionalised forms of Hinduism and not have to contend with another group's religious practices in their temple. However, in this diaspora setting where Hindu temples are scarcer, a diverse mix of newly arrived Hindus seek out the Saiva Temple due to its large size and proximity to new Indian migrants in the city.

To explore the ethnolinguistic diversity at the temple, a small written survey was completed by 100 people in its canteen. While these results are not necessarily representative of who worships in the temple, they paint a picture of the devotees present in the temple spaces. Although observations

in the temple indicate that the Sri Lankan presence remains strong, these results reveal the significant presence of Indians. The survey found that 80% of the respondents were from India while 13% were from Sri Lanka. The remaining 7% were from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Singapore. Of the 80 respondents from India, 28% were from Gujarat, 16% from Maharashtra and 14% from Tamil Nadu. Overall, only 27% of the Indian respondents came from South Indian states so this indicates that many of the Indians visiting the temple are not likely to be Saivites.

In terms of the languages present in the temple space, for the 100 respondents, Tamil was the most popular first language at 29%, followed by 20% for Gujarati, 20% for Hindi and 11% for Marathi. This indicates the potential for a significant amount of Gujarati, Hindi and Marathi to be used by devotees in the temple spaces. In conversations with a few Gujarati and Telugu participants during survey collection I was told that they visit the temple regularly but sometimes feel like they are missing out because they cannot read or speak Tamil (a sentiment observed by the temple president in Interview extract 4-2). In addition, the survey respondents reported that they use their first language, that is, a language other than English, most often in the home. However 63% of respondents reported using English (to a lesser degree) alongside their first language, and 26% reported using Hindi alongside their first language, in the home. Therefore there is potential for the use of more English and Hindi in temple operations in order to be inclusive of other linguistic groups.

The influx of Hindu migrants from India has positive implications for the survival of the temple beyond the first-generation Sri Lankan Tamil migrants. However, there could also be challenges in how the temple will adapt or modify its activities to cater for different groups. This will have implications for each group's heritage language use and ability to engage in all temple activities. There are two relevant issues here: one is the unity between South Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, belonging to the same

ethnolinguistic group; and the other is the potential unity or division for devotees belonging to different ethnic groups.

In terms of language intelligibility for Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils, only minor problems were reported by devotees. As Das (2011) notes, the distinction between the Tamil used by Indians and Sri Lankans cannot be simply defined. However the general perception is that Indian Tamils use the variety known as Spoken Tamil whereas Sri Lankans rely more on the variety known as Written Tamil. Interviews and conversations in the temple indicated that Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil speakers could understand each other, but differences in accents caused the main difficulty. The general view was that there was little variation in the way both groups wrote Tamil although opinions differed about this as well. Some Sri Lankans stressed that they considered Sri Lankan Tamil to be the most pure, grammatically correct form and this perception of Sri Lankan Tamil has been found in other studies (cf. Das, 2011). Arjun describes the differences here:

Interview extract 4-11

7Oct13 Arjun Timecode: n/a

Arjun: written ones are same, everyone reads the same thing but ah, when that's why the Indians now feel like the Tamil classes are all run by the Sri Lankans. and ah they felt that I think they now started their own ones because they can't understand the Jaffna Tamil or they didn't want the children learning the- the Ceylon Tamil version

As with the separate language classes described by Arjun, Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils in the city of the Saiva Temple tend to form separate cultural and social organisations (Kandiah, 2008), but there is a shared pride in the language and a shared vision to protect it against Sanskrit/Hindi and Sinhalese hegemony in their respective homelands (cf. Burgio, 2016; Jones, 2016). Perhaps for this reason there has been some collaboration between the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil language schools.

Divisions between northern and southern Indians have been reported in a temple in the US. In Jacob and Thaku's (2000) study in Houston, South Indians broke away from a North Indian temple as they experienced conflicts over how Hinduism should be practiced. On the positive side, they observed that the Hindu temples in the US provided a space in which different types of Hindus could learn to understand each other. As one devotee in their study explained "In India it is a rare thing for people in Hyderabad to worship with people from Tamil Nadu...it takes a little time to get used to but it is a very good experience" (Jacob & Thaku, 2000, p. 236). As a result, the Houston temple adopted numerous deities and ethnically different practices to cater for its heterogeneous group of devotees (Jacob & Thaku, 2000). This adaptation is evidence of the syncretism of different sects in the diaspora setting. It corresponds to Mullins' theory regarding ethnic churches which predicts that they will survive if they de-ethnicise their religious traditions and transition from an "ethnic to a multiethnic organisation" (1987, p. 327).

In the Australian context, Arjun does not see the regional variation in Hinduism to be a significant issue overall. He saw it as common practice for Hindus to frequent different temples, as shown in this quote:

Interview extract 4-12

7Oct13	Arjun	Timecode: n/a
Arjun:	The people go to Vishnu ((the Vaishnavite temple - a different sect of Hinduism)) they come to Shiva (.) the people who come here they go to Vishnu (.)it's all single god	

Jacob and Thaku (2000) found in their study that the Houston Hindu temple tried to cater for the specific holidays and festivals observed by its devotees (according to their regionalised preferences). Therefore, for a Telugu festival, one would find Telugu devotees forming the majority of

attendees but other ethnic groups were not excluded and did in fact attend. A similar pattern can be found at the Saiva Temple where the temple recognises some festivals which have greater appeal to non-Tamils. Thus, there is openness to different Hindu devotees in the temple but the question remains as to the extent the Saiva Temple will change its linguistic and religious practices to cater for the preferences of multiple sects or regional groups.

The Murugan Foundation's constitution clearly states that it is a forum for worship based on Saivism and the Tamil language. Thus, while all Hindus are certainly welcomed into the temple, it continues to operate in accordance with the Tamil Saivite form of Hinduism and has not truly transitioned into a multi-ethnic operation. However, as Arjun commented, Hindus can move between different temples in the city freely in order to fulfil their religious needs as they see appropriate. So if other temples promote different deities and different regionalised religious practices, then the need for this temple to de-ethnicise may not be so critical.

Furthermore, two of the directors, Arjun and Barani, reported that the trend is for Tamil devotees to attend the Friday evening puja (since they uphold Friday as Murugan's auspicious day), whereas other, mainly North, Indians tend to visit on the weekends³⁸ since Murugan is not a prominent feature of their time in the temple. In this way a kind of segregation is naturally occurring between Tamil and other Hindu devotees. As Jacob and Thaku (2000) observed, most socialising then occurs within one's ethnic group rather than across groups and this segregation is heightened when devotees socialise in their heritage language. Such divisions then become what Kurien (1998, p. 59) calls the "direct and indirect mechanisms" for restricting membership (at least of some of the temple's programs) "to those

³⁸ I note that this factor may have biased the results of the language survey in the canteen since it was conducted on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Thus the survey results emphasise the presence of North Indian languages in the temple.

with similar backgrounds and interests”. Thus we can see that within the Saiva Temple’s “community” are different communities of practice with the Tamils forming a kind of “inner community” and the Sri Lankan Tamils forming a core community inside of that.

4.4.2 Second generation engagement

The first and second generation have different needs and concerns, and it is difficult to develop an institution that successfully addresses these differences.

(Kurien, 1998, p. 63)

While the issue of the increasing linguistic diversity of devotees has the potential to influence language shift to English in the Saiva Temple, it also presents an opportunity for the sustainability of the temple in the long term. This opportunity is salient given the question of how involved the next generations of Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus will be in the temple, both in managing its operations as well as in attending the temple on a regular basis. One of the key findings in Warner and Williams’ (2010) study of faith transmission in the US was that parents and religious institutions work very hard at transmitting religion and cannot take for granted that children will imbibe the faith as their parents would have, being raised in Hindu-dominant societies.

Interviews and conversations with devotees confirmed that it is the first generation that is mostly engaged with the temple. They spoke about the tendency for children to attend with their parents when they are young, but once they reach high school age they become uninterested and only attend when required. This sentiment was confirmed in a discussion with Kaliyani, a second-generation young adult, who was highly engaged with the temple:

Kaliyani kept making the point that you can get kids engaged in the temple for the first 10 years of their lives – they like to be a part of it, to come and perform, to dress up. But after that, they just have too many distractions. So is that enough? I guess it comes back to what Gayathri (a parent at the Saiva School) said about how if you teach a child something when they are young it’s like inscribing something into stone – it will never leave them. So it forms a foundation for when they are older.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

The first generation are well aware of this pattern highlighted by Kaliyani and indicate their worry about disengagement, but at the same time show optimism that the second generation will re-engage in temple life once they get married and have families of their own. With the strong emphasis on succeeding in education, parents see it as justified if the children have to disengage to focus on high school and university. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b, p. 441) also reported first-generation optimism about the second generation returning to the temple as part of the “life-cycle phenomenon”. In an interview with Nishanthan, the director of education, he said the idea is to place information in front of children “at the right time” – even if it lies dormant inside them for a while they will come back and search for it later in life. However my discussion with Kaliyani, the second-generation member, offers a different perspective:

When I told Kaliyani about what the directors said to me about the second generation returning once they have their own families, she said she thinks they have this belief because they are so focussed on it being the case, but she is not so convinced. She said that the second generation becomes disengaged after university. They start working long hours and have different priorities like going out on Friday nights and going travelling. Then they get married and have children and don't have time for the temple. She said the second generation doesn't really return to the temple in a big way – they may bring their kids to singing (classes and performances) but not so much to the temple.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

Kalyani's view as a second-generation member is in contrast to the consistent response from the temple directors that temple re-engagement is a strong possibility. Her prediction points to what Bilimoria and Bapat (2009) say is a sign of protestantisation evident in the Hindu diaspora in Australia – that is, the desire to “get on with life and all its demands” and to integrate with the host society. It highlights the myriad of expectations that the first and second-generation members may have about what constitutes religious maintenance.

Previous research has found that a devout faith in Hinduism is a strong influence on Tamil language maintenance for Sri Lankans (Fernandez and Clyne 2007; Perera 2015; Smolicz et al. 1990). Yet if the second generation is losing interest in the religion, then how does this affect language maintenance? Based on his personal experiences and knowledge of families in the Saiva Temple, Arjun perceived that 50% of parents would speak to their children in Tamil at home but only 10% of children in such homes would respond in Tamil. The comments from interviews and conversations suggest that while practicing Saivism would maintain the use of Tamil in temple ceremonies and activities, it would not necessarily result in the maintenance of the Tamil language in the home for the second generation. Amarasingam's (2008) study of Sri Lankan Tamil youth investigated the language-religion ideology for Tamil and Hinduism in Canada. Many of his respondents stated that the Tamil language was not integral to their practice of Hinduism partly because they did not attend temple regularly and conducted their worship privately. In those cases where the temple is not a part of one's religious practice, a spiritual relationship with God did not require the use of Tamil (Amarasingam, 2008, p. 165).

While the phenomenon of templeisation could mean that the Saiva Temple plays a more significant role in the lives of second-generation youth, Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b) believe that issues other than busy schedules are preventing their engagement. They point to the fact that if the second generation is not familiar with the meaning of rituals and festivals then it is difficult for them to engage with the Hindu religion. As a result, going to temple becomes more about socialising (in English) than religious practice. Similarly, in regards to the potential for the Tamil language to be a barrier to second-generation engagement in the temple, Woods (2004) found that in ethnic Christian churches, the problem may not be about understanding the language but about understanding the relevance of the faith. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b) also observed that for religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism where attendance at a weekly ritual is not an important part of

customary practice, many adults do not expect or encourage their children to participate. These factors prevent the second generation from playing a more involved role in the temple (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b; Kurien, 1998).

4.4.2.1 Prioritising between language, religion and culture

The tension between the goals of language, religious and cultural maintenance for Sri Lankan Tamil parents became evident in this study. Given demanding weekly schedules of school, tuition and extra-curricular activities, parents and children are put in the position of having to prioritise between such goals (this notion will be revisited in Section 5.4.5). Conversations with various temple organisers and devotees revealed a range of attitudes about this issue. For some, the religion is seen as a vehicle for the maintenance of the Tamil language for their children. For others, the key to the temple surviving in Australia is for the next generation to maintain their faith, therefore language should not be a barrier to religious maintenance.

The continuation of Saiva religious practice is the key to the temple's long-term security, and so this is the area where the Murugan Foundation focuses its efforts for the second generation. As a former temple director expressed in a conversation, "the religion will live for a hundred years but the language won't" (Personal communication, 2013). In such a case where a religious denomination prioritises the transmission of faith over the transmission of language this can certainly lead to a weaker LRI (Woods 2004) and contribute to language shift to English. Similarly when asked about the loss of language versus religion, Arjun responded thus;

Interview extract 4-13

7Oct13

Arjun

Timecode: n/a

Arjun: If you are going to rate the way that language, our our the next generation losing, and the religion the chance of losing the religion is very less because when they are young up to 15 years old they come to the temple start to pray and sort of things and keep on continuing praying (.) they may not come to the temple regularly but they

will say yep there is a god ah so we got to pray. so that
will continue (.) ah I will not say that ah that the
religion will be lost so quickly compared to their err
language

As we will see in Section 4.4.3, the attitude towards language loss from the two directors mentioned above is reflected in the seemingly laissez-faire approach to language policy in the Saiva Temple.

Other studies show that language maintenance can be a complementary goal to the main goal of religious transmission. This was evident in Kurien's (1998) study of the first generation's attempt to provide religious education in the US. While the practice of Hinduism in India was confined to family-only gatherings, in this US case, parents organised mixed group gatherings to bring different families together. Components of these gatherings included Tamil language lessons, discussions on Hindu philosophy and a chance to socialise (Kurien 1998). While language maintenance played a part in this religious activity it did not result in fluency in Tamil. In this case, the small group did not have access to a larger religious institution to support its language maintenance objective. However the Saiva Temple has the size and influence to strongly implement Tamil language maintenance in its activities and therefore assist the goal of Tamil proficiency for younger generations (as long as they elect to make it a priority).

Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b) , Kurien (1998) and Perera (2015) report that the first generation sees religion not only about the worship of god(s), but as a way of instilling moral values in the young and bringing them together with peers, mainly from the same ethnic group, who presumably have similar values. This could also increase exposure to the ethnic culture and the chance of marriage within the same religious, if not ethnic, group. Thus, the temple is seen as providing a space that could help protect migrant children from being misled by the dominant Western culture. This idea is

echoed by one of the teachers at the Saiva School who sees the religion as a vehicle for life skills:

Interview extract 4-14

6Sep15	Mrs Chandran	Timecode: 00:15:36.573
Mrs Chandran:	hmm I think that my own opinion is um not language, that's ah human values. that's ah religion is ah you know the Saivism is not a religion, that is um life skills I think. you know that's discipline and life skills.	

Mrs Chandran sees values as more important than language. However for others it is not so simple to separate values from language and religion. As reported in Chapter Two, the language, religion and culture are so intertwined that some people in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, view Tamil as their religion and the language as a deity (Suseendrarajah, 1980). Additionally, other studies found that some parents equate heritage language loss with the abandonment of ethnic and religious identity and family values (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b).

There is an overlap between what people would see as Saiva religious values and Tamil cultural values. Some people view the Tamil language as the vehicle for maintaining certain cultural values, and thus, connect those values with language. As shown in the previous paragraphs, others might see the religion as the vehicle for maintaining cultural values but it is likely these values encompass more than religion. During my study, devotees regularly referred to “Saiva values”. While a value such as vegetarianism is more clearly a Saiva value, other values such as loyalty to the family, use of the Tamil language and the adherence to certain customs could be seen as Tamil cultural values, and therefore, non-religious.

In summary, there are challenges for engaging the second generation in the Tamil language and Saiva religion. First of these challenges is the second generation’s preference for English in most domains and the fact that the

link between Tamil and Saivism is not as strong as for the first generation. Next, the disengagement from the temple as teenagers means there is a short window of time in which parents can establish a religious foundation before teenagers fall prey to the life-cycle phenomenon. This limited timeframe places the goals of language and religious maintenance in competition, and the evidence presented here is that language loses this competition for those people who do not see a strong connection between language and religion. We now look at the response from the Saiva Temple to these issues.

4.4.2.2 Temple programs for young people

We have all these cultural programs, everything so that ah children, even though they don't know Tamil or something, they are attracted to the religion. There are Tamil schools there are religious Saiva schools. All over we are paying so many schools, so we are trying to maintain ah but it doesn't mean um yeah they can- the way people yeah think, there may be a problem in the future.

(Interview, Barani, 2015)

In this quote from the interview with the temple president, we see the approach taken by first-generation leaders to assist in the maintenance of Tamil and Saivism in Australia. The youth activities organised by the Saiva Temple provide more than opportunities for maintenance, they give young people access to peer support. Such support can motivate them to behave and dress in culturally and religiously appropriate ways and, since they may be facing similar challenges to their identity as they grow up, such programs provide an opportunity to informally consult with each other and to form a kind of “buffer” from the outside society where such issues can be heightened (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b, p. 437). In this section, I will outline the main programs run by the Saiva Temple that are aimed at the second generation. These activities overlap with language and cultural activities outside of the temple which will be outlined in the next chapter.

The temple's programs are mostly conducted in Tamil, thus, they are for Tamil speaking people. As mentioned in Section 4.4.1, there is an indirect

mechanism for limiting membership of these programs such that within the diverse “community” of Saiva Temple devotees, the Tamils form a kind of inner community of practice. The mostly Sri Lankan Tamil families that are involved in organising and participating in these activities form a core group within that inner community of the multilingual and multi-ethnic Saiva Temple.

The most prominent program is the Saiva religious school which operates at two sites, one in Greenfields and one at the temple in Desiville. The schools run for two hours every Sunday for children aged approximately four to 16 years and enrolments across the two schools do not exceed 100 students. Tamil is the medium of instruction, with all activities and classes occurring in Tamil. The provision of such religious classes, knowledge which would traditionally be provided informally at one’s home in South Asia, represents an adaptation of religious and temple practices in the diaspora (Baumann, 2009; Kurien, 1998).

Students are also involved in various temple events such as performing at cultural programs in the cultural hall, playing roles in particular festivals (such as helping in the puja, acting in a religious drama, or singing *pannisai*), and participating in the annual Saiva religious competition which takes place at the temple. These religious competitions are treated as a separate youth activity since they target young Tamil Saivites throughout the city, not just those who are involved in the schools or Saiva Temple. The director of education reported that in 2015 they awarded 35 shields to the best students. He saw the competition as a motivation for the children to memorise the *Thevaaram*, the name for the first seven volumes of the *Thirumurai* holy book, that contains the Saiva hymns. Again this highlights the importance of devotees knowing these Tamil devotional hymns as part of religious practice.

The director of education oversees the two Saiva schools; and volunteer teachers and parents, who are devotees of the temple, staff the schools. Most of the teachers are first-generation women, some of whom have teaching experience from Sri Lanka. A more recent venture for the temple is the provision of Hindu teachers to mainstream public schools in the metropolitan area. The temple targeted 11 schools (in suburbs where there are a large number of Hindus) and engaged about 25 teachers to go into general religion classes and teach Hindu scripture. This is the only activity that specifically includes non-Hindus and is therefore presented in English.

The other main program for youth is the Saiva Temple youth group aimed at older second-generation members from roughly 18 to 25 years of age. The aim of the youth group is to encourage university-aged students to re-engage with the temple after a hiatus during the final years of high school. Members are asked to volunteer in the temple's operations (such as working in the canteen or helping to prepare for festivals). The director Arjun described their activities thus:

Interview extract 4-15

7Oct13

Arjun

Timecode: n/a

Arjun: They help cleaning and ah there's a festival they celebrate. or sometimes um some of the activities you know the garland making and the decorations and those sort of things they get involved. (.) yeah they're involved. (.) there's a committee and actually this library in the past this was looked after by them

This extract from my field notes provides the view of one second-generation young adult in the temple,

When I asked Kaliyani about the youth group she said they are about 10 to 15 people who are a self-contained social group, that is, they hang out at university together, go out together – so this is just another thing that they do. And so, the youth group just comprises one subgroup of devotees in the temple, it is not bringing in youth from across the board.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

Kalyani's comment points to one issue with the youth group. Reports from other devotees indicated that the group was not regularly active but came together once a year to organise a specific day for youth as part of the temple's annual festival. From the quotes above it appears that the group is not very formalised.

Among its objectives for the youth group the Saiva Temple aims to encourage youth organisation and participation in temple activities and to preserve culture in the present and for the future. While language is not specifically mentioned in the objectives, it is somewhat implied in the goal to preserve culture. However, given verbal reports from devotees, it is likely that Tamil would not be the only language in this forum and that English could be favoured.

An attempt to bring the next generation into leadership roles is evident in the Murugan Foundation's policy to reserve two places for young people on its board. On paper, at least, this practice seems to be more progressive than other religious institutions in the US where it was reported that the second generation were denied meaningful positions to which they felt entitled (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b). However the opinion given by the same young adult devotee sheds a different light on this policy:

Kaliyani said the first generation is so fierce in promoting religion, language and culture that the second generation feel they can't live up to that fervour. She said maybe it will be the newly arrived young first-generation members that will be able to step up in the future but she doubts if the second generation will be able to.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

As Kaliyani suggests, future leaders and involvement may not be sourced from the second generation but from recently arrived first-generation members who migrate as young adults. This leaves the question of future involvement of the second generation in the management of the temple unanswered but the evidence provided in this section suggests that the problem will need more attention from the board in the immediate future.

4.4.3 Implications for temple language policy

Interview extract 4-16

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 00:06:24.890

Niru: um so I want to understand in this temple would you call it a- it's a Tamil temple. Tamil is the main language?

Barani: we yeah yeah it's it's it's actually ah theoret- either theoretically it's a Sri Lankan Tamil temple but it doesn't mean

Niru: yeah

Barani: it's for all Hindus

This quote from the temple president sheds light on a tension in terms of the language medium in the temple. How can a temple be for all Hindus when it is “theoretically” a Tamil temple that operates mostly in the Tamil language? Similarly, on another occasion while standing at the front counter of the temple I witnessed a volunteer worker respond defensively when a visitor asked him if it was a South Indian temple. He insisted “no, this is a temple for everyone”.

As shown in this chapter, the Saiva Temple is going through a period of change in regards to the linguistic and ethnic make-up of its devotees. This has implications for the language policy of the temple with the potential for a few different outcomes into the future. If the temple continues to operate with a Tamil language policy this might isolate other language groups, such as those from India. Once these language groups become more established in Australia, they may seek out other, or even start their own, temples so that they can worship in their heritage languages. This need may become more urgent if language and cultural maintenance for the second generation is seen as a priority for such groups.

In addition to language is the matter of different forms of religious practice and deity worship faced by the new non-Tamil devotees which may force them away from the Tamil Saivite temple. However as one director, Arjun,

pointed out, devotees in the diaspora have become more flexible and open to the worship of other Hindu deities who are deemed significant to particular ethnic groups. There is also the practice in Australia, as in the US, of deities belonging to different branches of Hinduism being brought together under one temple (Bilimoria, 2013; Jacob & Thaku, 2000) as a more efficient way to service various Hindus. These are signs of religious syncretism and could be a possibility for the future of the Saiva Temple dependent on the vision of the temple leaders.

At the same time that the temple has an increasingly diverse congregation, the reports from the first-generation directors raise uncertainty about whether younger Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus will be willing to step into the temple management roles of the future. Unless these positions can be filled by newly arrived first-generation members from Sri Lanka, the board may have to start recruiting Indian Hindus who may not speak Tamil. This could begin the process of change for the temple's language policy. When I interviewed the temple president he informed me that the Murugan Foundation did not have an official language policy for the temple although the institution's official objectives did incorporate the role of Tamil. I also got the impression that the future identity of the temple was not on the board's current planning agenda:

Interview extract 4-17

18Sep15 Barani Timecode: 00:08:57.666

Niru: so you you think in the future, have have you considered that the language of- used in the temple might change? that more English might have to be used in the temple or

Barani: ah no not really, but many many years then it can happen. um nobody knows, err because temple like culture may change. like it can change in other places which I can't predict um, but maybe classes everything (you see) like all student ((study)) is done in English ((in the future)), but the prayers and all it won't change. um so depending on the future community like um they even they may even speak Tamil in the future, who knows?

It appears the board is aware of the possibility of a future non-Tamil identity, and a shift to English in the schools but they still aspire to maintain Tamil for the worship function.

A change to language policy to accommodate the growing diversity in the temple would be a very contentious issue for the temple management to face. The evidence in this area is not positive. In Woods' (2004) study she pointed out that when devotion to language in the religious context is coupled with strong nationalistic feeling (especially pertinent for groups who have experienced linguistic persecution) then the likelihood for opposition to weakening the LRI is higher. Furthermore, Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b) cited many case studies where migrant religious institutions have experienced conflicts created by language policies in multilingual congregations. They warn that "at best, accommodating one or more linguistic minorities disrupts unity through the creation of segregated, parallel congregations. At worst, it generated inter-ethnic jealousy and conflict" (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b, p. 428). They observed that in a multi-ethnic setting the use of English can promote unity among a diverse congregation and focus people's attention on a common religion rather than different ethnicities.

Regarding the medium of instruction in the Saiva School, there were reports of rumblings in the community for an English religious class to be introduced or for the annual religious exam³⁹ to be available in English. When I asked the director of education, Nishanthan, about this he said they would like to keep using Tamil in the religious school because the students have so much exposure to English in other parts of their lives especially at mainstream school. For those children who could not speak Tamil, they could access English Hinduism classes through the mainstream schools, and this was one reason why the foundation supplied teachers for such classes.

³⁹ One of the main events of the Saiva School year is a religious exam which is administered by a Tamil Hindu college in Sri Lanka.

Through this project some English workbooks had been created such as “Hinduism for juniors”.

As Mullins (1987) observed in his study of the life-cycle of ethnic churches, if the churches de-ethnicise their religious traditions to accommodate many ethnicities, they may have the potential to survive, but this may render the original goals of the institution irrelevant. This possibility raises some very big issues for the temple, such as the importance of maintaining the strong LRI and the incorporation of Tamil culture into the fabric of temple activities and operations. Ultimately “de-ethnicising” would require changes to the temple’s goals and constitution. Consequently, we see the challenges that lay ahead for the Saiva Temple in navigating through stages of accommodation and potential conflict in the course of such change (cf. Omoniyi, 2010a).

4.5 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the Saiva Temple – its history, its operations, its devotees, its programs, and its goals. This information sets the scene in which I present and analyse language use and language-related issues for the temple and the generations of Sri Lankan Tamil Saivites who participated in this study.

The Saiva Temple is a vast and busy religious institution servicing a range of Hindu and even non-Hindu devotees (mainly of South Asian descent), most of whom live in the area surrounding Desiville, a part of the city popular with migrants and with recent arrivals from India and Sri Lanka. At the same time, it is first and foremost a Tamil Saivite temple, according to its constitution and stated objectives, thus it operates according to the Tamil way of practicing Hinduism. A strong language-religion ideology is evident in the temple’s operations with most activities, for example, group devotional singing, priest sermons, cultural events in the hall, and the religious school, occurring in Tamil. Sanskrit remains the language of

rituals and English plays a supplementary role as the lingua franca for face-to-face interactions for those not proficient in Tamil and for some of the temple's written communication. In these, more administrative and social, areas of the temple we see evidence of a weakening of the LRI even though it remains strong in other parts.

The two forces influencing a slow shift to English in the temple are the increasing multilingual and multi-ethnic diversity amongst the temple devotees and the decreasing proficiency and commitment to Tamil language maintenance from the second-generation Sri Lankans. However (unofficial) temple language policy and operations are not changing at the same pace, and thus, the Saiva Temple is adhering to its identity as a Tamil temple. In fact, temple management appear to take a *laissez-faire* approach when it comes to the future language and identity of the temple – this will depend on who is in leadership in the future and this may well include non-Tamil Hindus.

One of the big questions that arises from the issue of engaging the second generation is how critical the Tamil language is for the practice of Hinduism in this temple. If the goal is to maintain religious engagement of the young as they become more exposed to alternative and Western-dominant aspects of culture and religion, some members of the first generation believe that the Tamil language can be discarded and English can make the religion and temple more accessible and sustainable in the long term. However for others, the language and religion are inseparable and both are seen as key components in keeping children on the right path.

I showed how the temple acts as a stabiliser and beacon of Tamil identity in the Australian Tamil diaspora. Roles such as being a site for language and cultural maintenance are signs of templeisation – the prominence that the temple takes on in the lives of migrants as they adjust to a new country and

new life, especially when they have left behind a country, such as Sri Lanka, where their future is uncertain.

I outlined the main ways in which the temple is attempting to keep young people engaged; namely through the religious school, cultural programs in the hall, and the young adult youth group. Language use in the religious school will be the focus of the next results chapters and will highlight the optimism but also complexity for maintaining Tamil in the temple.

5 Chapter 5 - Greenfields Saiva School case study

In the previous chapter I provided an overview of the Saiva Temple, its purpose and programs, and highlighted some of the issues which are relevant to language maintenance and shift for the second generation. Having looked at some of the macro factors in the temple we now move to the micro – a study of how language is used by second-generation members in the temple’s religious school. In other words we will learn how the strong language-religion ideology, the temple’s unofficial language policy, as well as other factors (ranging from the social to political and beyond) manifest in the linguistic behaviour of young devotees. For the next five results chapters I focus on the case study of the Year 9 Saiva class at Greenfields Saiva School.

Almost all of my observations and all of the class video recordings taken at the Greenfields Saiva School were of the Year 9 class. I will start the chapter by outlining the context for the class and profiling each of the six class members. These descriptions will provide some background for when it comes to discussing each person’s language practices.

The rest of the chapter is devoted to describing the Tamil-related environment in which the children live. I investigate their answers to questions about their use of and attitudes towards the Tamil language in the home, family and outside. The children live in an environment that is particularly conducive to the maintenance of their Tamil heritage and culture in that there is a multitude of ways in which they can get involved with other Tamils and learn various aspects of this identity. I outline the activities they participate in, the extent to which they might use Tamil in these contexts, as well as some of the issues present in what may seem like a Tamil oasis in mainstream Australian society. All of this discussion will serve to help us better understand the students’ language behaviour in the

class and their attitudes towards their heritage religion and culture in general, which are to be explored further in Chapters Six to Nine.

5.1 Overview of the school

The Greenfields Saiva School operates out of a local public school in Greenfields, an area popular with Sri Lankan Tamils. According to the director of education, enrolments at Greenfields Saiva School vary from 40 to 65 students through the year, with classes covering grades from Kindergarten to Year 9 or 10, depending on demand. There are five Saiva teachers, two singing teachers and a few volunteer assistants at the school.

On most Sundays during the four mainstream school terms of the year, the Saiva School operates from 8am to 10am. The school opens with a 30-minute assembly starting with a small puja and devotional singing followed by a short lecture/story from a senior teacher, announcements, a short yoga session and any presentations by or to students. At approximately 8.30am, the school splits into classes by grade, with some grades combining depending on the number of students and teachers who are present on a given week. On most weeks I was present at the school, the total number of students came to approximately 30 so the classes were small in size. The Saiva class runs for an hour until 9.30am. After that, there is a 30-minute *pannisai* class where a music teacher leads students in singing Saiva devotional songs mainly from the *Thevaaram* collection.

5.2 Introduction to Year 9 class

In 2015 the Year 9 class was the highest grade in the Saiva School. Reports indicated that the general pattern was for students to “drop off” after Year 9 to concentrate on their academic studies.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ In fact, by 2016, most of the Year 9 students did not continue to attend the school. Thiran was the only regular Year 10 student with Meena attending occasionally. These students will be introduced in Section 5.2.2.

The teacher of the class is a first-generation devotee named Mrs Chandran. There are five students enrolled in the class, although the number in attendance varies each week. The students and teacher sit at one long rectangular table with the teacher seated at the head and the students on either side. They tend to sit in the same place at every class, with the three boys on one side and the two girls on the other. This layout means that all participants are facing each other.

The Saiva class differs from a mainstream class or even the Saturday Tamil language classes in that it is not overly academically oriented. Students in the Year 9 class rarely bring a notebook for writing and sometimes forget their textbooks. The teacher does not use a whiteboard so the only written text is in the textbook or on the occasional handout. At the beginning of the data collection period I noticed Mrs Chandran asking students to maintain a spiritual diary (printed by the school) with a log of their daily acts of faith. But over time these diaries rarely surfaced and the teacher ceased to ask the students about them. In fact, no other homework tasks were given. There are no regular assessments or tests and no report card sent to parents. However there is an Open Day at the end of the school year where students are awarded certificates for best attendance.

Nishanthan, the director in charge of the schools, advised that all school texts come from Sri Lanka's Department of Education for Saiva religious teachings. The main academic focus for the year is preparation for an annual exam administered by a Hindu college in Colombo. There is also an annual Saiva religious competition held at the temple which students can compete in. However, for the Year 9 students, such events do not seem to be critical and not all students choose to participate.

Reasons for attendance vary but overall there is genuine interest from the students in receiving a religious education. For some students, their parents enforce attendance, but for others, it is their personal decision to pursue an

understanding in this area. Also Mrs Chandran encourages them to attend and has even spoken to parents to urge them to send their children.

The main investment in these classes is time. Classes are virtually fee-free, subsidised by the Murugan Foundation which receives no government funding for this operation. In general, the Saiva School is a relatively simple and low-cost school mainly run on the goodwill of the first-generation volunteers (teachers are paid a small amount for their time).

5.2.1 Class format and characteristics

The Year 9 class usually starts around 8.30am with a chanting of the *om shanti om* mantra, led by the teacher, with all eyes closed and bodies still. Then there is time devoted to whole-class teacher-directed talk. The teacher refers to a section in the textbook, reads an excerpt, and then gives an explanation. Sometimes she asks the students to read aloud. The traditional IRE (instruction, response, evaluation) pattern is evident when the class is in this textbook mode. But then, depending on how many students are present (usually more students mean a chattier dynamic), and the mood of the class (sometimes they are collectively tired from a late-running Tamil event the night before), there can be considerable deviation from the IRE format. This deviation sets the scene for dynamic language practices as is often the case when more student-led discussion occurs.

Mrs Chandran encourages discussion and questioning from the students because she knows they are receiving their Saiva education in a very different context to the one she had growing up in Sri Lanka. Her perspective of the students is given in this quote from her interview:

Interview extract 5-1

6Sep15	Mrs Chandran	Timecode: 00:05:24.425
Mrs Chandran:	hmm um sometimes when I am te- I am teaching something ah but they are learning more than me because of the environment here. they ah when I teach Jeya, Jeya is having ah different, other knowledges together. then	

she's taking my knowledge, also she's very rich information. I'm very proud oh they are having everything together. they they have a very broad and um wise knowledge

Niru: yes yeah yeah

Mrs Chandran: very broad and different way of knowledge because I have limited environment. I born in a Tamil place, I lived in a Tamil place I talk only Tamil um even my English is not good

Here Mrs Chandran outlines how she feels that her education and resulting knowledge is more limited than what the Year 9 students are experiencing and, for that, she is proud of them for applying their rich knowledge to the study of their religion. Furthermore, having taught the students over a long period of time, she is confident that they have a good foundation in the religion and can therefore initiate topics for discussion. The teacher is flexible about the objectives of each class so there were regular occasions when a class was devoted to practising for a religious drama performance or an external Tamil competition if that was what the students required.

This excerpt from the interview with the director of education exemplifies the Murugan Foundation's current position on the role of language in religious instruction. The teachings are very much centred in the Tamil language.

Interview extract 5-2

25Oct15

Nishanthan

Timecode n/a

Nishanthan: it is Saivism religious teaching and Tamil is the medium. teachers sometimes explain things in English but this is not the main purpose. in the Saiva materials, Tamil is the language. even when Saivism is taught in English the Tamil culture comes through because it is Tamil-related Saivism.

However, as highlighted by Souza et al. (2012) language ideologies from the top level are dependent on the practices of the teachers and students involved. This excerpt from Mrs Chandran's interview outlines her approach to language in her class:

Interview extract 5-3

6Sep15 Mrs Chandran Timecode: 00:13:55.208

Mrs the situation make them ((Tamil)) important here because
Chandran: they are having a book in Tamil. they exactly follow the
 Sri Lankan system here ... but they can understand in
 English also, nevermind. sometime I explain to them in
 English because ah, not everything, but alright

While Mrs Chandran respects the reasons for this being a Tamil-medium class she also allows space for the students to discuss topics in English if that helps them to understand more clearly. This approach reflects her attitude expressed in Section 4.4.2.1 that the teaching of human values is more important than language or even religious theory. She also mentioned to me that she thinks the students would get bored if they had to solely use Tamil in the class. It is only occasionally that she reminds students to speak Tamil and that is generally when they play up in English. Her approach exemplifies the tension between separate bilingualism and flexible bilingualism as outlined by Creese et al. (2011). While the ideology of separate bilingualism allows the teacher to “articulate, organize and assemble resources to counter the hegemony” of English and encourage the use of Tamil, she recognises that to engage students, she has to accept flexible bilingualism and allow space for their more dominant language (Creese et al., 2011, p. 1197).

Possibly due to the rapport and trust between teacher and students, the teacher does not constantly engage in classroom management. Due to the seating, students tend to have quiet side discussions while teacher-directed talk is happening. Goffman (1981, p. 134) called this talk “byplay”, the subordinated communication of a subset of ratified participants, with the term “collusive byplay” meaning the attempt to conceal the talk, usually through whispering. Mrs Chandran authorises such side talk, if she thinks it is relevant to understanding the topic, and will stop her own speech as a cue for the students to share their conversation with the others. The

dynamics of this classroom are very different to what was observed in Rampton's (2006) study at Central High, with students at the Saiva School generally respecting the teacher's authority and not openly contradicting or criticising her. This is very much in line with expectations of behaviour towards elders in Tamil culture. At the same time, the students are not subdued or entirely obedient and when it comes to disagreeing with a comment by the teacher they feel comfortable to challenge this out loud (but respectfully).

Regularly, the boys engage in some sort of game or diversion that they revisit at intervals throughout the class. They appear to be open to distractions and to be more focussed on the social aspect of being together. Even this aspect of the class has been nurtured by the teacher. On one occasion she paused her teacher-talk to let the students work on an unrelated maths question which had generated a lot of interest. At other times she intervenes, but usually a look or a hand on the shoulder is sufficient to bring the boys back to the discussion. The girls, on the other hand, tend to stay "on topic" with the teacher although they do have side conversations with each other to ponder a certain relevant question.

In the class the teacher rarely asks open questions, and generally asks more closed, polar questions to check students' comprehension. However this does not discourage students from interrupting with their open questions and the teacher generally endeavours to answer them. As she expressed in her interview:

Interview extract 5-4

6Sep15	Mrs Chandran	Timecode: 00:08:23.590
Mrs Chandran:	((I tell them)) don't be shy. when your age I don't know much. you are learning more. gon't be shy. come out, learn, ask, talk. doesn't matter anything. learn, improve."	

When the class is excited about a topic, students will interject and chime in with multiple responses, quick quips and laughter, some of which would not be comprehended by the teacher due to the fast pace of English dialogue. As observed by Rampton (2006) at Central High, the Saiva class students also engage in some performance. The boys, especially, take opportunities to play with language – such as recoding utterances linguistically (changing a Tamil word to its English homophone for example), repeating an utterance with a contrast such as an accent for comic effect, or engaging in what Rampton (2006, p. 62) labels “echoings” which means repetition of each others’ amusing performances.

A significant aspect in which this class differs to Rampton’s (2006) Central High class, Lee’s (1996) geography class in Perth, Australia, and a multilingual science class in Iowa, US (Vann, Richardson Bruna, & Perales Escudero, 2006), is in the area of gender dynamics. Whereas it was the boys that played authoritative positions and dominated the floor in those classrooms, in the Saiva class it is the girls that tend to lead much of the student-generated discussion and assert some power, on occasion, over the boys. While they certainly do engage with the boys, there are also times when it appears that they see the boys as immature and not serious enough about the class. In response to this, the boys treat the girls with a certain amount of deference, in awe of their maturity and knowledge. Thus, when the girls tell the boys to be quiet, it results in immediate compliance. However it is important to note that this tends to be the dynamic when all students are present and it changes when there are fewer in number. Interestingly, during one class when the girls were absent, the boys were very engaged and took the opportunity to ask a lot more questions of the teacher.

In Julé’s (2005) study of women’s language behaviour in a Protestant evangelical theological college in Canada, she found that female students were more quiet than males during class. She wrote that despite the

contemporary push for change in the role of women in the outer world, in the college, the female presence did not upset “‘God’s order’ and that women serve as supportive listeners to the larger male-dominated linguistic space of the lectures” (Julé, 2005, p. 164). This finding is a stark contrast to the female students’ dominance in Saiva classroom discourse, as will be proved in Chapter Six. It suggests that the same rhetoric on gender identity norms in Christianity does not apply in this Saiva context. This is a complex issue because while several devotees mentioned that women are seen as the carriers of Tamil heritage and culture, which could connect to Jeya and Meena’s vocality in class, there is also a tradition of female subservience connected with the religion (cf. Seneviratne & Currie, 1994). However the Year 9 girls could also be representations of how aspects of traditional gender roles from Sri Lanka have changed in the Australian context and this will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

5.2.2 Profile of the research participants

My first encounter with the Year 9 Saiva class

After the assembly, at 8.45am, they split up into their smaller classes. I went with Mrs Chandran and her group of five. She stopped outside the room to talk to a parent so I went in while the students were taking their seats at the communal table; girls on one side wearing salwar kameez, boys on the other dressed in Western clothes. As I walked up to the table, there was one outspoken girl with short hair who said to me “you know, we don’t only speak Tamil, we speak English until the teacher comes in!” She then turned to the boys who were speaking at a self-conscious volume, assumedly because of my arrival, and said with a roll of her eyes, “oh Jesus Christ, just say it!”

(Field notes, 19 October 2014)

In this section, I introduce the six main research participants of the ethnographic study, comprising the Year 9 class of 2015. There are two female students, Jeya and Meena; three male students, Chitran, Raja and Thiran; and the teacher, Mrs Chandran, all pseudonyms. Table 5-1 on the next page provides a summary of the students’ personal details.

Table 5-1 Summary of Year 9 students' details

	Chitran	Jeya	Meena	Raja	Thiran
Age	13	15	14	14	14
Year of birth	2002	2000	2001	2001	2001
Place of birth	Sydney, Australia	Sydney, Australia	Sydney, Australia	Sydney, Australia	Trincomalee, Sri Lanka
Parents from	Mullaitivu, Sri Lanka	Jaffna, Sri Lanka	Singapore and Fiji	Colombo, Sri Lanka	Jaffna and Trincomalee, Sri Lanka
Time of arrival in Australia for self and/or parents	2000	1988	1990s	2001	2009
Grade in mainstream school	8	9	9	9	9
Grade in Tamil language school	9	10	10	10	10
How often visit the temple	once a fortnight	every few months	once a month	once a month	once a week or more
Other Tamil- related extra- curricular studies	singing	singing dance violin	singing dance violin flute	drum	singing (but ceased)
First language	Tamil	Tamil	Tamil	Tamil	Tamil
Languages spoken	Tamil English	Tamil English	Tamil English	Tamil English	Tamil English
Languages studied at high school		Italian	Mandarin		
Tamil for final high school exam?	yes	yes	not sure	yes	yes

The information in Table 5-1 was provided via the short written questionnaire completed by the five students (see Section 12.5). In the following discussion, the questionnaire results have been supplemented with details gathered through informal conversations, observations and the formal interview process.

In 2015, the time of the study, the students were aged between 13 and 15 years old. All students are in Year 9 in their mainstream schools except for Chitran who is in Year 8. All students attend state-funded high schools, with some of those being selective schools.⁴¹ Except for Thiran, all the students were born in Australia and are thus the second generation of their family to be living in Australia. Thiran left Sri Lanka and arrived in Australia at the age of eight so he could be classified as a 1.5-generation migrant.

All families originated in Sri Lanka. In the case of Meena, her mother's family is from Sri Lanka although her mother was raised in Singapore. Meena and Jeya's parents had been in Australia for about a decade before they were born, whereas Raja and Chitran were born shortly after their parents' arrival in Australia. As an indication of socioeconomic status, Jeya, Raja and Thiran's households have one parent working in a professional role and one parent in a semi-skilled role; Meena's parents are both in professional roles, and both Chitran's parents are in semi-skilled roles.⁴²

We can see that the frequency of visits to the temple varies. Whereas Jeya only visits the temple every few months, Meena and Raja visit once a

⁴¹ Selective schools are high schools run by the government where entrance is based on merit, in part, assessed through an entrance test. They are considered to provide quality education for high-performing students.

⁴² Verbal reports indicated that most families in the school were from the Vellaalar caste of Tamils. The issue of caste has not been a focus of this study. While I do not deny the significance of caste in the diaspora, the issue has been put aside because the students indicated in their interviews that it was not important to them.

month, Chitran once a fortnight and Thiran once a week. So while all these students are highly engaged with the Saiva religion, temple attendance alone is not a measure of this. In her interview, the teacher made the point that the students are not devout in the same way that a person in the homeland might be considered so (that is, daily visits to the temple, performing puja and prayer at home, or adhering to strict interpretations of Hinduism like not eating meat). However, relative to other second-generation teenagers in the broader Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu community who do not attend the Saiva School or the temple these five students are more involved with their religion.

The questionnaires reveal a high degree of students' involvement in Tamil activities. All students attend the Saturday Tamil language school in the same area and they also receive private tuition in other aspects of Tamil culture. Chitran learns Carnatic singing, as do Meena and Jeya. Thiran used to learn but had to stop due to an already busy weekend schedule. Raja learns to play the mridangam (drums), Jeya the violin, and Meena, the violin and flute.⁴³ Jeya and Meena also take Bharatanatyam dance lessons. In fact they attend their singing, dance and violin classes together and it is evident that they have built solidarity through these shared activities even though they do not attend the same mainstream school nor do they see each other much outside of those activities.

In terms of language, all students report that Tamil was the first language they learnt. They list Tamil and English as the two languages they speak and both Jeya and Meena are learning one other language at their mainstream school, Italian and Mandarin respectively. All students predict that they will include Tamil as a subject for their final high school exams except Meena who says she is not sure if her speaking skills are

⁴³ Jeya and Meena reported that the Tamil violin and flute are not different instruments to the norm, however they are tuned and played to suit South Indian music styles

strong enough. Older students at the Tamil language school confirmed to me that the “orals” are a particularly difficult part of the final exam.

What these details reveal so far is that the five students are the best-case scenario for language, religious and cultural maintenance due to their high level of engagement in Tamil-related activities. The students come from what Warner and Williams (2010, p. 159) termed “exemplary families” due to their commitment to the transmission of faith to children. This notion will be revisited throughout the rest of the thesis. I will now provide a short profile of each student to assist our understanding of their individual biographies and how this might affect the way they use their linguistic repertoires. I also provide a profile of the teacher to highlight the important role she plays in setting the conditions for interaction in the class.

5.2.2.1 Mrs Chandran

Mrs Chandran was born and raised in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and emigrated to Singapore in 1985 to marry her husband. They lived between Singapore and Australia for her husband’s work and in 2005 they resettled in Australia, close to the location of the Greenfields Saiva School. Mrs Chandran is aged between 50 and 60 years old and has two adult children. She works part-time, volunteers at the Tamil language school and Saiva School on weekends, and gives private Tamil tuition when she has time. She is a devout Saivite, attends the Saiva Temple regularly, and is also involved in interfaith activities.

Most of the teachers at the Saiva School have some experience of teaching in Sri Lanka. In the case of Mrs Chandran, whilst living in Singapore, where Tamil is one of the four official languages of the nation, she obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Education in Tamil and worked for many years as a Tamil language teacher. She spoke favourably of her time

as a Tamil teacher due in part to governmental support for the language and its teaching.⁴⁴

In 2005, Mrs Chandran began teaching at the Saiva School. She first taught some of the students in the Year 9 class when they entered the school in Year 2. One student in particular, Jeya, insisted that Mrs Chandran continue as her teacher so she agreed to follow them as they progressed by grade each year. While not all students have been there from the beginning, they have certainly known Mrs Chandran over several years. Partly for this reason, the relationship amongst them is comfortable, genuine and respectful. In addition, Mrs Chandran plays a senior role in the school, often giving small speeches about religion at the weekly assembly.

Mrs Chandran is very committed to the class and it is evident that she draws a lot of satisfaction from her interactions with the students. The perspective she brings to her role as the teacher is that the class is a forum to talk about life and values, not strictly religion. Mrs Chandran could be described as fairly traditional in that she is strongly Tamil in her identity, a vegetarian and maintains an alcohol-free household. However my observations in the class suggest her views about religion are not dogmatic and indicate a broad-minded approach to faith and spirituality.

Mrs Chandran is highly proficient in Tamil and knowledgeable about different aspects of Tamil culture and the Hindu religion. She learnt English from a young age but classifies her abilities as limited – she is generally unable to discuss more complex issues in English due to some limits in grammatical knowledge but her lexical repertoire is usually extensive enough to convey her message. Also, due to the time spent in

⁴⁴ However Saravanan (1993), Saravanan, Lakshmi and Caleon (2007), and Schiffman (2003) outline some of the issues concerning Tamil language education and maintenance in Singapore.

Singapore, Mrs Chandran tends to use vocabulary that is more common to Indian Tamil rather than Sri Lankan Tamil.

5.2.2.2 Chitran

Chitran is an engaged and curious student in the class. While his fellow male classmates are sometimes more inclined to distraction, it is evident that Chitran is keen to participate in the discussions. Along with Jeya, he is the student that speaks the most Tamil in class and has a vast Tamil vocabulary. He likes to converse in Tamil with his older cousins who recently arrived from Sri Lanka. In addition he has received extra Tamil lessons from his mother and a tutor. For these reasons he has gained more practice in speaking Tamil and appears proud to be a Tamil speaker.

Chitran has a keen interest in science and, in the class, this manifests as an enthusiasm to connect religious stories and beliefs with scientific evidence. He spends time researching the more extraordinary aspects of Hinduism (like certain sects) on the internet and often raises questions in the class that amuse and sometimes challenge the teacher and other students. But Mrs Chandran is familiar with Chitran and his family and regards him as a very well-mannered student.

Chitran has visited Sri Lanka twice in his life and he observes the Saiva practice of not eating meat on Fridays. He is recognised as a very good Carnatic singer in the community and is regularly seen participating in cultural performances at the temple's hall.

5.2.2.3 Jeya

In several ways, Jeya is an outstanding student in the class. She is engaged in discussions, vocal with her opinions and asks a lot of questions. Her Tamil speaking skills are high, like Chitran's, and she even won an award for best student at the Tamil language school one year. She attributes her Tamil foundation to her grandmother who lived with Jeya, and spoke to her in Tamil all the time, before she died.

While Chitran brings a scientific perspective to the class, Jeya's is based in philosophy. She is keen to understand the meaning behind Saiva religious practices and to question why things are a certain way. In one class she spoke about how her father told her not to read too much into philosophy in case she ended up not believing in anything. She is a self-described "kind of agnostic".

Jeya has a long-term relationship with Mrs Chandran through the school and looks to her for answers and discussions that are not easy to have with other Tamil adults. During the course of the year Jeya even converted to vegetarianism after a class discussion with Mrs Chandran. She has visited Sri Lanka two times but most of her relatives have left because of the war, so she now has transnational family connections in France, Germany and India.

5.2.2.4 Meena

Out of all the students, Meena appears to have the busiest schedule and to be the student who is most involved in mainstream extra-curricular activities (mainly team sports) on top of her Tamil-related activities. She is the only female student in the Saiva School with short hair which is notable in a culture where long hair for women is considered the norm. These are small signs of a less traditional interpretation of her Tamil identity. In addition, she calls herself an agnostic and also attends a Christian church with her mother. At the same time, she regularly participates in temple events and cultural performances in the temple's hall.

Meena is less vocal in the class than Chitran and Jeya, mainly because she has fewer questions about the religion and carries an air of wisdom about her. When she speaks it is often to state her opinions which seem to be more definite and bolder than other students'. She tends to challenge aspects of the religious teachings which she sees as dated or unrealistic.

She has reported that while she understands a lot of Tamil she does not feel confident about her speaking skills and so often defaults to English. However she also feels strongly about maintaining the language as part of her identity. Her behavior indicates that she is mature and independent-minded.

Other unique characteristics of Meena's are that she is an only child and that her father is not of Tamil ethnicity but does have a South Indian background. She has visited Sri Lanka twice in her life and has transnational family connections in Fiji, Singapore and the US. She reports that she was a vegetarian until the age of six but now eats meat for health reasons.

5.2.2.5 Raja

Raja is certainly the quietest student in the class and tends to be open to distractions, often with Thiran as his accomplice. However observations and information gathered outside the class reveal that he is in fact engaged with the religion and culture in several ways, and in addition, is a very polite student.

There is very little linguistic data available for Raja because he tends to not participate in discussion and his soft speech was not always detected in the audio of the recordings, nor was he seated within full view of the camera. I assume his quietness may be to do with a reluctance to speak Tamil for a lack of confidence. When he has to read out loud from the textbook, he struggles with reading and pronunciation more than other students. However Raja is regularly present at special events at the temple and school. For one festival, he and Thiran performed a drama where they played the roles of significant Tamil saints. This took several weeks of practice and preparation and appeared to be something the boys were proud of doing.

Outside of Tamil activities, Raja is a member of his school chess club. He has been to Sri Lanka once, and also has relatives in Canada. He speaks Tamil with his grandmother on a daily basis since she lives with his family. He observes the Saiva practice of not eating meat on Fridays.

5.2.2.6 Thiran

Thiran is an intriguing student because, while he often plays the “class clown”, he is in fact very knowledgeable about the language and religion. This is partly due to his first eight years of life spent in Sri Lanka. In addition, he comes from a family who are highly involved in Tamil-related activities. Both his parents volunteer in the Saiva and Tamil language schools, and Tamil is maintained as the language of their home.

Through his parents’ involvement in the schools, Thiran rarely misses a class, is always present at temple events, and usually has a role to play in any cultural performance or school event. In this way, he is a model Tamil son. So when it comes to Saiva class, with Raja, Thiran takes a more light-hearted approach and tends to speak a lot of English. Perhaps, unlike for other students, he has enough exposure to Tamil in other domains and thus Saiva class is an avenue for fun and socialising. However when he is called on to apply himself, for a Tamil competition for example, he does so.

Outside of Tamil-related activities, Thiran has taken Mandarin classes and Taekwondo but has since stopped going to both. He has been to Sri Lanka once since his family arrived in Australia. Thiran is also the only student that attends a mainstream school where Tamils are significant in number. Like the other boys, he does not eat meat on Fridays.

Now that I have introduced the students we move to an investigation of the Tamil language, cultural and religious practices in their daily lives.

5.3 Language maintenance in the home

We start with a look at the students’ use of Tamil in the home and family domain. I will detail the home language practices of the student

participants to show their individuality in how they enact their Tamilness and “Saiviteness” in their daily lives.

Even when Tamil has governmental and institutional support, like in Singapore, the success of minority language maintenance “remains the responsibility of the family and community to preserve the language for intra-ethnic communication and intergenerational language transmission” (Kadakara, 2015, p. 31). Fishman (1991, 2005) and King et al. (2008) also assert the absolute and fundamental role of home and family in maintaining the heritage language. Yet we also know the challenges for maintaining a heritage language in the home. Canagarajah (2008) points out that there are an array of macro historical, social and economic factors that can all impact on the family’s ability to maintain Tamil. Such factors were cited by first-generation devotees in the Saiva Temple to be complicating issues involved in language shift in their home contexts.

To begin the discussion, I present an assessment from Mrs Chandran about the home domain.

Interview extract 5-5

6Sep15	Mrs Chandran	Timecode: 00:12:57.110
Mrs Chandran:	I don't think so they are speaking at home ah Tamil. now I think when they are in um primary school they follow the mothers and talking. I think nowadays ah some of them are, I think mothers asking questions they answer Tamil, but in friends or siblings they're not talking ((Tamil))	

In this excerpt Mrs Chandran states that while the second generation may speak Tamil with their parents as children, they cease this practice as teenagers and engage in what Pauwels (2016, p. 91) calls the nonreciprocal use of the heritage language with their parents. In addition interaction with siblings and Tamil peers is characterised by prominent use of the majority language.

Table 5-2, on the next page, outlines answers from the students' questionnaires about their home circumstances and Tamil language practices.

Table 5-2 Students' use of Tamil in home and family domains

	Chitran	Jeya	Meena	Raja	Thiran
Lives with	mother brother uncle aunt cousin	mother father sister	mother father grandmother	mother father sister grandmother	mother father sister
Speak Tamil at home with:					
Mother	always	often	sometimes	often	sometimes
Father	*	sometimes	sometimes	often	sometimes
Sister		never		rarely	sometimes
Brother	sometimes				
Grandmother			always	often	
Aunt	always				
Uncle	always				
Cousin	sometimes				
Speak Tamil with family living outside of home:					
Cousins	sometimes	often	rarely	rarely	often
Aunts and uncles	always	often	always	sometimes	often
Grandparents	always	often	always	often	often
Transnational family connections	Sri Lanka	France Germany India	Fiji Singapore Sri Lanka US	Canada Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
Private Tamil lessons?	mother tutor			mother	mother

*blank cells means not applicable or the answer was "no".

All five students live with family members in different configurations. Chitran lives with his mother and brother and with extended family, his uncle, aunt and cousins. He has a father but I did not find out why the father did not live with them. Raja and Meena live with their grandmothers, as did Jeya prior to the death of her grandmother. The presence of grandparents and other extended family came up as a key motivation for speaking Tamil on a regular basis. In the following two interview excerpts we see evidence of this from four of the students:

Interview extract 5-6

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:02:13.300

Niru: yeah but with your grandma it's only Tamil she doesn't speak much English

Meena: she does speak English but I think understandings also get mixed up a bit, so I just talk to her in Tamil instead

 (irrelevant lines omitted)

Jeya: yeah she was actually the one who made me like talk in Tamil like I grew up talking Tamil because of her I think

Interview extract 5-7

6Sep15 Chitran, Raja, Thiran Timecode: 00:03:59.200

Niru: when do you most enjoy being able to speak Tamil. in what part of your life is it the most enjoyable? like is it when you come to the Saiva School or to the Saturday school or something else, when you watch the movies

Thiran: it's at home

Raja: probably my grandma's house

Niru: yep

Raja: cause she likes um Tamil

Niru: hmm

Chitran: yeah my cousins' and uncle's and aunty's house 'cause um they recently came from Sri Lanka

Niru: a:h

Chitran: so it's very enjoyable just communicating

Meena, Jeya and Raja all highlight the drive to speak Tamil with their grandmothers and for Chitran, having newly arrived relatives provides him with the opportunity to use Tamil and to possibly learn more about Sri Lanka and his heritage culture in the process. In general, studies of language maintenance identify the presence of grandparents as a positive

force for heritage language use in the home or family domain (Clyne, 1991; Li Wei, 1994; Pauwels, 2016; Willoughby, in prep).

When we look at the rate of frequency for the use of Tamil at home, we see that, with the older generations, the students report speaking Tamil more regularly, varying from “sometimes” to “always”. However when it comes to intra-generational communication with their siblings or cousins, “sometimes” was the most frequent answer but “rarely” and “never” were also chosen. The use of English for interactions with siblings and friends, is a common occurrence for second-generation migrants (Clyne, 1991; Willoughby, in prep), and signals a degree of language shift. Answers from the questionnaires were echoed in the interviews:

Interview extract 5-8

6Sep15 Chitran, Raja, Thiran Timecode: 00:02:19.400

Chitran: we speak English with friends

Niru: yeah but at home it's err you speak a lot of Tamil?

Raja: yeah but like with siblings I rarely speak Tamil

Chitran: yeah same

Niru: yeah heh heh same with you Thiran?

Thiran: yeah

While the impetus to communicate with elders in Tamil will always exist, the results indicate that as the children become adults they are likely to speak less and less Tamil with their own generation. Thiran reported only speaking Tamil “sometimes” with his family members even though both his parents reported (and I observed) that they spoke to him in Tamil the majority of the time. In answer to whether they have any Tamil teachers other than in the schools, Chitran, Raja and Thiran all answered that their mothers acted as teachers of Tamil in their upbringing. In addition, Chitran received private Tamil tuition.

If we expand the home domain to the family domain, to include family members living outside of the students' households, and potentially outside of Australia, we see that communication with aunts, uncles and grandparents is most commonly "often" or "always" in Tamil. Whereas two students rarely speak Tamil with their cousins, two reported that they often do. This highlights the need for Tamil in order to communicate with relatives in the transnational diaspora and in Sri Lanka (cf. Canagarajah, 2008), and is expressed by Jeya here:

Interview extract 5-9

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:03:21.500

Jeya: even in just like communicating. I know like my relatives, they don't- like they live all over like the world, so I need to talk to them in Tamil or I can't talk to them at all because they don't know English. like Germany even like German

Whereas Meena, Raja and Thiran's cousins live in other Anglophone nations of the West, Jeya's, in Germany and France, do not. Therefore Tamil is the lingua franca in these contexts. Meena faces a different challenge in that her cousins are not proficient in Tamil and therefore her opportunities to speak Tamil in the family domain are more limited.

Interview extract 5-10

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:03:49.087

Meena well my cousins don't actually speak very good Tamil.
 like I've got two of my cousins that are half Chinese
 they don't speak Tamil and then my other ones, uncle's
 like Tamil's not that relevant nowadays so it's like they
 barely know Tamil

Meena's quote also highlights the issue of the role of parents in motivating Tamil language maintenance. In the case of her uncle, he is not enforcing Tamil as the home language. However for these five students the case is quite different in that, given their parents' commitment to encouraging their participation in religious and cultural activities, the students are

exposed to Tamil language, culture and Saivism on a regular basis. That being said, there are still tensions between parental ideologies and child agency and this impacts on the success of family language policy (cf. Fogle & King, 2013; King et al., 2008).

So we can see that several factors are interplaying when it comes to language maintenance in the home and family domains: parent's motivation and enforcement; influence of grandparents, newly arrived relatives or transnational relatives who do not speak English; but also the influence of transnational relatives who do not speak Tamil and thus limit the extent to which Tamil-speaking children can use their language in the family domain and see a future of communicating in Tamil as they become adults.

5.4 Language maintenance outside the home

We now move to a description of the many Tamil-related activities available to and adopted by the five best-case-scenario children outside of their homes. I acknowledge that while I use the concept of “domains” to categorise language use, I do not negate the overlaps that can occur between domains in reality. However for the purposes of this discussion, it is useful to highlight the opportunities that exist for Tamil language, religious and cultural maintenance outside of the home, and to point to what Fishman (2005) refers to as the several self-supporting institutions that exist in the Sri Lankan Tamil and wider Tamil community.

Table 5-3 shows some of the language practices outside of home as identified by students in their questionnaires.

Table 5-3 Students' use of Tamil outside of home

	Chitran	Jeya	Meena	Raja	Thiran
Speak Tamil outside home with:					
Tamil friends	sometimes	rarely	sometimes	rarely	sometimes
Tamil priests	always	always	always	often	always
Tamil adults at language school	always	often	always	always	always
Tamil adults at Saiva School	always	often	always	always	often
Tamil adults at temple	always	often	always	always	always
Other Tamil adults	always	often	always	often	always
Language used for praying	Tamil	English or Tamil	English at home, sometimes Tamil in temple	Tamil	Tamil

As to be expected, the students at best speak Tamil only “sometimes” with their Tamil friends outside the home however Jeya and Raja said this “rarely” happens for them. When I asked students in the interviews whether there were many other Tamil students in their mainstream schools, only Thiran reported a significant number with his estimate that a quarter of the school are Tamil. For the other students, the number of Tamils in the school varies between two and 10. Jeya and Meena do not use Tamil in the mainstream school context and both had the opinion that it is more respectful not to speak a language that would exclude others at school. Thiran did admit to some joking around in Tamil with his Tamil schoolmates but he reported that they mostly communicate in English. So apart from Thiran, the Year 9 students’ main contact with Tamils of their age occurred on the weekends during Tamil language and Saiva school times.

Communication with adults outside of the home domain yielded very positive answers with students using Tamil “often” or “always” in different situations; with priests, at the Tamil language school, at the Saiva School, at the temple, and with adults outside of these spaces. This indicates the

significance of domains outside the home in supporting language maintenance. It also shows the cultural norms for language behaviour in this part of the Tamil community – that when it comes to speaking with adults, children should be using the first language as a sign of respect. This feature has been reported in other studies (cf. Willoughby, in prep). I observed many occasions in the temple where, if children spoke to an adult in English it wasn't strongly criticised but there would often be encouragement from a first-generation member to speak Tamil. Note that for communication with adults at the Saiva School, Jeya and Thiran wrote "often" while the other three students said they "always" spoke Tamil. Jeya and Thiran's use of "often" may be to account for their translanguaging practices in the classroom which will be explored in more detail in further chapters.

Lastly, the students were asked to report in the questionnaires what language they use when they pray by themselves. The three boys answered "Tamil", and Jeya and Meena answered "English and Tamil". This was a misleading question on my part because it didn't specify the type of prayer, that is, whether it was recitation of a written prayer or a personal conversation with God (Baquedano-López (2008) distinguishes between scripted versus situational prayer). I repeated the question in the interviews for confirmation of their answers. Here is the answer from the boys:

Interview extract 5-11

6Sep15	Chitran, Raja, Thiran	Timecode: 00:04:58.358
Niru:	some of you said that you use Tamil when you pray so why do you think you use Tamil for praying and not English	
Chitran:	well um it's culture basically	
Thiran:	because like most of mantras are like in Tamil and then it's like when you start it off it's just flowing so ... we just don't know like English mantras	
Raja:	it wouldn't come as fluent as English would	

After explaining that they recite scripted Tamil prayers and mantras, the boys also confirmed that they used Tamil for their personal prayers to God. However Jeya and Meena painted a different picture. Meena answered that “if it's in my head I pray in English” and Jeya said “if it's just like a small prayer that like I just do throughout the day, like randomly, then it's probably in English because I'm thinking about it and I um think in English sometimes”. But she also clarified that “if it's like a structured prayer I use like Tamil because they have like songs an' stuff written in Tamil” (Interview, 2015).

We will now explore some of the main domains outside of home where the Tamil language is supported; the language school, the temple and Saiva School, through music and art lessons, and other community activities. Section 12.7 features a table summarising details of the activities and programs for young people outlined in this and the previous chapter. To encapsulate the myriad of Tamil-related activities that are intensively fitted into the Saturdays and Sundays of Tamil young people I have adopted the term “Tamil weekends”. While the students may attend weekday mainstream schools with a low proportion of Tamil students (except for Thiran), their weekends are full of socialising with other Tamils and are highly structured. When I asked Meena if she met Tamils in her spare time, her answer was very telling:

Interview extract 5-12

19Sep15	Jeya and Meena	Timecode: 00:42:53.795
Meena:	to be honest it's not spare time it's actually class-filled spare time	
	(irrelevant lines omitted)	
Meena:	that's like our spare time () a lot. I only see Sri La(h)nkan peo(h)ple o(h)nly(h) on Saturday and Sunday in my whole week. otherwise it's all revolved around school or	

Meena, amused, told me that the concept of spare time has a different reality in her life. This is not just the case for the Saiva School students but for a larger number of young Tamils who are involved in some of the other Tamil programs external to the temple. As Burgio (2016, p. 113) observes about the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, “this almost maniacal tendency to make [ethnospecific] associations means that no space of social life remains ‘outside’ the community ... reinforcing a common belonging”. At the conclusion of this chapter, I will provide some insights into how these various activities cooperate and sometimes conflict in working towards the goal of language maintenance.

5.4.1 Tamil language school

The most popular Tamil program is the language schools which are run by Sri Lankan Tamils and located in five suburbs across the metropolitan area including Greenfields. These schools take place on Saturdays and hold classes for about three hours. There were approximately 1,000 students enrolled in these schools in 2015 which is a marked contrast to the less than 100 students attending the temple’s Saiva schools. Students can take Tamil as a subject for their final high school exam so attendance at the language school is seen as more important for their education. Burgio (2016, p. 112) sees such Tamil language schools as a common feature across the Tamil diaspora, aiming to reproduce Sri Lankan Tamilness, “to perpetuate social codes (respect for elders, obedience, discipline, modesty, discretion...) and to counterbalance the codes learned in European schools.”

The majority of the students of the Greenfields Saiva School also attend the Greenfields Tamil School which has roughly 300 students. The language school is linked to the temple by the fact that it was founded by the Murugan Foundation before it became a separate entity. These days both the Saiva School and language school are run out of the same local public school, a “borrowed space” (cf. Martin, Bhatt, Bhojani, & Creese, 2006). While the language school caters to non-Hindus as well, most of its

students are Hindu and therefore it does recognise some of the big Hindu festivals throughout the year, especially the annual Saraswati puja to honour the goddess of knowledge, music, arts, and learning.

Four students of the Year 9 Saiva class are in the Year 10 class at Greenfields Tamil School (the system puts them in a higher grade as part of working towards their final high school exam). Chitran is the only student in a different class, Year 9, and Mrs Chandran is the teacher for this class as well. As part of my fieldwork, I observed the Year 10 class at the Tamil language school to see how it differed to the Saiva class. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

There were a few striking differences in the Year 10 Tamil class. Firstly, the number of students was 25 in total with the majority being girls and only four boys. There are three Indian Tamil students in the class, the rest Sri Lankans. There appeared to be a high proportion of girls who were relatively recent arrivals to Australia and were not born here. These girls sat on one side of the classroom, opposite to where Meena, Jeya, Raja and Thiran sat (with the chattier, apparently longer-term students). While these "old-timers" spoke to each other in English, I was surprised to see the newer girls talking with each other in Tamil.

While still social, the class was taken more seriously than the Saiva class. The teacher had structured activities for the students to complete, there was group work, individual writing exercises, homework to be handed in, and corrections to be handed back from the teacher. The new arrivals seemed very keen to participate and you could see that they had done preparation at home in the form of palm cards and posters for their group presentation.

For one activity they were talking about ambition and each group had to give an oral presentation about what job they aspire to have and the reasons why. Interestingly all the students mentioned the homeland in their presentations, wanting to be doctors and engineers to help improve lives of others in India and Sri Lanka – this shows a strong awareness of and connection to their origins.

The teacher told me that in the school they try to speak in Written Tamil to the students to encourage the use of a more grammatically correct form.

The students are more familiar with Spoken Tamil so sometimes the teacher will point out to them when their Spoken Tamil should not be written down so they can differentiate between the two.

(Field notes, 15 August 2015)

In comparison to the Saiva class, the language class is more structured and skills-focused. We see the promotion of Written Tamil in the language school, however, in the Saiva classroom there is more flexibility and the use of much Spoken Tamil. The influence of new arrivals in the language class is significant, firstly in upholding Tamil as their medium for peer communication, and secondly, in reinforcing the contemporary Tamil linguistic features in use in Sri Lanka. Therefore we see that overall the second-generation students have exposure to differing varieties of the Tamil language.

5.4.2 Saiva School

When it came to discussing the purpose and role of the Saiva School in children's lives, there was a myriad of responses. In line with what Creese and Blackledge (2010), Li Wei and Wu (2009) and Martin, Creese and Bhatt (2003) found in complementary language schools in the UK, Jeya highlights how the Saiva School offers her a safe space to explore her religion and identity:

Interview extract 5-13

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:12:06.228

Jeya: I like it's like just taking a break from the real
 wor(h)ld heh heh it's ju(h)st like going into like (.)
 you talk about things that you wouldn't really talk about
 with other people kinda thing and um

In the interview with the boys Thiran and Raja placed emphasis on learning about Saivism and also the values of their culture (again signalling how close-knit religion and culture can be for Tamil Saivites):

Interview extract 5-14

6Sep15 Chitran, Raja, Thiran Timecode: 00:06:12.006

Thiran ((it)) teaches us our cultures more like in depth um like all the what is it called like it's called Saiva vizhumiyangkaL ((Saiva beliefs)). like it tells us like what you should do and what you shouldn't

Raja all the values of our culture

For Meena, she saw the Saiva School as a long-term investment which would assist her ongoing contact with Tamil Hindus:

Interview extract 5-15

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:05:53.191

Meena I: like I attend Saiva classes mainly to get an understanding of Tamil background because I guess when I'm growing older ... I assume that I'll be more around Tamil people than any other culture s'like I kind of have to have a understanding of it

Meena's answer highlights the importance of this knowledge to be part of a community of practice and her desire to belong for all her life.

When I interviewed the director of education about the purpose of the Saiva School, he said it has a dual purpose: to teach the religion but also the language. He saw the Saiva School as another medium for teaching Tamil which complements other activities such as the language school. In his view the language is important to maintain, not just for the strong LRI, but also as a critical part of the children's identity. Unlike some of the other board members mentioned in Chapter Four, he sees language as equal to or more important than the religion for transmission to the next generation.

5.4.3 Cultural arts

There are the many Tamil and South Indian musical and dance lessons on offer in the city of the Saiva Temple. Outside the temple, private lessons in a traditional South Indian musical instrument (such as the veena⁴⁵ or mridangam⁴⁶), Bharatanatyam dancing or Carnatic singing are popular extra-curricular activities for the second generation. These lessons usually occur on top of private academic tuition that is a feature of a lot of Tamil teenagers' weekends. As mentioned in Section 5.2.2, all five students in the Saiva class have been involved in cultural arts tuition.

Some of the music, dance and songs learnt in the classes have religious significance and much of it incorporates some Tamil language. Carnatic music, for example, is multilingual (Subramaniam, 2008) with most songs having a devotional aspect. The *pannisai* (religious singing) teacher at the Saiva School is also a Carnatic singing teacher, and she reported teaching songs in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam to mostly Hindu students from India and Sri Lanka (Hamshana, interview, 2015). However for Tamil, it must be pointed out that the variety is not the same as Spoken Tamil and students may not easily understand it. Thus the variety of Tamil here is the liturgical language, reserved for religious purposes, and is different to the heritage language of everyday speech (cf. Jaspal & Coyle, 2010).

The temple aims to complement these activities by providing spaces for the students to perform as part of “cultural programs” usually held in the cultural hall. The idea is to get leverage from the popularity of such activities to attract second-generation devotees into the temple. Cultural programs usually take place as part of particular Saiva festivals. I observed children, immaculately dressed in traditional clothes and

⁴⁵ a stringed instrument similar to the sitar

⁴⁶ drum

accessories, excited to display their skills. The performances were met with appreciation from the first generation who was delighted to watch the culture passed on in the children (cf. Canagarajah, 2008).

When I asked Hamshana, the singing teacher, about the motivation to take Carnatic singing lessons she said that enrolments amongst teachers in the city were actually increasing and that parents were keen to have their children learn since this is likely to be something they would have done growing up in Sri Lanka. However she did not think that the children viewed the practice as strongly religious. In her mind they were more interested in the musical aspect and the opportunity to perform on stage.

Veerasamy, the Tamil school principal, estimated that 90% of students who receive arts or music tuition would also attend a Tamil language school. However language, it appears, is not a strong priority for some of these teachers, and this will be discussed in Section 5.4.5.

5.4.4 Other external activities

Through the year other Tamil events are held on weekends. External to both the language and temple schools, there is a Tamil society that holds a language and culture competition over the course of a month every year. A lot of the students from the Saiva and language schools participate in this. Apart from these youth-specific activities, there are a whole range of Tamil cultural events on offer such as fundraising concerts, dance performances and alumni gatherings and some of these involve participation by young people. Such events potentially provide a further domain for the use of at least some Tamil by the second generation.

5.4.5 Collaboration and tension between programs

Overall, taking the view of language domains, we can say that having a multitude of programs on offer for second-generation members would

increase their chances to maintain the Tamil language and a strong sense of their Tamil identity. While this seems true in general, certain tensions are evident which can impede the ultimate goal of language or religious maintenance for the temple.

Firstly, as described in earlier sections, we have seen how the functions of the temple and language schools have overlapped in different ways over the years. However the Saiva School faces the challenge of much lower student enrolments. I received reports of how, in the 2000s, enrolments were much higher but over the years they had decreased. There were different opinions about why this is the case with the main problem being that the school takes place early on a Sunday morning and many families are too tired to make the effort to attend. Referring to my conversations with some of the temple management in Chapter Four it is curious that they see the religion outlasting the language given the higher popularity of the language schools.

It appears that while the Tamil and Saiva schools are collaborating, they are still competing for children's time on the weekends, and thus, with its placement on Saturdays, the language school has the advantage in slotting into people's weekend schedules more easily. With the increasing trend for children to receive academic tuition in subjects like maths or English on weekends, the priority given to Saiva School is under threat when competing with the more academically-oriented language school.

Again, with the private Tamil music and arts lessons, there are aspects of these classes that complement the goals of language and religious maintenance, as well as aspects that conflict with them. In this excerpt from Jeya and Meena's interview we see the benefit to religious and cultural maintenance from learning Bharatanatyam dancing.

Interview extract 5-16

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena

Timecode: 00:26:49.886

Meena: Bharatanatyam makes a lot more sense because the teachers (.) like our hands right there's like this, there's a certain amount of hand gestures and they will actually have a meaning

Jeya: yeah yeah you yeah you can- it actually started out as a temple dance

Niru: yeah so it's quite religious you'd say?

Jeya: yeah it was originally religious um like it was, it was most dances actually tell stories about the gods and goddesses ... and it also comes with like um like cultural beliefs ... to do this kind of dance you have to have that religious mindset as well. I know at the beginning um when we do the um Bharatanatyam you pray the=

Meena: =earth to the mother earth

(irrelevant lines omitted)

Jeya: so it's it it it keeps me in touch with um my religious and cultural side yeah

However there was critical commentary about the music and dance lessons from some first-generation members. Veerasamy, the Tamil school principal, took issue with the fact that some teachers do not promote the Tamil language or culture overtly in these contexts and, thus, an opportunity to complement the work of the schools is diminished. The main objective in the singing classes is to get students to learn the Tamil words of a song and the correct pronunciation, rather than focus on the meaning or cultural significance of the lyrics. This focus on form over meaning in what is called ritual speech (as in, text which is to be recited and repeated) seems to be a common phenomenon and echoes what other research has found. For example in a religious class in a Tamil Hindu temple in Singapore the priest focused on pronunciation of Tamil and Sanskrit in a bhajan (devotional song) as correct pronunciation was seen to invoke spirituality and religious solemnity (Vaish, 2008). A similar emphasis was found in the recitation of excerpts from the Quran in a Singaporean madrasah (Chew, 2014), and in the decoding of religious classical texts in Jewish, Muslim and Sikh complementary schools in the UK (Rosowsky, 2014). In Gregory et al.'s (2013) study, they showed ways

in which children in four migrant faith communities in London learnt sacred texts “by heart” and were able to attach their own meaning and interpretation to the words through the repeated practice of voicing the words. Again, “perfection” in delivery was the main goal and was seen as a critical cultural and religious act for the children to perform. This looks to be the case for the Tamil Saivite children in Australia, evidenced by the great pride and importance placed on “performance” in the temple, although like Veerasamy, there are first-generation members who see it as a lost opportunity for language maintenance.

Here is an extract from my field notes which summarises a conversation I had with a Carnatic singing teacher about the language medium of her classes.

Mrs Selvam said when she teaches a class she will give the Tamil words in Roman letters (transliterated). She will explain to the kids the meaning of the song in English and then she will teach them the Tamil words. Basically it's all being taught in English. They said you can't assume that everyone knows to read in Tamil script or to speak Tamil. Plus the kids are more comfortable speaking in English, so it's more convenient.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

However when I asked Hamshana, the Carnatic and *pannisai* singing teacher, she reported that she ensured that Tamil literate children had the opportunity to use their language skills, saying “I write English and Tamil the songs. Most of the Tamil students I give the Tamil version only and I don't give the English version” (Interview, 2015). Hamshana is able to promote Tamil language through providing song sheets in Tamil script and speaking to students in Tamil, rather than providing them with the transliterated Tamil. Thus, it appears that the way these lessons can complement language, religious and cultural maintenance depends on the attitudes of the students and the teachers. Like Rosowsky (2016, p. 11) found in his study of young people’s participation in Muslim devotional practices for recitation and performance, “if one links knowledge of performance with the vestigial language of the home, there is the

possibility of mutual re-enforcement”, and potentially a boost to one’s interest in the religion at the same time.

5.5 A final word on Tamil competency and preference

Having looked at the Year 9 students’ experiences of Tamil language use in the home and outside domains, I will finish this chapter with the final responses given by students in their questionnaires. The results are summarised in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Students’ Tamil competency and language preferences

	Chitran	Jeya	Meena	Raja	Thiran
Tamil skills					
Read Tamil	well	well	medium	medium	well
Write Tamil	well	well	well	well	well
Speak Tamil	well	medium	medium	medium	well
Language most comfortable with	both	English	English	English	English
Language you think in	English	English	English	English	English
Language you like the most	Tamil	English	both	English	Tamil

When asked to self-report on their competency in the Tamil language, both Chitran and Thiran categorised themselves at the highest level, “well”, in reading, writing and speaking. This is in line with my observations and recordings from the class. Chitran and Thiran both come from families who place a strong emphasis on Tamil culture. Jeya reported herself at the middle level, “medium”, for speaking. This was somewhat surprising given my observations of her fluency in class (even though there were some grammatical errors from time to time). Meena and Raja both reported their reading and speaking skills as “medium” which was in line with observed behaviour and comments they made to me about their skills over the course of the study. Interestingly, all five students reported

their writing skills at the highest level, and this is attributed to their attendance at Tamil language school.

In the interviews I asked students what proportion of Tamil and English they would speak on a normal day in their lives. While this can be a vague question, the results are somewhat reflected in the questionnaire answer for Tamil speaking skills. Chitran and Thiran said 50% Tamil, Raja 35% Tamil and Jeya and Meena 10% Tamil. They all attributed these amounts to the Tamil they spoke at home. Thus it appears that Chitran and Thiran's home environments are especially conducive to language maintenance.

When it comes to language preferences, all students declared that they felt more comfortable using English except Chitran who chose both. We also see that Chitran and Thiran both chose Tamil as the language they like the most. The fact that Thiran had Tamil as his first language until he migrated, aged eight, may be one reason for his answer. Meena chose both languages as the ones she liked most and Jeya and Raja chose English. However from my observations and interviews, I can say that all five students showed a strong alliance to and interest in the Tamil language. In fact Meena was the only student who expressed a sentiment that Tamil had minimal functional use in the Australian context. Lastly, and tellingly for the signs of language shift, we see that all five students said they think in English.

5.6 Conclusions

In Chapter Five we have moved from the larger temple and its Saiva devotees (described in Chapter Four) to the second generation, predominantly Sri Lankan Tamil, members who are involved in Tamil-related activities for youth; and specifically to the five students and their teacher in the Year 9 class at Greenfields Saiva School. I have called these highly involved and engaged second-generation members the best-case-

scenario children since they are maintaining a connection to their heritage mainly characterised by intensive Tamil weekends.

I introduced and profiled the members of the Year 9 class and I have outlined the format for the Saiva School and the class. I note that this is a Tamil-medium school with a mandate to teach Saivism to its students, however the structure of the classes is flexible, and so in the Year 9 class we have the setting for a more dialogic session on religion and culture with no strict adherence to the monolingual policy.

The rest of the chapter was devoted to a discussion on the reported language practices of the students. Inside their homes I found that the influence of grandparents, parental attitudes, and the agency of young people all played a part in motivating Tamil use. Having transnational relatives was also a motivation for Tamil literacy where Tamil acted as the lingua franca with those cousins who were not proficient in English. Lastly, we saw the shift to English evident in its use for sibling-to-sibling and much peer communication.

The best-case-scenario children access different Tamil programs outside of the home every weekend, with the language and Saiva schools being the main institutional programs. The students also receive private tuition in Tamil or Indian cultural arts. In addition there is a calendar full of Tamil community events such as performances or fundraising gatherings, and, some activities such as competitions that specifically target children. While we can argue that this multitude of Tamil activities creates a sound environment for maintenance, I have outlined some of the issues that have arisen such as competing for children's time, and conflicting goals in the case of music tuition where English can be the main language used by teachers.

Overall I have provided a holistic view of the environment surrounding the five students and their reported habitual language practices within

this environment. In the next two chapters we will move to a closer analysis of their language behaviour in the Saiva School to investigate how religion and other factors influence the way the students communicate in the “Tamil oasis”.

6 Chapter 6 - Language use and function in the Saiva classroom

In Chapters Six and Seven we move from discussing reported language behaviour in different domains of the students' lives to a micro-analysis of language practices in the Year 9 Saiva classroom. These two chapters are dedicated to looking at the linguistic composition of the discourse, how it relates to this religious education context, and the functions that Tamil and English linguistic features can play for these students.

In Rampton's (2006) study of classroom talk in Central High, he posited that settings such as his, in late modern times, were not conducive to the traditional IRE structure, and diversion from this pattern led to more interesting discussions and to more authentic participation from the students. Even though the Year 9 Saiva classroom is very different to Rampton's, there are parallels in that this is not a conventional class in a typical school. While there are sometimes long teacher monologues, this small class is characterised by collaborative discussion. The discourse that unfolds is particular to this context and, as we will see, when students are given the space to express themselves they can say things that stray from the thematic relevance but produce compelling discourse that can mark associated identities.

The main purpose of the next two chapters is to show that instances of translanguaging are occurring in this classroom and that translanguaging is the unmarked language practice for all participants despite Tamil being the official classroom medium. So while this classroom talk takes place in an institution, and is, arguably, "driven and structured by institutional goals and agendas" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 92), the discourse and context are co-created by the six class participants, their individual goals and agendas, and their identifications which can be "non-institutional" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 97). In the words of Gafaranga and Torras i

Calvo, (2001, p. 198) “speakers themselves do not necessarily orient to the normative use of one language”. That being said, not every single unit of speech necessarily consists of more than one “language”. There are occurrences of monolingual Tamil and English discourse. Thus, it is useful to point out that translanguaging can comprise monolingual and mixed language units of speech, below the turn-level. In this chapter I will present linguistic data separated into intonation units to delineate what is monolingual and what is mixed within the structure of a turn. This exercise will serve as a numerical overview of the students’ habitual linguistic practices before we move to a more qualitative analysis of selected linguistic extracts in Chapter Seven, in order to understand the workings of translanguaging in this religious context.

Before we begin it is worth noting the variety of Tamil that appears in the classroom context and data extracts in the following chapters. While we know that the students are most familiar with Spoken Tamil, their education in the Tamil language school promotes the written variety of Tamil. The variation between the two forms is not so great in that knowledge of one form usually enables general understanding of the other. What tends to happen in this classroom is that Spoken Tamil dominates for discussion but Written Tamil is understood and used in the textbook. Students and teacher generally use the honorific forms of address (*niingkaL* rather than the familiar *nii* for “you”) although sometimes the teacher will use the familiar form with the students.

Chapter Six is divided into two main sections. I will preface these sections by providing some metadata on the video recordings which supplied the linguistic data that is analysed in the remaining results chapters. In the first section, I explain the results of a numerical analysis of the linguistic data from one lesson to highlight some patterns in the way the students mix and adopt Tamil and English in the discourse. This will provide a picture of the individual language practices for each student. For that

same lesson, I then investigate how the students use English and Tamil features in the formation of questions. This provides an introduction to the kind of information the students seek out in this religious class, and, how they use their repertoires to do so. In the second section, I discuss some general functions that Tamil and English play for the students, as a precursor to an investigation of the strategic use of linguistic repertoires by the students as part of their translanguaging behaviour (in subsequent chapters).

6.1 Summary of video data collected at research site

The linguistic data from the Year 9 class was sourced through a number of classroom video recordings during 2015.

Through the first three school terms of 2015 I collected a total of 12 class recordings with each recording lasting from approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Two videos were rejected due to sound quality issues and the remaining 10 class recordings are summarised in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 Details of Year 9 class video recordings

Date	Students present	Video duration
22 March 15	Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Thiran	0:29:04
17 May 15	Chitran, Jeya	1:01:55
7 June 15	Thiran	0:54:24
14 June 15	Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Raja, Thiran	1:02:22
26 July 15	Jeya, Meena, Thiran	0:51:34
2 August 15	Jeya, Thiran	0:52:20
16 August 15	Jeya, Thiran	0:34:10
23 August 15	Jeya, Thiran	0:41:45
30 August 15	Meena, Raja, Thiran	0:53:51
13 September 15	Raja, Thiran *	1:01:33

* in the class on 13 Sep 15, there were two students present from the lower grade. Although I had parental consent to video these students they were camera-shy so chose to sit at another table out of range of the camera and microphone. Their interactions have been excluded from the analysis due to poor sound quality.

As Table 6-1 shows, Jeya and Thiran are the students present in most of the video recordings. This is indicative of their attendance patterns over

the 11-month period in which I was present in the class. I attended the school regularly between October 2014 and September 2015, covering the school terms of Term Four in 2014 (when I had a general introduction to the school and various classes) and Terms One, Two and Three in 2015 (when I collected data solely from the Year 9 class). While the classes are generally held every week during the school term, activities such as temple events as well as teacher illness meant that only 20 regular Year 9 classes took place in Terms One to Three of 2015 and I was present at all of them. Including two classes in Term Four 2014, I observed a total of 22 Year 9 classes. Out of those 22 classes, Thiran was present at 21, Jeya at 15, Raja at 12, Chitran at 11 and Meena at eight.

Linguistic data from the above video recordings will be the focus of analysis and discussion for the remainder of the thesis. We begin by looking at one lesson in particular to highlight the general language use patterns in the Year 9 class.

6.2 A closer look at one Saiva lesson

In this section I provide some quantitative and qualitative information about one particular Saiva lesson. Out of the 10 video recordings, this class, recorded on 14 June 2015, has been chosen because all five students are present, the discussion centres around one main theme (that of Saiva funeral rites), and that theme elicits much discussion amongst the students.

In order to give an overview of general language behaviour in the class, I will first provide a numerical analysis to show which students take the floor more than others, and which tend to adopt more Tamil or English linguistic features. This is followed by a numerical analysis, combined with qualitative evidence, of how questions are posed in this lesson. A focus on questions is considered important since one of the themes of this

thesis is how the students investigate their religion and culture in the classroom discourse.

6.2.1 Numerical analysis for lesson on funeral rites

6.2.1.1 Language by intonation unit – rationale

For purposes of transcription and analysis, all linguistic data has been segmented into intonation units (IUs), and a discussion of the reasons for this is most pertinent as a preface to the results of the numerical analysis.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the rationale for dividing each student's turn into smaller intonation units is to investigate what is happening below the turn-level, that is, to pinpoint exactly where language mixing occurs and to what extent. This allows us to delineate between what is monolingual and what is mixed speech on a micro-level. By doing so I do not intend to prove that translanguaging at the turn-level is insignificant nor do I intend to imply that a speaker's full linguistic repertoire is not active when monolingual speech is uttered. Rather, I wish to highlight the nature of the translanguaging practice at the micro-level, and in this way, provide a more accurate picture of what is actually occurring in the participants' talk.

In the numerical analysis, each intonation unit has been categorised according to whether it is monolingually Tamil or English or whether it includes a mix of languages; and the number of IUs belonging to each category are counted for each student participant. Given that this thesis is, in large part, about translanguaging the “counting” of “languages” might appear to be contradictory. As Li Wei (2016, p. 5) asks, if the human mind does not divide different languages then should not research investigate “how language users use the multiple linguistic and cognitive resources available in combination in social interaction” rather than counting which and how many languages they know? I agree with Li Wei's question however I argue that we still need to interact with the names and

quantities of linguistic and cognitive resources in order to understand the complex ways in which they are combined for communication.

In Chapter One I outlined that key work on the concept of translanguaging rejects the idea that clear boundaries between named languages always exist and argues that speakers do not simply move between two discrete languages, as in code-switching, but have individual communicative repertoires from which they use features of different languages in unique and integrated ways (Blommaert & Backus, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Li Wei, 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2011; Otheguy et al., 2015). Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 286) distinguish between the concept of languages that can be enumerated, that are social constructs, and those that are not seen as named entities but are viewed as sets of linguistic features in an individual's repertoire.

By categorising IUs by language names, I hope to not wholly reject but encompass some of the influential collective thought on translanguaging. As a first step to looking at habitual language practices, a count of “languages” will give us some idea of the sociolinguistic behaviour of the students. I acknowledge that, as an external observer, I am applying the bounded language categories that I think are relevant, but this may differ to how the individuals view those same features in their idiolects. Also, I do not intend to imply, through designating a language name to intonation units, that we are dealing with homogenous languages or that the categories assigned are absolute. However, as a starting point, I believe it is useful to count “languages” as a way of showing the general patterns of language alternation and highlighting where certain features tend to dominate. In other words, this analysis can show us which features of Tamil and English are utilised as part of each student's repertoire.

Some rules were applied to ensure consistency when counting and categorising intonation units. Here is a short list of what has been included and excluded as part of the numerical analysis:

- Only interactions which occur in the “main class discussion” have been counted. I counted any discourse that had the attention of the majority of the class as the main class discussion. Side interactions (or byplay) were generally characterised by whispering and the participation of only two students. The recording of side interactions was biased due to the position of the microphone near some students and the volume of individuals’ speech. While excluded from the numerical analysis, the content of side discussions will feature in subsequent sections and chapters.
- The following items are paralinguistic and have not been counted: laughter, hesitation markers such as *hmm*, *ah*, *err* and *um* and question markers such as *ah?* or *huh?*. Some of these items have Tamil equivalents and it is not always clear whether they could be categorised as one language or another. The mimicking of sounds such as crying has also been excluded for this reason.
- Where words from languages other than Tamil or English have been used, such as Sanskrit or Hindi words, these have been excluded from the count since they only constitute a small amount of all speech. Proper nouns are also excluded from the count unless they refer to specific religious names.
- Minimal responses such as *oh yeah*, *yes*, *no* or exclamations like *oh God!* have been counted since they comprise a notable amount of English speech.

With these inclusions and exclusions in mind, we now turn to the numerical results for the class on Saiva funeral rites.

6.2.1.2 Results

The numerical results for the class video recorded on 14 June 2015, where all five student participants were present and much student interaction occurred, are presented in the table below. Table 6-2 shows the number of IUs spoken by each student, categorised according to whether the IU is solely English, solely Tamil, or a mix of both languages.

Table 6-2 Intonation units uttered by students on 14 June 2015

IU type	Student name					Total IUs	Total %
	Jeya	Chitran	Meena	Thiran	Raja		
English	176 (68.5%)	115 (67.3%)	117 (80.1%)	66 (82.5%)	8 (80%)	482	72.6%
Mixed	38 (14.8%)	26 (15.2%)	13 (8.9%)	6 (7.5%)	0	83	12.5%
Tamil	43 (16.7%)	30 (17.5%)	16 (11%)	8 (10%)	2 (20%)	99	14.9%
Total IUs	257	171	146	80	10	664	100%

Students are listed in the order of most to least IUs spoken (from left to right). In the one-hour class, a total of 664 IUs were uttered by the students as part of the main class discussion. Overall we can see that the students speak more English than Tamil in the class. Note however that 10.6% of all English IUs are minimal responses (*yeah, oh, okay* etc.). Of all IUs spoken by students, 72.6% are monolingually English, compared to 15% of the same in Tamil. However Tamil is included in a further 12.5% of all IUs, that is, in those IUs which are labelled as “mixed”. All in all, Tamil features in 27.4% of all IUs.⁴⁷

Jeya, followed by Chitran and Meena, speaks the most frequently in class. Thiran and Raja are not as involved in the main class discussion but do participate in regular side chats amongst themselves, hence their lower total IUs. For Jeya, the most vocal student in the class, 69% of her IUs are solely English and 17% are solely Tamil. This is closely followed by Chitran, for whom 67% of IUs are solely English and 18% are solely Tamil. The proportion of mixed IUs for Jeya and Chitran is around 15% of all IUs. So we can say that Jeya and Chitran are quite similar in their language use and alternation patterns. For the remaining three students,

⁴⁷ As a comparison, I conducted a numerical analysis of a class with fewer students and less interaction. The results revealed generally similar patterns. They are included in Section 12.8.

Meena, Thiran and Raja, the proportion of solely English IUs rises to between 80 and 82.5%. For solely Tamil IUs the proportion declines to 11% and 10% for Meena and Thiran respectively. Raja's results for Tamil IUs is 20% of his total speech but this is due to the minimal number of IUs (n=10) recorded for Raja in this class. The occurrence of mixed IUs is noticeably lower varying from 0 to 9% of all intonation units uttered by each of these three students.

Of the 83 mixed IUs uttered in this class, 33 (or 40%) of them feature Tamil religious words or concepts, that is language directly related to the practice of Saivism. Most of these words are nouns, generally used to name rituals or gods. Given the topic of the class is funeral rites there are also a few relevant verb forms such as *karaikku* (to disperse as in dispersing cremated ashes), *erikkiRa* (to cremate), *kumbiTu* (to pray) and *paTaikkiRa* (to make an offering). Twenty-seven IUs contain words pertaining to aspects of Tamil culture, of which 18 contain kinship terms and five contain food names. A total of 15 mixed IUs contain verb forms (including the ones that are counted as religiously significant above). These verbs are generally ones that are frequently used in everyday life such as *poon2an2* (go), *varum* (come), *eTutthu* (take) and *colluvaangka* (say). Nine mixed IUs contain determiners such as *oru* (a) or *antha* (that). These results provide some indication of the ways in which Tamil is "injected" into the English-dominated speech of the students.

In his study of code-switching and transfer, Auer (2000, p. 183) found that "members of the same interactional network" can "adapt to each other and develop a common style of linguistic behaviour". This is somewhat in contrast to the finding that translanguaging behaviour is individual and according to one's own idiolect (Blommaert & Backus, 2011; Otheguy et al., 2015). What the numerical analysis for this particular class suggests is that students in the Year 9 class adopt Tamil and English features from their repertoires at varying rates, although overall, the classroom

discourse, and the community of practice, is characterised by language alternation. As Heller (1988, p. 267) put it;

by accomplishing tasks through codeswitching, interlocutors accomplish social relationships. By using codeswitching as a discourse device, interlocutors signal a shared understanding of the context which renders the discourse strategies effective and meaningful and so signal assumed co-membership in a social community.

Auer (2000, p. 184) claimed that more sophisticated uses of code-switching such as changing the topic or the mode of interaction and other types of turn-internal switching become frequent in children at the age of 13 or 14. This is the same age of the students in the Saiva class and linguistic data in the rest of this thesis will support Auer's finding.

6.2.1.3 Discussion

This simplistic numerical analysis of IUs has been presented as an introduction to the investigation of language practices in the Year 9 Saiva class and will lead us to a more nuanced discussion of translanguaging in the rest of the thesis. However it has served its purpose of outlining the habitual trends for English and Tamil linguistic feature use.

The results have shown that English dominates the student's speech (segmented into IUs) in the main class discussion. On average it comprises 73% of all students' speech. This is a significant finding given that the class is, by policy, a Tamil-medium one. It tells us that the lived experience of this policy is different but this does not necessarily mean that there is a contradiction. Rather, there is evidence to suggest that the class members are adopting translanguaging as a way of abiding by the Tamil-medium.

By separating speech into intonation units we also see that a significant amount of monolingual English and Tamil speech occurs. This is a salient finding for theories of translanguaging because it shows that while, at the turn-level, language mixing is evident, it also accounts for the fact that smaller units of speech (both Tamil and English) still occur monolingually.

In other words, while speakers are accessing their full linguistic repertoires, there is still a considerable amount of what we could call monolingual speech. But as Otheguy et al. (2015) suggest, this does not mean that the speakers are conscious about which “language” they are adopting at a given time.

For the case of Tamil language maintenance, 15% of students’ speech is monolingually Tamil and this can be recognised as a strength of the Saiva classroom, even if it does not fulfil the monolingual Tamil ideal. We can also surmise that translanguaging at the turn-level contains a mix of monolingual and mixed IUs. While this has not been shown explicitly through the numerical analysis, examples will be given in forthcoming sections. While this thesis cannot explore the topic in depth, further research could investigate the placement and content of monolingual and mixed IUs in turns to look at patterns of alternation and the function of monolingual versus mixed IUs.

Having outlined statistical patterns of use for linguistic features, we now turn to an investigation of the ways in which language is used to pose questions in the class.

6.2.2 Questions

In this section I will provide an overview of how questions are asked using English and Tamil linguistic features, either monolingually or mixed, in the class on funeral rites. “Questions are pervasive in ordinary conversation and institutional interaction” (Hayano, 2012, p. 395), and have been a focus of study in Conversation Analysis and pragmatics (for example Hayano, 2012; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Stivers & Enfield, 2010). In fact, García and Leiva (2014) found that translanguaging actually enabled Latino adolescent students to raise questions in an English classroom in the US. Therefore, by looking at questions I aim to highlight the way in which English and Tamil features interplay to achieve communication and to further illustrate the nature of

translanguaging in this context. Context, in this sense, is the product of the participants' own actions. As Heritage and Clayman (2010, p. 22) put it, "the participants are continually enacting context, making its relevance available ... through their contributions to the interaction". Thus, from an investigation into the questions students ask, we can get an understanding of the particularity of this class and the discourse it produces.

For this analysis I have categorised questions by language formed at the turn- as opposed to IU-level. A total of 75 questions were posed by students during the one-hour class. At the turn-level, 35 questions were posed solely in English, 23 in Tamil, and 13 using a mix of both English and Tamil features in the turn. We will look at examples of each type in the next three sub-sections. A further four questions were not categorised as one or the other language since they could be attributable to both – this was for repair initiators like *huh?*, *ah?* or *hmm?* which occur in both English and Tamil.

6.2.2.1 English questions

Of the 35 questions posed in English, 14 were content questions, 14 were polar questions, one was an alternative question and six were repair initiators. Categorising questions as content or information-seeking was fairly straightforward in that they consisted of *wh*- question words. Here is an example:

Data extract 6-1

```

14Jun15   Timecode: 00:26:51.274
1   Jeya:      yeah there's a button,
2           and like a machine
3           and you [see it
4                       go on fire]
5   Meena:      [but why can't they]
6           d' that's so sa:d=
7   Chitran:    =why
8           why button.
```

9 Jeya: it's like a red bu↑tt↓on
 10 you just pre:ss

In this excerpt the students are talking about how cremation is done in the West, specifically, Jeya's account of the cremation of her uncle's body in France. The students are experiencing difficulty comprehending the use of a button to set the coffin on fire (something that would not happen in traditional cremations in Sri Lanka). In Line 5 Meena starts to ask a "why" question but doesn't complete it. Chitran's question in Line 8 is an example of seeking information to understand this aspect of pressing the button because he is used to seeing people manually set the coffin on fire.

Polar questions include the expected positive and negative interrogatives (such as "do", "don't", "is", "isn't" questions) as in this example:

Data extract 6-2

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:38:56.240
 1 Meena: wait teacher
 2 isn't jaggery palm sugar?
 3 Mrs Chandran: kind of jaggery
 4 palm sugar

Jaggery is a generic word for palm sugar in Sri Lanka, but its origins may be Indian or Portuguese (Sykes, 1982). In the next example, Meena and Thiran want to clarify a point about Jeya's account of cremation.

Data extract 6-3

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:14:31.900
 1 Jeya: they put the coffin in there and like
 2 as soon as you click a button
 3 like the whole thing goes on fire it's like oh
 4 Meena: but wait so you see
 5 [all the (remains) or]
 6 Jeya: [you see like as soon as] like
 7 they put the um-
 8 it goes on fire they close it
 9 but like you got to see it go on fire

10 an' I was like oh gees .hh
11 Thiran: wait the body?

When Jeya describes her experience Meena wants to clarify if she saw the actual dead body in the coffin. Note how she ends her question in Line 5 with the final disjunctive particle, “or”. Haugh (2011) suggests that, generally, the use of “or” could be interpreted as a polar question (as in, do you see all the remains or not?) or an alternative question (as in, do you see all the remains or something else?). In this case, it appears that Jeya has interpreted it as a polar question. In her answer in Lines 6 to 9 she states that they close the lid once it is set on fire, the implication being that, for a short time, one can see the remains.

In Line 11 Thiran forms a declarative polar question to check what the “it” is that goes on fire. Note how both Meena and Thiran use “wait” to frame their questions – this is a common practice amongst the students.

Question tags are also used to ask polar questions such as in this example:

Data extract 6-4

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:48:05.560
1 Jeya: it's gas right?

In this excerpt the students are talking about the planet Saturn and Jeya asks a question to confirm the composition of the planet's rings.

Other types of polar questions included the use of “really?”, what Stivers and Enfield (2010, p. 2621) call “newsmarks”, to signal surprise or disbelief and to seek confirmation; as well as questions that included a repetition of someone else's words to check comprehension. Checking comprehension could also be interpreted as initiating repair but in this analysis I have counted this as a type of polar question. Here is an example:

Data extract 6-5

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:26:29.800
1 Jeya: **appaa** had to go to press the button
dad had to go to press the button
2 for the
3 fire to like y'know
4 she was like oh you have to **kumbiTu** now
she was like oh you have to pray now
5 we were like Go(h)d heh
6 she wasn't-
7 Meena: wait
8 you have to press the button for it;
9 Jeya: no not me
10 my dad
11 Meena: °but what the hell°
12 Chitran: you press the button

The dialogue here precedes the interaction featured in Data extract 6-1 and we can see that students are struggling with the concept of the button in Jeya's story. In Lines 8 and 12, Meena and Chitran both ask comprehension polar questions about pressing the button.

The last type of question featured in the classroom are repair initiators, with "what?" (an open-class repair initiator) being the most common English form used to indicate surprise but also to prompt the speaker to reformulate what has been said. Here is an example:

Data extract 6-6

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:02:15.620
1 Chitran: that's **piLLaiyaar**'s favourite **pul**
that's Ganesh's favourite grass
2 Raja: yeah
3 Thiran: na:h
4 Chitran: he eats it
5 Thiran: that's th- only thing that made him full
6 Chitran: what?
7 Raja: what?
8 heh heh
9 Thiran: () heh heh heh

In this example, the teacher has shown the students a piece of special grass called *arugam* grass and asked the students to tell her why it's important. This leads Chitran to mention Lord Ganesh in Line 1. But Thiran disagrees with Chitran's point in Line 3 and provides a correction in Line 5. Chitran and Raja both use *what?* to infer that they don't know what Thiran is talking about but also to tease him.⁴⁸

The examples in this section show how the students use English extensively for questions to each other and this was indeed a pervasive trend throughout the discourse. Tamil questions were generally directed at the teacher.

6.2.2.2 Tamil questions

Out of the 23 questions posed in Tamil by the students, 13 were content questions and 10 were polar questions. Neither alternative questions nor repair initiators were made exclusively in Tamil.

When it comes to asking Tamil content questions, the two main types were those seeking the meaning of words and those questioning aspects of the religion. Here are some examples:

Data extract 6-7

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:36:06.161
 1 Jeya: **aacaapaacam en2Taa**
what is aasapaasam ((a term for likes))

Data extract 6-8

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:17:53.639
 1 Chitran: miss?
 2 **een2 antha erikkeekka paarth-**
why is it that when you cremate/set the body on fire
 3 **paarthathu erikkakkuTaathu.**
that you should not look at it

⁴⁸ I heard a few different stories about Ganesh's connection to arugam grass so Thiran could be referring to a variation of one of these stories, but I am also not clear about what he means in Line 5.

- 4 Mrs **en2en2Tu con2n2aa aakkaLukku**
 Chandran: *the reason being the people*
- 5 **payam varum ellee?**
 will get scared isn't it?

In Data extract 6-7 Jeya wants to ask the meaning of a word the teacher has mentioned. The teacher answers the question in Tamil. Chitran's content question in Data extract 6-8 asks the reason behind a particular action in the cremation ritual, and again the teacher supplies the answer in Tamil.

In the next example we see two types of polar questions posed by the students in Tamil:

Data extract 6-9

- 14Jun15 Timecode: 00:32:47.550
- 1 Chitran: miss
- 2 **naangka angka machcham paTaikkeekka,**
 when we are offering meat
- 3 **oru naangka**
 *if we include alcohol as offering**
- 4 **antha caaraayam ceerththu paTaichchaa athu**
- 5 **cariyaa miss.**
 is that okay?
- 6 Meena: yea:h
- 7 Jeya: **caaraayam?**
 alcohol?
- 8 Chitran: yeah

* an asterisk indicates that the English translation corresponds to the subsequent Tamil IU/s as well. This symbol will be used, where applicable, in all transcripts in the thesis.

In Lines 1 to 5 Chitran asks the teacher a question about what is acceptable to offer people as part of the death anniversary event held by the family. He makes a declarative statement and ends with the Tamil question tag, *cariyaa* meaning “is that okay?” In Line 7 Jeya wants to confirm if she has heard Chitran correctly so she repeats the word for alcohol, *caraayam?* with rising intonation to indicate a question. Chitran confirms that the word is correct in Line 8. Note that *caraayam* has a generic and a specific translation in Tamil. While it is the Tamil word for

arrack (a specific coconut-based spirit) it is also used to mean alcohol in general. It appears that Chitran is using the word in its generic sense.

6.2.2.3 Mixed language questions

The results found that fewer questions using a mix of languages were asked than those using solely English or Tamil. Of the 13 questions which comprised a mix of both languages, six were content questions, four were polar, two were alternative and one was a repair initiator. Here are some examples of content questions:

Data extract 6-10

```
14Jun15      Timecode: 00:44:26.475
1  Thiran:    canthathiyin2ar
               generations
2               what is that
3  Mrs        generation
   Chandran:
```

In Data extract 6-10 we see a common type of question asked by students to check the meaning of a Tamil word. Note how the teacher's response is in English this time. Perhaps Thiran's use of *what is that* in English, indicating a bilingual label quest (as coined by Martin, 2003), prompts the teacher to answer in English. When we compare it with Jeya's Tamil label quest in Data extract 6-7, the teacher supplied the meaning with a Tamil response.

In the next example we see a content question from Meena:

Data extract 6-11

```
14Jun15      Timecode: 00:46:10.540
1  Mrs        eL on2Tu sesame seed
   Chandran:  one sesame sesame seed
2               eL ren2Tu irruku
               there are two sesame
3               on2Tu black on2Tu white
               one black one white
4  Chitran:  oh yeah
```

- 5 Meena: **een2**
why
- 6 **°black thaan2 paavippangkaI?°**
do they use only black?

In this extract Mrs Chandran is talking about a ritual which involves the use of black sesame seeds. The use of *black* and *white* by Mrs Chandran in this example is marked given that the students are well aware of the Tamil equivalents for these colours. Perhaps, in an attempt to make the distinction clear, Mrs Chandran has opted to use English instead in Line 3. Thus, when Meena poses her question in Lines 5 and 6, she also adopts English for the colour *black*.

Here are some examples of polar questions using a mix of languages:

Data extract 6-12

- 14Jun15 Timecode: 00:22:56.956
- 1 Chitran: yeah I sang
- 2 >you +have to sing **panjchapuraaNam** miss+
you have to sing pancha puranam ((name for five hymns from Thirumurai)) miss
- 3 Thiran: yeah
- 4 [**panjchapuraaNam**]
pancha puranam
- 5 Jeya: [yeah (that's what I] had to do)
- 6 Mrs [oo **paaTi**]
 Chandran: *yes sang*

Data extract 6-13

- 14Jun15 Timecode: 00:45:50.740
- 1 Mrs **ingka irukkiRa kaTavuL**
 Chandran: *God from here*
- 2 **thaNNiikuLLa pooyiTuvaaR**
will go into the water
- 3 Jeya: do you drink the **thaNNi**,
do you drink the water
- 4 and then you get ()
- 5 oh wow

In Data extract 6-12 Chitran is making a statement about a specific set of Tamil devotional songs he sang at a funeral. As he is making the

statement to Thiran in Line 1, he then turns to the teacher to change it to a question in Line 2. As he is referring to a specific Saiva concept, the songs, he adopts the appropriate Tamil word. In Jeya's example, she is also referring to a Saivite ritual but in this case the Tamil word she uses has no obvious religious significance. However because *thaNNi* (water) is such a common Tamil word, and the teacher had used it in the prior turn (Line 2), Jeya adopts it out of habit.

In the next excerpt we see how Jeya forms a mixed language alternative question to ask what Muslims do with the dead:

Data extract 6-14

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:24:51.880
 1 Jeya: do they **erikkiRa** as well
 do they burn/cremate as well
 2 or do- **puthaippaangkaLaa?**
 or do- bury?

Here the religious significance of “cremate” and “bury”, given it is a class about funeral rites, seems to prompt Jeya to adopt the Tamil rather than English equivalents in her English-framed question.

As a final point to this section on asking questions, it is important to highlight how monolingual and mixed turns are regularly used in conjunction to convey accurate meaning. Here is an example:

Data extract 6-15

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:15:28.000
 1 Jeya: don't they put that **intha caaNi?**
 don't they put that this cow dung
 2 Mrs start **paNNi-** ↑aa=
 Chandran: *start ah?*
 3 Jeya: =**antha caaNi pooTuvaangka**¿
 they put that cow dung
 4 ◦**caaNi** like◦
 cow dung like
 5 Mrs **oo oo viruppamaan2ethallaam erichcherichchu**
 Chandran: *yes yes ah all whatever is liked is burnt*

In this scenario Mrs Chandran describes how the dead body is arranged for burning in a cremation. In Line 1 Jeya asks if cow dung, as a fuel, is also added to the arrangement with the body. She poses this negative interrogative polar question in a mixed turn, preferring Tamil to express the concept of cow dung, *caaNi*, prefaced by the pronoun *intha* (this). In Line 2 Mrs Chandran continues her description but then seems to become aware that her speech has overlapped with Jeya's turn so she asks *aa?* to initiate repair. It is likely that she did not hear Jeya's question but Jeya's use or pronunciation of the word *caaNi* may also be a trouble source given that she has to repeat it twice in Lines 3 and 4.

As a first-attempt repair strategy, Jeya reformulates the question as a solely Tamil IU in Line 3 and in the second attempt, Line 4, she repeats the word *caaNi* once more with the hedge *like* showing some hesitation about whether she has used the correct word or pronunciation. Mrs Chandran achieves uptake and, in response, confirms that Jeya is correct in Line 5. In this instance, Mrs Chandran's use of an open-class repair initiator in Line 2 has prompted Jeya to monitor her prior talk, not necessarily for something that was not heard, but for something that was potentially problematic to Mrs Chandran (cf. Sidnell, 2010). The trouble may lie in the fact that Mrs Chandran mistook the Tamil pronoun, *intha*, for the English homophone, *in the*, and thus was expecting an English feature rather than the Tamil, *caaNi*, to follow it in Line 1. Thus, for the function of repair, students exhibit their multicompetence (cf. Li Wei, 2011b) by reformulating speech in a mix of languages to assist in the teacher's comprehension.

In the close look at this one particular lesson for the Year 9 class I have shown numerical results and linguistic examples of the rate and ways in which linguistic features are adopted by the students. We now move to a

broader discussion of the functions of English and Tamil in this Saiva class.

6.3 The functions of English and Tamil features across all lessons

The main aim of the second part of Chapter Six is to paint a picture of how English and Tamil linguistic features are used in this particular classroom. While the first section's analysis was constrained to data from one Year 9 lesson, Section 6.3 will draw on linguistic data from all the classes that were recorded.

Martin (2003, p. 70) summarised the many functions of code-switching in the classroom that have been identified in the literature “including translation, clarification, checking comprehension, giving directions, maintenance of discipline, aiding weak students, saving time, and for solidarity purposes, in other words, acting as a ‘we-code’”. The discussion on the typical uses of Tamil and English in the Year 9 Saiva class will not be exhaustive but, rather, act as a general introduction to some of the main patterns in the classroom discourse. While the discussion from hereon is more qualitative than quantitative, I will supplement findings with some numerical information where I think it is relevant. Speech will continue to be separated into IUs however particular linguistic features or whole turns will also be tended to in this section.

This section is divided into three sub-sections: firstly I outline some functions of English linguistic features, then the same for Tamil linguistic features. I will also briefly mention how English and Tamil features are juxtaposed at the IU- or turn-level. I will conclude the section with a short discussion on the use of integrated words in this class. Data will provide evidence for my argument that, through the use of both Tamil and English linguistic features, the students display their multicompetence and metawareness of language, and that translanguaging can enhance their communication.

6.3.1 English features

Given the high number of monolingual English IUs uttered by the students, it is no surprise that English serves some key functions for the class participants.

There are a few social determinants of the amount of English that is used in the classroom. If more students are present, there tends to be a more playful dynamic and a faster pace of discussion that is assisted by the use of English. The class on 14 June 2015 about funeral rites is one such example where students had the numbers necessary to be able to play up and joke around. Below is an example, from a class with four students present, of how longer discussions, involving quick exchanges between group members, usually shift to English. In this excerpt from a class about the value of tolerance, the teacher raises the topic of tolerating things like insects and garden pests in the home. The students take pleasure in sharing their personal opinions and experiences of dealing with unwanted intruders.

Data extract 6-16

```
22Mar15      Timecode: 00:12:49.400
1  Meena:      the slugs
2              amma (h) a [will pick them up]
               mu(h)m will pick them up
3  Thiran:      [+slugs!+] e::w
4              they won't even go [down in the drain]
5  Jeya:        [you know what I do]
6              you get a tissue?
7              (to like it's [so slippery])
8  Meena:        [rub salt on it]
9              so it will just melt
10             on the spot.
11  Mrs        naan2 kaiyila
   Chandran:    I put the bag in my hand*
12             baga pooTuvan2==
13  Thiran:      =you put salt on the like the
14             underneath or
15  Mrs        en2n2a sɿalt pooTuRathaa.
```

Chandran: *what do you put salt*
 16 Jeya: [() the waxy ()]
 17 Thiran: [yeah um]
 18 Meena: [it will make it
 19 will melt it]
 20 Thiran: it hardens
 21 the body or °somewhere°
 22 Mrs **oo athu +tu↑rn+ paNNum [aakkum**
 Chandran: *yes it does turn it seems*
 23 Thiran: [>+no no no+ ye-]
 24 it makes it like dry
 25 [yeah makes it dry]
 26 Meena: [yeah it makes it dry]
 27 Jeya: the actual slug;
 28 Thiran: yeah
 29 Meena: y[eah]
 30 Chitran: [they are] molluscs s-
 31 Jeya: you put salt on the slu↓g
 32 Meena: yeah the actual slug=
 33 Chitran: =slugs need
 34 Meena: or you can put it on your door
 35 so it doesn't even come in in the first place
 36 Thiran: yeah
 37 Chitran: wha↑t
 38 Mrs **aa cari cari**
 Chandran: *ah ok ok*
 39 Chitran: [they melt]
 40 Thiran: [salt on ss-]
 41 they don't melt=
 42 Jeya: no i saw
 43 Thiran: =they just dry out
 44 Jeya: ugh °Je:su↓s°

* an asterisk indicates that the English translation corresponds to the subsequent Tamil IU/s as well. This symbol will be used, where applicable, in all transcripts in the thesis.

Except for Meena's use of *ammaa* for "mum" in Line 2, the rest of the students' speech is in English and involves quick interjections and reactions. Mrs Chandran continues in Tamil in Line 11 and forms Tamil questions in Lines 15 and 22. The students display their Tamil competency by the fact that they can understand the teacher's questions even though they reply in English.

Note in Line 44, Jeya's use of English for blasphemy in, *ugh Jesus*, apparently reacting to the crude tone of the topic of killing slugs. It is common for students and teacher to say *oh God!* but Jeya and Meena are the most frequent blasphemers and use *Jesus* or *Jesus Christ* often. In fact, other English swear or taboo words are rarely uttered by the students. One study of teenage language behaviour in London found that teenagers tend to use taboo words related to sex and drinking and adults tend to focus on taboo words related to religious subjects (Stenstrom, 1995, as cited in Dewaele, 2010). However in this case, perhaps the fact that the blasphemy is rooted in a different religion, and not Hinduism, makes it less forceful to use.

I was informed by one second-generation Tamil adult that taboo expressions in Tamil, involving the names of specific Hindu gods, are not used although people will use the more general *kaTavuL* (God) to express disappointment, and, due to the symbolic significance of this word, they could be referring to their God, Lord Shiva, when they do so. Dewaele (2010) found that uttering swear or taboo words in bilingual speakers' L2 (in this case, English) could carry less emotional force due to one's emotional distance to their L2. However for the Year 9 students who are now more proficient in their L2 it could also be the case that English swear words have more emotional force for them than Tamil ones (Dewaele, 2010). My observation of students' behaviour in the class indicated that they could get away with surreptitiously uttering English swear words in the presence of the teacher (due to her lower English proficiency) but they would be reprimanded for using Tamil ones. In any case, the teacher did not respond negatively to their use of English for blasphemy.

Just as English is used for quick and protracted exchanges, it also comes into deeper discussions. It appears that the students' ability to argue a point in Tamil is limited and therefore English is used to continue a

debate and to relay more complex ideas. This is especially true when students are responding to each other rather than to the teacher. This example comes from a discussion about the nature of competition:

Data extract 6-17

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:39:30.000

1 Jeya: >een2-
why

2 that's what I don't get

3 een2 aakkaL like
why do people like

4 (0.5) I need to beat her en2Tu colluvaangka like
I need to beat her they say like

5 you know oh I need to beat him

6 aa avangka el[laam like]
ah they all like

7 Meena: [it's pure]

8 there's a difference between pure healthy competition and,

9 (0.5) unhealthy competi[tion]

10 Jeya: [that]'s what I don't like

11 [I can't deal with competition at all]

12 Meena: [lots of people have unhealthy co]mpetition

13 Jeya: °I suck at competition°

14 Meena: unhealthy competition

Jeya begins her question in Tamil but then self-repairs to provide a presequence to the question in English. In Line 2 Jeya conveys the sentiment *that's what I don't get* which is colloquial in tone and perhaps more accurately expressed in English. In Line 3 she recommences her question in Tamil but then moves to English in Lines 4 and 5 to elaborate and provide an example by reporting other's speech *I need to beat her* and *I need to beat him*. In Lines 11 and 13, Jeya's English expressions of *I can't deal with* and *I suck at competition* are idiomatic and carry a teenager identification.

In Lines 7 to 9 we see Meena using English to make quite a detailed distinction between different types of competition, possibly something she could not immediately convey in Tamil. While Meena's use of English

features may be related to her competence in Tamil, we also see the “interactional value” of using English over Tamil in this instance for both students – functions like moving to an informal footing through the use of idiomatic expressions; and evaluating information, rather than merely giving it, tend to prompt what Auer (2000, p. 182) calls “discourse-related switching”.

One of the key functions of English is to fill any gaps in the students’ Tamil lexical knowledge. When a student cannot recall the relevant Tamil word for an item this prompts a shift to English. Here is an example:

Data extract 6-18

```

26Jul15  Timecode: 00:29:24.690
1  Jeya:    no that's weird because
2          antha antha vishNu kooyil veengkaTeshha kooyilla vanthu like
           that that in the Vishnu temple in the Venkatesh temple like
3          um oru t.
           um a t.
4          oru th- aa you know
           a th- ah you know
5          room like room

```

In the first IU we see Jeya use English for idiomatic and evaluative purposes, but in Line 2 Tamil dominates as she describes a section of a Vishnu temple. In Lines 3 and 4 she stumbles as she tries to search for the Tamil equivalent for “section” or “room” and we see some truncated words and hedging, for example, the use of Tamil *oru* twice and the English *you know*. Since she cannot recall the word in time, she switches to English to use *room like room* in Line 5. This kind of language alternation is what Auer (2000) calls competence-related alternation, switching from the supposed classroom medium of Tamil, the weaker language for the students, to English, their stronger language.

In the next example we see how English only comes in for a single word, which is not known to the speaker in Tamil, while the rest of the IU occurs in Tamil:

Data extract 6-19

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:22:19.200
1 Chitran: **oru mirror eTuththu vachchiTTu**
they take a mirror and put

There are also occasions when, especially in discussing life in the Australian context, English is needed to supply the apt word to fill a lexical gap in Tamil, as in this example:

Data extract 6-20

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:34:04.300
1 Mrs **ippa kiTTaTiyila vaaciccan2**
Chandran: *recently I read about two vegetables in Coles**
2 **Colesyila**
3 **iraNTu marakkaRi.**
4 **on2Tu vantha**
one looks
5 *the cabbage* **maathiri on2Tu kuTTi irukkum**
like the cabbage a small one
6 Meena: *sp[routs]*
7 Jeya: *[brussel] sprouts*

Here we can see that Mrs Chandran is trying to find the English word for a particular vegetable she has read about at Coles, the name of a supermarket chain, perhaps because a Tamil equivalent does not exist. The students comprehend her Tamil description and supply the required answer in English.

In other examples English features are used even if there isn't a lexical gap. In this discussion about funerals, Chitran is listing the appropriate duration of mourning periods which are dependent on the person's relationship with the deceased.

Data extract 6-21

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:20:17.260
1 Chitran: *oh yeah miss*

2 ah family members
 3 **oru varusham,**
 one year
 4 **cilaakkaL oru maacam**
 some people one month
 5 **cilaakkaL**
 some people
 6 **oru week**
 one week

We see Chitran begin his turn with English IUs but then move to Tamil in Lines 3 to 5 to list the mourning periods. Note in Line 1 how Chitran uses the English, *miss*, to get Mrs Chandran's attention. It is common for Chitran to start his turns with *miss* while other students rarely use an English term of address and never address the teacher by name or with a Tamil equivalent. In Line 6 he switches from the Tamil, *oru*, to finish his IU with the English, *week*. This is a marked switch because Chitran would be well aware of the Tamil equivalent and use it regularly. When we look at the pattern of shifting between languages in this short turn, perhaps there is a certain rhythm in Chitran beginning and ending his turn in English. Otherwise, the switch to *week* is difficult to explain.

When I interviewed the male students they elaborated on how they switch to English when they don't have the Tamil equivalent feature to draw from. In this case, they are talking about the use of Tamil and English with their parents:

Interview extract 6-1*

6Sep15 Chitran, Raja and Thiran Timecode: 00:08:26.200

Niru: like if your, say your parents say something to you in
 Tamil. is it quicker for you to respond in Tamil or to
 respond in English

Raja: well heh there's like some words that you don't know in
 Tamil so you just switch to English and (back)

Chitran: yeah it really is- depends on your knowledge of Tamil

*Note that for interview extracts, speech is not divided by intonation unit but by turn.

The boys' statements here provide evidence of the motivation to use Tamil but the function of English to fill the lexical gaps.

Lastly, small English words and discourse markers from the students' repertoires enter speech frequently. There are many instances of words such as *like*, *wait* or *but*, inserted as conjunctions or fillers, or words like *right* as question tags. Here are some examples:

Data extract 6-22

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:07:09.900
1 Jeya: **theriyaathu**
I don't know
2 I was like **iraNTu-**
I was like two-

Data extract 6-23

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:27:29.900
1 Jeya: **athu ellaam cari** right
all that is okay right?

Data extract 6-24

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:50:10.845
1 Jeya: **caTangku** thing
ritual thing

As in Data extract 6-22, the students often use “like” as a discourse particle.⁴⁹ In this case, Mrs Chandran has asked Jeya if she has been to Jaffna. Jeya answers in Line 1 that she is not sure, using *like* in Line 2 as a filler, similar to the function of “um”, to indicate uncertainty (or a non-committal stance (cf. Siegel, 2002)) about her age at the time, which she states in Tamil. In Data extract 6-23 we see a predominantly Tamil IU, however the English *right* acts as a question tag. In Data extract 6-24 Jeya is uncertain of the name of a particular ritual so she uses the generic Tamil word for ritual, *caTangku*, followed by the English *thing*. In this

⁴⁹ Students also use “like” as a quotative, as exemplified by Jeya in Lines 4 and 5 in Data extract 6-5.

case, she has a lexical gap but uses a mix of Tamil and English linguistic features to convey the meaning.

Similar to the discourse markers, single and simple English words appear in mixed IUs. Here are some examples:

Data extract 6-25

```
14Jun15  Timecode: 00:24:23.400
1  Meena:   the pakkaththu viiTta
           the neighbour
```

Data extract 6-26

```
14Jun15  Timecode: 00:12:58.810
1  Chitran: yeah eTTu
           yeah eight ((name of a particular funeral ritual))
```

Data extract 6-25 and Data extract 6-26 show the use of English for the article *the*, or, to show agreement or understanding with *yeah*. Thus we can see that although English is dominant in the class, its role is quite minimal in instances like these two above.

6.3.2 Tamil features

The most common way in which Tamil linguistic features are applied in the discourse by the students is to convey Saiva religious or Tamil cultural concepts. It is clear that some concepts cannot be conveyed in English particularly in matters pertaining to Saivism where a direct English equivalent does not exist. However many words pertaining to Tamil culture are also used, even if there is a well-known English equivalent. This is particularly the case for food and kinship terms. Here are some examples of religious concepts being expressed in Tamil:

Data extract 6-27

```
14Jun15  Timecode: 00:19:10.431
1  Meena:   it's pacu's ash
           it's cow's ash
```

Data extract 6-28

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:29:33.306
1 Thiran: of the **kooyil**
 of the temple

Data extract 6-29⁵⁰

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:24:51.880
1 Jeya: do they **erikkiRa** as well
 do they burn/cremate as well

In these examples Tamil provides the *mot juste*, to convey the complete meaning (and symbolism) of religious concepts like cow, temple and cremate. Such usage of Tamil for religious discussions is evidence of the strong language-religion ideology at work for these second-generation members.

Here are some examples of Tamil being used for cultural terms:

Data extract 6-30

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:08:47.680
1 Meena: do they put the **manjchaL** on the dead person's eyes or
 do they put the turmeric on the dead person's eyes or

Data extract 6-31

17May15 Timecode: 00:25:44.821
1 Jeya: I'm really interested in philosophy and stuff like that
2 but **appaa colvaar**
 but dad says
3 don't go too deep in there

In Data extract 6-30 Meena uses the Tamil equivalent for turmeric, a spice that is common, not only to cooking but, to religious rituals. In Data extract 6-31 note how Jeya uses English to express her point but inserts *appaa colvaar* (dad says) to refer to her father. Students almost always refer to their family members in Tamil – certainly it would be considered

⁵⁰ This extract is a repetition of Data extract 6-14 which was shown as an example of a mixed language question.

inappropriate for the students to address their relatives using English equivalents.

In the next example we see an anomaly, when Meena inserts the apt Tamil religious term but then actually changes it to its English form;

Data extract 6-32

```
26Jul15  Timecode: 00:29:20.500
1  Meena:  but okay like
2           they kinda discouraged like caivam
           they kinda discouraged like Saivam
3           -ism a bit
4           but I don't know
```

This excerpt is taken from a longer, predominantly English turn, so most of the IUs preceding this excerpt are solely English. In this case it appears that Meena is thinking in English as she speaks, to the extent she even converts the Tamil name for the religion, *caivam*, in Line 2, to the English form. After uttering *caivam*, she adds *-ism* in the next IU to form *Saivism* as an immediate self-repair.

While Jeya is the most frequent speaker of solely Tamil IUs, Meena's pattern is to sometimes start with Tamil before she shifts to a longer English turn. Consistent with her self-evaluation as a less-proficient Tamil speaker, it appears as if Meena has prepared her statement in Tamil mentally before it is uttered. However, when more spontaneous interaction or response is required, she uses English. Here is an example of how Meena starts a point in Tamil but then switches to English:

Data extract 6-33

```
26Jul15  Timecode: 00:02:58.100
1  Meena:  naangkaL ceyyeella
           we are not doing it
2           intha muRa
           this time
3  Mrs     ezhuthungkoo
```

Chandran: *write*
 4 Meena: no no no
 5 actually I can't do it
 6 because I might be going away for a little bit

In this extract the teacher has asked the students to add their names to the list of students electing to sit the annual religious exam at the school. When the teacher gives the list to Meena she responds in Tamil to say “we”, meaning herself and Jeya, are not doing the exam this year in Lines 1 and 2. However the teacher insists in Line 3. Meena then immediately responds with negation in English and she provides further explanation, in English, as to why she can’t sit the exam.

The interview with the female students shed some light on the idea of prepared utterances in Tamil:

Interview extract 6-2

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:22:49.605
 Jeya and then u(h)m(h) and now like whenever I talk in i- um
 um Tamil, I have to translate it in my head and I have to
 be like
 Meena I know
 Jeya um I have to say the word in in my head in English and
 then normally I can translate it but then they also
 Meena it's actually so embarrassing

Here Jeya talks about thinking in English and formulating what she will say in Tamil before it is uttered. Meena adds that she finds this embarrassing. In casual conversation Meena mentioned to me that she mentally prepares an initial statement in Tamil but then finds it awkward to continue talking in Tamil because she is not confident in her speaking ability and is scared to make mistakes. This pushes her to shift to English (Field notes, 26 April 2015).

Just as we saw that small English words such as hedges, conjunctions and articles are brought into students' speech, Tamil postpositions are often inserted after English nouns. Here is an example of how Meena tends to bring Tamil IUs into her speech:

Data extract 6-34

```
26Jul15 Timecode: 00:29:06.900
1 Meena: that's the same because
2         you know the North City
3         (.)-l↓a oru irukku?
           in there is one
```

Here Meena contributes to a discussion on the difference between Saivism and Vaishnavism. She starts her turn in English and after naming the suburb, *North City*, in Line 2 there is a pause before she adds the Tamil suffix *-la* (in Line 3) to *City* to signify “in the North City”. Perhaps the pause allows Meena to assess that she has omitted the English preposition in the IU just uttered, so she shifts to Tamil in order to maintain the “flow” and the grammatical correctness of her speech. The suffix *-la* (a bound morpheme) is part of the subsequent and solely Tamil IU, *-la oru irruku*.

In their attempt to develop a formal grammar for code-switching, Sankoff and Poplack (1981, p. 5) proposed the Free Morpheme Constraint theory which posits that a “switch may not occur between a bound morpheme and a lexical item unless the latter has been phonologically integrated into the language of the bound morpheme.” However, in this case, the lexical item *City* is not phonologically integrated into Tamil, thus it does not support the Free Morpheme Constraint theory. Sankoff and Poplack (1981) acknowledged that the theory had not yet been tested on a variety of languages and that it was not clear how the theory would operate with a highly agglutinative language (as Tamil is). What this example indicates, as Sankoff and Poplack (1981, pp. 6–7) confirm, is that this kind of

intrasentential switching displays a “competence in two component codes as well as the additional skill to manipulate them concurrently”.

It is worthwhile to note that Tamil can also influence a seemingly English IU, making it appear to be non-standard English syntax. Here the teacher is talking about the concept of *prasatham* – the practice of sanctifying the food you consume through prayer and offering to the gods. She describes the process in Lines 1 to 3.

Data extract 6-35

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:48:55.656
1 Mrs **kaTavuL vachchu kumpiTTiTTu kaTavuLee?**
Chandran: *you keep God ((keep the idol there)) and pray, God, thank*
*you for the food that you gave**
2 **nii thantha uNav↑u**
3 **n↓an2Ri**
4 Meena: that's on the food you
5 (.) ma:de or don't made.

In Lines 4 and 5 Meena wishes to clarify whether you should pray before eating food you have prepared yourself or only before eating food prepared by others. She asks this question in English, however the syntax is more in line with Tamil. If a similar question was asked in Tamil (using the past tense) it would be: *niingka ceytha caappaaTaa allathu ceyyaatha caappaaTaa* (lit.: you made food or not made food). It is possible that Meena was thinking of the Tamil prompting her to say “don't made” instead of “didn't make”. This kind of L1 language transfer is also known as structural borrowing, where the structural pattern from Tamil (her L1) is used in her more proficient language, English (Backus, 2005). By Auer's (2000) categories it appears to be a participant-related transfer rather than a discourse-related (or linguist-nominated) transfer because it doesn't seem to provide a discourse function.

To end this sub-section I want to highlight occasions when students utter the same word in both languages. This is similar to the doubling principle

(cf. Hinnenkamp, 2003) however it seems here that recipient design is not the main reason for using both languages. Here are some examples:

Data extract 6-36

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:22:38.211
1 Jeya: it's like an **abisheekam maathiri** but
it's like an abishekam ((specific Saiva ritual)) like but

Data extract 6-37

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:20:04.841
1 Jeya: like your moral values **maathiri**
like your moral values like

Data extract 6-38

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:47:16.791
1 Thiran: **en2Taa** what?
what what?

In both Data extract 6-36 and Data extract 6-37, Jeya has already stated *like* to convey the meaning of “similar to” before the noun, however she adds the Tamil equivalent, *maathiri*, after the noun. In Data extract 6-36, perhaps because Jeya has to insert the apt Tamil word for the Saiva ritual, she then tags *maathiri* onto it to follow the rules of Tamil syntax. However in Data extract 6-37, she still uses the Tamil feature *maathiri* even though it does not succeed a Tamil word. This suggests some Tamil interference or structural borrowing. In Data extract 6-38, the tone of Thiran’s question is one of surprise which may prompt him to repeat the meaning in English to index his disbelief.

6.3.3 Integrated words

In the linguistic extracts featured in the rest of this thesis, there are regular occurrences of integrated words, where the morphology contains both Tamil and English features. Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 110) describe such words in a Gujarati school in the UK as heteroglossic, saying that they serve the purpose of helping discussions to move forward, in other words, making it easier to express and comprehend meaning.

Various types of integrated words were found in the classroom discourse and I will provide a few examples as an introduction.

Generally the strategies for integrating words are to have a Tamil stem with an English suffix or vice versa. In the first strategy the common type is a Tamil noun with an English suffix 's to denote possession such as *pacu's* (cow's) or *ammaa's* (mum's). In the second strategy, there are English nouns with a Tamil postposition. Examples of postpositions are *-la* meaning "on" or "in" like in *riverla* (in the river) or *-ukku* meaning "to" as in *girlukku* (to the girl). The Tamil conjunction for "and" is a suffix *-um* and is seen in *sidesum* (sides as well).

There are also cases of English nouns which are given the Tamil suffix *-a* as a way of phonologically integrating the English word into Spoken Tamil. An example is *samea* (same). An additional common practice in Spoken Tamil, when a Tamil verb is not available (or generally known), is to form a compound verb with the relevant English verb and add the Tamil *paNNu* meaning to "do" or "make". An example is *inflate paNNum* meaning "to inflate".

The kinds of integrated words that appear in students' speech are not uncommon to Spoken Tamil in general. Such feature integrations are what Tamil speakers call Tanglish; a familiar term for Tamil translanguaging practices. Further examples of all these types will be revealed through the remaining chapters.

In Section 6.3 I have outlined the main patterns in the use of English and Tamil features in the translanguaging discourse. In their research on a young Tamil Saivite girl in London, Lytra et al. (2016b) found that as part of learning about her faith, the young girl syncretised two sets of linguistic resources. English, her more articulate language, was used to explain her

knowledge, but Tamil was strategically deployed for the main concepts associated with her religion. “Through the flexible juxtaposition of both languages” the young girl was able to “express her developing understanding of her faith and membership in the Hindu/Saiva community” (Lytra et al., 2016b, p. 150). While we can see parallels between the little girl and the Year 9 students’ linguistic behaviour, it is evident that there is not an absolutely clear delineation between the functions of each language in this context. It is not always possible to deduce why a particular linguistic feature from English has been adopted over Tamil for instance; and this corresponds with the idea that translanguaging is individual and not always enacted with “watchful adherence” to the boundaries of named languages (cf. Otheguy et al., 2015). Rather than this classroom being a situation of functional code-switching, or separate bilingualism, where the teacher uses the heritage language and the students use English, this is an example of flexible bilingualism. In flexible bilingualism, “participants’ awareness of ‘language’ or ‘code’ is backgrounded, and ‘signs’ are combined and put to work in the message being negotiated” (Creese et al., 2011, p. 1197).

6.4 Conclusions

As a way of introducing the habitual patterns of use and the function of English and Tamil linguistic features for the second-generation students, this chapter was divided into two main parts.

In the first section I outlined reasons for conducting a numerical analysis of intonation units and argued that applying “bounded” language categories to these units would help to paint a preliminary picture of how Tamil and English features interplay in the classroom. The results show that while English dominates in the students’ speech, there is a significant amount of Tamil used. When we combine the number of mixed and monolingual Tamil intonation units, we find that Tamil appears in roughly 28% of all IUs uttered by the students. Jeya and Chitran show a more frequent and fluent use of Tamil in the classroom compared to the

other students. Given that this group of students are all L1 speakers of Tamil and the best-case-scenario for language maintenance (given their reported involvement in Tamil-related activities in Chapter Five), this result gives us an idea of what is probable when it comes to upholding Tamil as the medium of the Saiva classroom.

I investigated the type of questions asked by students as a way of further exploring the function of English and Tamil features. For this exercise I investigated questions at the turn-level, categorising them as English, Tamil and mixed-language questions. English questions were the most frequent, followed by Tamil and then mixed language questions. However when we look at polar and content questions, approximately the same number of each were posed in English and Tamil. There were also a small number of alternative questions and repair initiators delivered in both English and mixed language turns.

I showed how a combination of English, Tamil and mixed IUs can work together to form and reformulate a question so that comprehension is achieved. The results of the investigation into questions not only shows the dominance of English but the enduring presence of Tamil features in the classroom discourse – almost half of all the questions in this one lesson comprised solely Tamil IUs or some Tamil linguistic features. The role of the religion is significant here in that, when students ask questions about the Saiva religion and Tamil culture in the class, the adoption of Tamil is necessary.

A look at the functions of English and Tamil features in the class shows some clear delineations and overlaps for the two languages. English is used for quick exchanges and deeper, complex discussions between students. It is used to fill lexical gaps in their knowledge of Tamil, for blasphemy, idiomatic expressions that index their teenager identifications, for hedging, minimal responses and for other discourse markers. The main

role that Tamil plays is for the expression of religious concepts, and for nouns and verbs which are considered unique to Tamil culture or which are commonly used in everyday household discourse. There were instances of Tamil appearing in prepared utterances to initiate a topic with the teacher while English came in afterwards for elaboration or deeper discussion. There were also occasions of Tamil structural borrowing in English turns.

There were several salient findings for the function of mixed IUs and turns. There are occasions when the English and Tamil equivalents are both uttered in a single IU for rhetorical effect, emphasis, repair and clarification, or when there is usually Tamil syntactic interference (such as the addition of *maathiri* for “like”) in an otherwise English IU. At the turn-level we saw how a mix of Tamil and English IUs help the students to convey meaning accurately to the teacher.

Lastly, we saw the phenomenon of integrated words, often consisting of English lexemes and Tamil suffixes or the use of the English possessive with a Tamil noun.

The findings so far suggest that the strong language-religion ideology of the temple is influential in the microenvironment of the Year 9 Saiva classroom. Furthermore we see the ability of students and teacher to use translanguaging to communicate effectively and strategically, and this will be investigated further in the next chapter.

7 Chapter 7 - Multicompetence, cooperation, and subversion in the translanguaging classroom

In the previous chapter we saw the patterns of usage for Tamil and English linguistic features in the Saiva classroom at the micro-level, how each type of linguistic feature can serve different but also overlapping functions and how monolingual English, monolingual Tamil and mixed intonation units (IUs) are all used in different speech combinations.

It is now time to draw the lens back so that we can interrogate aspects of translanguaging discourse and assess how effective or ineffective they might be in achieving communication and comprehension. It appears that many studies of translanguaging in different contexts do not problematise the imbalance in language competencies between teachers and students (exceptions are Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Li Wei & Wu, 2009). But in this Tamil-medium Saiva classroom, the imbalance in competencies in Tamil and English for the teacher and students is significant. On the one hand, the teacher is highly proficient in Tamil but limited in her ability to construct fluent English sentences or to comprehend rapid English dialogue. On the other hand, the students generally have a good but not complete knowledge of Tamil, and their oral skills and motivation or confidence to speak Tamil vary for different biographical reasons. In contrast, they are highly fluent in English and generally use English as their *lingua franca* amongst members of their generation.

In the words of Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 104), the students' "bilingualism is English dominant" whereas the teacher's is "community language dominant". With the teacher and students each relying on features of both languages to varying extents, the need to work harder, cooperate or to find ways to achieve mutual understanding are more salient. In addition, there are occasions when the students may not want

to achieve mutual understanding and use the teacher's lower English proficiency to their advantage.

Furthermore, when we talk about the usefulness of a translinguaging strategy in education, some scholars have warned about the applicability and transferability of research findings. Canagarajah (2011) points out that, while research into translinguaging has succeeded in proving the validity and dynamism involved in such linguistic practices, scholars must also be aware of a tendency to romanticise it. He calls for a more critical view of translinguaging's limitations so that it can be practically applied to classroom pedagogy and assessment. He states "We have to go beyond studying the strategies of translinguaging production to studying strategies of negotiation" in order to gain an insider perspective on translinguaging processes (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 5). By this he means looking at the strategies that speakers adopt to help listeners interpret their language choices; at what choices and considerations they face in the production of translinguaging; and the composing or cognitive stages that characterise the production of translinguaging.

In terms of the skills required for translinguaging, Li Wei (2016, p. 7) states that human beings have a "Translinguaging Instinct, an innate capacity to draw on as many different cognitive and semiotic resources as are available to them", to go beyond "narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend the culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication". I wish to highlight some of the specific skills and resources used by the students as part of their innate capacity for translinguaging and their linguistic multicompetence. I use "multicompetence" as developed by Li Wei (2011b, p. 373) to reflect, in a holistic sense, the "totality of linguistic knowledge" in the mind of a multilingual speaker. This idea echoes the notions put forward in other translinguaging literature about speakers drawing on features in their full linguistic repertoires (cf. Blommaert & Backus, 2011; Jørgensen et al.,

2011; Otheguy et al., 2015). Multicompetence encompasses all the languages known by the speaker but, in addition, the knowledge of norms for using the languages in context and how the different languages interact to produce “well-formed, contextually appropriate, mixed-code utterances” (Li Wei, 2011b, p. 374). The focus is not on separate competencies for each language, “but a multicompetence that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one’s repertoire” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 1). Thus proficiency is based on building one’s total repertoire, rather than on mastering every language (Canagarajah, 2011). While multicompetence not only addresses multilingual speech but the use of multimodality and multiple literacies in enhancing communication, in this chapter, I focus on the use of speech.

The concept of symbolic competence is part of multicompetence (Li Wei, 2011b). Defined by Kramsch and Whiteside (2008, p. 664) to be more than “communicative competence”, symbolic competence represents the multilingual speaker’s “acute ability to play with various linguistic codes and with various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes”. The playing aspect of symbolic competence is a theme in this chapter.

Li Wei (2011b) adds that a speaker’s skills in creativity and criticality are manifested in their displays of multicompetence. He defines creativity as;

the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language, and to push and break boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original, and the acceptable and challenging (Li Wei, 2011b, p. 374).

I will provide examples of how the students exhibit creativity in the use of Tamil and English features to not only enhance communication but also to enact subversion, through humour, in the classroom. Li Wei (2011b) believes that criticality is an intrinsic part of creativity, and while criticality is evident in the sample extracts, this particular aspect of multicompetence will be explored more deeply in Chapters Eight and Nine.

In this chapter, through a systematic investigation of linguistic extracts from the Year 9 class of 2015, I will highlight what mechanisms work for and against clear communication in a translanguaging setting. By answering Canagarajah's (2011) call to study strategies of translanguaging negotiation, I will problematise translanguaging in terms of the imbalance in language proficiencies between teacher and students. While full competency in each language is not necessary in terms of the skills required to translanguage, it is still relevant when it comes to how effectively the message is conveyed. For this reason, it is useful to look at when classroom participants attempt to cooperate to address the proficiency imbalance and when they purposely do not cooperate in order to manipulate the proficiency imbalance, mainly for the purposes of humour and subversion.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section we look at cooperation; how the participants work together to achieve understanding through translanguaging and the repair of misunderstandings – and also what aspects of meaning are not accurately conveyed through translanguaging and an imbalance in speakers' proficiencies. In the second section, we look at some ways in which the students subtly subvert the main classroom discourse and contradict their images as well-behaved and pious students. While the chapter is divided this way, that is not to say that the children can only be cooperative or subversive at one time. In most cases, their behaviour is a combination of both and we see how their subversive actions are tempered by the Tamil cultural influence of maintaining politeness, respect and face in front of the teacher. Lastly, given that this setting is in a temple's religious school, the issue of religion and language use will underlie the discussion in order to uncover how religion is influencing translanguaging practice for the Year 9 students.

7.1 Cooperation

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks ... they are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction.

(Grice, 1975, p. 26)

In this section we investigate how the participants collaborate to overcome difficulties in translanguaging talk in interaction. As a start to the discussion, it is worthwhile recalling Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle as an overriding force at work (most of the time) in the Saiva classroom. The principle states: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 26). Kramsch (2006, p. 249) writes about the purpose of communicative language teaching (CLT), and while this is not directly relevant, I think her words describe well the notion of cooperation in communication. She says interactions include "symmetrical turns-at-talk, where speakers' intentions are expressed and clarified in a rational manner, and where the meanings of words", and the conventions of their use in social contexts, "are actively interpreted and negotiated between interlocutors" (Kramsch, 2006, p. 250). In this section, I argue that cooperation is both a key component in the use of translanguaging, as well as necessary in addressing the weaknesses of a translanguaging classroom.

Translanguaging can be the most effective way of achieving comprehension amongst bilingual speakers. Studies by Lin and Martin (2005) and Arthur and Martin (2006), (as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 106), found that some of the strengths of translanguaging in the classroom to be to increase the inclusion and participation of students, develop less formal relationships between class members, allow ideas to be conveyed more easily, and work faster at accomplishing lessons. Importantly, for the development of young migrants, Li Wei (2011b) posits that translanguaging opens a space for students to feel confident about

their “new” identities (as the second generation) and their abilities across languages.

A significant feature of this class which differentiates it from other studies in complementary language schools, where the institution and teachers enforce a monolingual medium (through One Language Only or One Language at a Time ideologies (cf. Li Wei & Wu, 2009)), is that the main objective is not language teaching but religious teaching. In this case, while the temple management dictates that this is a Tamil-medium school, there is also room for teachers to manage the extent to which they enforce this goal. In the Year 9 class Mrs Chandran does not prohibit the use of English as she recognises its role in assisting learning. Thus, we have a situation where the teacher endorses translanguaging practice if it helps to achieve the aims of the lesson. Lytra et al. (2016a) report a similar approach by a first-generation Tamil Saivite teacher of a religious class in London.

In addition, because this is a religious class, the teacher does not consistently correct students’ Tamil language errors in the same way as she might in a language-learning setting. A few factors are at play here. Firstly, because Spoken Tamil is the norm for discussion, the teacher is flexible about the variation in students’ language given that a standardised form of Spoken Tamil does not exist. In addition, there is allowance for the mistakes caused by the participants not watchfully adhering to language boundaries, as in the case of structural borrowing from English into Tamil. As I analyse the transcripts in the remaining chapters I will at times point out speech that becomes problematic because Tamil and English features are used in a non-standard way, but I will not attempt to deconstruct all the students’ mistakes especially if they are not interactionally relevant to the discussion. An analysis of the lexicogrammatical nature of the students’ translanguaging practices is a recommendation for future work.

Given there is an imbalance in language proficiencies (between teacher and students as well as amongst students), students will interject to assist the teacher with an explanation of a Tamil or English concept, and they will interrupt to correct another's language errors. Such interjections are accepted by the teacher and signal that these are not considered rude or disrespectful but, rather, necessary in the pursuit of comprehension. The "power of knowledge" comes into play here. The students are keen to show their awareness of their heritage culture, religion, and the Tamil and English languages. They seem to like to help the teacher (and each other) to understand the meaning of English terms or how certain things work in Australian society. In this way the roles of teacher and student do shift, and so does a level of power along with it.

A major feature of this translanguaging classroom is the act of repair and this will be discussed via the extracts presented in this chapter. Kitzinger (2012, p. 229) defines repair (based on Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks' work from 1977) as "the set of practices whereby a co-interactant interrupts the ongoing course of action to attend to possible trouble in speaking, hearing or understanding the talk". Using overviews by Kitzinger (2012) and Sidnell (2010), I will explore the various ways in which the interlocutors initiate repair, locate trouble sources in speech, and implement repair strategies through the use of English and Tamil features. A closer look at this phenomenon will reveal the metawareness of language at work amongst the bilingual speakers. While I acknowledge that repair is a characteristic of any interaction, be it monolingual or multilingual, I argue that misunderstandings and repair strategies have particular characteristics in the translanguaging context.

Another feature of dealing with misunderstanding and miscomprehension is the role of politeness and face-saving in the classroom. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) define face as "the public self-image that every

member wants to claim” for themselves; “thus face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction”. They add that people cooperate to maintain face and such cooperation is based on the “mutual vulnerability of face” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Face is very significant in Tamil culture as a way of showing respect to first-generation members and, as we will see from the following extracts, the minimisation of face-threatening acts is a consideration in the way students question and challenge the teacher’s English knowledge.

7.1.1 Granite

The first extract is a simple example of cooperation in the classroom. Here, the teacher is talking about the material structure of a special temple in India. We see how the students teach her the English equivalent of a Tamil word.

Data extract 7-1

26Jul15	Timecode: 00:11:02.100 - 00:11:13.921
	Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Thiran
1 Mrs Chandran:	karungkallen2Taa ungkaLukku njaapaka- <i>what is karungkalla ((granite)) you remem-</i>
2	theriyumaa? <i>do you know</i>
3	ammi: aaTTukkallellaam ceyvaarkaL? <i>mortar and pestle stone for making thosai batter</i>
4	<i>oru +black+ stone,</i>
5	<i>very, heavy, strong.</i>
6 Thiran:	<i>coal?</i>
7 Meena:	<i>°no granite°</i>
8 Thiran:	<i>oh gran[ite okay]</i>
9 Mrs Chandran:	[oo] en2n2a en2n2an2TaTaa? <i>yes what how is it dear?</i>
10 Jeya:	<i>gr[anite.]</i>
11 Meena:	<i>[granite]</i>

In Line 1, Mrs Chandran uses a comprehension check (as in Martin, 2003, p. 80) to see if students know the meaning of *karungkalla* (granite). In Line 3 she supplies extra clues for this material in Tamil, referring to two

implements, used in Tamil kitchens to make *thosai* (a savoury pancake), which she assumes the children would be familiar with given their shared cultural background. In Lines 4 and 5 she adopts some English features to help get her meaning across. These simple words also give us an indication of the limited extent of the teacher's ability to describe the material in English. Thiran responds in English in Line 6 asking if she is talking about *coal*. But Meena offers repair with the English equivalent *granite* in Line 7. Note her Sri Lankan English pronunciation of *granite*, /grænɪt/ as opposed to the Australian English /grænət/.

In Line 8 Thiran repeats the English equivalent and supplies the acknowledgement token, *okay*, but Mrs Chandran has not immediately understood, so she initiates repair in Line 9 to ask for repetition. Jeya and Meena make overlapping responses in Lines 10 and 11, both pronouncing the word as /grænɪt/.

Here we can see how Mrs Chandran uses Tamil and English features in an attempt to help the students understand the target word and how Meena and Jeya attempt to teach her the English equivalent. The students display their multicompetence by performing this translation and their pronunciation indexes the influence of Sri Lankan English in their repertoire.

7.1.2 Coma

In this next extract we see another example of the teacher having trouble immediately understanding the students' use of English. Mrs Chandran is relaying a story about a class who went on an excursion in Indonesia when an earthquake struck and injured one student.

Data extract 7-2

14Jun15	Timecode: 00:50:11.846 - 00:50:36.070
	Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.
1	Mrs earthquake move paNNeekkiLLa ellaam eppaTi<u>yoo</u> .

Chandran: *when the earthquake moved it somehow hit*
2 **aTichchu** brain damage↓((claps palm together as she says
 “damage”))
 and there was brain damage

3 Thiran: (1.0) °is she in coma?°

4 Mrs (0.5) uh?
Chandran:

5 Thiran: is she in coma.

6 Mrs (1.5) karma? yeah
Chandran:

7 Thiran: c[oma]

8 Jeya: [c[oma]] coma

9 Meena: [coma]

10 Mrs coma illa no.
Chandran: *it's not coma no.*

11 coma illa an2aa brain damage **ethoo=**
 it's not coma but some brain damage

12 Meena: =it's probably affected [some nerves]

13 Mrs [<everyone> praying and helping.>
Chandran:

14 <the a:ll Saiva Centre boys go there, and ah,>

15 doing helping and >so many things happening now↓< right!

In Lines 1 and 2 Mrs Chandran uses the English features *earthquake* and *brain damage* to make the concepts clear to her students. She forms a compound verb, *move paNNeekkiLLa*, by combining the English verb *move* with the Tamil verb *paNNU* meaning “to do”. As shown in the previous chapter this Tanglish compound verb is a way for Tamil speakers to form a verb when they have a lexical gap or perhaps, in this case, it may be for recipient design.

In response to Mrs Chandran's story, Thiran asks if the student is *in coma* in Line 3, possibly due to a priming effect from Mrs Chandran's use of *brain damage*. While standard usage would include the article *a* before the word *coma* Thiran omits this and, perhaps for this reason, the teacher has not been able to interpret the word as *coma*. She initiates repair with *uh?* so Thiran repeats the question in Line 5. This is met with silence from the teacher as she tries to process what he is asking. She misinterprets his *English coma* for the Hindu concept (in fact a Sanskrit word), *karma*. She

appears unsure about the connection but shrugs her shoulders as she says *karma? yeah* as if to imply that karma could have been at play in this situation but it is not a connection she would immediately draw. The students immediately pick up on her malapropism and Thiran, followed by Jeya, and then Meena, repeat the English *coma* in quick succession to correct it.

In the karma/coma confusion, there is no observable sense of irony or humour from the students, just a quick interjection to keep the discussion on track. But the students here display their metalinguistic awareness in being able to correct the misunderstanding immediately. Sidnell (2010, p. 126) says that the misinterpretation of a word does not simply depend on “how it was articulated or pronounced, but on what context is provided for it”. Context not only refers to the surrounding talk but the “larger sequential context” in which some talk occurs (Sidnell, 2010, p. 127). In this case, the context for Mrs Chandran is the Saiva religious classroom and so perhaps she is primed to hear the concept of “karma” instead of “coma”.

When the teacher gives her answer to Thiran’s question in Line 10 it is promptly followed by Meena’s turn in Line 11, *it’s probably affected some nerves*. This is in line with Meena’s tendency to make “all-knowing” statements during class but she may also be thinking that the teacher has misunderstood the whole point of Thiran’s question. As a way of repair, Meena is providing her opinion on the issue of whether coma was a factor in the story.

In Lines 12 to 14, Mrs Chandran delivers a complete turn in English as a way of repairing the misunderstanding and ensuring that the rest of her message is clearly understood by the students. If we look at this in terms of Gafaranga’s proposition about medium repair, some parallels can be drawn. Gafaranga and Torras i Calvo (2001) adopt Gafaranga’s term

“medium” rather than “language” to acknowledge the language norm that is negotiated between speakers in an interaction. They state “the speakers’ own code is the medium of a bilingual conversation”, the code that speakers orient to whilst talking, as part of achieving communication (Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001, p. 195).

In the case of the Year 9 Saiva class, a bilingual medium is the norm with bilinguals using “both languages without any orientation to the two as different” (Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001, p. 205). Various modes of the bilingual medium seem to be at play in different interactions. For example, sometimes we see the “parallel” mode at work when Mrs Chandran consistently uses Tamil while students like Raja and Thiran consistently reply in English. For other students we can see that the interaction resembles more of a “halfway-between” mode of the bilingual medium. This is true for students like Jeya and Chitran who may consistently alternate between Tamil and English while the teacher consistently uses Tamil. The important thing to note is that the mode of the bilingual medium changes constantly during the conversation, and according to who is speaking. Also, it is common for all interlocutors to engage in the “mixed mode” by alternating between Tamil and English between turns and within their turns (cf. Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001).

When we view Mrs Chandran’s speech through this lens we can see that something peculiar has occurred. In order to repair the miscommunication she has moved to a monolingual medium of English in Lines 12 to 14 to ensure no further misunderstanding takes place. This can be seen as a sort of medium repair if we consider that Mrs Chandran was alternating languages (Tamil, English and the Sanskrit borrowing into English, *karma*) while the students were only using English in the preceding turns. When her use of *karma* is corrected with the English *coma* this could have been interpreted by the teacher to be a medium repair by the students

who are insisting on the English *coma*. Therefore, Mrs Chandran abides by this medium and shifts to English.

The kind of medium negotiation that Gafaranga and Torras i Calvo (2001) have observed is not constantly at play in this class. However when there is a misunderstanding we can see that accommodation is made by the teacher to facilitate easier communication and to avoid successive miscommunications. We also see the shift in roles when the students correct the teacher and Meena tries to answer the question about whether the student was in a coma. The students have executed their teacher role in a polite manner in this case.

7.1.3 Car accident

In this conversation the teacher is describing a car accident that happened in the local area on the previous day. The extract shows how the students participate in deciphering what a Tamil word means and in assisting the teacher to make a connection between the Tamil and English equivalents.

Data extract 7-3

13Sep15 Timecode: 00:09:59.570 - 00:11:11.667
 Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran#

1 Mrs roundabout**la oruvar vanthu**;
 Chandran: *when a person was driving his car at the roundabout**

2 car **oTikkoNTu pookum poothu**

3 **avarukku**
 he

4 **vali vanthu viTTathu,**
 got fits

5 **vali vanthathaala**
 *he can't stop the car because he got the fits**

6 **avar cara nippaaTTeelaa**

7 **niRaiya peer** accident **en2Tu colli.**
 lots of people accident it seems

8 Raja: oh wow

9 [yeah yeah yeah the]

10 Mrs [**vali yen2Taa en2n2an2Tu theriyumoo**]
 Chandran: *do you know what fits is*

11 Raja: °**naangkaL naangkaL**°
 we we

12 °**oru thamizh schoolkkuLLa**°
 were inside the Tamil school

13 °there was like the ()°=

14 Mrs =**aa**
 Chandran: ah

15 **oo** yeah
 yes yeah

16 **vali vanthathaala**
 because the fits came lots of people's cars*

17 **pala peeruTaiya**

18 car**kaL** vanthu,

19 Thiran: is that why-

20 is that why there was traffic yesterday,

21 Raja: [yeah]

22 Mrs [**oo**] **een2an2Taa athila** accident
 Chandran: yes because there is an accident

23 **avarukku antha**
 for him that

24 **valiyen2Taa en2n2a colluRathu,**
 fits means what do you say

25 **antha kaal kaiyellaam izhukkum;**
 that leg and hand will pull

26 Thiran: pain=

27 Raja: =or cramps

28 Mrs not cra:mps
 Chandran:

29 Thiran: °pins and needles?°

30 Mrs ah (0.5) <something like that>
 Chandran:

31 **aan2aa avangkaLaala** control **paNNeelaathu**
 but they can't control

32 **uTan2aTiyaa avangkaLa ellaam izhuththiTum**
 immediately it will pull all of them

33 <something ah>

34 <that's a brain um (0.5) damage> **aala vaara nooy:**
 that's a disease which comes from brain um damage

35 **appa: a- a- uTan2ee en2n2a ceythirukkooNum.**
 then immediately what ((he)) should have done is,

36 **nippaaTTi irukkooNum**
 should have stopped.

37 at least **avarukku** car-
 atleast his car-

38 **konjcham-**
 little-

39 ((turn from non-recorded student))#

40 many people are accident

41 because

42 this one
 43 Thiran: uh
 44 Mrs (0.5) right?=
 Chandran:
 45 Thiran: =what you think someone kept going
 46 Mrs yeah,
 Chandran:
 47 he didn't stop,
 48 uncontrol
 49 then everybody is:
 50 mess! system.

There were two students from the lower grade present who chose not to be in front of the camera for this class.

In Lines 1 to 7 Mrs Chandran describes what happened using Tamil (except for the integrated *roundaboutla* and *cara* and the English features *car* and *accident*). Raja comprehends what the teacher is saying and provides *oh wow* as an acknowledgement token. He attempts to add more information in Line 9 but it overlaps with the teachers question in Line 10, asking the students if they know the meaning of the Tamil word *vali* (fits). Martin (2003, p. 80) calls this kind of questioning strategy a “comprehension check”. Raja doesn’t seem to hear the teacher’s question and in Lines 11 to 13 he relays his experience of the accident using a mix of English and Tamil features. This is one of the few examples from the recorded data where he applies his Tamil. Note the integration of features in *schoolkkuLLa* (inside the school) which seems to trigger his shift from Tamil to English (there is a Tamil equivalent for *school* which is in use but both students and teacher were often heard using *school* with a relevant Tamil suffix instead).

When Mrs Chandran responds in Lines 14 to 18 she again emphasises the role of the fits in the accident. It dawns on Thiran that he was also indirectly linked to the accident when he understands why he was caught in a traffic jam the previous day. His self-repair *is that why* in Line 19 is an indication of him suddenly drawing the link between the two. Mrs Chandran repeats her story about the accident and the fits in Lines 22 to 24. Her agenda seems to be to get the students to comprehend the role of

the fits - in Lines 24 and 25 she asks for a translation for *vali* and gives a description in Tamil to assist the boys' comprehension. This is met with guesswork from the boys who offer three options in English in Lines 26, 27, and 29, but the teacher does not recognise these words as the equivalents. She then returns to Tamil to provide further clues in Lines 31 to 34 but also brings in English to denote the concept of brain damage. She provides a further clue about the effect of the fits by saying in Tamil that the driver should have stopped driving in Lines 35 and 36. In Lines 37 and 38 she tries to provide further information but cuts-off her talk twice.

There is a turn taken from a non-recorded student and when the teacher returns to the explanation she shifts to English in Lines 40 to 42. She is trying to express that the driver ran into several cars and this caused other vehicles to be involved in the accident. Due to the limited English features she uses to express this, it takes a few moments for the students to grasp her point. Thiran signals his hesitation in Line 43 with a pause and *uh*, and this indicates trouble (in the repair sense) to the teacher. In response to the silence, Mrs Chandran asks the question, *right?*. Thiran then asks a clarification question in Turn 42 *what you think someone kept going?*. In terms of repair, the *what* of his question can be seen as a category-specific interrogative but then he follows it with a candidate understanding (resaying the trouble-source, Lines 35 and 36, in other words) framed by *you think* (cf. Kitzinger, 2012). He starts to get a sense that there was a car out of control. Mrs Chandran gives a tentative *yeah*, as a continuer, to see if that helps Thiran. She then switches into English to try to expand on the idea of losing control of the car in Lines 46 to 50. As in "coma" in Section 7.1.2, this could be seen as another instance when Mrs Chandran shifts to the monolingual medium of English to try to enhance the boys' understanding. She seems to have an acute sense of when there is a risk of miscomprehension and thus shifts to English in order to avoid this. Thus, a kind of medium repair is taking place even if her use of English is not entirely successful in conveying meaning.

We see evidence of the three interlocutors cooperating towards “a common purpose” (Grice, 1975, p. 26), from the boys trying to guess the English equivalent of *vali* by listening to the teacher’s clues, to the teacher making several attempts in English and Tamil to clarify the story and the main points. The students stay engaged in this process and keep trying to comprehend the teacher. Overall we can say that there has been some loss of meaning in this bilingual interaction – the students still don’t have resolution as to the meaning of *vali*. While this is the salient fact that the teacher wanted to convey to the students, it is, at a certain point, left alone when the teacher senses that the students understand the implication of what she said and moves the discussion forward in the interests of momentum. Extracts like this highlight that while we see translanguaging as an efficient medium of communication, it still takes considerable time and rephrasing to achieve mutual understanding. In the end, the resultant understanding may be incomplete but, at the same time, more understanding might be reached than would be possible with strict adherence to Tamil alone.

7.1.4 Adultery

This extract is another case of when meaning is not fully conveyed or understood. It is actually the continuation of a conversation analysed in Section 7.2.2. Jeya, Thiran and Mrs Chandran are discussing the major sins and Jeya wants to clarify a point about the sin of lust.

Data extract 7-4

23Aug15	Timecode: 00:15:24.299 - 00:16:10.883
	Jeya, Mrs Chandran, Thiran
1 Jeya:	okay viba- vibachchaaram en2Tu colluRathu kaamam. <i>okay pro- prostitution what you call it kaamam ((lust))</i>
2	wait kaamam <i>wait kaamam</i>
3	kaamam en2Taa? <i>what does kaamam mean?</i>
4 Thiran:	< kaamam en2Taa?

what does kaamam mean?

5 Mrs (0.5) **peeraacai.**
Chandran: *greed*

6 Jeya: (0.5) oh

7 Mrs *greediness*
Chandran:

8 **ippa, caappiTaa=**
now if you eat-

9 Jeya: **=aan2aa aan2aa antha**
but- but that-

10 **vibachchaaram en2Tu**
*can't we say it's prostitution**

11 **collakkuuTaathaa.**

12 *like*

13 Mrs **aa kaamam**
Chandran: *yes lust*

14 **athukkuLee**[yum varum]
will come under that

15 Jeya: [yeah so the=]

16 Mrs **=ippa oruvan2 kalyaaNam muTichchu than2Ta wife ooTa**
Chandran: **vaazhuRathu** okay.
now if someone is married and lives with his wife that's okay

17 [acceptable.]

18 Jeya: [so so so

19 so] that's adultery↓

20 Mrs **aa?**
Chandran: *ah?*

21 that is [acceptab-]

22 Jeya: [**niingkaL**] **colluRathu** adulteryya
is what you say adultery?

23 Mrs **aa;**
Chandran: *ah*

24 Jeya: adult- adultery **en2Taa**
adult- adultery means

25 when <you're married?> >but

26 you have an affair with someone else.<

27 I mean **kalyaaNam muTichchiTiingka,**
I mean you are married

28 Mrs **aa muTichchaa avaiyooTa irukkiRathu** acceptable,
Chandran:: *yes finished ((married)) if you live with them it's acceptable*

29 **aan2aa maTTavan2Ta** wifea pooy=
but if you take someone else's wife

30 Jeya: =yeah

31 **aa athu=**
yes that's-

32 =yeah **athu** adultery.

yeah that is adultery
 33 **aankilaththila**
 in English
 34 Mrs **en2n2a** word
 Chandran: what word?
 35 Jeya: adultery
 36 Mrs adultery
 Chandran:
 37 Jeya: yeah
 38 said A D U L T E R Y
 39 Mrs **aa**
 Chandran: ah
 40 Jeya: there's a book called Scarlet Letter all about it
 41 Mrs **aa**
 Chandran: ah
 42 I don't know okay heh
 43 Jeya: I'm not (going into detail)
 44 heh heh

In Line 1, in Tamil, Jeya asks about *vibachchaaram* and whether that is connected to the sin of *kaamam* (lust), but then interjects with the English *wait* before she asks in Tamil what *kaamam* actually means. The word *vibachchaaram* is ambiguous here because it can mean either prostitution or adultery. Generally the word is used for prostitution and another word, *kuuTaa ozhukkam* is used for adultery. So even if Jeya intends to mean adultery, the teacher would be likely to interpret *vibachchaaram* to mean prostitution.

Thiran repeats Jeya's content question in Line 4. The teacher pauses as if searching for an equivalent and responds with the Tamil word for greed, *peeraacai* which is unexpected since it is not exactly an equivalent of lust, *kaamam*. In Line 6 Jeya supplies an acknowledgement token, *oh*, but it is with a tone of doubt or confusion. This prompts Mrs Chandran to follow with the English *greediness* for clarification. She starts to explain what greediness is in Tamil attributing it to eating in Line 10, perhaps thinking Jeya's confusion is about the meaning of greediness. But Jeya's interruption in Lines 9 to 12, shows she is still pursuing whether prostitution is a part of lust and, perhaps, whether both concepts are

connected to greediness. The hesitation evident in the use of *but* (repeated once) and *that* in Line 9 indexes Jeya's confusion. The cut-off of *but* and *that* could also be seen as a "delaying production" in self-initiated repair. Kitzinger (2012, p. 239) says "such hitches do not *ipso facto* initiate repair, but rather alert recipients to the possibility of a repair of an as yet unspecified sort – with the sort of trouble it was (if it was trouble) only becoming evident from an inspection of what happens next." In this case the trouble could be a miscommunication (as perceived by Jeya) by Mrs Chandran talking about greediness. Jeya is trying to steer the footing back to the subject of prostitution and lust.

In Line 13 Mrs Chandran confirms that lust and prostitution are connected, that lust "comes under" prostitution. However she does not clarify whether *kaamam* (lust) incorporates greediness in addition to prostitution. Greediness is not referred to again after this point so that part of the trouble is left unresolved. Mrs Chandran adds to her explanation in Lines 16 and 17, in Tamil, that if someone is married and lives with his wife, then the lust between husband and wife is acceptable. Jeya's response in Line 22 points to the possibility of some misunderstanding. Her confusion is indicated by her repetition of *so* as if she is trying to gather her thoughts. She asks *so that's adultery*. It appears that she has misinterpreted Mrs Chandran's answer to be about a married person engaging a prostitute, thus asking whether that constitutes adultery.

The teacher initiates repair in response to Jeya's question because, it seems to her that Jeya has not comprehended the word *adultery*. She attempts a reiteration of her point that lust between wife and husband is acceptable in Line 21 however it overlaps with Jeya's repetition of her question in Line 22, "is what you say ((called)) adultery?". She uses Tamil for this question except for the word *adultery*. Mrs Chandran responds in

Line 23 with *aa*, as a continuer, to indicate she is listening but also uncertain about what Jeya is saying.

Jeya then understands that the teacher may not know what the English feature *adultery* means and so she gives an explanation in English except for the Tamil *en2Taa* (means) in Lines 24 to 26. She then qualifies her statement in Line 27 with a Tamil clause meaning “you are married” (lit. the wedding is finished). This is an example of how both languages are “needed simultaneously” to convey the meaning of the “full message” (cf. Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 108).

After Jeya’s clarification in Tamil, Mrs Chandran achieves uptake. In Line 28 she specifies in Tamil that if you live with your wife it’s acceptable, again referring to the sin of lust. Mrs Chandran starts to elaborate on the idea of taking someone else’s wife in Line 29 but through her eye contact with Jeya and through mutual nodding, she realises that both speakers have achieved comprehension so does not explain it further. Jeya provides the acknowledgement token *yeah* in Line 30 and then confirms that the English word is *adultery*. She strategically places the English *adultery* in a Tamil clause to highlight the word to the teacher, and in Line 33 she verifies that this is the English name. In Line 34, the teacher asks for repetition and Jeya does so in Line 35 following with the spelling in Line 38. The teacher repeats the word in Line 36 and responds with *ah* in Line 39 to acknowledge receipt. Jeya then wants to expand on the topic by talking about a book, *The Scarlet Letter*, in Line 40 but Mrs Chandran shakes her head saying *I don’t know* in English and looks at the quiz paper to indicate she is ready to move on. Jeya responds to this cue and jokes in Line 43 that she won’t go into the detail of the book, implying that it would not be appropriate or comfortable to talk about a taboo topic in this forum.

The interaction between Jeya and Mrs Chandran proves rather difficult to follow. In this exchange it is not entirely clear if there is mutual comprehension or whether some meaning has been lost. Unanswered questions and/or misunderstandings include whether Mrs Chandran sees lust and greediness as the same or separate sins, whether a married person feeling lust was in reference to prostitution (as in adultery) or between husband and wife, and whether Jeya means adultery or prostitution when she uses *vibachchaaram*. What we do see is that it takes further communication and clarification before Mrs Chandran understands that Jeya is talking about adultery. In the end they both achieve mutual comprehension about the meaning of adultery but the questions about what actually constitutes lust and greediness remain unresolved.

In this extract we see the roles of teacher and student become blurred once again. Jeya is talking about adultery and trying to explain the concept to Mrs Chandran using both Tamil and English features. Even once Mrs Chandran understands the implication of adultery, she has to ask Jeya to repeat the English word and Jeya does this as well as supplying the spelling, taking on her teacher role. Jeya's pronunciation of the word *adultery* /ædʌltri/ does not follow the standard Australian English pronunciation /ə'dʌlt(ə)ri/ but indexes the influence of Sri Lankan English. At the end of the exchange, after Jeya has spelled the word for Mrs Chandran, there is a sense that the teacher wants to move on from the topic because she does not engage with Jeya's story about the *Scarlett Letter* and says *I don't know* as a way of changing the dialogue's footing. This suggests that Mrs Chandran may be uncomfortable talking about this topic with the students (or having it recorded) in a religious context. She subtly asserts her teacher role to move the conversation forward.

7.1.5 Devil kind of

In this extract, we see how the students can challenge each other's knowledge of the religion but also cooperate in conveying meaning to the teacher. Here, Mrs Chandran is talking about the Tamil Hindu month, which falls around September, where a special puja is conducted on Saturdays (known as *purTTaaci can2aiyilam*) for the planet Saturn (also known as *can2i* in Tamil). This leads to some confusion from Chitran about the meaning of these auspicious days.

Data extract 7-5 Devil kind of

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:47:10.826 - 00:47:44.000
Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.

1 Chitran: °yeah°

2 **cari ↑yeen2** ah- er- miss **antha colluvaangka**
okay why ah- er- miss they say

3 **puraTTaaci can2iyila antha atha**
that if you don't do that on the puratassi ((puja on auspicious Saturdays in September))

4 **ceyyaaTTi >can2iyan2 varuvaan2 en2Tu<**
the caniyen will come it seems

5 Thiran: **en2Tu** +wh↑at!+ heh
what what heh

6 Jeya: **can2iyan2**
caniyen

7 [heh heh heh]

8 Thiran: [o(h)h heh m(h)y] [o(h)h o(h)h o(h)h]

9 Mrs [what is **can2iyan2.**]
Chandran: *what is caniyen*

10 Chitran: °devil°

11 Mrs uh?
Chandran:

12 Chitran: devil

13 °kind of°

14 Jeya: >you kn↑ow you know the **can2iyan2**
you know you know the caniyen?

15 **can2iyan2 en2Tu kuuppiTuvaangka?**
they call it caniyen

16 like like ah

17 Meena: [°I don't think so°] ((deadpan voice))

18 Jeya: [like you know]

19 like your >**can2iyan2 varuthu en2Tu colluvaangka**¿<=
like they say your caniyen is coming

20 Thiran: =wai:t
 21 Mrs **uNmaiya can2i yilla,**
 Chandran: *truly it's not cani*
 22 **can2eechvaran2.**
it's canechwaran
 23 **can2↑ai en2Tu con2n2aa** <meaning slow↓>
the meaning of canai is meaning slow.
 24 Jeya: °oh°
 25 Mrs (0.3) [you know the-]
 Chandran:
 26 Jeya: [but no]
 27 [a↑lso +**can2iy↑an2!+**]
also caniyan
 28 Thiran: [heh heh +I know+]
 29 like
 30 Mrs **av↑aiyal c↓ol**
 Chandran: *they tell*
 31 **avaiyal pizhaiyaa antha.**
but they're wrong
 32 you know
 33 **naan2 con2n2an2 antha**
I told you about the story where that
 34 **puun2ai piTichchu vachcha kathai** [maathiri
*cat was put in the cage**
 35 **vanthiTTuthu]**
 36 Jeya: [o:h okay]

In Lines 2 to 4, Chitran adopts Tamil to ask his question of the teacher – “why do they say the ‘caniyan’ will come if you don’t do the puja?”. He ends with the common Tamil particle *eNTu* (it seems) as a hedge, denoting some hesitation about what he is asking. He asks the question in a serious tone, however, Thiran reacts in Line 5 with exaggerated surprise, initiating repair with *what!* in both Tamil and English. In Lines 6 to 8, Jeya and Thiran are laughing at Chitran’s question but Chitran and Mrs Chandran do not see the humour. It could be that Jeya and Thiran are reacting to the fact that “caniyan” is seen as a low-level curse word amongst youth (Canagarajah, 2012a). The teacher asks “what is caniyan?” in Line 9. Chitran supplies the English translation in Line 10 and Mrs Chandran initiates repair in Line 11 perhaps because she doesn’t hear him but also because this word’s meaning is the trouble source. Chitran

repeats his answer in Line 12 and, in Line 13, adds *kind of* as a further hedge in light of the reaction of his peers and teacher.

It appears that Chitran has drawn a connection between the concepts of the auspicious day for Saturn (known as *purTTaaci can2aiyilam*) and the similar-sounding Tamil word *can2iyan2* (devil). However Mrs Chandran does not know what *can2iyan2* means even though it is a familiar word to the students. In fact, other Tamil first-generation members had informed me that “the caniyān is coming” is an expression used to scare children, likened to the concept of the bogeyman in English.

Mrs Chandran’s lack of knowledge about the “caniyan” provokes a change in footing by Jeya and Thiran. Instead of continuing to laugh at Chitran’s apparent blunder, they participate in the task of cooperative communication. Jeya supports Chitran’s claim about the concept of *can2iyan2* in Lines 14 and 15. Meena is not amused by any of the discussion and simply comments in a deadpan voice in English in Line 17, *I don’t think so*.

Jeya gives an example of how *can2iyan2* is used in Line 19, a reformulation strategy to assist in Mrs Chandran’s understanding, and Thiran reacts to her statement with *wai:t* in Line 20 to indicate that he is affected by this scary-sounding statement, “your caniyān is coming”. At this point it is possible that Mrs Chandran comprehends the concept but she thinks the students are mistakenly connecting it with the auspicious day. She does not indicate that she sees any humour in the confusion or similarity between those words. Her response in Lines 21 to 23 is more serious to explain to the students that *can2ai* (slow – connected to the Tamil word for Saturn) and *can2iyan2* (devil) are two different things. She adopts English features, *meaning slow*, in Line 23 to make the distinction clear.

Jeya's quiet acknowledgment token, *oh* and pause shows that she is pondering the confusion so this prompts Mrs Chandran to make another attempt at explanation in Line 25. However Jeya interrupts in Lines 26 and 27 to adamantly disagree with her. She is arguing that something called a "caniyan" does exist. In Line 28 Thiran shows his agreement by looking directly at Jeya and saying *I know* and laughing. In this way he is signalling his collusion to Jeya but does not want to pursue the argument directly with the teacher. In Lines 30 to 35, the teacher tries to settle the confusion by referring to a story she had told them previously (the cat in the cage) about how people misunderstand the meaning of rituals. Jeya concedes in Line 36 with the change of state token, *oh okay*, but is not convinced. According to Sidnell (2010, p. 107), *oh okay*, can play a specific function - the *oh* acknowledges receipt of the information supplied by the teacher and the *okay* acknowledges an action, in this case Mrs Chandran's rejection of the meaning of "caniyan". At this point Jeya concedes, perhaps as an act of deference towards the teacher, to minimise a potential face-threatening act, and to no longer impede the momentum of classroom discussion (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 178).

Canagarajah (2012a) observed the use of "caniyan" by Sri Lankan Tamil youth in the US. In this context the word, which is considered an insult (meaning unlucky or evil), was adopted by youth as a term of familiarity, delivered in a mocking fashion. Canagarajah (2012a, p. 125) states that "caniyan" is difficult to translate but is derived "from the planet Saturn (*cani* in Tamil) which portends misfortune in Hindu astrology". Thus it appears that Chitran's question had legitimacy even though it received a mixed reaction in the class.

This extract shows the features of challenging and face-saving. Chitran minimises the strength of his claim about the "caniyan", using hedges as a way to preserve face. Jeya and Thiran openly laugh at Chitran's initial question but Jeya also wants to convince the teacher that the concept of

“caniyan” actually exists. However, by this time, Chitran has gone back to working on a maths question with Raja. In this way he disengages from the discussion to save face. We also see the moment when students could push for the teacher to engage with understanding about *can2iyan2* but they decide not to. It appears that this exchange, while humorous, has not been very satisfying in clarifying matters for the students, and in this sense, meaning has not been conveyed accurately between the teacher and students.

7.2 Subversion

In the second part of Chapter Seven, we look at examples of how the students subvert the momentum of whole-class discussion to, in part, index the ludic side of their teenager identifications. The three main ways in which they enact subversion is through the use of humour (sometimes delivered through performance), the injection of surreptitious naughty commentary, and also through subtle corrections of the teacher’s English. The students’ multicompetence and creativity is demonstrated in the way in which they strategically execute acts of subversion, through manipulating the teacher’s inferior grasp of English, such that these never appear as direct face-threatening acts towards the teacher. Heller’s (1988, p. 267) words about code-switching can be transferred to our discussion of translanguaging here: “codeswitching can be seen as one type of verbal strategy used to establish conversational cooperation or to prevent its establishment.”

Like Li Wei and Wu’s (2009, p. 207) study of children in Chinese complementary schools in Manchester we see how the students are able to manipulate their English and Tamil skills to “gain control of the classroom”. The Chinese students display a high level of multicompetence when they engage in some overtly sarcastic, challenging and face-threatening behaviour towards the teacher. However the Saiva students, in abiding by their cultural values of face-saving and respect for elders,

particle which is usually bound to the previous morpheme. However it appears that Mrs Chandran also uses it as a way of questioning the students' comprehension.

Jeya looks at Mrs Chandran and quietly initiates repair with *nineteenth century heh*. As she says this, Thiran looks at Jeya and indicates his agreement and laughs too. As in “devil kind of” in Section 7.1.5 we see evidence of Thiran's quiet collusion with Jeya. Meena smiles but looks down at her text. Mrs Chandran is looking at her text and does not see Jeya looking at her. In Line 9 the teacher also laughs but it appears that she is laughing because she hears the students laugh, not because she has interpreted Jeya's correction. The students are not directly laughing at the teacher but acknowledging to each other that they picked up the mistake and are treading carefully in terms of raising it with the teacher. The low volume of Jeya and Thiran's interaction and the fact that they choose to leave the matter alone rather than blatantly challenge the teacher are indications of minimising a face-threatening act.

Evidence of the students' multicompetence is shown in this extract. They have understood the teacher's meaning (the year stated in Tamil) and can then correct her error (the century stated in English) with an English response (the correct century). This is a good example of the complex ways in which the two languages interplay in this translanguaging classroom.

7.2.2 Kal is stone

Pronunciation is a source of trouble in this extract. This dialogue directly precedes that featured in “adultery” in Section 7.1.4. The students are discussing what the five major sins are called in Tamil. These are not sins specific to Hinduism - the question arises because they are preparing for an external secular Tamil language quiz occurring later that day. Even though it is a quiz organised by another Tamil diasporic organisation (see

Section 5.4.4) Mrs Chandran sees it as a worthwhile exercise to respond to the students' request for quiz practice in the Saiva class.

Data extract 7-7 Kal is stone

23Aug15 Timecode: 00:15:00.914 - 00:15:25.100
Jeya, Mrs Chandran, Thiran

1 Mrs **panjchamaa pathakangaL evai;**
Chandran: *what are the 5 major sins*

2 Jeya: okay.

3 **kolai, kolai,** pf-wait↓
 murder, murder, pf-wait

4 **poy, kolai, kaLavU, kaL, kaamam.**
 lies, murder, stealing, drinking, lust

5 Thiran: °yep°

6 (0.5) >**k↓al**
 stone

7 <is drink>=

8 Jeya: =I said **kaL**
 I said drinking

9 **kaL**
 drinking

10 not **kal**
 not stone

11 **kal** is stone

12 Thiran: **kaL** wha:t?

13 Jeya: **kaL**
 drinking

14 Thiran: **kaL;**=

15 Jeya: =unless you mean stone

16 [as in high]

17 Mrs [**kaL** is] [alcohol] alcohol
Chandran:

18 Thiran: [oh yeah]

19 Mrs [kind of alcohol]
Chandran:

20 Thiran: [can't you say **ma-**
 can't you say alc-

21 **mathu arunthuthal**
 drinking alcohol

22 Mrs **mathu arunthuthal?** same thing
Chandran: *drinking alcohol same thing*

23 Thiran: [for ()]

24 Mrs [**kaL** i- oo]
Chandran: *drinking i- yes*

25 **mathu arunthuthal** is **kaL**
 drinking alcohol is kaL

26 Thiran: okay

In Lines 2 to 4, Jeya attempts to list the five sins with some stumbling over words in the process. Thiran agrees quietly in Line 5 and then follows with a clarification request, *kal is drink* in Lines 6 and 7. This repair initiation involves repetition of the trouble source, *kal*, and provision of the English equivalent. In this instance he is confusing the pronunciation of *kaL* (drink or drinking alcohol) /kʌl/ with its minimal pair *kal* (stone) /kæɪ/. Thus Jeya provides repair by repeating the target word *kaL* (drink) twice and contrasting it with *not kal* (not stone) to demonstrate the difference in the two phonemes. She follows this with a reformulation that *kal is stone* in Line 11.

Thiran is still confused in Line 12, asking *kaL wha:t?* In this repair initiation, Thiran is being specific about the trouble source (he did not comprehend what *kaL* is), so Jeya repeats her pronunciation of *kaL* in Line 13 which Thiran then mimics. However Jeya has not finished speaking and so continues her explanation in English in Lines 15 and 16, *unless you mean stone as in high* thereby referring to an alternative meaning for “being stoned”. This statement is directed at Thiran but it overlaps with the teacher’s answer to his question in Line 19 where she repeats both the Tamil and English equivalents *kaL* and *alcohol*. The teacher does not hear Jeya’s turn and Thiran also misses the joke because he supplies an acknowledgement token to Mrs Chandran at the same time, in Line 18.

Such joking by the students, referring to topics like drugs, would not be acceptable in this classroom or religious and cultural context. However the students are aware that they can deliver jokes like this without the teacher noticing. This is achieved by saying something quickly or as an aside, but by also being aware of the limits of the teacher’s English vocabulary and perhaps her lack of exposure to colloquial terms such as “being stoned”. Jeya’s joke shows the students’ ability to surreptitiously run a counter-discourse, alongside the whole-class discussion, which

challenges the first generation's expectations of "proper Tamil child behaviour" in the classroom setting (as did Li Wei and Wu's (2009) Chinese children challenge the idea of the "polite Asian student").

In Lines 20 and 21, Thiran checks his understanding by providing a Tamil synonym for *kaL*. The teacher confirms his understanding by repeating the synonym and then adding in English, *same thing*. Lines 17, 19 and 22, uttered by the teacher, are examples of the doubling principle (cf. Hinnenkamp, 2003, p. 34) – repeating and paraphrasing the lexical item in both languages as part of accommodating for Thiran's stronger language, English. Line 25 sees the teacher repeat confirmation that *kaL* and *mathu arunthuthal* (drinking alcohol) are equivalent, this time using Tamil apart from the English *is*. This discussion ends with Thiran supplying the change of state token *okay* to indicate that they can move on.

In this example we see that Jeya takes on a teacher role to Thiran to correct his confusion between the minimal pair. Mrs Chandran gives Jeya space to do so before she adds her own contribution to, in part, validate Jeya's correction. In this way, the teacher approves Jeya's taking control of the classroom discourse and Jeya does not have to be subtle in her subversion of the teacher's authority. In Lines 8 to 11 Jeya's tone confirms a teacher, and epistemically superior, role by sounding condescending towards Thiran. At the same time, she also indexes a more teenager identity by referring to drug use and appealing to Thiran's equal status in this realm. However the reference is not heard by Thiran and the opportunity for solidarity at this point is missed.

7.2.3 Pacu's ass

In this next extract Mrs Chandran is trying to remind the students that we will all turn to ash. As part of the class on Saiva funeral rites, the topic of ash and cremation was recurring through this lesson. This is a difficult

interaction to represent in a linguistic extract because it involves much overlapping and rapid speech, as well as some turns occurring outside of the whole-class discussion. I have tried to simplify the transcript to improve its readability and hope that the description I offer here will point out the significant turns in the interaction.

Data extract 7-8 Pacu's ass

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:18:56.875 - 00:19:26.310
Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.

1 Mrs **een2 kuuTaathathu ceyyooNum naangkaL.**
Chandran: *why should we do bad things*

2 *for wh↑at! [<living only>]*

3 Raja: *[ash ()]*

4 *<few? years this world?>*

5 Raja: *[°you know the ash¿°]*

6 Mrs *[why are we doing the] [paavam]*
Chandran: *why are we doing the sin*

7 Thiran: *[°thirunuuRu¿°]*
holy ash

8 Mrs *and the [(1.0) so (0.5)]*
Chandran:

9 Raja: *[°yeah thirunuuRu°]*
yeah holy ash

10 Mrs *[so many] [things]*
Chandran:

11 Thiran: *[°yeah°]*

12 Raja: *[°is it human ash°]*

13 Mrs *heh heh*
Chandran:

14 *unwanted[d things.]*

15 Thiran: *[actually it's u:m] **pacu***
actually it's um cow

16 *a- um [**pacu:**]*
cow

17 Meena: *[it's **pacu**'s] ash=*

18 Thiran: *=f+ashl↑ey!+=*

19 Jeya: *=i-it's not*

20 *[i- any ()]*

21 Chitran: *[+it's not] **pacu**'s ash+, ((looking directly at Raja and spinning finger))*

22 Thiran: *[it's actual] **pacu:***

23 Meena: *no(h) no(h)t*

24 Thiran: *manure*

25 Chitran: [it's **pacu**'s ↓a:ss:
 26 Mrs [pacu] **caampa**l
 Chandran: cow ash
 27 Jeya: [heh heh heh]
 28 Thiran: [manure:!]
 29 Jeya: [pacu's ass]
 30 Thiran: [mixed ↑up]
 31 [dried up!=]
 32 Mrs [not human] [body]
 Chandran:
 33 Chitran: [nah]
 34 b[ut sometimes they do!=]
 35 Meena: [heh heh +n(h)o:(h)+ heh]
 36 Thiran: =that's s(h)o +creepy!+
 37 heh heh

I will not discuss Mrs Chandran's speech in Lines 1 to 14 in detail since it is only featured as a backdrop to the side conversation that is quietly unveiling between Raja and Thiran. While Mrs Chandran is questioning why we should sin when our lives are so short, Raja wants to resolve confusion about the origin of holy ash (the ash that is placed on one's forehead for worship) and so he poses a preface question to Thiran in Line 5. Thiran offers a candidate understanding, in Line 7, with the Tamil word for holy ash, *thirunuuRu*, to indicate that he may be grasping what Raja means (cf. Kitzinger, 2012). As Mrs Chandran continues to deliver her monologue, Raja quietly confirms to Thiran that he is indeed talking about *thirunuuRu* in Line 9 and Thiran adds *yeah* in Line 11 as a continuer. In Line 12 Raja directs his clarification (a polar interrogative) question to Thiran to ask if the holy ash is made from cremated humans.

From Line 15, the boys' side conversation enters the whole-class discussion, and they take control of the classroom. Thiran answers Raja's question at normal volume. He hesitates with *u:m* perhaps to think of the most effective way to provide an explanation. He adopts the Tamil feature *pacu* (cow) and in Line 16 hesitates some more which suggests he is unsure of the appropriate language and/or words to use. In Line 17,

Meena, who has been listening to their conversation, interrupts with her explanation, *it's pacu's ash*, to indicate that the holy ash is not made from human remains but from cow. What she is implying here is that cow dung, not the cow's dead body, is an ingredient of the holy ash.

As Meena utters the English *ash*, in Line 17, Thiran quickly adds a wordplay in Line 18. Instead of saying *actually*, a word he used in Line 15, he changes this to *ashley!* as a word play on “ash”, as in “ashley (actually), it's pacu's ash!”. This ability to provide a locally-relevant pun shows his high-level command of English and his symbolic competence. Thiran, especially, is a student who pays close attention to the classroom talk to look for opportunities “for formal linguistic recoding” so he can engage in “parallelism (repetition with contrast)” and provide “alternative or additional foci for the class” (Rampton, 2006, p. 58). From this point in the discussion, a faster pace of interaction and injection of humour ensues with all class members directing explanations at Raja.

In Lines 19 and 20 Jeya tries to clarify what holy ash is to Raja but has to self-repair a few times because of the overlapping speech. Chitran who is seated next to Raja, turns to him and in a loud voice says that *it's not pacu's ash* in Line 21. Attempting to hold Raja's attention, while Meena and Thiran are also talking, Chitran pauses and spins his right index finger around to indicate that he is trying to think of the apt word. He delivers his punch line in Line 25, *it's pacu's ass*. Here we see Chitran's symbolic competence when he turns *pacu's ash* into *pacu's ass*, stressing the word *ass* and using a baritone voice to heighten the force of the word .

While attributing the holy ash to the cow's rear as opposed to its body is a more accurate description on Chitran's part, his intention here is for pun and naughty humour. As Rampton (2006, p. 58) observed in his class at Central High, we see that Chitran has treated *pacu's ash* as a “performance”— this concept incorporates the spontaneity of his pun, and

that he puts “the act of speaking on display” through his pronunciation of the word *ass* /æs/ (a more American-sounding pronunciation as opposed to Australian /as/). As part of performance he seeks to evoke a reaction from his fellow students. Like Thiran, his joke entails “parallelism”. But while Rampton (2006, p. 58) talks about such utterances being “often incongruous to the immediate context”, Chitran’s pun is “on-topic” and accurate (the *ass* referring to cow dung). This original and innovative moment by Chitran is likely to be adopted and repeated by his fellow students in the future, and is likely to assist Raja to never forget what holy ash is made of. A spontaneous action like this is what Li Wei (2011a, p. 1224) labels as a critical moment because it will create a pattern of linguistic feature use that will be repeated by others.

The use of *ass* in the temple space would not be considered appropriate behaviour, but Chitran is confident that he can deliver this line without the teacher noticing. There is enough classroom noise to assist this, but the other students do pick it up and it elicits much laughter from Jeya. Previously in the class, there was evidence of Mrs Chandran mispronouncing the English word *ash* as /æs/. Since she is a native speaker of Tamil and acquired English later in life, she struggles with the pronunciation of /ʃ/ since it is not a Tamil phoneme. It could be that Chitran has noted this imbalance in the teacher’s proficiency and has assumed that she would not be familiar with the taboo aspect of the English word *ass*. Thus the joke about pacu’s ass becomes an “inside” joke for the students which excludes the teacher. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 124) say that jokes are “based on mutual shared background knowledge and values” and can be used to emphasise commonality amongst members. Thus, the students’ jokes serve to enhance their solidarity as second-generation members and teenage peers in the class – a particular background not shared with their teacher.

We see further interjections from the class members in the rest of the transcript. Mrs Chandran provides the Tamil translation in Line 26 and Jeya repeats Chitran's joke, an "echoing" as Rampton (2006, p. 60) puts it, in Line 29. Thiran engages in some "stylised performance" in Lines 28, 30 and 31 when he delivers his definition of holy ash with a pitch level, voice quality and speed of delivery that is different to his usual – the combination of these elements suggests he is mimicking and mocking a science expert (cf. Rampton, 2006, p. 262). In Line 32, Mrs Chandran shifts to English to address Raja and confirms that it is not human ash. This prompts Chitran to challenge her in Lines 33 and 34, with the claim that some people do use cremated body ash, and this generates more laughter and exaggerated reactions from Meena and Thiran in Lines 35 to 37.

While this extract is humorous and subversive, we also see the influence of religion on language use in this particular context. We see the students all use the Tamil *pacu* as opposed to the English equivalent – not once is *cow* used. The use of the Tamil term indexes the religious significance of the cow in Hinduism, even when the students are joking and referring to the "cow's ass", which could be interpreted as disrespectful. In this fast-paced and humorous interaction, we see the students adopt many English features from their repertoires except for the religious terms *pacu* and *thirunuuRu* (holy ash).

7.2.4 Bad is malam

In this class Mrs Chandran is asking Thiran and Raja questions from a past paper in preparation for the annual religious exam.

Data extract 7-9 Bad is malam

13Sep15 Timecode: 00:29:22.157 - 00:30:04.174
Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran

1 Mrs Chandran: **+iruLai viTa koTiya malam ethu↓+**
what is the malignant human characteristic which is worse than darkness

2 Raja: (0.5) °maayai°=
illusion

3 Mrs Chandran: **=aaNavam, kan2mam, maayai=**
ego, good and bad actions of souls, illusion

4 Thiran: °maayai°
illusion

5 Mrs Chandran: **=nalvin2ai.**
doing good things

6 Thiran: (2.0) °maayai°
illusion

7 Mrs Chandran: (5.0) **maa↑yai:**
illusion

8 Raja: [°yeah°]

9 Thiran: [heh heh heh]

10 Mrs Chandran: **nalvin2ai aaNavam.**
doing good things

11 **aaNavam kan2mam maayai nalvin2ai=**
ego, good and bad actions of souls, illusion

12 Thiran: =what's **iruLai iruL** means
what's iruLai, iruL means

13 Mrs Chandran: **iruL** is dark

14 Thiran: +oh+ r↓ight

15 Mrs Chandran: **iruL** is +dark+

16 Thiran: what's **koTiya maathiri.**
what's koTiya like

17 Mrs Chandran: **koTiya-**
koTiya

18 **malam muun2Ru.**
three human characteristics

19 **aaNavam kan2mam maayai**
ego, good and bad actions of souls, illusion

20 Raja: oh y[eah]

21 Thiran: [yeah]

22 Mrs Chandran: **aaNav[am kan2mam maayai.]**
ego, good and bad actions of souls, illusion

23 Thiran: [what's **koTiya** though.]
what's koTiya though

24 Mrs Chandran: **koTiya** is um (0.5)°en2n2a word¿°
koTiya is um what word

25 very bad¿

26 >very bad.
 27 [**koTiya**.]
 28 Thiran: [bad is] (.) **malam**.
 bad is poo
 29 Raja: [heh heh]
 30 Thiran: [oka(h)y? heh]
 31 Mrs heh heh
 Chandran:

In Line 1 the teacher asks one of the practice test questions in Tamil translated as “what is the malignant human characteristic which is worse than darkness?”. In the context of this question, the Tamil *malam* means human characteristic, something pertaining to the soul, and the word *koTiya* means malignant. Raja provides his answer in Tamil in Line 2 but Mrs Chandran doesn’t hear him and in Line 3 she lists three options in Tamil (from the multiple choice answers), which mean “ego”, “good and bad actions of souls” and “illusion”. In Line 4 Thiran gives the same answer as Raja while reading it from the teacher’s test paper, but again she doesn’t appear to hear him because she is about to refer to one more characteristic in Line 5 meaning “doing good things”, as a contrast to the others. It appears she is contemplating what the answer is because she looks down at the paper in thought. After a few seconds, Thiran once again whispers his answer, *maayai* (illusion). After a long silence, Mrs Chandran looks up from the test paper as if she has just heard Thiran and repeats his answer, to initiate repair, as if she is surprised or not convinced. In Line 8 Raja confirms he thinks it’s the answer and this overlaps with Thiran’s laughter, at the teacher’s reaction, in Line 9.

In Line 10 Mrs Chandran lists a positive characteristic and then lists the three malignant characteristics in Line 11, apparently repeating them for the students’ contemplation. In Line 11 Thiran asks the meaning of one of the words in the original question (from Line 1), *iruLai*. Note here he does not ask the meaning in Tamil but uses English features, *what’s* and *means*, perhaps trying to elicit an English equivalent. In Lines 13 Mrs Chandran provides the English translation and Thiran provides an

acknowledgement token in Line 12. In Line 16 he asks the meaning of another word from the question: *koTiya*. This time he uses both English (*what's*) and Tamil features (*maathiri* - like) to elicit meaning. In Line 17 Mrs Chandran acknowledges Thiran's category-specific question by repeating the trouble source but then she cuts-off and proceeds to list the human characteristics again as a way of indirectly answering Thiran's question. In Lines 20 and 21 Raja and Thiran indicate that they understand the names of the three human characteristics but Thiran pursues the meaning of *koTiya* again in Line 23.

In Line 24 we see Mrs Chandran adopting some low-volume self-talk, *en2n2a word* (what word?), a common way of self-repair (cf. Kitzinger, 2012), as she tries to find the appropriate English equivalent for *koTiya* (meaning malignant or deadly). In Line 25 she utters *very bad* with a tone of uncertainty but then sounds more definite in Line 26. As she repeats the Tamil equivalent in Line 27 she is looking at the two non-recorded students.⁵¹ In Line 28, Thiran looks upwards as he says surreptitiously in the direction of Raja, *bad is*, shortly pausing as if waiting for the right opportunity before stealthily uttering, *malam*. On this occasion he is referring to a common translation of *malam* which is "poo" or "excrement" rather than its alternative meaning, "human characteristic", which was used by the teacher in Line 1. Raja immediately comprehends Thiran's joke and laughs. In Line 30, happy that Raja has achieved uptake, Thiran follows with a continued reference to his joke. Mrs Chandran also laughs in Line 31 but it is not clear whether she has heard the joke or if she is just laughing along with the students as she did in "eighteenth century" in Section 7.2.1. Even if she has heard the joke, she does not directly look at Thiran or Raja in acknowledgement.

⁵¹ The students from the lower grade who elected to sit at another table to be out of the camera's range.

We see Thiran's strong multicompetence at work here – he has immediately been able to take the teacher's translation of *koTiya is very bad* and turn it into a word play. To those not attuned to the boys' humour, it would appear that he is simply associating the meaning of *koTiya* (bad) to the concept of *malam* (characteristic), thereby being a good Saiva student. But, in fact, he associates *bad* with *malam* (poo) showing his ability to play with translation and Tamil homophones.

In his article about discursive identities of three young Chinese men in Britain, Li Wei (2011a, p. 1226) provides examples of his participants' ability (and keenness) to play with linguistic resources which is afforded by a high level of multilingual ability. He concludes that this kind of playing with words is not only another manifestation of the young people's multicompetence but a sign of being comfortable with a “multilingual” identity. In these last two extracts I have shown ways in which the Saiva students enjoy playing with English and Tamil features as a way, like Li Wei and Wu's (2009) informants, of being naughty or subverting the image of being well-behaved, best-case-scenario students of religion. The plays allow them to refer to taboo words or expressions that would usually be disapproved of by first-generation members of the ethnoreligious community.

The students have found a way to surreptitiously inject naughty jokes into the teacher-led whole-class discussion and, it appears, these go unnoticed by the teacher. This is, in part, due to the students' acute awareness of the discrepancy in their teacher's English language ability and allows them to gain control of the classroom in the sense that their humour overtakes the main class discussion and attracts the attention of fellow students. While, unlike Li Wei and Wu's (2009, p. 207) Chinese students, the Year 9 Saiva students do not overtly engage in behaviour to “turn the table on their teachers”, their actions do work to reduce the power imbalance between the teacher and student roles.

7.3 Conclusions

The nine extracts in this chapter have shown many aspects that interplay in the translanguaging classroom. I will attempt to summarise the key distinctive features of translanguaging in the Saiva classroom.

In interrogating the effectiveness of translanguaging we saw that the use of English and Tamil linguistic features in combination helped interlocutors to achieve mutual comprehension. This was especially true in cases where students and teacher had to inform each other of new lexical items, like *granite*, and their meaning, and this was done efficiently in terms of the time taken to understand each other. In the case of the teacher describing the meaning of “fits” (*vali*) in Tamil, the students did not accomplish the target meaning, however this did not critically obstruct the overall message or affect discussion momentum. On the other hand, when it came to more complex, exploratory talk, such as the nuanced relationship between concepts like adultery, prostitution, greed and lust, interlocutors found difficulty in conveying precise and accurate meaning and some issues were left unresolved. In addition achieving resolution still took considerable time. However one could argue that this was done more effectively through translanguaging as opposed to the monolingual Tamil medium the class is supposed to be. We also saw times when the teacher was willing to move to a monolingual English medium to assist comprehension but this was not always accurate.

We could argue that translanguaging is effective in engaging the attention of the students – trying to achieve mutual comprehension is sometimes treated like solving a puzzle, and we see the way cooperation and repair are executed very well in this context. We also see how the teacher allows space for the students to adopt the role of teacher to other students or indeed, herself, at times.

The imbalance in language proficiencies plays out in this classroom. As mentioned above, there were some Tamil concepts that the teacher was unsuccessful in accurately conveying to the students due to her lower English competency. While we saw how students were keen to assist the teacher with her gaps in English vocabulary and her limited exposure to the Anglo-dominant society that they are more accustomed to, we also saw occasions where they took advantage of her limited English to make naughty jokes, comments or word plays that they knew would go unnoticed by the teacher. In this way they manipulated the language imbalance to subvert the rules of the classroom and to take control of the class discussion, usually to index their multilingual and teenager identities.

We saw many examples of the students' multicompetence and there can be no doubt that they have exhibited a high level of linguistic knowledge and symbolic competence. This is especially demonstrated in the creative ways in which they adopt both English and Tamil features to convey a "full message", to repair trouble, to make clever word plays and to correct the teacher. Such findings help to counter societal rhetoric where multilingual speakers' alternative use of language is seen as deficient, "resulting from 'interference' from the other languages in their repertoire, and conditioned by their first language or culture not to accommodate a second language effectively" (Canagarajah, 2011, pp. 2–3).

Lastly we see the influence of the religious and cultural context of this classroom. Firstly, religion is present in the topics of discussion, such as the teacher's confusion between coma and karma, Chitran's confusion about the "canian", and Raja's confusion about the holy ash. All of these troubles were repaired with a mix of humour, negotiation and a collaborative attempt at achieving comprehension. However there were also times when the students had to downplay their disagreement with the teacher. On such occasions, along with instances of subtly correcting

the teacher, the students engaged in politeness and face-threat minimisation as part of adhering to the Tamil cultural influence of showing respect to their elders. In the next chapter we will explore some less covert ways in which they question and challenge aspects of their religion and culture.

8 Chapter 8 - Talking Saivism

As is evident from the previous chapters, the students participate keenly in the Saiva classroom and exhibit an interest in understanding the teachings of Saivism. In the final two results chapters, we explore the ways in which the students and teacher co-construct discourse about their religion and ethnoreligious culture. Chapters Eight and Nine are loosely demarcated around two key themes: Chapter Eight looks at the students' attempts to relay their own experiences of the religion, and, how they interpret their religion and culture and try to apply the teachings to the context of their lives in Australia. Chapter Nine looks at ways in which students challenge certain aspects of the religion and culture, and, how they position themselves and index their identifications through the discourse. It will become evident that the discourse explored in these chapters is relevant to the themes of both Chapters Eight and Nine, but discussion will focus on one theme in each chapter for the sake of efficiency.

The themes mentioned above will be explored through a micro-analysis of selected linguistic extracts. I will attempt to answer the question of whether the strategic use of Tamil and English features can help the students to interpret, challenge and position themselves in their religion and culture more accurately and effectively. Extracts from interviews with first and second-generation members, and some field notes will supplement discussion. I note that the majority of second-generation interview extracts feature the female students. This is for no other reason than the girls were the ones who raised and elaborated on certain topics in their interviews whereas the boys did not talk at length about the same issues.

As shown in Chapter Five, the Saiva classroom is a unique environment. While the teacher is an older first-generation member who relies on traditional teaching methods learnt in Singapore decades prior, she also

brings a flexible approach to both language use and lesson structure, given the absence of a syllabus. Mrs Chandran's long-term relationship with the students, her familiarity with their families, and her membership of the temple and local Tamil Saivite community means she has an understanding of their solid foundation in the religion and consequently allows for student-led discussion. In this culturally familiar environment and safe space, the students feel comfortable to raise questions and even challenge, mock or criticise religious and cultural practices. The safe space is akin to Li Wei's (2011a) "translanguaging space", and is a space whether speakers can "practise their multiple language and learner identities" as well as create new ways of communicating, interpreting and performing their religion and identity (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Li Wei & Wu, 2009, p. 196). Therefore the Year 9 Saiva class is a safe space on two levels – in terms of flexible language practices and in terms of interpreting, questioning and challenging the religion (and the identity work that goes along with this). Just as the safe space both enables translanguaging and is, at the same time, a result of translanguaging (cf. Li Wei & Wu, 2009), the safe space enables questioning and criticality of the religion and also results from these behaviours.

In Chapter Seven, we examined one of two important features of the translanguaging space as highlighted by Li Wei (2011a, 2011b): creativity. In the next two chapters our focus turns to criticality. Li Wei (2011a, p. 1223) defines criticality as:

the ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations.

In this chapter, the students' capacity for criticality will be shown in the context of interpreting and questioning the practices of Saivism; and strategically drawing on their full linguistic repertoire to do so. While one could argue that criticality is also evident in monolingual discourse, what is shown in the examples from the Saiva class, is that applying features

from different languages enables an ability to be critical at the level of code choice and placement. Thus, the process of creativity with language entails criticality.

Keeping with the idea of creativity and criticality, Gregory, Lytra, Choudhury, Ilankuberan, Kwapong and Woodham (2014) apply a different lens, one they call “syncretic acts”, to encapsulate the agency that children perform in making sense of their worlds. The authors argue that children, such as the students of the Year 9 Saiva class, are in a position to perform syncretic acts due to their exposure to and experience of different languages, narratives, rituals and activities resulting from the membership of their migrant faith community and from their lives outside of that community. The enrichment that comes from such “contrasting yet complementary experiences” enables them to think creatively, outside existing boundaries, and to construct their own meanings from faith teachings as a result (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 323).

Syncretism is usually used to describe religious contexts where there is an “incorporation of beliefs and practices from unrelated traditions”, however Gregory et al. (2014, p. 324) use the term more broadly. The authors make the point that the definition has parallels with translanguaging in that both terms encompass the use of various resources from an individual’s repertoire, be it religion or language. They ask the question, “how can children simultaneously align themselves with traditional rituals in faith settings while syncretizing this knowledge with mainstream practices in their everyday lives?” (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 345). In the next two chapters evidence of criticality and syncretic acts on the part of the Year 9 students will be provided.

8.1 The search for meaning and relevance

The extracts in this chapter contain some recurring themes: how the second generation teens react to aspects of their religion and Tamil

culture, their need to question and understand, and the small signs of how the religion and culture is adapting to the Australian context.

As part of enacting their criticality, the students question why certain practices are performed instead of meekly following the obedient “parrot” learning they may have experienced as young children. As Gregory et al. (2015) observe in younger Tamil Saivite children in London, faith literacy is gained through playing “made-up” games based on what they see in temples. Religious education takes place in the home and through classes and experiences in the London temple so the children learn the appropriate “embodied and emotional stances” by following competent members of their faith community (Lytra et al., 2016b, p. 154). However the teenagers in Australia have reached an age where they want to build on this foundational childhood learning and explore meaning and complexity; attempting to distinguish between what is on the surface of the religion and what is deeper and more spiritual. With this goal in mind, they do look at their religion from the outside at times and this enables them to act critically and raise questions that challenge religious and cultural thinking. The following interview excerpt illustrates this point.

Interview extract 8-1

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena

Timecode: 34:29

Meena: yeah even with this thing, like um I'm not sure if you know, but like (you know the) called arookaraa ((an hallelujah/God almighty/salutation to God))like they do this ((puts hand in prayer and raises over her head)) above their heads

Niru: yes

Jeya: see that's not really, that's actually that's actually not a- a thing you're supposed to do. it's well, it's just something that people do. it's apparently it's like awakening the god

Meena: I used to do it when I was a kid but I don't it anymore exactly

(irrelevant lines omitted)

Meena: 'cause last year in July I went for Thiruvizha ((temple festival)) in Sri Lanka and that was like twenty days last, day and night. after that it really put me off Hinduism for a while because it was so overdone. like in the morning you have to dress up early in the morning like at five, you stay there till twelve and then at three o'clock you back there till nine again

(irrelevant lines omitted)

Meena: and it was having, it's- oh my god it- I was just too fed up by the end of it because at the end of it no-one was actually praying, everyone was doing this arookaraa and that's when I stopped being very- they just do all this Hindu actions things because it was a Hindu action, there's no purpose

Jeya: it's not even a Hindu action. it's actually it's actually, there is a purpose but no one really knows why. everyone just does it for attention. sometimes they do it for the attention. it's really like o:h

In this extract Jeya and Meena give an example of an action that evokes “reverence and spirituality in believers” even if the meaning of it has been forgotten (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000a, p. 429). Through personal experience, Meena and Jeya have come to see the *arookaraa* (a salutation to God involving raising palms over head in prayer position) as overdone or merely performed for show. In London, however, Tamil Saivite children were observed to imitate the prostrations and arookaraa, that they saw the adults enacting in the temple (Lytra et al., 2016b). Through such actions they learnt the sanctity of worship but, as Meena’s comments indicate, this may not continue as they grow older and begin to question why such actions are done. Lytra et al. (2016b) stated that prayer can be highly individualised so perhaps there is no particular reason behind when and why people choose to do such actions. However Meena and Jeya are sceptical and, for them, there is danger of disengagement from such practices which may lead to some disconnection from the spiritual side of the religion (cf. Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000a, p. 429). The risk is articulated by Jeya in this interview quote:

Interview extract 8-2

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:17:17.825

Jeya: the thing is that no one questions anything we just do it and then we lose our culture by doing that

When I interviewed Mrs Chandran about her class she spoke of their “broad knowledge” (see Interview extract 5-1) – the fact that they have been exposed to so much more in their childhood compared to the first generation. Thus, the need to question and understand is part of their self-development and self-identification processes in their transnational and transcultural existences. Alongside this they are searching for relevance. This is demonstrated in this quote from Meena:

Interview extract 8-3

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:38:12.655

Meena: there's so much resources in Hinduism and stuff, why not teach us things that relate to us only, instead of y'know, just teach us about what happened where, who was there. who cares about these things?

In another example, we see the barrier created by the young not entirely comprehending the meaning of the hymns that form an integral part of Saiva worship. Meena and Jeya are talking about performing *panjcha puraanam*, the custom of performing five songs from the *Thirumurai* holy book in Tamil.

Interview extract 8-4

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:09:29.818

Meena: the five songs right, half the time none of us know what is going on with the songs

Jeya: yeah I think that's-

Niru: even though it's Tamil

Jeya: yeah because the way- it's like ancient Tamil and-

Meena: because there's so much ancient Tamil in Tamil

the simple ‘that’s how my parents did it’”. Mrs Chandran sees the Saiva class as a way to address this gap.

It is understandable that children in any culture do not grow up with meta-competence in all their religious and cultural practices. However Meena makes another salient point about why the issue may be heightened for her community in the following excerpt:

Interview extract 8-6

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:17:39.896

Meena: yeah that's true because my mum's a second generation, like she wasn't born in Sri Lanka or anything, like she was born in Singapore and there itself already ... like the type of culture's slight- slightly lost already there. and my grandmother's come from like you know Sri Lanka. she didn't study all the way till like year twelve or whatever. like they had to stop by the end of primary school because they had to look after the family and stuff you know, like lots of troubles during the war period of time etcetera and so like, because of their lack of knowledge as well about these types of things they only know what to do, they don't know why they do it. and it's just passed from generation to generation, no-one's really taught properly.

In this excerpt Meena refers to the socio-political conditions in Sri Lanka and the effect this had on intergenerational transmission of religion and culture. For her grandmother, education was disrupted due to economic pressures and the civil war. Meena’s mother was born and raised in Singapore, and while strong in her Tamil Hindu identity and knowledge, missed the opportunity for some of the informal and formal religious education she would have been exposed to had she grown up in northern Sri Lanka. This “knowledge gap” due to migration was a familiar story relayed to me by several 1.5-generation members I talked to during the study.

The five linguistic extracts selected for this chapter have been divided into two sections; one on relaying personal experience of the religion and one on interpreting the religion. In the previous chapter, a more fine-grained

Conversation Analysis of the data was applied to highlight translanguaging phenomena in the classroom. In this chapter, additional examples of the same phenomena are evident but will not always be discussed in the same detail. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the discourse around the religion and to show how the syncretic acts of the students are reflected and enabled through their translanguaging practices. We see evidence that the students are thoughtfully engaged in Saivism but not blindly following it in the image of good and well-behaved, devout Tamil Saivite children. In fact, we see cases where, as insiders, they can laugh at or mock aspects of the religion but still show a level of respect for it. In the words of Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 111) “there is ridicule but there is also engagement”.

8.2 Students relaying their personal experience

In this section we look at two extracts (from the same class) where students are recounting their experience of different Saiva funeral rites, thus their use of Tamil is very much for the purpose of “talking” Saivism.

8.2.1 Saiva funeral

In this extract Mrs Chandran introduces the topic of Saiva funeral rites and rituals.

Data extract 8-1 Saiva funeral

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:08:19.041 - 00:08:50.421
 Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.

1 Mrs **yaaraavathu niingkaL**
 Chandran: *have any of you seen*

2 (2.0) **ceththaviiTu**
 a funeral

3 (1.0) **antharaTTi**
 the eighth day

4 (1.0) **thuvacam**
 one year death anniversary

5 **ithukaL ellaam paaththirukkiRiingkaLaa.**
 all of this have you seen?

6 **en2n2a paaththu.**
 what did you see?

7 Chitran: **aa ceththaviiTu** it's like

yes funeral it's like
 8 (0.5) they put it in a box?
 9 and then they do **puucaĩ**, they put like
 and then they do puja they put like
 10 (0.5) **manjchaL** on your ey:es
 turmeric on your eyes
 11 and then **civapparici**, and then they
 and then red rice and then they
 12 (0.3) get like the **peerppiLLaikaL**?
 get like the grandchildren
 13 to hold er
 14 (0.7) like fire thing
 15 Mrs **oo pantham pantham en2Tu colluRathu**
 Chandran: yes fire stick fire stick that's what it's called
 16 **ippa naangkaL pantham ellaam ingka ceyyeelaathathaala;**
 now because we can't use fire sticks and all here
 17 **mezhukuthiriya-**
 candles-
 18 Meena: <do they put the **manjchaL** on the dead person's eyes or=
 do they put the turmeric on the dead person's eyes or
 19 Chitran: =on the dead person.

Mrs Chandran asks the students to recall what they have seen of a Saiva funeral, known as *ceththaviiTu*. She also refers to two of the main rites; *antharaTTi* (the eighth day) and *thuvacam* (one year death anniversary) in Lines 3 and 4. Chitran gives his answer in Lines 7 to 14 with a predominantly English turn that contains some specific Tamil nouns. He uses *ceththaviiTu* for Saiva funeral in Line 7 and *puucaĩ* for puja in Line 9. Both these words are religious concepts and are appropriately expressed in Tamil since these specific Tamil Saiva concepts cannot be conveyed in English. Note that when he says *they put it in a box*, in Line 8, Chitran is referring to the dead body. We can assume that *they* are the people conducting the funeral but Chitran does not state this specifically.

Chitran continues to provide snippets of what he has seen, referring to putting *manjchaL* (turmeric) on *your eyes* in Line 10 and *civapparici* (red rice) in Line 11. In contrast to using *they* in the previous clause, Chitran uses *your* but it is not clear who it is referring to. Furthermore, he is not explicit about what is done with the rice (it is, in fact, placed in the deceased's mouth). Chitran uses Tamil to express these two concepts

because they are foods that are embedded in Tamil culture, and he would be well-practised in using them. However his explanation of what is done with both items is slightly vague. This could point to the fact that while he has experienced these events, his understanding of what occurred may be limited, meaning that he can't convey the detail of the ritual accurately. Like Meena and Jeya's comments in Section 8.1, Chitran's discourse highlights the need for religious education to explain the meaning of rituals and practices to the next generation.

The final Tamil noun used by Chitran in Line 12 is *peerpiLLaikaL* for grandchildren – as we will see in upcoming extracts kinship terms are almost always, and more aptly, expressed in Tamil for the second-generation. In reference to the grandchildren he states that *they* get them to hold a *fire thing*. He prefaces *fire thing* with hedging words *er* and *like* which indicate that he is searching for an appropriate Tamil word for this instrument but cannot find it. Chitran may not be able to recall it because the implement is not used in the Australian context (due to regulations around cremation). In Line 15 Mrs Chandran is able to provide the relevant word, *pantham*, to repair *fire thing*.

In Line 18, Meena directs a question to Chitran, predominantly in English, to initiate repair from his clause about the turmeric in Line 10. The trouble source is who the referent is in *your eyes*. Chitran provides a type-conforming response in English, *on the dead person*, to indicate that Meena's assumption is accurate.

This extract shows us that, as part of relating to the religion and culture, the students attempt to use the Tamil language, even when their understanding of the purpose of rituals or specific meanings is not complete. We see this in how Chitran tries to use a Tamil noun for *fire thing* before reverting to English. When Meena asks a question of Chitran, she adopts the same Tamil noun, *manjchaL* for turmeric. Thus, while English is very much part of the discussion about religion, accurate

4 Mrs =**karaikkiRathu**. even
Chandran: *they dissolved. even*

5 Sri Lanka **ingkee ellaam**.
in Sri Lanka and here, and all,

6 **antha** ash **kuTukkiRaangka illee**.
they give that ash isn't it?

7 **atha vaangki vacciTTu?**
they take it and keep it and

8 **kaacikku ploooy**
go to Varanasi

9 **ankee uLLa kangkeela karaippaangka.=**
and dissolve it in the Ganges there

10 Jeya: =**no** but **ippa vaikkaama viTamaaTTaangkaLaam**.
no but now they won't let us keep ((the ashes))

11 Mrs **aa aa**
Chandran: *yes yes*

12 Jeya: [they won't let you keep it in the house]

13 Mrs [+illa+ **athukekaNTu oru** section] **ethoo**
Chandran: *no for that they have reserved a particular section ((in the crematorium)) it seems**

14 **vachchirukkiRaangkaL.**

15 Jeya: =really?

16 because when **ammammaa** passed away,
because when grandma passed away

17 we want to give it(.)

18 (0.1) like a bit of the ashes to my

19 **ammaa's aNNaa** in India?
mum's older brother in India

20 to go **karaikkiRathu** in the **koovil** or something
to go dissolve in the temple or something

21 .hh and then the immigration didn't let us

22 Mrs [**aa**]
Chandran: *yes*

23 Jeya: [°we were] like like°

24 (0.3)it's foreign material or something like that=

25 Thiran: =the ghost [is going infect the pla:ne] heh

26 Mrs [**naan2 oru** talk**la keeTTan2aan?**]
Chandran: *I heard about it in a talk*

27 Jeya: heh heh [heh]

28 Mrs [**cari**]
Chandran:

29 Meena: [fthey] confiscated the ashes:f

30 Mrs [**cari +kavan2ingkoo+**]
Chandran: *okay listen*

31 Jeya: [we did get it back]

32 Chitran: °ghost infect the plane°

33 Mrs ah [**can2angkaLellaam**]

Chandran: *ah all people*

34 Thiran: [(h)oh (h)oh(h) heh]

35 Jeya: [heh heh heh]

36 Mrs listen carefully=
Chandran:

37 Jeya: ='cause after like a week we were j(h)ust(h)
38 how 'bout grandma's ashes
39 they're just (we got to) [**karaikkiRathu**] again=
they're just (we got to) dissolve again

40 Mrs [**cari**]
Chandran: *okay*

41 [**in2Taikku can2angkaLellaam**] so crazy
today all people are so crazy

42 Thiran: [why didn't you parcel it]

43 Jeya: +huh?+

44 Thiran: [why didn't you just] +parcel+ it

45 Mrs [**kangkeela**] **kuLik**[**kooNum.**]
Chandran: *should have a bath in the Ganges*

46 Jeya: [the parcel came back]

47 Mrs r↑ight?
Chandran:

48 Thiran: ah

In Lines 1 and 2 Mrs Chandran is explaining how ashes were dissolved in the Ganges River in India. In Lines 4 to 9 she states that even people in the diaspora keep the ashes until they can make a trip to Varanasi in India to perform the ceremony. In Line 10 Jeya interjects with an opposing point, that *they* won't let you keep the cremated ashes in your house. She is referring to the belief that the ashes should be scattered as soon as possible to assist a prompt transition to the afterlife. Some believe that keeping the ashes in the home can bring negativity. Note how the doubling principle is at work here, with Jeya first stating the point in Tamil in Line 10 and then providing the English iteration in Line 11. She is addressing the teacher in this instance, so perhaps she has translated into English because she is unsure if she has conveyed the point accurately in Tamil or perhaps the English translation is for the benefit of her peers. In Lines 13 to 14 Mrs Chandran gives her response to Jeya's point, that there is a section in the crematorium where the ashes can be stored.

Jeya relays a personal experience concerning her grandmother's ashes in Lines 15 to 21. We see a predominantly English turn but with the kinship (grandma, mum, older brother) and religious terms (dissolve, temple) expressed in Tamil. Jeya tells of how *the immigration* did not allow her family to take the ashes to her uncle in India, because they were considered to be *foreign material or something* (Line 24).⁵² Thiran reacts to Jeya's story with a joke in Line 25, directed at the two boys sitting next to him, and delivered with an eerie tone, *the ghost is going infect the plane*.

While the students are still engaged with Jeya's story, Mrs Chandran tries to change the footing in Line 26. In Line 27 Jeya is laughing in reaction to Thiran's joke. In Line 29 Meena directs a clarification question to Jeya seeking confirmation or disconfirmation that the ashes were indeed confiscated. The falling intonation at the end of her statement suggests that she expects the answer will be affirmative (cf. Couper-Kuhlen, 2012, as cited in Hayano, 2012) but she has posed the question as a way of signalling her disbelief. In Lines 28 and 30 we see two attempts, in Tamil, from the teacher to control the class however the students do not seem to hear her. In Line 31 Jeya responds to Meena's question to infer that the ashes were not permanently confiscated but returned to her family.

In Line 32 Chitran repeats the joke, an echoing, made by Thiran. Lines 34 and 35 see Thiran and Jeya still laughing at the joke – the humour arising from the thought that the ashes would carry a ghost onto the plane. They could also be mocking the authority that stopped the ashes from going overseas but it is not conclusive. Mrs Chandran patiently attempts again in Line 36 to get the students' attention, this time using English possibly as a "last resort" method for taking the floor. However Jeya has more story

⁵² Jeya calls the authority the immigration department in Line 21 so the implication is that she was travelling through a port. However later in her story it appears that her family were trying to send the ashes in the post and thus, she has confused "the immigration" with "quarantine" or "customs".

to tell in Lines 37 to 39. Her use of English and casual tone show that she is mainly relaying her story to the other students but she still uses the Tamil *karaikkiRathu* (to dissolve) as the apt verb to describe the ritual of dissolving the ashes in liquid. As she tells the story she laughs at the irony that the ashes came back and so they had to go and dissolve them one more time at the temple. The picture she presents is the nonsensical way in which her grandmother's body (in essence) was sent around the world and then came home once more waiting to be dealt with.

In Line 42 Thiran asks Jeya a content question *why didn't you parcel it?*. Here we see Thiran's use of a Sri Lankan English term with *parcel* being a verb to signify sending by mail. This use of *parcel* indexes Thiran's exposure to such lexical items due to his childhood in Sri Lanka. From Thiran's question we can conclude that he has misunderstood one detail, that the ashes were sent by post and not taken on the plane by Jeya herself. His misunderstanding could be a result of Jeya's misuse of "immigration" when she introduced the story in Line 21. Jeya initiates repair in Line 43 with the open-class initiator *huh?*. It is likely that the trouble source is not that she couldn't hear Thiran but that she is confused by his question (due to his misunderstanding) or that she is unfamiliar with *parcel* being used as a verb. Thiran repeats his question in Line 44, this time inserting the word *just* and increasing the volume for *parcel* to assist Jeya's comprehension. In Line 47 Jeya provides her answer to Thiran, *the parcel came back*, to confirm the details of the story and thus realises that Thiran did not initially understand that she was talking about a parcel sent by post. In Line 48 Thiran indicates that he now understands that aspect of the story with *ah*, a change of state token.

Jeya's narration has similarities with a story that was relayed by students in a Panjabi complementary school in Birmingham. Creese and Blackledge (2015, p. 32) called it a "mini-narrative that partly usurps ... serious cultural-religious practice". Only an insider would fully understand the humour and irony associated with it. Firstly, one would need to know the

Tamil concepts which are key to the story such as *karaikkiRathu* (dissolve) and *koovil* (temple) as well as the kinship terms. Secondly, one would have to understand certain practices like the need to go to the Ganges River and the need to take or send the ashes, as well as the need to deal with the returned ashes. What turned out to be quite a serious problem, that Jeya's mother could not send her mother's ashes to her own brother in India, was turned into a mockery by the students. Thiran's joke about the "ghost" infecting the plane shows evidence of the syncretic acts that Gregory et al. (2014) refer to, where he has drawn from outside the boundaries of the religion to incite humour. He makes this joke in English and therefore creates symbolic distance from the serious tone of the Saiva ritual, and perhaps also, manages to get away with it without the teacher noticing. If he was an outsider to the group, such a joke could have been seen as poor taste, however it creates delight for the teenagers and gives Jeya a chance to laugh at her family's diasporic predicament.

This idea of in-group membership is salient here. The students need to know Tamil to engage in the school let alone this discussion. But in doing so, they have access to this endless opportunity for syncretic acts due to their broad exposure to the ethnoreligious community as well as ones outside. Thus, in these small class groups, they can take advantage of the shared understanding of both the inner Tamil Saivite community and the outer mainstream community, mainly afforded by their mainstream school lives. Here, Thiran and Jeya provide some reasons for wanting to know Tamil:

Interview extract 8-8

19Sep15 Chitran, Raja and Thiran Timecode: 00:02:58.526

Thiran: when you like know your mother tongue it um makes you
 like part of the community and gives you sense of
 identity with other, other Tamils

Interview extract 8-9

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena

Timecode: 00:05:03.208

Jeya: it's expected of you like

Both of these quotes refer to the fact that Tamil language competency is a key marker for belonging to the ethnoreligious community. In an individual interview with Meena I mentioned the significance of receptive competency in group membership, that perhaps, as Canagarajah (2012b) found, being able to understand Tamil was enough even if one could not speak it. But Meena strongly disagreed with me and said that if you couldn't speak it as well you would be judged as being too Westernised. This demonstrates the way in which one's sense of belonging to a certain identity or group is dependent on other members' judgments about one's level of authenticity which is based on the acquisition or performance of certain "emblematic features" (Creese & Blackledge, 2015, p. 23).

Both the extracts featured in this section show some of the challenges to practicing the Hindu religion in countries outside of their origin – regulations on using "fire sticks" in cremation and on sending ashes to relatives in the mail are now real issues for transnational Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and will impose pressure for practices such as these to change in the diaspora setting. In such cases, we see how translanguaging practices are reflecting a "new languaging reality ... a new way of being in a different social, cultural or political context" and are effective in giving "voice to new social realities" (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 204).

8.3 Interpreting the religion

Interview extract 8-10

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena

Timecode: 00:36:12.895

Jeya and in the end Hinduism is just science and philosophy put together really, it's just it's just a way of life and stuff like that

This quote from Jeya gives us an idea of the kinds of meaning students are searching for in their religion. In this section we look at examples of the students attempting to interpret the religion and find how it fits into their syncretised existences. Whereas their parents may have not been accustomed to questioning during their religious education, the Saiva students look for scientific and philosophical bases for what they are told. Hemming and Madge (2012), in their discussion of the agency of children and young people in religion, state that youth draw from their knowledge of other religions in addition to their own, as well as science, their own experiences, and even own imaginations to create personal frameworks of meaning. Further evidence of the importance of science in understanding the religion is evidenced in these interview extracts from Chitran and Meena:

Interview extract 8-11

19Sep15 Chitran, Raja and Thiran Timecode: 00:12:56.600

Niru: I hear in class you often ask a lot of questions about science don't you

Chitran: yeah

Niru: you're interested in science and-

Chitran: what religion is related to science, in what context

Interview extract 8-12

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:40:43.991

Meena: they found out about the navakirahas ((nine planets)) which are the planets. they found out the nine planets and we were all praying to them long before Galileo or whatever his face came along

From Chitran's words it appears that his keen interest in science may even be a motivation for learning about the religion, and, in Meena's statement, we see some pride in her words that Hindus knew about the planets before Western science conceived of them.

In this section, we look at how the students try to interpret religious teachings and also how they react to some of the information provided by the teacher about the religion.

8.3.1 Three generations

In previous chapters and extracts I have shown occasions in the classes where English has played a role, especially for the students, in ensuring clear comprehension of the teachings. This example provides a contrastive scenario about the motivations for language alternation. In this case the interlocutors adopt a Tamil medium for most of the discussion, even though it becomes drawn out, and could potentially be shortened with the use of English. Tamil remains the preferred paradigm in which to discuss this particular Tamil Saivite principle, once again affirming the strong language-religion ideology in the classroom.

Data extract 8-3 Three generations

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:41:43.921 - 00:42:59.568
Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.

1 Mrs **kiriyakaL ellaaththileeyum:**
Chandran: *in all rituals*

2 *three* generations

3 Meena: oh yeah

4 you explained [this]

5 Mrs [+right?+]
Chandran:

6 **ippa niingkal**
now you

7 **kaTTaayam ungkaTa**
definitely your

8 (0.5) **ammaaTa peyar,**
mother's name

9 (0.3) **ammammaaTa peyar,**
mother's mother's name

10 **ammammaaTa ammaaTa peyar**
maternal grandmother's mother's name

11 Jeya: **theriyooNum;**
we should know?

12 Meena: **t[heriyooNum]**
we should know

13 Mrs [theriyooNum]
Chandran: *we should know*

14 Jeya: †oh! ok I kno(h)w

15 Mrs **ungaTa ammappaa peyar,**
 Chandran: *your mother's father's name*

16 **ammappaaTa**
mother's father's

17 **appaa peyar,**
father's name

18 **appaa peyar** three generations
father's name three generations

19 Jeya: so () **ammaan2Ta ammaan2Ta ammaan2Ta**
so () mother's mother's mother's

20 (0.3) **amman2Ta peer theriyooNum**
mother's name you should know

21 **appaaTa appaaTa appaaTa peer theriyooNum**
father's father's father's name you should know

22 Mrs **ammam-** [your **appappaa**]
 Chandran: *grandm- your grandfather*

23 Meena: [just your grandma]

24 [and your great] grandma

25 Mrs **[+iraNTu+]**
 Chandran: *both*

26 Jeya: <+ah so+

27 th- so

28 **[naaLu naaLu]**
four four

29 Mrs **[iraNTu sidesum]**
 Chandran: *and on both sides*

30 Jeya: oh okay:

31 Mrs **oo**
 Chandran: *yes*

32 **appa +aaRu aaRu+ varum**
then six six will come

33 Jeya: I only know my **ammaa's appaa**
I only know my mother's father

34 [and my mum's **ammaa peer**]
and my mum's mother name

35 Mrs **[oru naLaikku irun2thu ungkaTa]**
 Chandran: *sit one day and in one of your diary**

36 **oru diaryla**

37 important people

38 **naan2 ezhuthi vachchirukkiRan2 appaTiththaan2**
I have written it down in that way

39 Meena: wait

40 so **am-**

41 wait

42 **ammammaaTa appaavum theriyaveeNuumaa:**
do I have to know the maternal grandmother's father as well?

43 Mrs oo!
Chandran: yes

44 Meena: o(h)h heh heh

45 Jeya: wait

46 so [ammaan2Ta ammaan2Ta]
 so mother's mother-

47 Mrs [iraNTu (.)] parents
Chandran: two parents

48 Meena: so ammaan2Ta am-
 so mother's mo-

49 (0.4) en2n2uTaya ammaan2Ta,
 my mother's

50 ammaavum, appaavum,=
 mother and father

51 Mrs =oo=
Chandran: yes

52 Meena: =avarkaLin2Ta
 their

53 [ammaavum appaavum]
 mother and father

54 Mrs [ammaavum appaavum.]
Chandran: mother and father

55 Meena: oru pakkaththukk↑u
 on one side

56 aaRu p↓eer.
 six names

57 Mrs ((nods twice))
Chandran:

58 Jeya: twelve names theriyaa[thu]
 I don't know twelve names

59 Mrs [oo]
Chandran: yes

60 Jeya: en2akku aaRu thaana2 theriyum
 I only know six

61 I only know [ammaaN2Ta]
 I only know mother's

62 Mrs [ezhuthivaiy↑ungkoo] keeTTu=
Chandran: ask them and write it down

63 Jeya: =I only know (ammaaN2Ta ammaa's side
 I only know mother's mother's side

64 [appaaTa appaa's side)
 father's father's side

65 Mrs [een2en2Taal¿]
Chandran: because

66 theriyaTTi
 if the names are not known

67 aiyaroo: ((singing)) cari
 what the priest will say is

68 naama theevan2 naamellaam maRantha peyarkaL ((singing))

*namathevan ((a god's name)) the names that we have forgotten**

69 **en2Tu colli**

70 Meena: heh heh heh heh

71 Jeya: heh heh heh heh [heh ()]

72 Meena: so awkward heh heh

In Lines 1 and 2 the teacher announces that the students should know the names of their ancestors, up to three generations prior, for the purpose of honouring them in particular rituals. The practice is that the priest will ask you to name your ancestors so that he can include them when he chants a special blessing. This is a topic that has been discussed before as confirmed by Meena's response in Lines 3 and 4. Nevertheless it piques the interest of Meena and Jeya which suggests they are keen to interpret the principle correctly. The discussion ensues between the two students and the teacher while the three boys are distracted by a maths problem they are trying to solve.

In Lines 6 to 10, Mrs Chandran outlines the principle in Tamil stating the three female kinship names on one's mother's side. Jeya finishes the teacher's declarative statement in Line 11 by adding the relevant modal verb *theriyooNum* (we should know) with a pitch inflection to suggest a question (as opposed to adding the Tamil question tag *-aa* which would be common practice in Spoken Tamil). In Lines 12 and 13 Meena and Mrs Chandran confirm Jeya's assumption to be correct by repeating *theriyooNum*. Jeya then responds in Line 14 in a tone that signals her relief that she does already know these names.

In Lines 15 to 18 Mrs Chandran continues her explanation by listing the three male kinship names on the mother's side in Tamil and adding in English to clarify, *three generations*. In Lines 19 to 21 Jeya then adopts Tamil to check that she has understood the principle. However in Jeya's question, she has added a fourth generation on her mother's female side and thus needs repair. In Line 22 Mrs Chandran picks up on this error and attempts to repair it by saying *ammam-* (grandm-) before a self-

initiated cut-off to jump to another clarification about *your appappaa* (grandfather), but this is truncated by Meena in Line 23. Meena clarifies the requisite female kinship names to Jeya in English in Lines 23 and 24. In continuing her attempt at clarification from Line 22, Mrs Chandran adds *iranTu* (both), presumably to refer to the fact that both male and female sides of each parent must be known.

In Lines 26 and 27 Jeya begins another clarification question but stumbles as she tries to gather her thoughts and convey her meaning in Tamil in Line 28. This overlaps with Mrs Chandran's clarification *iranTu sidesum* (both sides) in Line 29. It appears that by saying "four four" in Line 28 Jeya could be referring to the fact that there are four sides (two for each parent) or she has misunderstood the principle since there are in fact three generations to know about or twelve names in total (apart from the names of one's immediate mother and father). Either way, Mrs Chandran's answer has provided clarification so when Jeya issues the change of state tokens, *oh okay*, in Line 30 she is indicating uptake and not pursuing her question any further. Note Mrs Chandran's use of the integrated word *sidesum* with the Tamil suffix *-um* indicating "and" or "as well". It is likely she has adopted an English morpheme here to assist in Jeya's comprehension.

As further clarification Mrs Chandran refers to the number six (six names for each side) in Line 32. Jeya's response in Line 33 is marked in her use of Tamil and English features. She refers to her mother's father in Tamil (*ammaa's appa*) but uses the English suffix *-s* instead of the Tamil suffix *-NTa* which has been used in the preceding discussion to denote possession. She then refers to her mother's mother in Line 34 by using *mum's ammaa*, thereby adopting the English equivalent, *mum* instead of *ammaa* as used previously and subsequently. The absence of a clear pattern in her use of Tamil for kinship names in this turn suggests the unpredictability and individuality of translanguaging behaviour.

As the discussion continues we see Mrs Chandran provide a suggestion about writing the names down (Lines 35 to 38) when Meena interjects with her own clarification request using Tamil for the kinship terms in Line 42. The teacher provides confirmation in Line 43 but this prompts another clarification question from Jeya in Lines 45 and 46. However Mrs Chandran interrupts to try to make the explanation clearer by referring to the fact that there are two parents. Next, Meena has another attempt in Lines 48 to 50 and 52 to 53 – we can see some stumbling and pausing in Lines 48 and 49 as she methodically tries to recite the kinship terms which are becoming quite complex and confusing in this detailed discussion. In Lines 51 and 54 Mrs Chandran gives some confirmation that Meena is on the right track.

In Lines 55 and 56 Meena forms a declarative question by stating her understanding of the crux of the principle in Tamil, ending with a falling intonation. Mrs Chandran responds with two firm nods of her head. Then Jeya immediately makes a statement to indicate that she has also understood the principle declaring that she does not know the twelve names in Line 58. Mrs Chandran encourages the students to do their research in Line 62 and to illustrate the significance of knowing the names, in Line 68, she impersonates a priest who is chanting a blessing for one's family in a ritual but instead of stating the ancestors' names has to say something similar to "the forgotten ones". The tone is similar to that of a monk chanting solemnly and in a deep voice. This evokes much laughter from the two students and prompts Meena to add *so awkward* in Line 72 indexing her "Australian teenager" identification with this situation. Such language is what Creese and Blackledge (2015, p. 32) refer to as part of a rapidly mobile register used by young people that positions them as "urban, sophisticated speakers of a repertoire that includes nonstandard terms" and indexes "cool".

What is interesting about this extract is the fact that the three interlocutors stay with Tamil to achieve understanding of this

genealogical principle. Kinship terms in Tamil are more complex than English because they specify the lineage as belonging to the mother or father (e.g. maternal grandmother as opposed to paternal grandmother), as well as the position in the family (father's younger brother as opposed to father's older brother). Furthermore, because the kinship terms in this particular discussion use the morphemes of *ammaa* (mother) and *appaa* (father) – e.g. *ammaappaa* (parent) or *ammaaNTa* (mother's) or *ammammaaTa* (grandmother's) - and can sound similar when delivered in rapid succession, there is potential for confusion and misinterpretation, especially on the part of the students due to their lower Tamil proficiency. When we look back at Jeya's usage of *ammaa's appaa* and *mum's ammaa* in Lines 33 and 34, her variation could be strategic in that she is bringing in English features to reduce the confusion caused by the similar sounding Tamil morphemes. One could argue that the principle may have been understood more easily and efficiently if the teacher or students used English to express "your parent's parents and grandparents". However the fact that Tamil has been used suggests that this is the cultural paradigm necessary to understand the principle.

In this example we see the extent to which the students may be more comfortable understanding concepts (which are not solely religious) in Tamil rather than English terms. While some English is useful such as the teacher's use of *parents* in Line 47, all three speakers abide by the medium of Tamil. Although much clarification is needed, the use of Tamil enhances the communication due to the specificity of description it can provide. In addition, some translanguaging is useful in clarification, evaluation and achieving mutual comprehension.

8.3.2 Cremation

Cremation is an aspect of Hindu funeral practice that is well known to the non-Hindu world. The following extract is surprising because of the detail in which this particular funeral rite is discussed. The teacher provides

information about burning dead bodies and this appears to appeal to the students as well as ignite much reaction and opinion from them. Such reactions from the students can be seen to index their “teenager” identifications but also hint at the influence of their existences outside of the ethnoreligious community, viewing the practice as outsiders to the religion might.

Data extract 8-4 Cremation

14Jun15 Timecode: 00:25:22.921 - 00:26:11.000
 Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Raja, Thiran.

1 Mrs **ippa naangkaL**
 Chandran: *now when we*

2 **uTampa erichchaalum**
 cremate the body

3 **ungaLukku theriyumaa**
 do you know

4 bone **ellaam eriyaathu**
 all the bones won't burn

5 Meena: °wait°

6 really?=
 Mrs **oo**
 Chandran: *yes*

8 Jeya: o:h!

9 Meena: o:h(h) [heh]

10 Mrs [engkaTa] bone **ellaam**
 Chandran: *all our bones*

11 **eriyaa[thu]**
 won't burn

12 Meena: [↑oh heh]

13 that makes it worse

14 Mrs **atha en2n2a ceyvaangkaL**
 Chandran: *what they would do is*

15 **en2Taalaam ingka;**
 *here there's a machine it seems that does the crushing**

16 **eTuththu**

17 **oru machine vachchirukkiRaangkan2aam**

18 crash [paNNi]

19 Jeya: [they grind it?=
 Meena: =they crush it=
 Chitran: =but what they do?=
 Jeya: God!
 Thiran: crack
 they've gotta kill them!

25 Mrs **keelvippaTTan2 oom.**
Chandran: *I have heard about it yes*

26 Chitran: [grind it?]

27 Mrs [athaa ellaaththaiyum]
Chandran: *all of that*

28 Thiran: grind [bones]

29 Mrs [grind **paNNi piRaku thaan2**
Chandran: *only after grinding*

30 Meena: [I thought they] crush [everything]

31 Jeya: [I thought
32 yeah] everything

33 Mrs [dispose **paNNu**vaangkaL oo
Chandran: *they will dispose yes*

34 Chitran: they didn't
35 I-I didn't know what [happened
36 to the bones]

37 Jeya: [coz I know- I know they fil-]
38 coz in the-
39 if you burn it with the coffin
40 they filter all the flowers and all the
41 (.) all the stuff
42 and they just get the human ashes
43 and I thought that
44 that was everything

45 Mrs no oh (.)+cila bones+ **eriyaaathu**
Chandran: *no oh some bones won't burn*

46 [ellaa illa] **cila boneskaL eriyumaakkum ellaam**
eriyaaathaam.
not all of it will burn some bones might burn all won't burn

47 Chitran: [we got it] [all on camera]

48 Thiran: [skull]

49 Mrs [appa antha **periya bones.**]
Chandran: *then those big bones*

50 Chitran: [my cousin's dad got it all on camera]
51 in India

52 Mrs ah **ungaLukku theriyum thaana2ee**
Chandran: *you know this*

53 Thiran: oh my God.
54 it's so creepy

In the first turn, from Lines 1 to 4, Mrs Chandran makes a statement about not all bones burning to ash during a cremation, using the English *bone* in an otherwise Tamil utterance, presumably to aid comprehension.

In Lines 5, 6, 8 and 9 we hear Meena and Jeya's reactions to this, one of distaste but also humour. Note Meena's use of the newsmark *really?* to show her surprise and disbelief (cf. Stivers & Enfield, 2010) and Mrs Chandran's affirmative type-conforming response in Line 7. She repeats the fact in Lines 10 and 11 to confirm her point to the students and this is met with more distaste and amusement from Meena in Lines 12 and 13.

In Lines 14 to 18 the teacher elaborates on what happens to the bones. She uses the Tanglish compound verb *crash paNNi* (to crush) in Line 18. It appears that the teacher means to say "crush" but her pronunciation is closer to the minimal pair "crash". Thus, perhaps Jeya is initiating repair in Line 19 when she asks for clarification, *they grind it?*. However Mrs Chandran does not provide repair and instead this comes from Meena who confirms *they crush it*. This piques the interest of the boys who have been distracted by their maths problem. Chitran tries to catch up through his information-seeking question in Line 21 while Jeya supplies more of her reaction of distaste with *God!* in Line 22. In Lines 23 and 24, Thiran supplies a macabre but witty comment about the bone-crushing machine.

In Line 25 Mrs Chandran begins to elaborate on the topic but her speech is overlapped with that of the students'. In Line 26, Chitran appears to start to comprehend the topic and asks a clarification question. Thiran addresses Chitran with his answer in Line 28 specifying the *it* (the bones) that Chitran was asking about. Perhaps picking up that this is new information for some students, Mrs Chandran uses the English *grind* in Line 29 to make the compound verb *grind paNNi*. She has switched from using *crash paNNi* to accommodate for the preferred verb used by the students.

In Lines 30 to 32 Meena and Jeya engage in more processing of the shocking information and their statements overlap slightly. Meena states that she thought that everything was crushed. It appears that Jeya is agreeing with her in Lines 31 and 32 however perhaps she has

misunderstood what she is agreeing with because her turn beginning at Line 37 suggests a different perception of what happens during cremation (explained in the next paragraph).

Mrs Chandran continues her explanation in Line 33, adopting another English verb to enhance communication, *dispose*. In Lines 34 to 36 Chitran implies that this is new information for him – he didn't know what happened to the bones during cremation. In Lines 37 to 44 Jeya provides her knowledge of what happens in the cremation, that is, that the body is burnt in the coffin and then the ashes are filtered out, ending with *I thought that was everything*. This suggests she wasn't aware of the remaining bones and the crushing machine until the teacher advised her and she is now questioning what she initially thought. This is evidence that her previous agreement with Meena's statement, about crushing all the bones in Line 30, was misdirected.

In Lines 45, 46, 49 and 52 Mrs Chandran provides more specific information about the bone burning highlighting that the big bones are the ones that don't tend to burn to ash during cremation. While she is relaying this information Chitran and Thiran have a side conversation. In Line 47 Chitran is recalling his personal experience of a cremation and informs Thiran that *we got it all on camera*. Thiran, taking his usual humorous stance on things says in a deadpan voice, *skull*, using both fingers to point to either side of his head and smiles at Chitran. Because his turn has overlapped with Thiran's, Chitran then repeats his statement in Lines 50 and 51 mentioning that the cremation took place in India. This raises two points. Firstly we see the transnational connections for Tamil families. Just like Jeya's uncle (in "ash parcel"), some of Chitran's relatives are based in India, presumably Tamil Nadu, and thus these family members have to travel far for milestones like funeral attendance. Secondly, it is interesting that what might be seen as a solemn event is recorded on video. As a teenage boy this could be something that Chitran

would be proud to report to his peers. Thiran finds Chitran's news unpleasant saying *oh my God that's so creepy* in Lines 53 and 54, which could also be summing up his reaction to the whole business of bone crushing.

In terms of linguistic features in this interaction, the students maintain a monolingual medium of English while the teacher's speech is predominantly Tamil, except for the use of some strategic English verbs to assist the students' comprehension. This is another example of where the students' default to English coincides with topics that incite a reaction or ones where they want to share their opinions in a somewhat rapid interaction. Their interpretation of this particular aspect of cremation, enacted in English, suggests again a syncretism in bringing in outsider perspectives to their evaluation of the ritual.

8.3.3 Bhagavad Geeta

While the previous four extracts have been taken from the class about funeral rites, the next extract comes from a smaller class containing only the two most vocal students, Chitran and Jeya. In this particular discussion, Jeya and Mrs Chandran are exploring the concept of *shakthi*, the forms and powers of the god, Shiva. This prompts an assertion from Chitran about a principle in the Bhagavad Geeta, the canonical Hindu scripture written in Sanskrit. Such a statement exemplifies Chitran's interest in interpreting the doctrines of Hinduism. Moreover, the issue of whether they should believe in multiple Hindu gods or only one true God was one that students raised several times during the school year, evidencing their keenness to apply the teachings appropriately.

Data extract 8-5 Bhagavad Geeta

17May15 Timecode: 00:56:27.556 - 00:57:03.912
Chitran, Jeya, Mrs Chandran.

1 Chitran: **antha bhagavath geethala,**
 in that Bhagavad Geeta

2 **oru (.) thing colluthu**

there's a thing which says

3 (0.3) **antha kaTav↑uL**
that God

4 **naangkaL vazhipaTuRa civ↓an2 cakthi, piLLaiyaar**
whom we worship Shiva Shakthi Ganesh

5 **avangkaLeellaam form**
all of them form

6 **kaTavuLuTaiya form.**
God's form

7 **avangkaLaiyellaam vazhipaTa kuuTaathu en2Tu¿**
it's said that you shouldn't worship them*

8 **colliyirukkuthu**

9 **antha (0.3)uNmaiyaan2a like**
you should worship the true like God the God that doesn't
have any form*

10 (.)the God

11 (.)**uruvamillaatha God thaana2 vazhipaTa veeNTum en2Tu**

12 **bhagavath geetha colluthu**
that's what the Bhagavad Geeta is saying

13 **athu antha forma vazhipaTT↑aa**
that if you worship that form

14 **paavam en2Tu °colluthu°**
it said that is a sin.

15 Jeya: **r↑eally¿**

16 **paavam.**
sin

17 Mrs **paavam en2Tu illa,**
Chandran: **it's not sin**

18 **engkaLukku oru vaLarcci kiTaikkaathammaa.**
we won't have growth darling

19 **ippa niingkaL**
now if you

20 **cummaa pooy ithu**
just go and say this

21 **>kaTavuL ithu kaTavuL ithu kaTavuL< en2Taa**
is God this is God this is God

22 **ungkaLukku ulakamee viLangkaathellee.**
you won't understand the world isn't it?

23 **<cila peer en2n2a ceyvaangka en2Taa¿**
what some people do is

24 **kooyilla pooy on2Tumee,**
they go to the temple

25 **paNNamaaTTaangka.**
and do nothing

Chitran's turn from Lines 1 to 14 comprises well-formed Tamil with the insertion of only a few English words. He wants to refer to a statement in

the Bhagavad Geeta and in Line 2 we can see that after a pause, likely to be caused by his mental search for an apt Tamil word, he adopts *thing* to fill his lexical gap. In Lines 3 and 4 he names the gods that *we worship* and in Line 5 he adopts the English, *form*. He uses *form* again in Line 6, and in both cases he is stating that what the Bhagavad Geeta says is that all of the Hindu gods they worship are forms of a singular *God* which he refers to by using the Tamil *kaTavuL* in Lines 3 and 6.⁵³ In Lines 7 and 8 he declares in Tamil that the holy text states that those forms of God should not be worshipped.

In Lines 9 to 11 we see some pausing occurring which suggests some uncertainty from Chitran. He also uses *like* as a hedge in Line 9. In Lines 10 and 11 we see Chitran use the English, *God* as opposed to *kaTavuL* which he used previously. In this context he is referring to a God that is the true God, the God that doesn't have any form, that the Bhagavad Geeta speaks of. His use of English to refer to this God suggests a shift in relationship. Whereas in Lines 3 and 6 it is likely that he is using *kaTavuL* to refer to Shiva, the preeminent god for Saivites and the one that he has a personal connection with, in Lines 10 and 11, he seems to use English for *God* because this is a version of his god that he is uncertain about. This is supposed to be a formless god, and because Chitran is not entirely sure what this concept of a god entails, he adopts the English equivalent to associate a different meaning to it. By switching between these two concepts he is also signalling to his interlocutors his different relationship with *kaTavuL* and the formless God.

We see some similar switching occurring in the use of the equivalents *uruvam* and *form*. In Lines 5 and 6, Chitran adopts the English *form* to make his point rather than the Tamil, *uruvam*, which was used frequently in the discussion that preceded this extract. It appears here that he shifts to English to emphasise the significance of the concept of "form" in his

⁵³ In Line 6 he uses *kaTavuL* with the suffix *-uTaiya* to indicate possession (God's form).

statement. In Line 11 he uses the Tamil equivalent to form *uruvamillaatha* (the suffix *-illaatha* added to *uruvam* to mean “has no form”). Then in Line 13 he uses the English *form* but this time he adds the Tamil vowel *-a* to phonologically integrate it to Tamil, a common practice for Sri Lankan Tamil speakers which has been mentioned in Section 6.3.3. Although it appears that the use of *form* in Lines 5 and 6 is strategic, there are no clear conclusions why Chitran has adopted these different forms of “form”. This could merely be a case where he was not able to recall the Tamil equivalent promptly so he reverted to the English. Thus this is evidence of individual variation in translanguaging behaviour.

In Lines 12 to 14, Chitran says the Bhagavad Geeta sees worshipping a form of God rather than the formless God as a sin. He uses the Tamil equivalent for sin, *paavam*. In Lines 15 and 16 Jeya gives her surprised reaction, using the newsmark *really* and repeating *paavam*. While she uses this Tamil noun regularly, as all the students do, perhaps because of her surprise and her use of the English *really*, the Tamil *paavam* /pa:vəm/ is pronounced with an Australian accent as /pavəm/.

In Mrs Chandran’s response in Lines 17 to 25, she qualifies Chitran’s claim by saying that it is not a sin but rather a barrier to spiritual growth if you focus on the material aspects of each deity (or avatar) as opposed to the true God. In this way, Mrs Chandran is encouraging the students to look below the surface of commonly held Hindu beliefs. In Lines 23 to 25 she makes a critical comment about some devotees, saying that some people go to temple and do nothing else because they think that fulfils the requirement of being a Hindu. We can see that Mrs Chandran shares some of the sentiments expressed by Meena and Jeya at the beginning of this chapter (see Interview extract 8-1).

While other extracts have shown a high occurrence of mixed intonation units, frequent shifting between monolingual Tamil and English IUs, or the sole use of monolingual English IUs by the students, in this example,

we see that Tamil dominates Chitran's speech. We see the criticality of translanguaging at work in Chitran's use of English to refer to the formless God and, perhaps, to highlight the significance of the concept of "form" in his statement. Overall translanguaging has allowed him to draw on his repertoire in a more strategic, indexical and efficient way than a monolingual medium would allow.

This extract shows a criticism by the teacher about how the religion is interpreted by some devotees. Comments about the negative aspects of temple culture were made in the formal interviews and these reflected the notion that some devotees were not serious about the religion. In the following excerpts we see the experience of females in the temple from the second and 1.5 generations' perspectives. Here, Jeya and Meena talk about girls of their generation who are fixated on appearance in the temple:

Interview extract 8-13

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:32:38.770

Meena: something weird is happening to our group, like I don't know

Jeya: yeah because if you look at that girl she's wearing like a really, like a slutty outfit or like a really like a grand ganga ((dress)), you'd be like oh my god that girl- it's become so

Meena: it's very judgmental

Jeya: it becomes very judgmental, negative, really bad environment even though it's supposed to be for the opposite reasons, it's supposed to be very devotional

Meena: like no one, for these type of Thiruvizha ((festival)) and stuff, like I bet you 99 per cent don't actually go there for God

Jeya: go there to pray

Meena: I can't pray in a big crowd, there's like no concentration. as soon as I see a glittering saree go by my mind goes (blank)

Meena sees the behaviour of members of her generation as “weird” and Jeya gives an example of the kind of judgment that is placed on girls’ appearance by her peers. She offers the opinion that it should be a devotional space and Meena adds that most people do not go to temple for God. Meena ends her explanation with a witty anecdote about being distracted by glittery sarees while trying to pray.

We can see a similar sentiment raised by Nanthika, who is a 1.5-generation parent of children at the Saiva School.

Interview extract 8-14

11Oct15 Nanthika Timecode: 00:09:11.850

Nanthika: not really into getting dressed up and all that you know a lot of people go there to look at the saree heh (the bangles). for me it's like, I couldn't care less you know, so I'm more yeah (.) so that's how I'm training my kids to to the spiritual side

Although Nanthika does not explicitly criticise others for caring about appearance, she rejects the practice for herself saying “I couldn’t care less”. She ends by saying that her focus is on the spiritual side so there is an implication that saree dressing is not spiritual for her.

These comments raise some points in relation to the adaptation of the religion in the diaspora. While these three female participants are in the minority, it appears that the wearing of Tamil traditional dress, especially for women, is a key feature of temple attendance. In the temple’s cultural hall, during performances, I did indeed overhear teenage girls discussing and complimenting each other on their outfits which were generally outstanding. While this may be seen as a shallow and material practice, there is also an element of conjuring up aspects of life in the homeland and taking advantage of the opportunity to express their Tamilness outwardly in mainstream society (even though it is mostly in the confines of a Tamil space).

Tamil dress can be a strong marker of identity and signal in-group membership, so such “symbolic trappings” of Tamilness can hold much significance to individuals (Canagarajah, 2008, p. 169, 2012a, 2012b) (see also Gregory et al., 2013). Thus, in the diaspora context, dressing for temple carries a loading that would not be marked in the homeland. In the future however, with younger women like Meena and Jeya rejecting the emphasis on this practice, we could see a growing number of people who choose not to dress up so elaborately. They may wear Tamil clothes as part of their identity but choose not to participate in what they perceive to be “showiness” for the sake of fashion and appearance.

We can see from this discussion some contrasts in the way religion and culture are interpreted. From Chitran’s question about the Bhagavad Geeta to Mrs Chandran’s deeper interpretation of its meaning; from Jeya, Meena and Nanthika’s rejection of glittery dress to the females who place importance on this aspect of their Tamilness. These stated opinions point to a regular phenomenon I observed in my conversations with devotees – their own practices and beliefs in relation to others in the temple and ethnoreligious community. This kind of comparison, I believe, was a way to measure particular concerns which become heightened in diaspora life such as one’s degree of Westernisation and one’s level of devotion to the religion and culture. As is evident in the interview comments from Jeya and Meena, this act of comparison and relative positioning has transferred to the second generation, and I regularly spoke to best-case-scenario second-generation devotees who spoke of their peers who had disengaged from temple life and language and cultural activities. These ideas will be explored further in the next chapter.

8.4 Conclusions

In Chapter Eight I introduced the focus for the last two results chapters of this thesis: to investigate how the class searches for meaning connected to the religious practices they have experienced and how they assess, react to and challenge certain practices in their ethnoreligious community. These

issues are investigated through analysing the classroom discourse and looking at the role of translanguaging and syncretic acts in assisting the participants through their interpretation and evaluation processes.

When we look at the translanguaging occurring in this particular classroom context, we can see evidence of the participants' creativity, drawing on their full linguistic repertoires, to engage in criticality and even mockery. The mockery is an affordance of the students' in-group membership and is evidence that they are challenging the image of the obedient Asian student (cf. Li Wei & Wu, 2009).

The students and teacher exhibit strategic ability and individuality in the way they adopt Tamil and English linguistic features from their repertoire. We see the same patterns in the students' use of Tamil as shown in previous chapters. Tamil nouns are brought in to students' speech to relay particular aspects of their personal experiences, especially for specific religious, cultural and kinship terms. When the students refer to their God (Shiva) and to the Hindu gods, they adopt the relevant Tamil forms. But it is not just about inserting nouns. When we look at the "three generations" extract we see that both the Tamil cultural paradigm and knowledge of the Tamil language are critical for the students to engage in classroom discussions like this one on kinship. This echoes the strong language-religion ideology evident in the Saiva School and for the individual students.

One of the main functions of English highlighted in these extracts is to engage in humour and mockery, such as Thiran's joke about the ghost on the plane in "ash parcel" or killing the dead with the crushing machine in "cremation". English provides a way to distance themselves from some of these more risqué statements and as a strategy to potentially exclude the teacher from some of the "teenage" joking and play. In "Bhagavad Geeta" we see Chitran use English to distance himself from a "god" he is uncertain of, and to use Tamil to signal his closeness to his God, *kaTavuL*.

English is used by the students to give their strong reactions to new information like their distaste over the bone crushing in “cremation”, when Thiran says *that’s so creepy*. In this discussion we see how English is used for rapid interaction between the students, to supply quick quips and opinions, and for blasphemy. But, while I argue that the participants are being strategic in their adoption of English and Tamil features in these examples, I must also acknowledge that is not always a conscious decision on the part of the speakers (in accordance with Otheguy et al.’s proposed definition of translanguaging). There are times when I, as the analyst, perceive the use of a feature to be strategic, but it in fact, could be due to reasons I am unaware of which pertain to an individual’s biography and idiolect.

In the participants’ commentary about the search for meaning and relevance, we see Jeya and Meena declare their cynicism about some of the accepted forms of worship like the *arookaraa* and their desire to understand the rich language used in the numerous devotional songs they must learn to recite by heart. They point to the issue of the first-generation not explaining the religion to them, and this is relevant to the socio-political context for Sri Lankan Tamils who, for many, were forced to leave Sri Lanka and therefore, lost the opportunity for a more comprehensive religious education in the homeland. The intergenerational effect of this is evidenced in extracts like “Saiva funeral” where the children can provide snippets of rites they have witnessed but don’t fully understand or cannot adequately convey what they have seen.

When it comes to the issue of interpreting the religion we see commentary about the varying degrees of adherence to and interpretation of Saivism evident in the diaspora. Jeya and Meena provide insight into the practice of wearing traditional dress to temple which they see as overdone or even shallow. However, as Canagarajah (2012b) highlights, this too, can be an important marker of identity for some youth. What comes out as significant for the five Year 9 students is the relevance of science and

philosophy in Saivism. These frameworks provide a way for the students to connect with and conceptualise the religious teachings. While they learn about these frameworks in a Western context, they are able to draw connections with their Eastern religion and this is a source of great interest for them. This syncretic act is a signifier of the new ways in which the religion is interpreted and adapted in the Australian context by the second generation.

In this chapter, we see the parallels between the concepts of syncretic acts, translanguaging, and what Hemming and Madge (2012) call the second generation's development of personal frameworks of meaning. All of these concepts represent the hybridity and creativity of the Year 9 students and are particularly evident in the safe space of the Year 9 Saiva classroom. As Li Wei (2011b) showed, the multilingual space of the Saiva classroom is interactionally created. We see the agency of the children; they are "not simply responding ... to broader social forces or structures, but are creating spaces for themselves using the resources they have" (Li Wei, 2011a, p. 1234) to explore religious interpretations and, thereby, they create change in the evolution of their diasporic religious and cultural community. Together, the teacher and students create a safe space where students have confidence to exhibit their multilingualism and their Tamilness in different ways.

9 Chapter 9 - Positions of challenging religion and culture

We now take a focused look at how, in searching for relevance and meaning in their religion, the students engage in acts of positioning their beliefs and identities as members of the ethnoreligious community. We will investigate four linguistic extracts from the Saiva classroom that show how the students, and teacher at times, challenge and even criticise aspects of their community that they do not agree with. Again, we see how the creative use of language through translanguaging allows them to display their criticality and to push against the image of unquestioning religious students. Even though they are best-case-scenario children, this does not mean that they are strict in their adherence to the Tamil-medium or the religious teachings. Rather, through syncretic acts, they are forging their own paths and ideas about how they want to position themselves, and drawing on other identifications in the process. They are negotiating and problematising aspects of their heritage religion and culture, allowing traditional and modern interpretations of their religion to co-exist. The class participants thereby construct new identities, values, practices and positions.

Hopkins, Olson, Pain and Vincett (2011) refer to four types of strategies that young people use to negotiate their religious positions which lie on a continuum between the extremes of adopting similar positions to their parents (correspondence) and taking a completely contradictory stance (conflict). While one might expect these Tamil students who form the best-case minority to take a strategy of correspondence, what we see is that they tend to fall in between the two mentioned extremes – either following parents' religious expectations but privately questioning them (compliance), or openly debating religious positions of family members (challenge) (cf. Hopkins et al., 2011). We can certainly see that Meena and Jeya adopt the challenge strategy while Thiran and Raja are closer to

compliance (and possibly play around in class as part of resisting the correspondence position). While my time spent with the students and their parents led me to believe that these religious positions would be fairly consistent in the students' lives, I must also note that the Saiva classroom is a relatively low-risk environment under the supervision of the flexible Mrs Chandran. Therefore students can push the boundaries in this space perhaps more than they could with some first-generation family members at home and at temple.

In this chapter I continue to highlight aspects of the students' identifications which come through in their discourse. Ominiya and White (2006, p. 1) state that identity is "always being (co-) constructed by individuals of themselves (or ascribed by others), or by people who share certain core values or perceive another group as having such values". Butler (1990, as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) claims that identity is a discursive practice but also a performance. The notion of performance carries connotations of transience, masquerade, resignification, and irony (Butler, 1990, as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 33). Through the following four extracts we will see how this notion of performance is evident in the discourse and how it affords the occupation of certain positions by the speakers. "Positioning" is defined as "the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48). It can take the form of interactive positioning whereby one person positions another or reflective positioning in which one positions oneself. Davies and Harré (1990) point out that positioning is not necessarily intentional. In these extracts we will see how the interlocutors not only position themselves but also others in their ethnoreligious community and outside of it.

9.1 Cooking is for girls

In this discussion we see the students bring in humour and subversion to creatively challenge the mindset, reinforced by societal norms in Sri

Lanka, that females are responsible for cooking. In this class Jeya and Thiran, are preparing for a Tamil trivia quiz, run by another Tamil organisation, that they are competing in later that day (the same as in “kal is stone” in Section 7.2.2). The students come to class immaculately groomed and dressed in traditional clothes for the quiz. Jeya and Thiran are on opposing teams for the final match of the quiz and through the class, Jeya makes a few friendly jibes at Thiran for defecting to another team, since he had been on her team the previous year. In general, I observed a friendly competition between students during all classes, keen to exhibit their knowledge of the language, religion and culture and this feature was certainly present in this particular class.

Working from a list of past quiz questions, the teacher asks the two students to complete a cloze test where she names a particular Tamil dish and the students must supply the relevant verb for making that dish. Thus this exercise requires specific cultural knowledge of Tamil cuisine.

Data extract 9-1 Cooking is for girls

23Aug15 Timecode: 00:09:38.734 - 00:10:19.910
Jeya, Mrs Chandran, Thiran

1 Mrs **ammaa iTiyappam aviththaar en2pathu poola**
Chandran: *just like mother steamed stringhoppers*

2 **ammaa thoocai?**
mother thosai?

3 Jeya: **cuTTaar=**
made

4 Thiran: ((slams hand down on table and looks at Jeya as if
nonplussed))

5 Mrs **=cuTTaar**
Chandran: *made*

6 Jeya: *heh heh heh [heh]*

7 Thiran: *[(you're such a)] genius!*

8 Mrs *[thoocai cuTTathu] heh*
Chandran: *who made thosai heh*

9 **ammaa iTiyappam aviththaar en2pathu [poola**
just like mother steamed stringhoppers

10 **ammaa piTTu?]**
mother pittu?

11 Jeya: *[this is the only*

time]

12 when [sexist stuff counts=]

13 Thiran: [koththin2aar]
(lit. to dig but no English equivalent))

14 =no?

15 Mrs ammaa piTTu avichchaar=
Chandran: mother steamed pittu

16 Thiran: =oh yeah

17 avich[chaar]
steamed

18 Mrs [same thing]
Chandran:

19 Jeya: no iTli iTli avikkiRathu,
that idly idly steam

20 Mrs oo
Chandran: yes

21 Jeya: thoocai cuTuRathu
thosai cook

22 Mrs oo
Chandran: yes

23 Jeya: piTTu avikkiRa[thu]
pittu steam

24 Mrs [piTTu] avikkiRathu
Chandran: pittu steam

25 Thiran: [oh my God]

26 Jeya: [um: t. cooRu}
um t. rice

27 Mrs camaikkiRathu=
Chandran: cook

28 Jeya: =kaa-
bo-

29 kaachcha-=
boi-

30 Thiran: =that's kinda(genius)=

31 Jeya: =()?

32 cooRu?
rice

33 kaachchiRathu?
boil

34 Thiran: [cooRu cook
rice cook

35 Mrs [cooRu camaikkiRathu
Chandran: cook rice

36 kaachchiRathu en2Tum collalaam
boil we can say both

37 both

38 Jeya: yeah yeah um

39 (1.0) iTiyappam=

stringhoppers

40 Mrs **=porikkiRathu=**
Chandran: *deep fry*

41 Jeya: **=porikkiRathu**
 deep fry

42 Mrs **uruLaikkizhangku porikkiRathu**
Chandran: *potato deep fry*

43 Jeya: see!

44 Mrs [fried]
Chandran:

45 Jeya: [+this is why+] coo(h)king comes in handy

46 Mrs **[porikkiRathu]**
Chandran: *deep fry*

47 Jeya: [£(you can)] go ask girls£

48 Thiran: °£(we're) cooking guys°

49 cook

In Lines 1 and 2 the teacher supplies the first example, “just like mother steamed stringhoppers (noodle cakes), mother thosai (thin pancake)?” – with Tamil having an SOV word order, the students must add the verb to complete the sentence. Note that the “mother” does all the cooking actions in this quiz, thus reflecting the social norm of the woman taking responsibility for cooking in the household. In Line 3 Jeya provides the appropriate verb for making thosai. *cuTTaar*. In reaction to her quick and confident answer, Thiran uses non-verbal communication (slamming his hand on the table) to show he is nonplussed since he could not recall the answer himself. Mrs Chandran confirms that Jeya is correct by repeating her answer in Line 5 and Jeya laughs in response to Thiran’s reaction. In Line 7 Thiran calls Jeya a genius as part of their relaxed competitiveness.

Mrs Chandran supplies a sample clause to show how the verb *cuTTaar* is conjugated in Line 8 and ends with a laugh in response to Jeya’s laugh in Line 5. As she asks the next question in Lines 9 and 10, Jeya’s declaration in Lines 11 and 12 overlaps to say *this is the only time when sexist stuff counts!*. The implication of Jeya’s statement is that this is the only time when she sees it as an advantage to be a woman fulfilling a dated gender role since she has more access to knowledge around cooking than Tamil men would. Exclaimed in English and directed at Thiran, it seems that

Jeya is not intending to make the point to the teacher. She is also indicating her position – that while under normal circumstances she would be opposed to the traditional expectation of females doing the cooking, here she can tolerate it in order to win the quiz. Jeya is embracing the traditional role in one sense but she is also indexing her progressive femininity (cf. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 52).

It seems that Thiran does not hear Jeya because in Line 13 he attempts to answer Mrs Chandran's question from Line 10 with *koththin2aar*. In Line 14 he shows some doubt when the teacher does not immediately respond and seeks confirmation in Line 14 by asking *no?*. Ending sentences with *no?* is also a practice that Canagarajah (2012a) observed in Tamil youth in the diaspora. He referred to it as "Tamilized English" where the direct Tamil to English translation of a question means that speakers insert *no?* at the end. In Line 15 the teacher gives the answer, completing the sentence with the appropriate verb, *avichchaar*. Thiran shows uptake in Lines 16 and 17 and repeats the verb, but the teacher also validates his answer by saying *same thing* in Line 18.

In Lines 19, 21 and 23 Jeya initiates her own clauses to provide more examples of verbs that are linked to certain foods, namely "idly" (steamed lentil and rice cake), "thosai" (thin pancake) and "pittu" (a steamed rice and coconut cake). The teacher confirms they are correct with *oo* (yes) used as a continuer in Lines 20 and 22, and a repetition in Line 24. Thiran supplies another expression of his bewilderment at Jeya's knowledge with *oh my God* in Line 25. In Line 26, Jeya continues the pattern but seems to be thinking out loud as she uses the hesitation marker *um* followed by *.t.* before she supplies the Tamil noun for rice. Mrs Chandran supplies a verb in Line 27 but Jeya is thinking of an alternative. She makes two attempts to say the verb in Lines 28 and 29 but self-repairs each time.

In Line 30, Thiran once more provides a compliment, in awe of Jeya's knowledge, with *that's kinda (genius)*. Jeya's next utterance is inaudible

but in Lines 32 and 33 she asks a declarative question, stating the noun and verb combination for rice with a final rising intonation; thus seeking confirmation from the teacher. In Line 34 Thiran seems to be making a joke by using the English *cook* instead of supplying the apt Tamil verb for cooking rice. In the following line Mrs Chandran states two verbs that are applicable to cooking rice, including the one produced by Jeya, and then says that “we can say both” in Tamil. She follows this with the English *both* in Line 37, thereby enacting the doubling principle, for clarity.

In Line 38 Jeya acknowledges Mrs Chandran’s answer but wants to continue to her next clause in Line 39, when she states the Tamil word for “stringhoppers” (steamed noodle cakes). Mrs Chandran is listening to her but either misunderstands or elects to proceed with another verb because the Tamil verb she states in Line 40 means “deep fry” and is not applicable to stringhoppers. It appears that Jeya sees this as a repair and repeats the verb in Line 41. In Line 42 Mrs Chandran matches the Tamil noun for potato with the verb for deep fry however we are left unsure as to whether Jeya has comprehended that the same verb, *porrikkirathu*, does not apply to stringhoppers. Mrs Chandran does provide a similar English translation, *fried*, in Line 44 but this overlaps with Jeya’s Line 45 so is not heard by the student.⁵⁴

In Line 43 Jeya begins to make a point to Thiran in English which continues into Lines 45 and 47. Again Jeya is making reference to her expert status on the subject of cooking as a Tamil woman. Given her earlier statement that *this is the only time when sexist stuff counts* she is again taking the position that, while she usually wouldn’t abide by these traditional gender role assignments which she sees as sexist, in this case it provides her with the upper hand.

⁵⁴ Hence this is potentially a misunderstanding between teacher and student, however it is resolved later on in the discussion (beyond this extract) when the topic of frying is addressed in more detail.

Thiran provides a response to Jeya's statement in Lines 48 and 49, saying *we're cooking, guys cook* to indicate his position, that he does not see cooking as belonging to the realm of girls (although he is impressed by Jeya's knowledge) and that he is also learning these skills as he grows up. While we see Jeya invoke her feminist position by deeming cooking for girls as sexist, we see Thiran claiming that boys cook too and showing his position for equality on this particular issue. This interaction seems to be unheard by the teacher who continues with the subject of deep-frying. Such interactions between the students, uttered in English, were often left alone by the teacher, likely due to her limited proficiency in English or as her way of keeping the classroom talk on track.

These perspectives from the students bring a new interpretation to the topic of cooking food in Tamil culture. While the inclusion of such questions about cooking in a quiz indicate the significance of food to Tamils, the students are able to participate in criticality of their heritage culture, through the use of English. They position themselves regarding macro socio-political views on the topic of gender and cooking, and thus signal the new interpretations of cultural traditions at work for the second-generation.

There were several occasions during the classes I observed when the topic of the place of women in Tamil culture was discussed. Issues included why women were traditionally not allowed to attend cremations, arranged marriages and career aspirations for second-generation women. A few first-generation male members did comment to me that they saw women as the ones who were the cultural transmitters to the second generation. The majority of teachers in the Saiva and language schools were indeed women. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000b) also observed in the US context that, for women in various migrant religious institutions, sometimes the only formal role they have access to is as a ethnoreligious educators.

In Tamil temples in Britain, Geaves (2007, pp. 173–174) observed that it was the women who maintained the household Saiva rituals (such as a daily shrine for puja) however the establishment of the earliest temples was the domain of men and a similar pattern was observed in a Hindu temple in Houston, US (Jacob & Thaku, 2000). At the Saiva Temple it was the men who historically filled the majority of leadership roles and this was changing very slowly with the election of one female to the board of twelve members during my study.

In the 1980s Seneviratne and Currie investigated the extent of religio-cultural constraints on Sri Lankan women in Australia and Sri Lanka. They wrote that “both Buddhism and Hinduism have influenced traditional norms in Sri Lanka, which have led to the notion that the husband is considered the head of the family and the woman plays a secondary role all through her life” (Seneviratne & Currie, 1994, p. 593). Through their interviews with 30 women, from various religions and social classes, they found that, other than the self-identified feminists, religious women followed certain religious practices which reinforced their inferiority to men. At the same time, the majority of these participants did not see their religion as subordinating them. Most of the Australian Tamil Hindu participants reported that they fasted once a week to enable positive astrological implications for their husband’s wellbeing (Seneviratne & Currie, 1994). What this study shows is that 30 years on, second-generation Sri Lankan Tamil girls, and boys, are questioning practices which position women as unequal to men. Jeya and Thiran’s discourse suggests that the younger generations have and will influence change in gender roles in the application and translation of their ethnoreligious religion and culture in Australia.

9.2 Kind of agnostic

As part of their acts of syncretism (cf. Gregory et al., 2014) we have seen the students being able to draw on learnings and experiences from wider Australian society in order to see their heritage religion from an outsider

16 Mrs okay
 Chandran:
 17 **naan2 oru kathai colluRan2**
 I'll tell you a story
 18 **en2akku-**
 for me
 19 Jeya: <I'm kind of agnostic in a wa:y
 20 Mrs [**en2akku-**]
 Chandran: *for me*
 21 Jeya: [°a little bit°]

Jeya starts her turn in Lines 1 and 2 with a question in English. We see some hedging and hesitation here with the repetition of *is it* in the first IU and *ah if- if* in the second IU. After some encouragement from the teacher in form of a continuer in Line 3, Jeya provides a presequence to her question, a story as background to her personal dilemma. In this way, this extract contains an interaction within an interaction, as Jeya relays an encounter with her aunt (the embedded interaction).

As Jeya starts the story in Line 4, we see the insertion of some Tamil, with the phrase for *some people*. In Line 5 there is more hesitation with *like I think* and rushed Tamil speech for “one of my aunts” with the insertion of *um* between the Tamil words. These features suggest some discomfort around the situation. Perhaps this discomfort is triggering the high frequency of alternation between Tamil and English because *when I went to France* is stated in English even though Jeya would have no trouble expressing this in Tamil.

In Lines 6 and 7 Jeya uses Tamil to narrate the story and to report the speech of her aunt who asks Jeya, “which god are you worshipping?”. Jeya ends Line 7 with the English *right* as a question tag. In Line 8 she moves into English as she gathers her thoughts and continues with English in Line 9 except to provide the Tamil names for the Hindu gods, Ganesh and Murugan. The use of English to express *I felt weird because I don't really pray* in Line 9 serves a particular function. Firstly, “feeling weird” is a commonly used expression in Australian English and *I don't really pray* is

perhaps less severe if delivered in English than Tamil. This provides a clue about Jeya's discomfort – that she is exposing truths about her religious practice that may not be seen as the best-case scenario and may signal an out-group membership. Thus she can use English as a way of distancing herself from the Tamil-Saiva connection in her declaration. In Line 10, she uses English to express *I just serve God right*. I am unsure which God she is referring to here - she is not using a Tamil equivalent for God (*kaTavuL* being the most common) nor is she naming a particular Hindu god such as Shiva. Therefore it is not clear if she is referring to a god outside of the Hindu context. Whichever way, she mitigates her declaration in Line 11 by saying, in English, *all like all* thus inferring that all gods are relevant to her.

In Line 11, Jeya once again switches to Tamil for the reported speech of her aunt which continues into Line 12 where the aunt advises her to worship particular gods. Note that this extract precedes Chitran's question about the Bhagavad Geeta (Section 8.3.3) taken from the same class, when he declares that it may be a sin to worship any form but the true God. At the end of Line 12 Jeya shifts back to English with *I'm just like* to lead into a question. Mrs Chandran laughs in Line 13 to indicate she is familiar with the kind of opinion expressed by Jeya's aunt.

In Lines 14 and 15 Jeya poses her question to the teacher in English, *is it wrong that you don't believe in like each god*. Once again, the use of English could signal a distancing from the Tamil language-Saiva religion ideology to express an opposing view of the religion or it could be a softening of her message to the teacher. It may also represent the fact that when Jeya has reflected on this quite complex religious question, she has done so in English, her dominant language.

Mrs Chandran acknowledges Jeya's question in Line 16 and announces that she will tell Jeya a story in relation to this dilemma in Line 17. She starts the story in Line 18 but Jeya interrupts with a declaration, *I'm kind*

of agnostic in a way, in Line 19. This seems to be the point that Jeya was leading to in her story. The interruption and the elongated final diphthong suggest that she is uncertain about revealing this. But Mrs Chandran does not acknowledge the interjection and continues with her story in Line 20. In Line 21 Jeya adds a further mitigation *a little bit*⁵⁵ in low volume. Note the use of hedges like *in a way* and *a little bit*⁵⁵ which signal her uncertainty to identify as an agnostic, and the use of English to make a statement which challenges her Saiva faith. Ironically, the teacher does not pick up the statement about agnosticism and, beyond this extract, she continues to tell her own story relevant to the question of which god to pray to.

The way that Jeya builds her story from Line 4 to end with a more controversial statement in Line 19 could be seen as a way of hinting at her membership of the belief category of agnostics. This could be her way of “introducing a piece of information and testing out whether it will be acceptable” without having to say it (Sacks, 1995, p. 47), what Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p. 67) call a type of subversion procedure. In the beginning she does not overtly state her position or possible identity as an agnostic. Instead she uses the story of her aunty in France (the embedded interaction) to lead into the topic, quoting her aunty’s reported speech as a way of testing the waters (like saying “my aunty said this, is that right?”) thereby distancing herself from the assertion that you should pray to individual gods. At this point she can then introduce the fact that she doesn’t really pray to a particular god which then opens the space for Jeya to announce her position of being somewhat agnostic. But this comes across as a provisional rather than a definite identity. This is what Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p. 67) referred to as inoculating oneself from the “interactional consequences of overt categorisation”.

⁵⁵ While the use of the Tamil hedge *konjcham* (little) was observed by the students at times, it was more common for hedging discourse particles like *a bit* to occur in English.

Looking at the declaration from a more sociological viewpoint, Jeya is constructing what Day (2009) calls a “belief narrative”. Day’s study of belief narratives of young people (of various religious backgrounds) in one region of England found that most participants contextualised their belief positions through referencing other people; that “their beliefs were both informed and reproduced through human interaction, particularly the emotions that such interaction produces” (Day, 2009, p. 269). The study also identified the desire for young people to find authenticity between their religious beliefs and their inner values. Through Jeya relaying the story about her aunty, and trying to reconcile her aunty’s beliefs with her own, she is performing her own belief narrative.

There is an apparent contradiction in the fact that both the female students positioned themselves as agnostic at various times during my fieldwork yet still belong to the best-case minority of second-generation Tamils. What their questioning and challenging reveal is that the religion will be interpreted more broadly in their generation and that, as long as this is accepted and embraced by the first generation, this can actually assist their continued engagement in the temple into the future. Here is an extract from my field notes to illustrate the point:

During the pannisai vizha (religious singing performance), I sit next to Meena’s mother, Gayathri, while Meena sits in the row directly in front of us. Gayathri asks me about my religious beliefs and as we discuss this, Meena turns around to say, “it sounds like you’re an agnostic like me!” This does not faze her mother at all. Gayathri tells me that they go to an Anglican church as well. She says that temples will change with the next generation because that generation is not so accepting of all the religion entails – with their different education and exposure to science, they question things a lot more.

(Field notes, 26 April 2015)

As mentioned before it is important to note that claiming agnosticism is not necessarily a permanent identity for either student. In the interview extracts below we see Jeya and Meena position their beliefs using different discourse:

Interview extract 9-1

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:34:59.005

Jeya: I don't really consider the whole like like you know
 Shiva for like Saivism thing

Interview extract 9-2

12Oct15 Meena Timecode: 00:06:32.618

Meena: like I also go to the church um I've been to a lot of
 other religions, like I go to Buddhist churches as well.
 like I don't really find it a restriction ... I don't
 really identify with Saivite wholly, just ah I don't know
 I just go there for my own interest to understand like
 all these stories and morals and stuff

In these extracts Jeya declares that she doesn't consider Shiva as the preeminent god and Meena states her openness to other religions. She often referred to attendance at the Hare Krishna temple, Buddhist temple and a Christian church during the course of my fieldwork. In her study of contemporary religion in Britain, Davie (1994, p. 94) introduced the theme of "believing without belonging" to describe the "persistence of the sacred in contemporary society despite the undeniable decline in churchgoing", otherwise known as when belief persists. She said the discrepancy between believing and belonging in Christianity was sometimes compounded by a mistrust of religious institutions. Religious education was identified as a site where belief is either injected or rejected (Davie, 1994, p. 105). Davie's framework provides a way to view the complexity of the Saiva female students' religious positionings. While the girls position themselves as agnostics, they still remain interested in Saivism, attend the school and abide by certain practices (observance of festivals, vegetarianism to name a few). Their interpretations of their faith become more personal and heterogeneous and echo the syncretism that Gregory et al (2014) referred to and the self-styling that Canagarajah (2012b) observed in Tamil youth. While their belief persists (in a multi-faith sense) one could argue that it is the "belonging" aspect of Saivism that keeps

them involved in the temple and religious school. However, at other times, such as when they feel disconnected from aspects of temple life (such as dressing up (Interview extract 8-13) or socialising in a sacred space) we see their spiritual beliefs taking precedence over “belonging” to temple culture. Overall the students’ behaviour in the classroom exemplifies the “new” ethnoreligious identifications that can be created through migration experiences in late modernity.

9.3 Status and smart(ness)

As we have seen, especially when there are a small number of students, the class discussion can move in many directions. In this class, Jeya and Chitran are the only students present, and given that they are the most vocally curious students of the class, they are keen to explore what we could term as moral issues within their local Tamil Saivite community. In this extract Chitran and Jeya get onto the topic of social class, in particular, how jobs can define your identity and status in society.

Data extract 9-3 Status and smart(ness)

17May15 Timecode: 00:29:58.910 - 00:32:01.862
 Chitran, Jeya, Mrs Chandran

1 Mrs you're a +cleaner?+
 Chandran:

2 hmm <smell when you're coming!>
 3 hmm?

4 Chitran: hh

5 Mrs this is the world
 Chandran:

6 Chitran: miss
 7 cleaners get a lot of money here

8 Mrs [yeah heh]
 Chandran:

9 Jeya: [yeah now they]

10 Mrs [nowadays]
 Chandran:

11 Jeya: [now they do]
 12 but before they (didn't)=

13 Mrs =+aan2aa+
 Chandran: but

14 even though **engkaTa camuukaththila, maTTavangkaLTa**

even though in our community others

15 **en2akku theriyum ippa aNmaiyla oru**
I know, now recently it seems that a

16 (.) **oru girlkku**
a girl

17 (0.5) **oru boyla viruppamaam**
loved a boy

18 **antha boy vanthu**
that boy

19 **ava doctor en2Tu ninaikkiRan2.**
I think she's a doctor

20 **antha boy vanthu**
that boy

21 you know that funeral service **ceyravar?**
he does you know that funeral service?

22 the Sri Lankan society.

23 oh my God she's doing the funeral service man to love!

24 for what?

25 ah? heh heh

26 funeral service **ceyyaaTTi en2n2a ellaa bodyyum irunthu**
if you don't do funeral service all the bodies in the
*world will smell**

27 **maNakkum elloo ulakaththukku**

28 **illaiyaa?**
isn't it?

29 Chitran: yeah
 (teacher's monologue omitted)

30 Mrs heh .hh **athu en2n2an2Taa**
 Chandran: heh what it is

31 **appaTi oru oru camuukam vaLanthiTTuthu paravaayilla**
the the society has matured ((developed)) like this, it's
okay.

32 **aan2aa**
but

33 **antha camuukam uTayap pookuthen2Tathu ippa engkaLukku**
therinjcu pooccuthu
now we have come to know that the community is going to
break ((this attitude/these old values))

34 **viLangkuthaa.**
do you understand?

35 Jeya: hh err:

36 I don't know;

37 Mrs not hundred per cent
 Chandran:

38 Chitran: [miss what about selective school]

39 Mrs [**aan2aa** fifty=]
 Chandran: *but fifty*

40 =aa?

what?

41 Chitran: like-

42 Mrs **oo en2akkum theriyum piLLaikaL ellaam**
 Chandran: *yes I know all the children*

43 oh selective schoolla **antha piLLa [paTikkuthaam]**
oh that child is studying in selective school it seems

44 Jeya: [I ha(h)te- no **en2akku-**]
I hate- you know for
 me-

45 [**en2- antha-**]
me- that-

46 Mrs [you study normal:] school?
 Chandran:

47 heh [heh]

48 Jeya: [no no] selective school okay

49 this is what happened to me two like two weeks ago;

50 .hh um **oru** lady **irunthava**
um there was a lady

51 I- I've known her since I was like four years old;

52 so she's oh **niingka vaLanthuTiingka** blah blah blah
so she's oh you have grown blah blah blah

53 **piRaku ava keekkiRaa**
later she's asking

54 **niingka entha schoolla paTikkiRiing-**
what school are you studyin-

55 so I said Year 9.

56 **entha schoolla paTikkiRiingka,**
what school are you studying at

57 oh you're at Greenfields Girls.

58 she was talking for 15 minutes with me

59 as soon as I said Greenfields G↑irls awkward silence

60 and then she just turned away she didn't talk for like
 five minutes and I was like

61 (.) I was very offended because

62 (.) [you kn↑ow] j↑ust bec↑ause it-

63 Mrs [heh heh]
 Chandran:

64 doesn't matter **ammaa**
doesn't matter darling

65 Jeya: but like **antha**
but like that

66 (0.3) **antha** mindset's very annoying sometimes?
that mindset's very annoying sometimes

67 like also um (0.3) t.

68 **oru** mark can like define your entire smart like
one mark can like define your smart like

69 you know

In Lines 1 to 3 we see Mrs Chandran impersonating others who judge people based on the work they do. She plays someone who is disapproving of a cleaner and makes a comment that they smell bad. She often engages in these kinds of “role-plays” during class to illustrate the behaviour of others. Most of the time she is portraying negative behaviour and most of the time she does so in English. It appears that sometimes she uses English because she is criticising some aspect of Western cultural behaviour and playing a “white person”⁵⁶, while at other times it is not clear. But English is her preferred language for portraying undesirable traits and this choice of language may be a way for her to distance herself from the “role” she is playing. Note her Tamil-like pronunciation of *smell*, /simel/.

The role-play elicits a laugh from Chitran. While she is exaggerated in the previous turn, Mrs Chandran states regretfully and in a sad tone in Line 5, *this is the world*. Chitran has a different perspective to Mrs Chandran’s argument. In Lines 6 and 7 he makes the point that cleaners earn a lot of money.⁵⁷ In Line 8 Mrs Chandran acknowledges Chitran’s point with the minimal response *yeah* and a laugh and both her and Jeya overlap in their speech in Lines 9 to 11 to express this is a more recent development.

In Line 13 Mrs Chandran continues to pursue her point about people being judged based on their work. She starts with the Tamil conjunction *aan2aa* (but) followed, in Line 14, with the English *even though*, thus repeating the meaning in both languages. In this case, it is doubtful that she is providing the English (as per the doubling principle) to convey meaning, however, she may be trying to add emphasis to her ensuing

⁵⁶ The Tamil equivalent is *veLLak kaaran* which directly translates as white person but can generally refer to Europeans.

⁵⁷ While Chitran’s point may not be true in all cases, in recent times, people can make good livings from private cleaning work in Australia. The job of cleaning was probably singled out as this is a job that new arrivals from Sri Lanka may have to take on while they search for permanent work.

point. In Lines 14 to 28 she proceeds to relay a story from inside the Tamil Hindu community, from the in-group, about a union between a Tamil girl and boy. When she describes the work of the boy, it appears she is designing talk with her recipients in mind, so she uses *you know the funeral service?* in Line 21 to seek confirmation of the students' understanding.

During the study I heard the teacher refer to stories that were considered quite scandalous in the community. Most of the time the students had some knowledge of the “gossip” she was reporting. My personal experience has found these kinds of discussions to be a common characteristic of the Sri Lankan diaspora and, likely, many other migrant communities. It is a way for members to set the parameters of what is acceptable and what is not in their community in the diaspora context (especially for the second generation). Usually the commentary includes a judgement of the extent to which someone has assimilated to, or been corrupted by, the dominant cultural values. On this occasion the teacher talks about a young female doctor who fell in love with a male funeral director (or mortician perhaps) and how this union was disapproved of because of the perceived imbalance in professional status. Given that arranged marriage was a passionate topic for debate in the classroom, the fact that this was a “love” union is also relevant to the “gossip” factor here.

In Line 22 Mrs Chandran prefaces her role-play by saying *the Sri Lankan society* to infer that what she says subsequently came from members of the community. In Line 23 she commences the role-play with a tone of exaggerated outrage. Her use of English is non-standard but it might be that there is Tamil syntactic interference with the placement of *to love* at the end of the sentence, following SOV word order. In Line 24 she returns to speaking as herself (not the role-play) to ask *for what?*, an English phrase she uses regularly to imply, “for what purpose?”. In this role-play, even though she is playing a Sri Lankan community member, she reports the speech in English rather than Tamil. It is unlikely that the speech

actually occurred in English so perhaps this is her way of distancing herself as discussed above. In Line 25 Mrs Chandran laughs at the attitude portrayed in the previous turn and then, in Line 26, raises the point that if the world did not have funeral directors there would be no one to take care of the dead bodies. Chitran offers his agreement in Line 29. The teacher continues with this theme, talking about how both doctors and funeral directors have expertise to deal with dead bodies. This monologue lasts for about 20 seconds and has been omitted from the transcript.

When we re-enter the discussion, in Line 30, Mrs Chandran makes a final point that she thinks society (meaning their Tamil community) has progressed from having these old-fashioned attitudes. This is met with doubt from Jeya in Lines 35 and 36. In Line 37, Mrs Chandran mitigates her declaration with *not hundred per cent*. In Line 38 Chitran also has a counter point, raising the issue of selective schools, something seen as very important to Tamil parents.⁵⁸ Mrs Chandran misses Chitran's utterance because she is still in the process of mitigation to the students, suggesting that while not all of society has changed, maybe 50 per cent has, in Line 39. She then catches that Chitran has said something and reacts to this in Line 40 with *ah?* as an open-class repair initiator. Chitran starts an explanation in Line 41, but the teacher has straight away caught up with the topic and can provide a response in Line 42. She starts by agreeing with his point saying in Tamil, "yes I know all the children". She then proceeds to imitate what the first generation says, this time using Tamil to report speech except for *selective schoolla* (in the selective school).⁵⁹ By doing so she is mocking the way people attach status to selective schools in their community.

⁵⁸ As education is highly valued in the Tamil community I heard reports from the first and second generation of how some children stopped attending Tamil and Saiva classes towards the end of their primary school years in order to concentrate on preparing for the selective school entrance test.

⁵⁹ The use of *schoolla* instead of the Tamil equivalent was common in the class by both teacher and students. See also Section 7.1.3.

In Lines 44 and 45 Jeya starts to make a statement but she has four false starts because she overlaps with Mrs Chandran's turn in Line 46. The teacher is continuing the role-playing of a community member, this time using English with an exaggerated tone of disapproval. She laughs at the end of the role-play to indicate her amusement at these attitudes. In Line 48 Jeya restarts her statement with *no no* as a way of taking the floor. In Lines 49 to 62 she relays a personal encounter in the local Tamil community, with a member of the first generation, who she felt disrespected her because of the school she attends (which is not a selective school but a regular government high school).

Jeya is quite passionate (and irritated) when she tells this story so more English is adopted. In Line 50 she starts to use some Tamil but then appears to shift back to English for speed in Line 51. She then uses Tamil in Line 52 to report the speech of the Tamil woman finishing it off with *blah blah blah*, but then returns to Tamil for Lines 53 and 54 as she continues to report speech. Note how Jeya switches to English to report her own speech in Line 55, *so I said Year 9*, but then moves back to Tamil to report the woman's Tamil question in Line 56. However in Line 57 she uses English to report the reaction of the woman when she learns that Jeya is not attending a selective school. The tone in Line 57 is one of disapproval. The rest of Jeya's story is reported in English, as she relays the interaction with the woman and then her feelings about it. In Line 62 Jeya is in the process of explaining why she was offended but she is cut off by Mrs Chandran.

In Line 63 Mrs Chandran gives a sympathetic laugh and uses English in Line 64 to say *doesn't matter*. Even though there is an equivalent in Tamil, she could be adopting the English as a show of solidarity with Jeya. She uses the affectionate term *ammaa* for "darling". In Lines 65 to 69 we see Jeya providing her opinion on such attitudes which are prevalent in the community. Despite the turn being predominantly English Jeya still

uses some Tamil for “that” and “one” – these kinds of insertions suggest that Tamil is very much in her mind as she is speaking and that she tries to draw on Tamil features even for these seemingly insignificant insertions. When she says *oru* (one) *mark can like define your entire smart*, she is likely referring to the competitive entrance test for the selective schools. In Line 70 Chitran shows his agreement with Jeya’s opinions.

Overall we see the three members discussing certain “identities” that are highly valued by a part of the community. They challenge the importance that is placed on job status or selective school attendance. What is highlighted here is that the students have a forum in this class where the teacher can provide support as a first-generation member of the same community. This role of the teacher and of the classes is extremely valuable for the children to form opinions about Tamil society and Saiva values in a safe space. In this space they do not have to feel like they are betraying any in-group confidence as they are presenting their own community in a negative light to an insider, not an outsider.

In this particular situation we see the three interlocutors each position themselves as being in a similar “category” which is in opposition to the one that the job and status-aware people are a part of. Through the discussion, they each index their shared understanding by either overtly agreeing with Jeya (as Chitran does) or telling similar stories (as Mrs Chandran does) and thus enact membership of the same category (cf. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 79–80). But they also take different stances on topics such as the economic status of cleaners or about how much Tamil society has changed.

In their study of translanguaging in different complementary schools in the UK, Creese and Blackledge (2010) commented on the movement between languages by students and teachers to distance and align themselves from and with each other; and found that the teacher

sometimes uses bilingualism to “side” with the students. They said the class participants “used whatever signs and forms they had at their disposal to connect with one another, indexing disparate allegiances and knowledges and creating new ones” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 111). When talking about selective schools, Jeya uses Tamil to report the speech of the disapproving lady while she reports her own in English. Mrs Chandran’s use of English to mock other members of the community is a way of engaging in the multilingual space and assists her to create a sense of connectedness with the second-generation students’ identification positions (cf. Li Wei, 2011a, p. 1223). It is also a form of stylisation in that she exaggerates “representations of languages, dialects, and styles” that “lie outside her own habitual repertoire” (Rampton, 2009, p. 149). In addition, Jeya and Mrs Chandran are using performance, in particular irony, to indicate their stances (Butler, 1990, as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

During the course of fieldwork I witnessed or received comments about “other” sections of the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu community from participants. In this small diaspora community in one city of Australia, members are united by their cultural practices and participation in Tamil activities, but they also position themselves alongside particular identities within that community (for example, status-aware versus status-averse, traditional female versus progressive female, strictly Saivite versus flexible Saivite). This is also an indication of the shifts in the religion and culture that are occurring in the diaspora setting.

9.4 We don’t say thank you

In this last extract we see an example of the teacher explaining the reason behind a particular phenomenon of their ethnoreligious culture. It is notable because both the teacher and students laugh at the feature and can easily distance themselves from it – seen as something people in the homeland or recent arrivals would do, but once people have assimilated

into Australian society, they change the behaviour to fit in with Anglo-dominant social norms.

Data extract 9-4 We don't say thank you

26Jul15 Timecode: 00:36:49.500 - 00:38:11.600
Jeya, Meena, Mrs Chandran, Thiran

1 Mrs **een2 engkaTa camayam ippaTi irukku,**
Chandran: *why is our religion like this?*

2 **een2 ippaTi collak kuuTaa.**
why we shouldn't say like this?

3 **een2an2Taa avaiyal nin2aikkinam,**
because, they think

4 **ellaam iRaivan2 ceyal,**
everything is God's doing

5 **ellaam iRaivan2aala vazhangkappaTTathu,**
everything has been provided by God

6 **athukkum engkaLukkum thooTarpilla.**
there's no connection between that and us ((we are instruments of God))

7 **en2Ta veela dutya ceythiTTu pooka veeNTiyathu thaan.**
my work is to do my duty and go

8 **(.)no thank you kuuTa collak kuuTaatham.**
we shouldn't even say thank you.

9 **<athaana2 (sals-)**
that's why (sals-) ((no meaning))

10 **engkaTa engkaTa camayaththaakkaL paarungkoo**
our our look at the people who belong to our religion

11 **niingkaL nin2aippiingka**
you will think that

12 **(1.0) +ch↑i!+ n|an2Ri kuuTa collaatha can2am.**
chi! these people they can't even say thank you

13 Meena: [heh heh]

14 Jeya: [heh heh heh]

15 Mrs **<naan2↑ee nin2aichchirukkiRan2!**
Chandran: *even I have thought like that*

16 **(1.5) viLangkuthaa;**
do you understand?

17 **+chik!+ oru thank you illaatha can2am.**
chi! this is a group of people without any thank you

18 **engkaTa camayaththila,**
in our religion

19 thank you **collak kuuTaathu**
we shouldn't say thank you

20 **colla veeNTiya theevaiyee illai**
and there is no need to say it

21 **[een2 athu-]**
why that-

22 Jeya: [co- co- co-]
sa- sa- sa-

23 <collakkuuTaathu (0.3) en2Tilla>
it is not that we shouldn't say

24 but collath theevaiyillai
but there's no need to say

25 Mrs collath theeveella yeah
Chandran: no need to say yeah

26 viLangkuthaa.
do you understand?

27 <athaala naangkaL appaTi pazhakiiTTam=
that is the reason we have got used to it

28 Jeya: =aan2aa een2
but why

29 een2 theeveella
why don't we need?

30 Mrs een2 theeveella en2Taa
Chandran: the reason why it is not needed is

31 avaiyal nin2aikkin2am een2
they think

32 ippa naangkaL engkaTa camayam en2n2a ninaikkuthu en2Taa
now we what our religion thinks is

33 ellaam kaTavuLaala-
everything is being made by God*

34 (0.5) ceyyappaTuthu.

35 athukku naan2um niyum een2 thank you collooNum
for that why should I and you say thank you

36 Jeya: [appa:
then

37 (0.3) gratitude?]

38 Meena: [°just so stupid°]

39 Mrs aa?
Chandran: ah?

40 Jeya: heh [heh]

41 Meena: [I feel] polite n↓ow

42 Jeya: yeah gratitude

43 Mrs gratitudekku niingka en2n2a ceyyalaam?
Chandran: what can you do to show gratitude?

44 poothu nala ceevai ceyya veeNTum en2Tu colluthu.
it says you have to do service for common good

45 Meena: °I don't know° hh

46 Mrs +right?+
Chandran:

47 un2n2uTaiya theevai puurththiyaakin2oon2n2a
once your needs are met

48 yaar yaarukku en2n2a en2n2a theevaiyoo
who whoever has whatever needs are there

49 engkengka (paarththu) c↑ey

wherever, you have to (see and) do
 50 Jeya: **munthi cool- coolluvaangka**
 previously say, they would say
 51 thank you **con2n2aa athu**
 if you say thank you that
 52 **ungkaLukku** like **aaNavam**
 it would like inflate your pride it seems*
 53 inflate **paNNum en2Tu**
 54 [I think]
 55 Mrs [oo oo oo=]
 Chandran: yes yes yes
 56 Jeya: =oh okay (I remember)
 57 Mrs **a a athaala** thank you
 Chandran: ah ah because of that ((can't)) thank you
 58 no thank you,
 59 thank you **illa kai thaTTak kuuTaathu**
 no thank you shouldn't clap hands

In Lines 1 to 3 Mrs Chandran is asking in Tamil “why is our religion like this?”. She is referring to the fact that, as part of their religious ideology, the need to thank others is not as salient as it is in mainstream Australian society. She proceeds to provide a reason in Lines 4 to 8. Mrs Chandran explains how according to Saiva religious thinking we should all see ourselves as instruments of God, here to do our duty and move on. In that sense, people do not think they need to show appreciation to others, that a “thank you” is not necessary if we are merely fulfilling our duties. Note the use of *iRaivan2* for “God” in Line 4 – the teacher uses a number of different names,⁶⁰ including the aforementioned *kaTavuL*, for “God”. In Line 8 she uses the English *thank you* and, in Line 12, the Tamil equivalent *nan2Ri*. She also uses the Sri Lankan expression *chi* (similar to “yuck”) to show disapproval or disgust as part of enacting what “you” (as used in Line 11) would think about people who can’t even say thank you. The use of *chi* (or *chik* in Line 17) in Sri Lanka has a strong rhetorical effect as it is an expression uttered regularly by parents and can have a comic tone at times. In Line 12 Mrs Chandran displays her meta-

⁶⁰ The different names for God were sometimes used interchangeably but also carried different connotations.

awareness of her religious culture by considering that outsiders (or insiders like the students) may misunderstand them for not saying thank you. This enactment is received with laughter from Meena and Jeya in Lines 13 and 14.

In Line 15 Mrs Chandran admits that “even I have thought like that” thereby indexing her own “outsider” identification in this instance. She wants to check that the children understand why they don’t say thank you (in Line 16) so she repeats the main points in Lines 18 to 20. In Line 21, it seems like she commences to ask an information-seeking question to check students’ comprehension but she is interrupted by Jeya. Jeya has some false starts in Line 22, possibly searching for the correct form of the verb, *collakkuTaathu* (we shouldn’t say), and proceeds to make a clever distinction, delivered in Tamil, except for the English conjunction *but* to separate the two clauses in Line 24. Her inference is that there is no definite rule that we shouldn’t say thank you but saying thank you is obsolete when you are an instrument of God.

In Line 25 Mrs Chandran confirms that Jeya’s answer is correct and addresses the other students, Meena and Thiran, in Lines 26 and 27 to make sure they have understood. However, in Lines 28 and 29, Jeya then poses an information-seeking question in Tamil indicating that some further explanation is required. The teacher provides a response in Lines 30 to 35, reiterating that in our religion we see everything as made by God. This evokes a follow-up question from Jeya. She starts the question in Lines 36 and 37 but then pauses to catch what Meena is saying in Line 38. Mrs Chandran does not understand so initiates repair in Line 39. In Line 40, Jeya laughs at Meena’s comment, and Meena expands her point in Line 41, *I feel polite now*. It is not clear whether Meena’s *just so stupid* means she thinks the Saiva reasoning is stupid or whether she feels stupid for saying “thank you” often. Either way she is making a judgment of her own behaviour or of the practice.

In Line 42 Jeya repeats the word *gratitude* without any elaboration. I think the inference here is whether one can show gratitude for anything (life, family, good fortune etc.) based on this reasoning. In Lines 43 to 44 Mrs Chandran provides an answer saying that we show gratitude by working for the common good. Meena quietly responds to this in in Line 45 with *I don't know* followed by an exhalation, suggesting that she is not convinced by the teacher's answer. Mrs Chandran continues her explanation in Lines 46 to 49 starting with *right?* as a way of commanding students' attention. In Lines 50 to 54, Jeya recalls another reason for not saying thank you - that people used to say that being thanked might inflate your pride. Here she uses the compound verb *inflate paNNum* (to inflate). She ends her assertion with the English *I think* as a way of hedging. Mrs Chandran shows agreement with this point with repetitions of *oo* (yes) in Line 55. In Line 56, Jeya acknowledges Mrs Chandran's agreement with *oh* and follows it with *okay I remember*. In Lines 57 to 59, Mrs Chandran further acknowledges Jeya's reason and says we can't thank or clap hands. Here the "we" is inclusive of the interlocutors as part of the religious culture. Note how the teacher uses both the English *no* in Line 58 and the Tamil equivalent, *illa*, in Line 59 to repeat her point.

As has been highlighted through Chapters Eight and Nine the students are searching for deeper meanings and interpretations of the religion that increase its relevance to their lives. In this extract we see both the teacher and students explain why "we" don't say thank you and co-construct meaning and interpretation around why and how they do that. Through Jeya's discourse we see the agency of the young people in the classroom and a case where intergenerational transmission of the religion is not unidirectional (cf. Hopkins et al., 2011) as her statements about gratitude and pride enlighten and remind the teacher about aspects of this particular phenomenon. The following interview extract shows how rewarding finding meaning can be for the students:

Interview extract 9-3

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:13:00.520

Meena: 'cause I find a lot of things we do in like our Hindu culture just so pointless like it's all very kept in the older generation. no one's passed down anything it's very like rigmarole like they tell you to do something you do it but you don't actually understand why you do anything

Jeya: and then when you do understand why, it's like wo(h)w heh it's so like

Meena: it makes much more sense, there's lots of purpose, like it makes it much more purposeful for you to do it

Jeya: and you you you get more benefits from it as well

Meena: and you become more part of it the culture, I guess in a sense it makes you more connected to it

Meena's sentiment in the first line is one that has been expressed in previous interview extracts, but what is new here is that Jeya and Meena then discuss the benefits of understanding the reasoning behind their religious culture, which, in terms of the goals of religious maintenance for the next generation, are certainly promising. Meena's last line about feeling part of the culture again signals that while these students want to question, criticise and challenge, they are still very keen to engage with their culture and ethnoreligious community.

This linguistic extract provides an insight into Tamil Saivite culture. Despite the declaration about the practice of not thanking or clapping, I regularly observed such actions in the temple spaces and broader Tamil Saivite community. Thus this particular practice does not strictly delineate in-group membership. At the same time *nan2Ri* (thank you in Tamil), while in use, was not uttered at the same frequency that people might use "thank you" in wider Australian society. These signs of "thanking" could indicate that the practice has changed gradually over time with the influence of other cultures. The use of English "thank you" is universally recognised and the teacher and students' time in post-colonial Sri Lanka and Australia has conditioned them to its use. So while I have stated that the speakers are, at times, indexing a more outsider

position by laughing at this religio-cultural practice, it is more accurate to say that they are doing so as insiders of the community. As Jeya and Meena stress, it is important for them to understand the basis of the religious and cultural practices even if it is one they won't personally follow in all situations.

To end the discussion, I want to highlight that in addition to challenging, there were also occasions when the students defended their religion and culture. Meena and Jeya referred to times when they were faced with questions, and ignorance, from outsiders about Hinduism. Such questions had the effect of essentialising the students as "Hindus" which caused them to align with their Hindu identification in order to defend the religion. Thus, as Meena stated in the last line of the previous interview extract, when she understands the religion she feels a part of it, and thus, can explain it to outsiders. An example is given in the extract below:

Interview extract 9-4

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:35:50.266-

Meena: like if I go for () and stuff I go to church all the time (). um so someone asked me about Hinduism, why do you have so many gods? you have

Jeya: I'm like

Meena: but it's like I don't actually know how to explain this

Jeya: and peop- and peop- and people judge based on that. or like when or like people who are not Hindus, they be like why do you put like cow poo on your foreheads.

 (irrelevant lines omitted)

Jeya: because the cow yeah and it's it's kinda annoying because it's such a it's such a deep religion

Meena points out that she's not sure how to simply explain some aspects of Hinduism to outsiders and Jeya shows frustration when people diminish Hinduism to wearing "cow poo". Note Jeya's use of the invariant habitual be in *they be like why do you put that cow poo on your foreheads?* which indexes the influence of African American Vernacular English in

her repertoire (cf. Rickford, 2014). The extract shows the complexity of self-identification for the second-generation members. As insiders they want to question and challenge the contradictions of aspects they see as dated, materialistic and meaningless in the religion. But as insiders, they also need to explain and justify the meaning and depth of the religion to non-Hindus (and perhaps even to other members of their own Tamil community). At the same time, the best-case second-generation members also step closer towards an outsider positioning in order to criticise aspects of their religion and culture, and judge it by standards which are a result of their exposure to the thinking of other cultures (in other words, the syncretic act). As the final interview extract shows below, despite their criticisms, the students respect what the religion offers:

Interview extract 9-5

19Sep15 Jeya and Meena Timecode: 00:41:01.498

Meena: it's very um, it's like one thing I've learnt by Hinduism

Jeya: two points of the-

Meena: it's not very, it's not just oh theologised. it's not something people make up,

Jeya: it's not a hypothesis

Meena: it's not like yeah. it's not something, maybe it's true maybe it's not true. it is actually true

Jeya: it's actually true yeah it actually makes sense

This extract points to Jeya's quote at the beginning of Section 8.3 – the students see the religion as having scientific and philosophical bases, and through these frameworks they can find meaning in Saivism, and, use such frameworks to communicate about the religion with out-group members. Through Jeya's discourse in this chapter, we can see how she respects, defends, challenges and rejects aspects of her ethnoreligious culture, and we've seen cases where translanguaging has helped her to do so. In the words of Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 29), translanguaging

has allowed her to “establish identity positions that were both oppositional to, and encompassing of, institutional values”.

9.5 Conclusions

In this final results chapter, I have highlighted how the students and teacher use language strategically and creatively to challenge and criticise aspects of the ethnoreligious community and culture, and, to position their own beliefs and identities within the same community and culture. We see much evidence that the best-case-scenario students are not unquestioning of the religion. They adopt a strategy for negotiating their religious position which is between “compliance” and “challenge” (cf. Hopkins et al., 2011). Perhaps because they are best-case-scenario children they have a strong awareness of when it is important to be compliant (for the sake of the first generation) and when they can push the boundaries and be more challenging.

In “cooking is for girls” we see the use of humour to challenge the traditional roles relegated to women in the ethnoreligious culture. The subversive aspect of the humour is enabled through Jeya’s use of English to direct her progressive comments to Thiran and not the teacher. In “kind of agnostic” we see Jeya attempt to resolve her beliefs about God through a belief narrative with reference to the words of her aunty. In this, and the extract on “status and smart(ness)” she uses Tamil to report the speech of the first-generation (and somewhat judgmental) character and English to report her own speech and reactions. In contrast, Mrs Chandran uses English to play less desirable characters inside and outside the community as a way of distancing herself from their speech, and Tamil to report her own opinions. We see aspects of performance and stylisation in such discourse.

Jeya uses narratives, embedded interactions, in “kind of agnostic” and “status and smart(ness)” as part of a search for authenticity. In both these extracts it is evident that that positioning oneself in reference to other

members of the community is an important aspect of the discourse. As part of this, the participants use language to “side” with each other and index their belonging to the same category. Much of the time, this occurs in English. They criticise those who place value on status and selective schools and place themselves in opposition to them.

In “we don’t say thank you” we see all participants take a gentler approach to this aspect of their ethnoreligious culture. When they laugh at the phenomena of not saying thank you, it is not to mock others, but to participate in an “in-joke” and index their “insider” understanding of this particular practice. There is a balance of Tamil and English features used by Mrs Chandran and Jeya in this extract, and evidence of the interlocutors co-constructing an interpretation of why this practice occurs in their community.

Through the extracts we see how the students utilise the teacher as a religious advisor to inform about what is “correct” Saiva practice but at the same time, feel safe to reveal truths even if they do not conform to the best-case scenario. The teacher’s acceptance of the students’ questions points to her flexible approach to religious interpretation and to their translanguaging practices.

I provided some examples from Jeya and Meena of when they are called to defend or explain their religion. While the class data highlights how they question and critique aspects of ethnoreligious practice and culture, and even identify as agnostics at times, we also see much evidence of their self-understanding and positionings as Tamil Saivites. While Davie (1994) wrote of the occurrence of believing without belonging, Meena and Jeya’s varying stances indicate that they could be “belonging without believing” at some points. They very much want to belong and associate with the Tamil Saivite community even if they do not want to take on many of the associated practices and beliefs.

10Chapter 10 – Conclusions

This thesis makes a contribution to the study of the sociology of language and religion, specifically, to the study of non-Christian religious institutions that cater to migrants, and to the phenomenon of faith transmission in this context via organised religious education. What it supports is the notion that religion is a significant but under-recognised factor in the study of language maintenance for migrants. In other words, language issues are core to one's experience of faith and play a crucial role in the second and future generation's relationship to their faith. The study also makes a contribution to our understanding of the heterogeneity of religion in Australia and shows the significant role that migrant religious institutions play in the settlement and adaptation of migrants to the host country.

As a conclusion to the study, this chapter will address each of the three key research questions outlined in the methodology. This will be followed by a discussion of some enduring questions that have come out of the findings. Lastly, I will conclude with the main contributions this study makes to our understanding of religion and language in Australia, and possibly, in the new globalised world.

10.1 The role of Tamil in a Tamil Hindu temple in Australia

Through an investigation of the functional distribution of language in the formal and informal activities of the temple, it was found that Tamil is the first language of the Saiva Temple and thus provides a potential domain for Tamil language maintenance for first and subsequent generations of Tamil migrants. While Sanskrit, as in India and Sri Lanka, is still the language used for formal Hindu ceremony, Tamil also has a religious function in that a repertoire of hymns and prayers are recited as a core part of worship, based on the canonical Tamil Saivite literature. Furthermore Tamil is used for much interpersonal communication in the

temple space, such as casual conversation between Tamil devotees (predominantly of the first generation), and for formal announcements, cultural events and religious lectures. A significant amount of religious and temple publications are also written in Tamil.

However there are signs of English being adopted to cater for two main changes in the diaspora context. The first is due to the fact that Hindu migration into Australia has rapidly increased since the temple's consecration, and given the Saiva Temple is located in an area popular with South Asian migrants, it has become a hub for newly arrived Hindu and even non-Hindu South Asians. This presents a challenge to upholding the Tamil medium for communication in the temple. Many of the new devotees are from North India and are not familiar with Tamil or even Saivism. Languages like Hindi and Gujarati are becoming more audible in the temple space. While it is fairly straightforward for devotees from these different ethnolinguistic groups to adopt English as the lingua franca on an interpersonal level, they require a knowledge of Tamil to access some of the temple's programs and resources including the religious school. The second change in the diaspora is the disengagement of the second generation which can manifest as a rejection of the heritage language, culture and religion. The temple board sees this as another reason to provide some communication in English, so as to cater for those second or third-generation members who are not proficient in Tamil. Thus, it is now normal practice to have Tamil and English bilingual signage and notices in the temple space.

Despite the two pressures for change in the temple's language policy, for now, the board is continuing with an unofficial policy of Tamil for communication where possible. This indexes the strong language-religion ideology (LRI) that is evident in the temple. Since Tamil and Saivism have a very strong connection in Sri Lanka, and Tamil Saivism has its own canonical literature upon which practice is based, the language and

religion are seen to represent one identity and the culture is viewed as inextricably tied to the religion. Therefore it is understandable that first-generation members, especially those in leadership positions, attempt to uphold this strong connection in the practice of the religion in Australia. In this regard we can see that both religion and language act as core values for Tamil Saivites (cf. Smolicz, 1981). The recent history for Tamils in Sri Lanka carries much weight in the transference of the LRI to the diaspora. The discriminatory Sinhala Only policy, the ethnic tension played out between the army and LTTE in the civil war, reports of ongoing injustices for Tamils post-war and the increasing Buddhist chauvinism, which has resulted in persecution of other religions, are some of the issues in the minds of those Tamils who have left Sri Lanka. With a heightened sense of a language, religion and ethnicity under threat in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Tamils in the diaspora seek to ensure that these aspects of their collective identity are able to thrive and continue in the next generation.

Having said that, it is important to highlight the different voices in the temple space which point to varying perspectives on the LRI for the Saiva Temple. In the context of ensuring the long-term survival of the temple I heard from those, in leadership and in the congregation, who saw language as a practical consideration in the transmission of faith to the next generation. They argued that if the young are shifting to English in increasing numbers, then the religion could make adaptations in line with this. Such views indicate that some do not see the LRI, the sacrality or invariability of Tamil, to be as strong. However, for the best-case-scenario children in the Saiva School, their voices reflect a strong LRI and the critical role of Tamil as the language of belonging to their community. We must remember, though, that these best-case-scenario children are the minority in the second generation. While there are many children who attend the temple periodically and can speak Tamil, they do not

necessarily view the link between the two as critical to their faith or to their identity.

10.2 The linguistic practices employed by the second generation in the Saiva Temple

Through an in-depth investigation of the discourse in the Year 9 class at Greenfields Saiva School we saw how the Saiva Temple is facilitating language and religious maintenance for the small number of students in its Tamil-medium religious school. While the data revealed that English was the dominant language in students' speech (segmented into intonation units), roughly 30% contains Tamil or a mix of Tamil and English.

For these best-case-scenario students a significant amount of translanguaging is occurring in the classroom and this is the result of the safe and multilingual space co-created by Mrs Chandran, Chitran, Jeya, Meena, Raja and Thiran. Analysis of the linguistic extracts has shown that the participants' repertoires are individual, resulting from their various biographies and migration trajectories, and show the influence of hybridity and the religious context. Like Harris (2006) found in the urban context of London, the Sri Lankan Tamil teenagers in a cosmopolitan centre of Australia are multilingual, applying the use of their residual and locally acquired linguistic markers. While I have used the generic language labels of Tamil and English, I note that different varieties are evident in the participants' repertoires such as General Australian English, Sri Lankan English, African American Vernacular English, Written Tamil, Spoken Tamil, Sri Lankan Tamil, Jaffna Tamil and Indian Tamil.

By adopting linguistic ethnographic principles and methods such as Conversation Analysis some particular linguistic practices for the second generation were highlighted. The strong LRI for these students is indexed by the use of Tamil features for the discussion of the religion, such as to

name Tamil Saiva concepts like gods or to discuss the detail of particular rituals. The significance of the culture is also indexed by the use of Tamil to refer to kinship relations or to cultural concepts like food and clothing.

The students display multicompetence and symbolic competence in applying translanguaging as part of cooperation to achieve mutual comprehension, but also as part of subversion, sometimes simultaneously. In this way, English is often adopted by the students for clarification, to check comprehension, to discuss complex issues or to play. However to accurately convey meaning to the teacher, the students must strategically use Tamil as well as English, to cater for her lower English proficiency. The students, at times, use the teacher's lower proficiency to their advantage in order to make jokes or word plays which display their bilingual skills and creativity. However their plays are not malicious towards the teacher and they even temper their responses as part of face threat minimisation and repair, and, as part of their respect for their elder in accordance with Tamil cultural practice.

It is through the strategic application of monolingual and translanguaging speech that effective communication is achieved in this classroom. Having said that, there were examples of when complete comprehension between the teacher and students was not possible through translanguaging, say over the meaning of a particular word, but this did not necessarily affect the overall discussion to the point that participants were regularly confused. In other examples, students had their questions only partially answered or some detail was lost as a result of the imbalance in proficiencies between teacher and students. However it is argued that translanguaging could actually have enhanced understanding in these situations rather than have impeded it. We also saw that, sometimes, monolingual units of speech were applied for the purposes of efficient communication such as when the students wanted to provide opinions and reactions in a quick or excited manner. What the translanguaging practice

did enable, apart from helping to convey a fuller message, was that it engaged the students in meaningful discussions and allowed for a more dynamic exchange than staying with a monolingual medium. As Mrs Chandran put it, the students would get bored if the whole lesson was in Tamil. Like the findings of Creese and Blackledge (2015, p. 33) in a Panjabi school in the UK, my study shows that translanguaging has the “potential to deepen understandings and sociopolitical engagement, develop critical thinking, and extend metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic flexibility”.

This study found that the Year 9 classroom is a safe space and therefore the students feel comfortable to draw on English features as they want, despite the Tamil-medium. Han’s (2013) study found that, in the religious domain, balanced bilingualism or parallel monolingualism are no longer necessary aspirations for language maintenance, and translanguaging is now the legitimate code. The evidence in this thesis suggests that what is more important to provide for these children, given the problems of declining religious engagement, is a multilingual space, rather than a site for Tamil-only language practices. In that way, Mrs Chandran is influential in creating this space, and we have seen examples of her own translanguaging behaviour, as a way of accommodating her students, but also as an indication of common first-generation language practices. She and the students have struck a sustainable balance of language use. The space allows the students to evoke their hybrid identities freely, and in this freedom, the fact that they are still defaulting to Tamil for “talking Saivism” is a sign of their strong LRI and therefore, of the temple assisting language maintenance.

10.3 The relevance of the Tamil language and Hindu religion in the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils in Australia

This particular research question was addressed through a multi-pronged methodology for the purposes of triangulation of the data. We saw how

students view and engage with the language and religion in their interview and questionnaire answers. But we also saw how they use language to form their identities around the Tamil language and culture and Saiva religion in the classroom discourse. In the words of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), the use of language is an act of identity, whereby language offers the means to talk about identity as well as the features through which one can index identity (Tabouret-Keller, 1997).

One gets a sense of the pride in ethnicity for these five students. This could be a result of all the issues in Sri Lanka listed in Section 10.1 which have impacted on Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the extent that the fervour to maintain the culture is instilled in the next generation. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has a particularity because members draw from a Global Tamilness, fostered by the Tamil stronghold in Tamil Nadu, as well as connections to Sri Lanka and their various host nations (Burgio, 2016). While Canagarajah (2012b) found that for his participants, whose degree of religious engagement was not specified, a strong knowledge of the language was not critical, it is a different story for the students in this study. The Saiva students seek to use more than “linguistic tokens” (cf. Canagarajah, 2012b) and instead aim for proficiency in the Tamil language for a variety of reasons: to be accepted as a “full” member of the ethnoreligious community, to connect to and understand the Saiva religion, to use as the lingua franca with Tamil transnational relatives and members of the older generation, to participate in Tamil cultural arts via learning music or dance, and to engage in Tamil media and popular culture.

Through the linguistic extracts we saw examples of the students’ search for meaning in the religion and for authenticity between the teachings of the religion and what their own practices and beliefs are. As part of the process of searching, they adopted Tamil and English features in strategic ways to signal their allegiance with Tamil and Hindu practices, but also to

distance themselves at times. Thus, they exhibited criticality of the Tamil Saivite community and of outsiders through the use of translanguaging. They questioned the usefulness of some received religious and sociocultural practices and thereby displayed their ability to be independent-minded and not completely obedient best-case-scenario students.

However this questioning was executed in slightly different ways. For Chitran, Jeya and Meena, they took an approach of challenging their beliefs through directly questioning what they observed and experienced. Raja and Thiran, however, took a more compliant strategy of being well-behaved and doing what their parents asked, but engaging in subversive humour and play in the classroom to exhibit some criticality. The fact that students are engaged, thinking independently, debating and questioning, is something of an achievement for the Saiva School because it shows how the second generation is making the language, religion and culture work for them, adapting these features of identity to suit their new paths in Australia not forged prior by their parents. As they enter their senior years of high school they may, like their predecessors, stop attending the Saiva School, but their foundation in the language, religion and culture is at an adequately strong level and it is predicted, but not proven, that they will maintain these features into adulthood.

The class members use both English and Tamil to engage in positioning and identification work, both in their discourse, and in their membership of various communities of practice. The students also used belief narratives to position their beliefs according to what others in their ethnoreligious community practiced. Jeya and Meena, who identified as agnostics at times, were still keen to participate in some Saiva practices and in the temple community. In the case of Chitran, his interest in the doctrines outlined in the Bhagavad Geeta was accompanied by an interest in the scientific bases of Hinduism. Through these acts of syncretism, the

students aligned with the Saiva religion and community to a degree, but they did not necessarily “believe” in the same way as each other or as members of the larger ethnoreligious community. The solidarity and distance they feel when discussing religious practice and the actions of some members of the community is reflected in the hybridised language practices they use. In this case the dichotomy of insider and outsider is not always applicable. What the students show us is that it is only through their insider membership that they can step “outside” to view Tamil culture and religion more critically, however ultimately, they construct their commentary as insiders or those that are familiar with this community of practice.

In summary, the translanguaging practices of the students indicate that the Tamil language and Hindu religion are significant components of their self-understanding. These young Sri Lankan Tamils form a community of practice which is characterised by its syncretism of different perspectives and frameworks in order to conceive Tamil language, Saiva religion, Tamil culture and Tamil identity according to their contemporary existences in Australia.

10.4 Directions for future research

This study focused on the experiences of a small number of best-case-scenario children in the specific context of a Saiva temple in Australia. There are many similarities, but also some differences in their opinions and practices to those Sri Lankan Tamil subjects in previous research. For example, the youth studied by Canagarajah (2012b) were not described as a best-case sample and focused on other markers of identity such as dress or participation in Tamil events with language being adopted more tokenistically. The young Tamil Saivites studied in Lytra et al. (2016b) are more similar to the Year 9 students in that they are highly involved in Tamil religion and culture, however, they belong to a younger age group (under 10). Therefore the interests and aspirations of the Year 9 students

lead to different approaches to the religion and culture due to their age and longer exposure to mainstream schooling and wider society. All of these studies indicate the possibility of diverse interpretations of Tamilness for young Sri Lankan Tamils across the West but a shared identity as Tamil nonetheless. The wider lesson from my own study is that best-case-scenario second-generation migrants are on one end of a spectrum of engagement with religion and culture. In this community of practice, members are abiding by the strong LRI but are not indiscriminate in their use of Tamil language or in their religious education. In this way, my study makes a contribution to the study of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and the trajectories of Sri Lankan Tamils who are raised in the West.

As this study ends with the Year 9 students, aged 14 or 15, leaving the Saiva School to focus on their high school senior years, a longitudinal study which follows teens into their post-secondary years would help inform what happens to language, religious and cultural practice in the young adult years, a time of much change for second-generation members. This could include a study of practices in Tamil and/or Hindu student organisations at universities and in religious institutions. Such a study would supplement the aforementioned research on youth and provide a picture of the life cycle of identification practices for second-generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the diaspora.

This Saiva Temple study has opened the question of what will happen to language policy in the temple into the future. While we have seen that the unofficial policy reflects a fairly strong LRI for Tamil and Saivism, future research could investigate whether and how this changes for the purposes of adaptation and survival. A study into the systematic adaptation of a Hindu religious institution's language policy in a diaspora setting would make a significant contribution to the sociology of language and religion. It could supplement the work of scholars like Woods (2004) by providing a

case study of language policy for non-Christian religious institutions in the West.

Finally, the analysis of linguistic data in this thesis has not focused on the grammatical and syntactical patterns of translanguaging by the religious students. In particular, an analysis of the varieties of Tamil and the standard versus non-standard usage of language would help to build a picture of variation and contact for the “Sri Lankan Tamil language” in Australia. In Owodally’s (2011, p. 147). study of multilingual practices in Sunni madrassahs in Mauritius, she raised the point that the madrassah became a site where Mauritius Creole was being stretched “to create a hybrid code that responds to the linguistic, communicative, and religious needs” of the religious community. An analysis of the morpho-syntactic composition of language in the Tamil Saivite classroom would assist in identifying whether the translanguaging practices are indeed providing a new form of Tamil in Australia. Such a study could also provide evidence to inform whether speakers are consciously adhering to the boundaries of “named” languages (cf. Otheguy et al., 2015) and whether they are consciously strategic in the use of their repertoires to index certain identifications.

10.5 Final points

This thesis has drawn a picture of aspects of migration and settlement for one small collection of people in Australia, Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus. Through the lens of adaptation and hybridisation we see that the Tamil language and the Tamil Saivite religion and culture are undergoing change in the Australian context.

One of the biggest changes for the practice of the Tamil Saivite religion in the diaspora is the new role that has evolved for the temple or religious institution. Templeisation describes the growing importance of the temple over the home as a site for religious practice in the migration context

(Baumann, 2009). From the uncertainty and potential trauma that comes with migration for Sri Lankan Tamils, the temple has become a centre for newly arrived migrants to gather. It is a site where first-generation members focus their energies towards language, religious, cultural and identity maintenance for themselves and for their children. The temple therefore performs a variety of roles not assigned to it in the homeland.

One of the roles for the diaspora temple is to transmit religion, and while this study has shown that the Saiva Temple's schools are small and relatively flexible in pedagogy, there is much activity, organisation and effort invested in providing a religious foundation for the next generation. As several first-generation members said to me, the objective is to plant the seed of knowledge while the second generation is young, in the hope that it will give them a point of reference in their hybridised existences in Australia. This thesis has shown the pivotal role that the Saiva Temple, and potentially other Tamil Hindu temples, plays in not only providing a "Tamil oasis" but as a cultural institution for the transmission of Tamilness to the next generation.

A key part of this transmission is of course, language, and my findings agree with those of Han (2013) in that the religious institution is one of, if not the, most important spaces, other than homes, for young people to learn and use their heritage language. In fact, given the Saiva students' reported language use in the home, we could argue that the temple and Saiva School, at times, surpass the home, as a site for Tamil language use and maintenance. The language practices in the Year 9 Saiva classroom show that the reality, however, is far from a Tamil Only scenario, and that translanguaging is the norm.

While this thesis has shown the value of translanguaging for communication, identification and syncretic acts for the second generation, it cannot solve the problem of long-term Tamil language

maintenance in Australia. Rather it shows the potential trajectory for heritage language use amongst future generations as Tamil moves between the scenarios of full or pure language maintenance and complete language shift. This recalls Otheguy et al.'s (2015) view of translanguaging, where language maintenance is not seen as an attempt to "preserve a pure, well-bounded and essential collection of lexical and structural features, but rather a cultural-linguistic complex of multiple idiolects and translanguaging practices that the community finds valuable" (p. 299). The Saiva students' translanguaging behaviour is forging the path for new ways at looking at the goals of Tamil language maintenance in Australia. In this way, the Saiva Temple is a highly valuable institution for providing a translanguaging space and for assisting in the identity development, and one could argue, social and emotional wellbeing, of its young people. Thus we see the importance of societal support for such migrant religious institutions in Australia.

In terms of sociolinguistic theory, this thesis has contributed to our understanding of the concept of translanguaging. Creese and Blackledge (2015, p. 29) assessed that the concepts of creativity and criticality are fundamental to the translanguaging space yet are "underexplored dimensions of multilingual practices". This study has provided examples and examinations of these concepts in a religious education context. In addition, in the past, research on translanguaging has tended to investigate the phenomenon at the turn-level without much close analysis of the composition of each turn. In this study I took an approach of systematically coding intonation units of speech in one of the Saiva lessons and I numerically analysed the distribution of linguistic features and question forms. In this way, I have provided a model for analysis that incorporates a holistic quantitative overview as a basis for qualitative discussion. As scholars, this also allows us to distinguish between what is monolingual speech and what is mixed speech in a translanguaging turn. The benefit of this is that it supports an argument about the high-level of

knowledge and multicompetence in language exhibited by its speakers. And this in turn, allows sociolinguists to provide evidence of the skilfulness displayed in repertoires that “deviate from the imagined standardized norm” and are “characterized by language contact and language change” in societies where a monolingual (English) mindset is dominant (Piller, 2016, p. 29).

In what he calls a challenge for “Post-Multilingualism”, Li Wei (2016, p. 7) asks how, in these late modern, globalised and super-diverse times, we can “protect the identity and integrity of individual languages whilst recognizing and promoting the fluidity of linguistic diversity and contact between languages”. I believe that the Year 9 Saiva students provide us with some ideas for doing this, in forging paths that syncretise their religious and linguistic knowledge to form new religious interpretations, belief positions and language practices, whilst still remaining protective of and true to their Tamilness and, when necessary, to maintaining the integrity of the Tamil language. I believe that further research that examines language issues in diaspora religions may unlock evidence to help our understanding of how hybridisation can, in fact, strengthen one’s sense of identity and belonging, and also their commitment to their heritage religion and language.

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12 Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1 – Survey of temple devotees

1. Please place a tick ✓ next to your age group:

<input type="checkbox"/> 18-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 80-89
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 60-69	<input type="checkbox"/> 90-99
<input type="checkbox"/> 40-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 70-79	

2. Who did you come to the temple with today? Please place a tick ✓ next to your answers:

<input type="checkbox"/> Husband/wife/partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Children
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents	<input type="checkbox"/> Relatives
	<input type="checkbox"/> Brother/sister

3. Your place of birth: City _____ Country _____

4. If you were born overseas, please write the year you migrated to Australia: _____

5. What is your first language? (the first language you learnt to speak, the language you spoke at home as a child) _____

6. What languages do you speak at home now? (in order of most often (1) to least often (4)):

1. _____	4. _____
2. _____	
3. _____	

7. What other languages do you speak? _____

8. What language/s do you prefer to use when you pray? _____

9. What year did you start coming to the Sydney Murugan Temple? _____

10. How often do you visit the Sydney Murugan Temple? Place a tick ✓ next to your answer:

<input type="checkbox"/> Once a week or more
<input type="checkbox"/> Once a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/> Once a month
<input type="checkbox"/> Every few months
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 4 times a year

11. Is the Sydney Murugan temple the Hindu temple that you visit most often?
_____Yes _____No. If no, please write the name of your main
temple:_____

12. Why do you choose to visit the Sydney Murugan Temple? Place a tick ✓
next to your answer (you can choose more than one):

___It's close to my home	___I want to meet other people from my
___My friends come here	country of birth
___My family comes here	___I can practice my culture
___I prefer to worship Lord Murugan	___I can speak my mother tongue
___There are activities for my children	___There is a good canteen here

13. What suburb do you live in? _____

12.2 Appendix 2 – Transliteration system

The system I have adopted is based on the Tamil Unicode Page (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.-b) which draws from a scheme devised by Prof. Harold Schiffman.

Tamil letter	Roman letter	Notes (see Keane, 2004)
அ	a	
ஆ	aa	
இ	i	
ஈ	ii	
உ	u	
ஊ	uu	
எ	e	
ஏ	ee	
ஐ	ai	
ஒ	o	
ஔ	oo	
ஔ	au	
க்	k	
ங்	ng	
ச்	c, ch	
ஞ்	nj	
ட்	T, d	
ண்	N	velar nasal
த்	th	
ந்	n, nd	alveolar nasal
ப்	p, b	
ம்	m	
ய்	y	
ர்	r	rhotic liquid
ல்	l	alveolar lateral approximant
வ்	v	retroflex lateral approximant
ழ்	zh	central retroflex approximant
ள்	L	
ற்	R	rhotic liquid
ன்	n2	alveolar nasal
Grantha ⁶¹		
ஸ்	s	
ஷ்	sh	
ஹ்	h	
ஜ்	j	
கஷ்	ksh	

⁶¹ Incorporating Sanskrit consonants into Tamil alphabet

12.3 Appendix 3 – Sample transcript inclusive of Tamil script

Bhagavad Geeta (from Section 8.3.3)

- 01 transcript@Chitran அந்த Bhagavath Geethaல// ஒரு thing சொல்லுது//
அந்த கடவுள்// நாங்கள் வழிபடுற சிவன் சக்தி பிள்ளையார்// அவங்களெல்லாம் form//
கடவுளுடைய form// அவங்களையெல்லாம் வழிபட கூடாது என்று// சொல்லியிருக்குது// அந்த
உண்மையான like// the God// உருவமில்லாத God தான் வழிபட வேண்டும் என்று// Bhagavath
Geetha சொல்லுது// அது அந்த formஅ வழிபட்டா// பாவம் என்று சொல்லுது//
00:56:27.556 - 00:56:50.813
- 02 translit@Chitran anthaBhagavath Geethala oru thing
colluthu antha kaTavuL naangkaL vazhipaTuRa civan2 cakthi
piLLaiyaar avangkLellaam form kaTavuLuTaiya form.
avankaLaiyellaam vazhipaTa kuuTaathu en2Tu colliyirukkuthu antha
uNmaiyaan2a like the God uruvamillaatha God thaana2 vazhipaTa
veeNTum en2Tu Bhagavath Geetha colluthu. athu antha forma
vazhipaTTaa paavam en2Tu colluthu
00:56:27.556 - 00:56:50.813
- 03 translation@Chitran in that Bhagavad Geetha there's a
thing which says that God whom we worship Shiva Sakthi Pillaiyar
all of them form God's form. It's said that you shouldn't worship
them. you should worship the true God. like the God that doesn't
have any form. That's what the Bhagavad Geetha is saying that if
you worship that form it said that is a sin.
00:56:27.556 - 00:56:50.813
- 04 transcript@Jeya really// பாவம்//
00:56:50.813 - 00:56:51.821
- 05 translit@Jeya really paavam (Aust. accent)
00:56:50.813 - 00:56:51.821
- 06 translation@Jeya really? sin?
00:56:50.813 - 00:56:51.821
- 07 transcript@Mrs Chandran பாவம் என்று இல்ல// எங்களுக்கு ஒரு வளர்ச்சி
கிடைக்காதம்மா// இப்ப நீங்கள்// சும்மா போய் இது// கடவுள் இது கடவுள் இது கடவுள் என்டா//
உங்களுக்கு// உலகமே விளங்காதெல்லே//
00:56:51.602 - 00:57:00.239
- 08 translit@Mrs Chandran paavam en2Tu illa engkaLukku oru
vaLarcci kiTaikkaathammaa. ippa niingkaL cummaa pooy ithu kaTavuL
ithu kaTavuL ithu kaTavuL en2Taa ungkaLukku ulakamee
viLangkaathellee
00:56:51.602 - 00:57:00.239
- 09 translation@Mrs Chandran it's not sin. we won't have a
growth darling. Now if you just go and say this is God this is
God this is God you won't understand the world isn't it?
00:56:51.602 - 00:57:00.239
- 10 transcript@Mrs Chandran சில பேர் என்ன செய்வாங்க என்டா// கோயில்ல
போய் ஒன்றுமே// பண்ணமாட்டாங்க//

00:57:00.239 - 00:57:03.912

11 translit@Mrs Chandran cila peer en2n2a ceycaangka en2Taa
kooyilla pooy on2Tumee paNNamaaTTaangka

00:57:00.239 - 00:57:03.912

12 translation@Mrs Chandran what some people do is they go to
the temple and do nothing

00:57:00.239 - 00:57:03.912

12.4 Appendix 4 – Guide to transcription symbols

The use of transcription symbols is largely based on the work of Schegloff (n.d.).

MEANING	SYMBOL
Temporal and sequential relationships	
1. Intonation unit	New line
1. Overlapping or simultaneous talk	[]
2. Latching – can be between different speakers or if the two lines connected by the equal signs are by the same speaker, then there was a continuous utterance with no pause, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk	=
3. Pause, timed	(0.5)
4. Micropause (less than or equal to 2/10 of a second)	(.)
Speech delivery	
5. Prolonged or stretched sound (the sound preceding the colon). The more colons, the longer the stretching. NB. Graphically stretching a word on the page by inserting blank spaces between letters does <u>not</u> necessarily indicate how it was pronounced; it is used to allow alignment with overlapping talk.	: ::
6. Cut-off or self-interruption	-
7. Talk between symbols is compressed or rushed	> <
8. Talk between symbols is slow or drawn out	< >
9. Jump-started talk (sounds like it starts with a rush)	<
10. Soft or quiet speech. The degree sign indicates that the talk following it was soft or if there are two degree signs, the talk between them is markedly softer than the talk around it.	° ° °
Prosody	
11. Final intonation	.
12. Rising intonation	?
13. Continuing intonation	,
14. Between rising & continuing intonation	¿
15. Inflected falling intonation contour	__:
16. Inflected rising intonation contour	: :
17. Sharp rise in pitch	↑
18. Sharp fall in pitch	↓
19. Stress or emphasis (the more underlining, the greater the emphasis).	word word
20. Loud talk (enclosed by plus signs).	+word word+
Hearable aspiration/breathing (h – the more h's the more aspiration)	
21. Breathing or laughing within a word	Wo(h)rd
22. Inhalation	.hh
23. Exhalation	hh
Metatranscription	
24. Transcriber's description of events	((words))
25. Uncertainty of what is said but represents a likely possibility.	(word)
26. Unintelligible	()
Participation	
27. Speaker/turn attribution	Initials:
28. Unidentified speaker	():
29. Uncertain speaker	(Initials):
Extra symbols I have added	
30. Laughing word	heh
31. Smile quality	£
32. Click (in voice)	.t
33. Exclamatory utterance	!

12.5 Appendix 5 – Year 9 student questionnaire

Your name: _____

1. What year were you born? _____
2. Were you born in Australia? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, please write the name of the town or city _____
3. If you were born overseas, please write the city and the country where you were born. City _____ Country _____
4. If you were born overseas, what year did you come to Australia?

5. What suburb do you live in? _____
6. What school do you go to? _____
7. What year are you in at school? Year _____
8. What languages can you speak? _____

9. If you are learning any languages at school, please write them here

10. People you live with - Who do you live with at home? Place a tick ✓ in the box next to the people you live with:

Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sister	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brother	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandmother	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandfather	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cousin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

11. When you speak Tamil at home - How often do you speak **Tamil** with the people who live in your home? Place a tick ✓ in the relevant column for each person you live with. If they do not live with you, then just leave it blank.

Person	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sister/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brother/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grandmother/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grandfather/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aunt/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uncle/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cousin/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. When you speak Tamil outside your home - how often do you speak **Tamil** with people outside of your home? Place a tick ✓ in the relevant column for each person you live with. If you do not have any contact with a group then just leave it blank.

Group	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Tamil friends your age					
Tamil cousins					
Aunts and Uncles					
Grandparents					
Tamil priests at temple					
Tamil adults at Tamil language school					
Tamil adults at Saiva School					
Tamil adults at the temple					
Other Tamil adults					

For questions 13 to 15, please use these guidelines:

Select **WELL** if you can read/write/speak Tamil fluently with only a few mistakes or words that you don't know.

Select **MEDIUM** if you can read/write/speak Tamil comfortably but sometimes you need some help and have to translate things into English to understand

Select **BASIC** if you can read/write/speak Tamil for simple sentences. You can exchange greetings and simple questions, and understand the answers, but you can't have a long discussion in Tamil.

13. How well can you read Tamil script? Well ☐ Medium ☐ Basic ☐

14. How well can you write Tamil script? Well ☐ Medium ☐ Basic ☐

15. How well can you speak Tamil? Well ☐ Medium ☐ Basic ☐

16. Do you go to the Saturday Tamil language school? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, which school? _____

17. Does anyone else teach you Tamil? Yes ☐ No ☐

18. If someone else teaches you Tamil, please select who it is:

Tutor ☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Grandparent ☐ Relative ☐ Friend ☐

19. If you go to any other classes or activities associated with your Tamil heritage, please select which ones:

Singing ☐ Bharatanatyam dance ☐

South Indian musical instrument ☐ if yes, which instrument? _____

Other (please write the type of class) _____

20. Which language did you learn to speak first? (eg. English or Tamil?) _____

21. Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking? _____

22. Which language do you usually think in? _____

23. Which language do you like the most? _____

24. When you are praying by yourself what language do you use?

25. How often do you go to the temple?

Once a week or more ☐ Once a fortnight ☐ Once a month ☐

Every few months ☐ Less than 4 times a year ☐

26. Do you read any Tamil books or newspapers in your spare time?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are any of these about Saivism? Yes ☐ No ☐

27. Do you read Tamil websites in your spare time? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are any of these about Saivism? Yes ☐ No ☐

28. Do you watch Tamil TV shows or movies? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are any of these about Saivism? Yes ☐ No ☐

29. Do you listen to traditional Tamil music? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are any of these songs about Saivism? Yes ☐ No ☐

30. Do you listen to modern Tamil music (eg. pop songs)? Yes ☐ No ☐

31. Do you listen to or watch the Tamil news on SBS? Yes ☐ No ☐

12.6 Appendix 6 – Interview questions

12.6.1 Year 9 students

1. If you think about how much Tamil you use in your everyday life, what percentage would you say is Tamil and what percentage is English?
2. Is it important to you to know Tamil? Why?
3. When is it useful to be able to speak Tamil?
4. When do you most enjoy using Tamil?
5. In your questionnaires you said that you use Tamil when you pray. Why do you think you use Tamil and not English?
6. What do you like about coming to the Saiva School?
7. Is there anything you would like to change about the Saiva School?
8. Since I've been watching your class, I've noticed that some of you often change between English and Tamil when you are speaking. Is this the way you would speak Tamil at home?
9. Most of you are taking Tamil arts classes such as singing, dancing and musical instruments. Why have you chosen to do these classes?
10. How often do you go to the temple?
11. Do you like going to the temple? What do/don't you like about it?
12. What do you find most interesting about Saivism?
13. What do you like to do outside of Tamil and Saiva classes/in your spare time? Do you play any sports or take any other classes?
14. Do you spend a lot of your spare time with Tamil people or others?
15. Do you use Tamil on social media or when you are texting (if you have a mobile phone)?
16. Do you visit Sri Lanka? If yes, how often? Do you speak Tamil when you go to Sri Lanka?
17. When people ask you about your heritage or where you are from, what do you say?
18. In what ways do you think you are a Tamil person?
19. Is being a Hindu/Saivite important to you?
20. I heard the teacher say you are all from the Vellaalar caste. Is your caste important to you? Are most students here from the same caste?
21. When you are older will you still practice Saivism? Will you go to the temple?
22. When you are older, will you still speak Tamil?
23. Do you think you will want your children to go to the temple and to speak Tamil?
24. Do you know what you want to do when you finish high school?
25. If you were born here, do you know when your parents migrated to Australia? Did they migrate from Sri Lanka or somewhere else? Whereabouts in Sri Lanka are they from?
26. What do your parents do?
27. Are you vegetarian?
28. Are there many other Tamil students at your high school? Do you speak Tamil with them?
29. How you feel about saying "I'm Australian"?

12.6.2 Year 9 teacher

(The same template was used for the Saiva School parent interview but questions relating to teaching were omitted)

1. Can you tell me where you were born and when you came to Australia?
2. How long have you been a devotee at this Murugan temple?
3. How long have you been a teacher at the Saiva School?
4. What classes do you teach and how many students are there?
5. Why did you become a teacher at the Saiva School?
6. Do you teach any other aspects of Tamil culture such as language?
7. What are your proudest achievements as a teacher at the Saiva School?
8. What topics do you cover in your class? Do you follow a syllabus?
9. What parts of the Saiva School and the class do you think the children are most interested in?
10. Do you think that most of the students are devout Saivites?
11. Do your students speak Tamil in the class?
12. Do you think they speak Tamil at home?
13. Do you think it is important for the children to use Tamil in the practice of Saivism?
14. What is more important to you to pass on to the children? The Tamil language or Saiva religion?
15. Do you think the Saiva Schools are likely to continue into the future?
16. Do you think the language used in the Saiva Schools will change to English in the future?
17. Do you think that young Sri Lankan Tamils are engaged with the temple?
18. Are there particular ways that young people practice Saivism that are different to the older generations?
19. Are there particular ways that young people use Tamil that are different to the older generations?
20. Do you think that the second generation will use Tamil when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
21. Do you think that the second generation will practice Saivism when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
22. How many children do you have and how old are they?
23. Have your children attended or do they attend the Saiva School? Why is it important for you that they attend this school?
24. Are your children involved in any other Tamil programs?
25. Do you speak Tamil with your children at home? Do you have any rules about speaking Tamil at home?
26. Do your children go to the temple regularly?
27. Do your children do any praying or worshipping outside of the temple? Like at home?
28. Are there any instances when your children use Tamil outside of the home?
29. What do you think is the main role that the Saiva School plays for your child's development?
30. Do you think your child likes going to the Saiva School?

12.6.3 Temple president

1. Can you tell me where you were born and when you came to Australia?
2. How long have you been a devotee at this Murugan temple?
3. What do you see as the main purpose of this temple?
4. What are the popular rituals and ceremonies for devotees in the temple?
5. What are the main festival celebrations at the temple each year?
6. What rituals and ceremonies in the temple are conducted in Sanskrit?
7. What rituals and ceremonies in the temple are conducted in Tamil?
8. What role does the Tamil language have in the practice of Saivism for the temple's devotees?
9. Are there any plans to change the languages used in rituals and ceremonies in the future?
10. Would you say that it is the priests who decide how the rituals and ceremonies are conducted here in Australia?
11. How many priests are at the temple? What languages do they speak?
12. How does it work when a devotee can not speak Tamil? Can they communicate with the priests in English or another language?
13. What aspects of the temple activities are only conducted in Tamil?
14. When are languages other than Tamil used in the temple's communications?
15. Does the temple have an official language policy for Saiva rituals, temple activities, and communication with devotees?
16. What is the main language used by the Saiva Manram board?
17. What percentage of temple devotees would you say are Tamil speakers?
18. Is it important for the temple to continue as a Tamil temple or will this change in the future?
19. When your generation gets older do you expect the next generation of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to take over the management of the temple?
20. Is the first generation worried about the religion continuing to future generations of Sri Lankan Tamils who are growing up in Australia?
21. Is the first generation worried about the Tamil language continuing for future generations of Sri Lankan Tamils who are growing up in Australia?
22. What is more important to you to pass on to the children? The Tamil language or Saiva religion?
23. Do you think that the second generation will use Tamil when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
24. Do you think that the second generation will practice Saivism when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
25. What programs are there for young people at the temple?
26. What is the aim of the youth group?
27. What is the aim of the Saiva Schools?
28. What is the aim of the cultural programs (that is, the music and dance performances)?
29. Are there any plans for the temple to expand into the future?

12.6.4 Director of education

1. Can you tell me where you were born and when you came to Australia?
2. How long have you been a devotee at this Murugan temple?
3. Can you tell me some of the history of the Saiva Schools? When did the schools start?
4. How many students are enrolled at each Saiva School? Are enrolment numbers increasing, decreasing or staying the same over time?
5. Is there an enrolment fee that parents have to pay for their children to attend the Saiva School?
6. What are the aims of the Saiva Schools?
7. What are the main activities of the Saiva Schools?
8. What are the achievements of the Saiva Schools?
9. What do you think is the main role that the Saiva School plays for children's development?
10. How many teachers are at each Saiva School? Is there a principal at each one?
11. How does the temple recruit teachers for the Saiva School?
12. Do the Saiva Schools follow a syllabus?
13. How many classes are there at each Saiva School?
14. Do you think the Saiva Schools are likely to continue into the future?
15. What role does the Tamil language have in the Saiva Schools?
16. What is more important to you to pass on to the children? The Tamil language or Saiva religion?
17. Do you think the language used in the Saiva Schools will change to English in the future?
18. What are the other activities and programs in the temple that come under your responsibility as director of education?
19. Do you think that the second generation will use Tamil when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
20. Do you think that the second generation will practice Saivism when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
21. How many children do you have and how old are they?
22. Have your children attended or do they attend the Saiva School? Why is it important for you that they attend this school?
23. Are your children involved in any other Tamil programs?
24. Do you speak Tamil with your children at home? Do you have any rules about speaking Tamil at home?
25. Do your children go to the temple regularly?
26. Do your children do any praying or worshipping outside of the temple? Like at home?
27. Are there any instances when your children use Tamil outside of the home?

12.6.5 Saiva School singing teacher

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background – when did you come to Australia? Where did you come from?
2. When did you start teaching in Sydney?
3. What classes do you teach?
4. How many students do you have?
5. Who are your students? Tamils? Age groups?
6. When do you hold your classes?
7. Are there times of the year that are particularly busy?
8. What are the main performances/concerts of the year?
9. Is teaching pannisai at the Saiva School different to what you teach in your private classes?
10. What is the main language used in your classes?
11. Do you use Tamil or English for any specific purposes in the classes? Eg. for praying, teaching songs, explaining songs, telling jokes, chatting to each other
12. Is it important to you to be able to use the Tamil language in your classes? Why?
13. How do your students respond when you use Tamil. Do they understand? Do they reply in English?
14. Are all the songs you teach in Tamil?
15. Are all the songs you teach connected to Saivism?
16. Do you think your students come to these classes as part of their faith or is it separate – is it more about their culture?
17. Why do you think singing classes are very popular for Sri Lankan Tamils? Is it only the Saivites that come for classes? Why do parents want their children to learn singing?
18. I'm trying to understand how young Tamils identify in Australia. What proportion would you say are engaged in Tamil cultural activities? What proportion do you think would be proud of their Tamilness?
19. Do many of the children continue to have classes until they are adults?
20. Do you think the popularity of the singing classes is increasing or decreasing?
21. For your own family, what is the first language of the home? Do your children speak in Tamil to you at home?
22. What is more important to you to pass on to your children? The Tamil language or Saiva religion?
23. How many children do you have and how old are they?
24. Have your children attended or do they attend the Saiva School? Why is it important for you that they attend this school?
25. Are your children involved in any other Tamil programs?
26. Do you speak Tamil with your children at home? Do you have any rules about speaking Tamil at home?
27. Do your children go to the temple regularly?
28. Do your children do any praying or worshipping outside of the temple? Like at home?
29. Are there any instances when your children use Tamil outside of the home?
30. What do you think is the main role that the Saiva School plays for your child's development?
31. Do you think your child likes going to the Saiva School?

12.6.6 Language school principal

1. Can you tell me where you were born and when you came to Australia?
2. How long have you been a devotee at this Murugan temple?
3. Do you think that young Sri Lankan Tamils are engaged with the temple?
4. Are there particular ways that young people practice Saivism that are different to the older generations?
5. Do you think that, for young people, it is important to use Tamil for the practice of Saivism?
6. Have you been involved in running any Saiva activities at the temple?
7. What is more important to you to pass on to the children? The Tamil language or Saiva religion?
8. Do you think the language of the temple will change to English in the future?
9. What do you think is the main role that the Saiva School plays for children's development?
10. Would you say that the Saiva School students are the best-case scenario students? But is this a very small proportion of the whole group?
11. I'm trying to understand how young Tamils identify in Australia. What proportion would you say are engaged in Tamil cultural activities? What proportion do you think would be proud of their Tamilness? Is this something that is important in starting up the school?
12. Do students at the Tamil school speak Tamil in their classes? At home?
13. You said that most young people respond in English at home – but in what instances will they use Tamil?
14. Are there particular ways that young people use Tamil that are different to the older generations?
15. What do you think is the main role that the Tamil school plays for children's development?
16. Do you think that the second generation will use Tamil when they are adults and pass it onto their children?
17. Do you think that the Tamil language will survive with future generations in Australia?
18. What other factors help children to maintain Tamil here – is it SBS, internet TV, Kollywood films, dance and music classes – what is popular with children?
19. How many children do you have and how old are they?
20. Have your children attended or do they attend the Saiva School? Why is it important for you that they attend this school?
21. Do you speak Tamil with your children at home? Do you have any rules about speaking Tamil at home?
22. Do your children go to the temple regularly?
23. Do your children do any praying or worshipping outside of the temple? Like at home?
24. Are there any instances when your children use Tamil outside of the home?

12.6.7 Pilot study interview

Temple name: _____

Role in the temple: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Interviewee:

Male Female

Tamil Other _____

Country of birth: _____

2. What is your age group?

20-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71-80

3. How old were you when you came to Australia?

Under 18

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71-80

4. What year did you migrate to Australia?

5. How long have you been involved with this temple?

6. How did you come to be associated with this temple?

TEMPLE MEMBERSHIP

7. When did the temple start?

8. How many members does the temple have?

9. How many people are regular worshippers at the temple?

10. How many people are occasional worshippers at the temple?

11. Has there been a period where the numbers of members increased greatly?

12. What about member numbers now, are they increasing, stable or falling?

13. Can you give a breakdown of the nationalities of the membership?

14. For the members from Sri Lanka, where would most of them come from?
Jaffna, Colombo, Batticaloa.....

15. For the members from India, where would most of them come from?

16. Can you give a breakdown of the age groups of the membership – under 10, 11-20, 21-40, 41-60, 61 and over?

17. Can you tell me if most of the members are first generation or second or third? Approximately how many of each generation?

18. Can you give a rough estimate of the proportion of males and females in the membership?

19. Can you tell me whether most members have been in Australia for a long time or are newer arrivals? When did most members arrive?

20. What proportion of members would you say have come to Australia because of the civil war in Sri Lanka? Would there be many members who have come as refugees? Are there many recent refugees joining as members?

21. Do most members attend in their family groups (ie with children and grandparents) or is it just the adults or older generation that comes regularly?

Specific questions about religious services

22. Can you tell me details of which services are conducted on a regular basis at the temple (poojas (blessings), bhajans (devotional songs), prayers, ceremonies)?
23. Which of these services would only be conducted in the Tamil language?
24. Is the Tamil language used for Hinduism (and found in the sacred texts) different to the Tamil you use in your daily life?
25. Are any other languages used in these services? If so, why?
26. Do you see the Tamil language as an important part of the way Tamils practice Hinduism?

Specific questions about education in the temple

27. Can you give me some details of the classes conducted at the temple? (these might be religious and/or language classes)
28. If there are no language classes, what are the main ways that children are taught the language?
29. Can you tell me how many students, the age groups and which countries they are from?
30. What languages do the teachers use in the classes?
31. What languages do the students prefer to use in the classes?
32. Is the Tamil spoken by the children the same as the Tamil used by the adults?
33. Is using the Tamil language seen as an important part of the students' education?

TEMPLE ACTIVITIES

34. What other kinds of activities and services happen here at the temple? What are the main activities that members are involved in?
35. Are there any specific activities for children or young people? For new arrivals or refugees?
36. Do all activities take place on temple premises or are there other places?
37. What do you think is the role of the temple for the members? Is it for worship, community activities, meeting people, speaking Tamil?
38. Is fundraising an important part of temple activities? How do you raise money?
39. What are the big events at the temple each year?
40. Is there mixing with other temples/churches/Buddhists/Sinhalese/Indians in the area?
41. What would you say have been the big changes in the temple since it began?

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE TEMPLE

42. Are there any activities in the temple which are conducted only in Tamil?
43. Are there any activities in the temple where a mix of Tamil and English are used?
44. Are there any activities in the temple where only English is used?
45. What language do the younger generations use to speak to each other? To their parents? To the elders?

46. What language do the first generation use to speak to each other? To the children? To the elders?
47. Would you say it is important to the first generation to keep using Tamil language in the temple?
48. Are you worried about losing the younger generations in the temple – that they will not keep the religion when they grow up?
49. Do the younger generations use a different Tamil to the one used by older generations?
50. Do the members from different countries understand each other's Tamil when they speak together? Are there big differences in the Tamil used by members from different countries?
51. How is the Murugan temple different to other temples in Sydney/Canberra/Melbourne/Adelaide/Perth?
52. Do people decide to attend only this temple or do they go to different temples at different times?
53. What are the differences between this temple and one you would find in Sri Lanka/South India? Has this changed over time?
54. Do you think members view this temple differently than the ones in Sri Lanka/South India? For example, do they think this temple is just as sacred as the ones back home?
55. Would you say that the way Hinduism is practiced in Australia is different to Sri Lanka/South India? If so, why? Has this changed over time?
56. In terms of the Hindu/Murugan leaders in Australia, do you have any policy about keeping the Tamil language going in this country? Any policy about catering for future generations who can not speak Tamil, only English?
57. What do you think will happen for future Tamil generations in Australia? Do you think that they will use the Tamil language to practice Hinduism? Do you think that Hinduism will change to cater for Tamils growing up in Australia?

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

58. What language would most members be speaking in their homes?
59. How important is it to teach Hindu/Tamil values to the children?
60. Are most parents worried about the children losing the Tamil language or culture?
61. Do you think that the Hindu religion has a strong tie with the Tamil language and with Sri Lanka/northern Sri Lanka/Jaffna?
62. Do you think the civil war in Sri Lanka has had an influence on language and religious practice in Australia? For example, would you say that the civil war has made Tamil migrants more motivated to keep the language and religion going strong?
63. What do you think makes a Tamil identity? Is it religion, language, family, dress, food....
64. Do you think the Sri Lankan Tamil identity in the diaspora is changing?
65. What do you think is the difference between the Hindu/Tamil values and the Anglo Australian values? Are these values changing now that people live in the West?

12.7 Appendix 7 - Summary of Tamil-related activities for youth in the city of the Saiva Temple

	Day/time	No. of students/ages	Details
The Saiva Temple			
Saiva School, Desiville	Sundays 2pm-4pm	~40 K-8	in the temple's cultural hall
Greenfields Saiva School	Sundays 8am-10am	~40 K-9/10	at Greenfields Primary School
Saiva Temple youth group	No regular schedule	University-age and older	Meetings are concentrated around annual festival
Sri Lankan Tamil language schools Founded by Sri Lankan Tamils in 1980s, initially by the Murugan Foundation. The schools became independent in 1990s. There are 5 schools in its network, each managed independently. Approx. 800 students in total. Est. 5% would be Indian and the rest Sri Lankan. Est. 90% Saiva School students also attend Tamil language schools.			
Greenfields SLT school	Saturdays 2pm-4.30pm	~280 K-6, 7-12	at Greenfields Primary School
SLT school 2	Saturdays 2pm-4.30pm	~600 K-6, 7-12	located near Desiville
SLT school 3	weekends	~60	
SLT school 4	weekends	~30	
SLT school 5	Saturdays 2.30-5pm	~50 K-6	
Indian Tamil language schools Founded by South Indian Tamils in 1970s. There are 6 schools in its network, all managed by one committee. Approx. 300 students in total.			
Private Tamil cultural classes Private classes are offered by Sri Lankan Tamil music and dance teachers, usually in their homes. There are many teachers in the city of the temple's location. <u>Classes:</u> veena, mridangam, flute, Carnatic singing, Bharatanatyam dance. Performances are regularly given by students at the temple cultural hall and other venues, generally in groups. Est. 90% of cultural class students also attend SLT language schools.			

Information for this table sourced from: temple website, former and current directors of education at the temple, principal at Greenfields SLT school, language school websites.

12.8 Appendix 8 – Numerical analysis of Year 9 lesson on 26 July 2015

As a comparison to the results for the class where all students were present and there was frequent student interaction (see Section 6.2.1.2), we can look at the count from the class on 26 July 2015. Jeya, Meena and Thiran were the only students present at this class. The class did not have an apparent single theme but diverged from the topic of temples in Sri Lanka and India to moral values, competitiveness, materialism and purity.

When we look at the breakdown of students' intonation units we get a similar picture of individual student's speech habits.

IU type	Student name			Total IUs	Total %
	Jeya	Meena	Thiran		
English	65 (47.4%)	51 (82.3%)	23 (82.1%)	139	61.2%
Mixed	36 (26.3%)	4 (6.5%)	2 (7.1%)	42	18.5%
Tamil	36 (26.3%)	7 (11.3%)	3 (10.7%)	46	20.3%
Total IUs	137	60	28	227	100%

In the one-hour class, the students uttered a total of 227 intonation units as part of the main class discussion. For all three students, most of their speech (61%) is comprised of monolingual English intonation units and 12% of all these IUs are minimal responses. This is compared to 20% of all IUs being solely Tamil. In addition, Tamil is included in a further 19% of all IUs which are “mixed” making a total of 39% of IUs which have Tamil features (compared to 27% in the last class). The results for Tamil are higher in this class but when we look at individual student results we can see that this figure is affected by Jeya's use of Tamil which is much higher than Meena's and Thiran's.

In the case of Jeya, there is a stronger tendency towards using Tamil in this class. Fifty-three per cent of Jeya's IUs contain either Tamil or a mix of both languages compared to around 32% in the other class. The proportion of mixed and solely Tamil IUs in this class is around 18% for both Meena and Thiran. For these two students the results are similar across the two class recordings; solely English IUs make up a much higher proportion of their turns, around 82% of all their speech.

Mixed intonation units

The results reveal that a higher percentage of mixed IUs than the previous class were uttered by the students (18.5% as opposed to 12.5% on 14 June 2015). When we look at what categories the Tamil words in mixed IUs fall into we find that out of the total of 42 mixed IUs uttered, only 10 (or 23%) feature Tamil religious words or concepts (compared to 40% on 14 June class). Whereas the previous class discussed funeral rites which called for specific Tamil Saivite terms to be inserted into speech, this was not the case in this lesson. All of the religious terms in this class are nouns, for example, *puuca*i (puja), *civaperumaan*2 (Tamil name of Lord Shiva) and *kooyil* (temple). Similarly only six IUs contain Tamil cultural words (including kinship and food terms) such as *yaazh* (harp) and *paaL* (milk). Thus we can surmise that the topic of discussion can determine the amount of specific Tamil cultural and religious terms that enter the discourse.

There are 16 IUs which contain words in common usage in everyday speech (a higher proportion than the previous class) including numbers and words like *ellaam* (all), *appa* (then) or *aan*2*aa* (but). There are ten IUs containing verbs with five featuring a form of the common verb *collu* (to say). Other verbs are also in very common use such as *irruka* (to be) and *ceyya* (to do). Lastly, nine IUs contain pronouns such as *athu* (it) or *ningka* (you).