

# *FIELD ASSIGNMENT #2*

News Writing

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*T202 | S10171758C*

Headline: Effort Being Made to Encourage Youths to Speak Tamil

Standfirst: More youths are encouraged to speak Tamil.

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Lead: The Tamil Studies with Early Education course is one effort which has been encouraging youths to speak Tamil.

Article:

The number of people speaking Tamil at home has been on a slow but gradual decline. According to a general household survey done by the Department of Statistics Singapore, the percentage of people aged 15 and above who speak Tamil at home (with at least secondary school qualification) decreased from 40.6 in 2000 to 35.5 in 2005.

However, plenty of effort has been made to encourage more people to speak Tamil, and to speak it more often.

One such effort would be Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Tamil Studies with Early Education (TSE) course, which welcomed its first intake of 30 students in April this year. Students with an interest in Tamil, as well as a desire to enter the early childhood sector have taken up this course, which fulfils a very specific need of the Tamil-speaking community: more pre-school Tamil educators.

When asked about the primary motivation behind starting the TSE course, Mr Yokanathan S/O Ramakrishnan, one of the course lecturers for TSE, said in an email interview, “This (course) is part of a community effort spanned few years ago, wishing to have a Tamil pre-school education primarily to achieve a strong grounding in the (Tamil) language as we are exposed to the demands of multiple languages in Singapore.”

When asked about the support received by the course, Mr Yokanathan said, “We had more than enough (support) and are receiving enquiries with regards to the course.” He went on to mention that authorities such as the Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Development Agency, as well as self-help groups like SINDA, Tamil Language Council, National Library Board, South West CDC have all shown their support to this course.

Tamil Studies with Early Education students also elaborated on how this course has helped them, and encouraged them to speak more Tamil. “When I first came into this course, ... I couldn’t speak proper Tamil compared to some of my friends in this course, but now that I have to mix around with my Tamil-speaking classmates and course mates, I’m definitely speaking better Tamil, and I’m speaking more Tamil,” said Vaishnavi D/O Karthikeyan, 17.

“Since we are going to be pre-school educators, we have to be very confident in our language so this has definitely motivated me... in a very positive way,” said Naseema Begum D/O Sarfudin, 17.

However, these students are not the only ones motivated to speak Tamil voluntarily. Students studying in various disciplines unrelated to the Tamil language also feel motivated to speak Tamil voluntarily.

“From my experience, I see that our generation (of youths) are speaking Tamil to one another”, said V Eshwar, 17, from NP’s Information Technology course, adding that he himself speaks in Tamil to his fellow Tamil-speaking course mates.

Speaking Tamil need not stop at students who took Tamil as their mother tongue language in school. Students who took other mother tongue languages in school are also motivated to speak Tamil on their own to their friends.

“I still speak Tamil at home, and when I go back to India I also (use) Tamil,” said Keerti Karunakaran, 18, who took Chinese as her mother tongue in school.

Students also acknowledged that there are programmes and events already available to encourage youths to speak Tamil, but that youths should support such programmes more.

Kaviraj S/O Rague, 17, mentioned that the Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre organises many programmes and talkshows to motivate youths to speak Tamil, and talked about the National Tamil Elective Programme, which he had attended.

(581 words)