

Intermediate Tamil (ASIALANG 417/ASIALANG 427)

Institution Name: University of Wisconsin–Madison

Credits: By the end of the program, you will complete two, four-credit language courses.

Course Designations and Attributes:

Core GenEd - Humanities & Arts

Frng Lang - 3rd and 4th semester language

Level - Intermediate

L&S Credit - L&S Liberal Arts and Science

Course Description: This course offers intermediate-level instruction in Tamil, emphasizing the four major language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – in every class meeting. The course begins with a comprehensive review of advanced topics in modern Tamil grammar. In the first semester, students will be introduced to different forms of modern Tamil prose and verse; the second semester will introduce students to a few of the various genres of premodern Tamil literature. Furthermore, in each meeting of the class, students will be asked to simulate real-world speaking situations, and will practice engaging with authentic language sources (such as films, newspapers, and social media content). By the end of the course, students will be prepared to engage in independent research that would require a strong command of the language – whether that involves fieldwork or a deep engagement with textual/literary sources.

Requisites: Enrollment in this course requires successful completion of the preceding semester, equivalent coursework, or demonstrated proficiency as determined by the instructor.

Meeting Time and Location: 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (CDT), via Zoom

Instructional Modality: Online

Instructor Contact Info: Dr. Jay Ramesh [REDACTED]

Office Hours: M-Th, 2:30-3:30 PM CT, via Zoom

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Engage in spontaneous conversations in Tamil in casual and some formal settings
- Navigate everyday situations that would require the use of the language in Tamil-speaking areas, including but not limited to: making introductions and social conversations, making travel arrangements, navigating formal/business settings, expressing one's needs, desires, thoughts and opinions, ordering food at restaurants, buying groceries, asking for directions, and so forth
- Be able to communicate one's research interests in both written and spoken Tamil

- Fully understand textual sources in modern Tamil, with the assistance of a dictionary
- Write in Tamil on topics of the students' interest, expressing complex thoughts organized into connected paragraphs
- Converse with native speakers and be understood with little to no difficulty
- Recognize and understand most different registers of spoken Tamil, and to be able to recognize some common dialect variations
- Navigate unanticipated complications that may arise in everyday situations

By the end of the course, students will be expected to achieve an “intermediate high” level of proficiency as described by the ACTFL guidelines.

How Credit Hours are Met by the Course

The credit standard for each of the 4-credit courses is met by requiring at least **180 total hours of student engagement** with course learning activities, consistent with the UW–Madison standard of **at least 45 hours of learning activities per credit**. These learning activities include scheduled instructor-student meeting times as well as asynchronous reading, writing, listening, speaking, preparation, homework, projects, studying, and other course-related activities. **Required co-curricular programming** will take place on Fridays, which includes lectures, language practice, cultural sessions, and other structured activities designed to support and extend course learning.

Regular and Substantive Student-Instructor Interaction

This course meets the regular and substantive student-instructor interaction requirement. By engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment through direct instruction, providing feedback on student work, providing information about course content, and facilitating discussion of course content on a weekly basis. Regular and substantive student-instructor interaction, as defined by the US Department of Education (Within 34 C.F.R. §600.2), is always a requirement of UW-Madison for-credit learning activities

Course Overview

In every day of this course, we will practice all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is normal for students to feel more confident in one of these areas than others. That being the case, please be respectful towards your classmates as we navigate the learning process together. As we do so, we will survey a broad range of primary source material – including ancient, medieval and modern poetry, songs, modern fiction and non-fiction, films, political writings and speeches. We will also cover a broad range of dialects in the Intermediate courses, although South Indian Tamil is what we will mostly use in class.

I encourage each of you to think about particular Tamil language sources that you would like to engage with. We will have many opportunities to cover your specific interests in our class, and we will plan lessons and assignments that will help you acquire the skills necessary to understand your chosen sources.

Course Website and Digital Instructional Tools

SASLI Homepage: <https://wisli.wisc.edu/sasli/>

Course Canvas Page: Semester 1: [REDACTED]

Required Textbook, Software, and Other Course Materials

- There are no texts required for purchase. Handouts and scans of literary sources will be added to the Course Canvas page throughout the summer.
- While you are welcome to consult a published dictionary, there are several good online dictionaries. There are two that I particularly recommend:

1) Crea's Tamil-English and English-Tamil dictionary (<https://www.crea.in/>) is well-suited for everyday modern language use.

2) The University of Madras Tamil Lexicon (<https://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/tamil-lex/>) is better suited to more advanced work in the language, such as translation of premodern texts.

Homework & Daily Journal

- Students will be expected to maintain a daily journal in Tamil, with entries to be written 4 days a week. Each entry should consist of 3-5 paragraphs or one handwritten page. These should be submitted to the appropriate module on Canvas.
- In addition to the journal, there will be a minimum of one additional homework assignment each day (often in the form of a reading with a brief accompanying exercise). These must be submitted by the beginning of class time on the following day after they are assigned.

Exams, Projects, and Oral Assessments:

- Translation Exams: There will be two exams this summer; both will consist of short passages on familiar topics that students will have to translate. The first exam will be held on **Friday, July 10th**, and the second will be held on **Friday, August 7th**.
- In the last week of each semester, there will be a brief oral assessment that will consist of a ~7-10 minute spontaneous conversation in Tamil. These will be **scheduled individually in the final week of each semester of the course**.
- There will be two final projects – the first semester project will consist of a short presentation (roughly 5 minutes), to be submitted as a written assignment in the written register of Tamil, and to be delivered to the class in spoken Tamil. The presentations will be given on **Thursday, July 2nd**.
- The second semester project will consist of a collaborative skit to be performed in pairs in class. These will be performed on **Wednesday, August 5th**.

Important Dates

Friday, June 19	11:00 am	Global Professionals Panel Sessions
Friday, June 26	11:00 am	Language Practice Tables
Thursday, July 2	-	In-class Presentations
Friday, July 3	TBD	WISLI Research Symposium
Friday, July 10	8:30 am	Translation Exam 1
Friday, July 17	-	Asynchronous Review/Study Day
Friday, July 24	11:00 am	Language Practice Tables
Friday, July 31	11:00 am	Intercultural Learning Session
Wednesday, August	-	Final Project Skits
Friday, August 7	8:30 am	Final Exams

Grading

Grades in the course will be determined by the following criteria:

- Attendance and Participation (25%)
- Homework and Daily Journal (20%)
- Written Exams (15%)
- Final Projects (a presentation in the first semester, and a skit in the 2nd semester (25%))
- Spoken language assessments (15%)

Grading will follow the University of Wisconsin grading system, which is as follows:

Score	Letter Grade
92-100	A
89-91	AB
83-88	B
80-82	BC
71-79	C
65-70	D
0-64	F

Grade Rubric:

	A	B	C	D
Reading	Reads modern prose with a dictionary, and can answer follow-up questions based on a reading with complete accuracy.	Can generally follow written Tamil, being able to broadly summarize the content of any given passage even if there are some errors in understanding	Can only repeat some basic details of a given reading; struggles with reading the script	Has significant difficulty reading the script; Cannot follow the meaning of a passage on any level
Writing	Can communicate using the written Tamil register with proper grammar; can write complete paragraphs with connected thoughts, and make sophisticated arguments.	Can communicate in simple prose, even if there is some difficult in expressing complex thoughts, arguments and connected ideas; writes in the spoken register occasionally	Has difficulty with grammatical concepts; frequent spelling errors; can only transliterate spoken forms	Frequent grammatical and spelling errors
Speaking	Can have full conversations with minimal difficulty or forethought on familiar topics; can communicate spontaneously on unfamiliar topics	Can speak clear and understandable Tamil, with some mistakes, on familiar topics; can comment on unfamiliar topics	Can manage some basic conversation on familiar topics, with listeners able to follow the thread of what the speaker is saying	Able to manage only a few basic expressions
Listening	Can understand most spoken dialects of Tamil, with little difficulty; can understand when native speakers switch between registers of Tamil	Can understand a familiar dialect of Tamil, or one particular register as opposed to others; has some trouble with unfamiliar dialects	Can only manage to understand some expressions and words	Cannot understand spoken Tamil

Attendance Policy

Students may miss one class per semester without penalty; a second absence can result in a full grade deduction; three or more absences may lead to an additional grade reduction or automatic failure.

Tardiness Policy

Tardiness is defined as arriving more than 5 minutes late to the start of class as well as the time immediately following scheduled breaks. **Excessive tardiness** is arriving more than 10 minutes late to class. Tardiness in excess of 30 minutes will be considered a half- or full-day absence. In instances of repeated tardiness:

- **Three instances of tardiness** will result in a warning. A fourth instance of tardiness will require a

meeting with an Academic Director.

- **Three instances of excessive tardiness** (arriving more than 10 minutes late but less than 30) will be counted as a half-day absence.
- **Repeated tardiness in excess of 30 minutes** will be subject to the WISLI absence policy.
- **Continued tardiness or excessive tardiness** may result in further penalty or dismissal.

WISLI understands that unforeseen circumstances can occur. Please notify the course instructor of any tardiness or absences as soon as possible.

WISLI Technology Policy

There are many helpful online tools available to language learners, and these tools should be used responsibly and in alignment with UW-Madison expectations of [academic integrity](#) and guidelines on [generative artificial intelligence](#). Do not use translation software or AI tools unless instructed to use these tools for assignments or projects. In these instances, these tools are to be used only in the manner permitted by the instructor. Ask for clarification if you have any questions about what is allowed.

We may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools and applications (such as Copilot, Gemini, etc.) in some circumstances in this course as they support the course learning objectives. The specifics of when, where and how these tools are permitted will be included with each assignment, along with guidance for attribution. Any use of these tools other than where indicated is a violation of this course's expectations and will be addressed through UW-Madison's [academic misconduct policy](#), specifically UWS 14.03(1)(b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise.

In general, LLM's can be useful when practicing one's language skills or reviewing grammar, but must never be used as a translation tool or to generate text to submitted for an assignment. Moreover, AI-generated Tamil text, as well as translations of Tamil into English, are often inaccurate or highly idiosyncratic, and cannot be for any purpose uncritically.

UW-Madison Academic Policies and Statements

- [Academic Calendar and Religious Observances](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Course Evaluations](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Student Health, Well-Being & Basic Needs](#)
- [Privacy of Student Records and the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures](#)
- [Remote Proctoring with Honorlock \(if applicable\)](#)
- [Students' Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Teaching & Learning Data Transparency](#)

Detailed Course Schedule:

Day	In-Class Exercises	Assignments	Notes
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Monday, June 15 th	Review of Syllabus; Reviewing differences between spoken and written Tamil; Making introductions in Tamil	Begin Journal	Journal entries should be completed daily, in addition to supplemental assignments listed hereafter. Occasionally, specific prompts for journal entries will be given. All homework assignments (including journals) are due by the beginning of class on the following day.
Tuesday, June 16 th	Grammar Review – Cases, Tenses and Common Expressions; Listening Exercises; Conversation – Past, present and future	Reading: Short story, '4 9 ₁ 4 6 ₁ 1 7 ← _ε 9'	Journal Prompt: 1 ₅ 6 9 3 [~] 0 6 9 4 (6 # 9 2 ¥ 9 ₁ ~ - → 6 9 ? (Why did you begin learning Tamil?)
Wednesday, June 17 th	Grammar Review – Non-finite Verb Forms; Practicing Simple Reading; Conversation – Everyday Situations	Reading comprehension questions, '¥ 4 ← ¥ ε 8'	
Thursday, June 18 th	Grammar Review – Participles; Listening to Modern Spoken Tamil; Role Playing Exercise – Making Plans with Friends	Reading response to poem, 'f 3 ₅ 5 + 3 ₇ 3 ₁	
Friday, June 19 th	Grammar Review – Auxiliary Verbs; Introducing Sangam Tamil; Speaking Drills – Talking about Family	Select a text – an essay, a book excerpt, or a poem – that you would like to read this semester. Write a paragraph in Tamil on why it interests you.	No journal entry required for Fridays; plan to read and translate the selected text in the future!

Week 2:

Day	In-Class Exercises	Assignments	Notes
Monday, June 22 nd	Grammar – Introducing Dialect Variation; Listening to differences between Sri Lankan and	Reading Response: M. Varadarajan on Dialects	Journal Prompt: ¥ 2 3 7 4 6 # 5 4 # 9 ^ε - ^Y 7 0 ₅ 5 \$ 8 ₁ → 6 9 ? (What did you do this past weekend?)

	Indian dialects		
Tuesday, June 23 rd	Engaging with news sources (listening and reading); Dialogue: discussing current events	Write down and translate at least 5 headlines from today's edition of ←5 7 1 8	
Wednesday, June 24 th	Grammar Review: Colloquialisms; Listening Exercises: Colloquial Tamil Speaking Exercise: Talking about nature	Listen to and translate the dialogue from the assigned video on the origins of Chennai dialect	
Thursday, June 25 th	Introduction to novel ←7 1 # 5 # ¢ 7 # 6 5 # 1 6 # 9 ; Dialogue Practice: Musical Performance	Describe clip from film, ←7 1 # 5 # ¢ 7 # 6 5 # 1 6 # 9	Journal Prompt: N° 3 6 l (7 \$ 9 # 1 6 ~ - 3 = 3 6 1 1 ↑? 1 5 f £ 3 N° 3 6 l (7 7 ~ - (7 1 ? (What is your favorite book? Why do you like it?)
Friday, June 26 th	Guided reading and discussion: ←7 1 # 5 # ¢ 7 # 6 5 # 1 6 # 9	Translate a paragraph from the reading that you had selected last week.	