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## **THE IMPACT OF SULAM PROJECT'S TAMIL COMIC BOOK ON LEARNER'S COMPREHENSION AND MOTIVATION IN READING SKILL TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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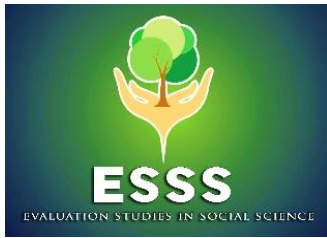
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*Received:* 4 December 2024; *Accepted:* 13 December 2024; *Published:* 30 December 2024

### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the impact of using Tamil comic books as a teaching tool to enhance students' reading comprehension and motivation. Recognizing the decline in reading habits among younger generations and the challenges associated with traditional methods of teaching Tamil, the research investigates how comics combining engaging visuals and narratives can make learning more interactive and appealing. Employing a quantitative approach, the study involved pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires to evaluate comprehension skills and motivation among 20 form two students in a Malaysian secondary school. This study employs a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of Tamil comic books on students' reading comprehension skills and motivation to read. Results revealed significant improvements in reading comprehension, with students scoring an average of 77.9% on post-tests, indicating enhanced abilities in understanding vocabulary, sentence structures, and narrative flow. Additionally, the questionnaire findings demonstrated heightened motivation, with 85% of students expressing strong or very strong enthusiasm for learning Tamil through comic books. The integration of comics helped address comprehension challenges, such as identifying main ideas and paraphrasing, while fostering a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience. The study concludes that Tamil comic books serve as an effective educational tool, bridging gaps in traditional teaching and offering a practical strategy to enhance language skills and cultivate a lifelong interest in reading. These findings highlight the potential of incorporating innovative resources like comics into Tamil language education to support learners' academic and personal growth.

**Keywords:** *Tamil Reading Skills, Tamil Comics, Tamil Reading Comprehension*



## INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition encompasses the mastery of four fundamental skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Dardjowidjojo, 2003). Each skill contributes uniquely to a learner's ability to communicate and comprehend effectively. Among these, reading stands out as a pivotal skill that not only facilitates the development of the other three but also plays a critical role in acquiring knowledge, expanding vocabulary, and improving communication abilities. Reading provides learners with access to new ideas and concepts, enhancing their capacity for critical thinking and creativity (Monarisa & Suwarno, 2016).

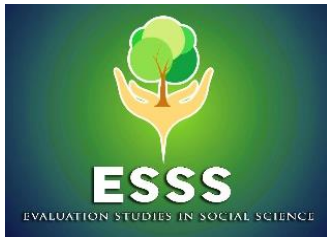
Despite its importance, reading is often neglected, particularly by the younger generation. Many students perceive reading as a tedious or outdated activity, preferring visual and interactive engagements, such as those provided by gadgets and digital media. This perception has led to a decline in reading habits, making it imperative to adopt innovative strategies to instill a love for reading from an early age. Encouraging reading not only benefits learners academically but also equips them with essential skills for lifelong learning and personal growth.

In the context of Tamil language learning, reading is a foundational skill that significantly impacts comprehension and overall proficiency. Harmer, as cited in Ismail et al. (2017), defines reading as the ability to interpret written information presented in a structured format. It involves decoding text, understanding meaning, and relating it to prior knowledge. Developing proficiency in Tamil reading allows learners to grasp concepts more effectively, build linguistic competence, and foster a deeper appreciation for the language's cultural and literary heritage.

With the increasing globalization of education and communication, the role of reading has become even more critical. Tamil learners, in particular, face the dual challenge of mastering a language rich in history while navigating modern educational demands. Reading proficiency bridges this gap by enhancing learners' ability to engage with diverse texts and contexts, thereby improving their academic and personal achievements. As such, prioritizing reading in Tamil education is essential for nurturing well-rounded, critically thinking individuals who can thrive in an interconnected world.

## BACKGROUND

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for mastering any language, including Tamil, as it enables learners to understand, analyze, and interpret texts, essential for academic success and lifelong learning. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to effectively engage students, particularly in the context of Tamil language learning (Affendi & Masnan, 2022). This issue is exacerbated by a decline in reading habits among younger generations, who often find conventional textual materials unappealing, necessitating the identification of new, innovative teaching approaches (Nallaluthan et al., 2024). Comic books, as a form of visual



storytelling, offer a promising solution to this challenge. By combining engaging narratives with vivid illustrations, comic books make reading more interactive and enjoyable (Bakar et al., 2021). This integration of text and visuals not only simplifies complex ideas but also caters to diverse learning preferences and abilities, presenting a potentially effective medium for enhancing Tamil reading comprehension and fostering a greater interest in reading.

The primary research problem of this study is to investigate the impact of using Tamil comic books as a pedagogical tool on students' Tamil reading comprehension skills and their motivation to read. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how incorporating Tamil comic books into the curriculum affects students' ability to comprehend and interpret Tamil texts, including their understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, and narrative flow. Additionally, the study explores the influence of comic books on students' interest in reading Tamil texts, particularly whether the engaging format of comic books encourages reluctant readers to develop a habit of reading and perceive it as an enjoyable and rewarding activity.

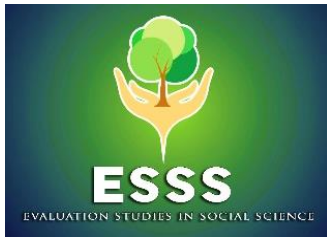
Addressing these challenges is crucial as it targets two critical issues in Tamil language education: low reading proficiency and lack of motivation. This research has the potential to provide valuable insights into innovative teaching strategies that can make reading more accessible and engaging for students. Furthermore, the findings could contribute to the development of educational practices that resonate with modern learners, strengthening their connection with Tamil language and culture.

This study explores the potential of Tamil comic books as a teaching tool to enhance reading comprehension and motivation. It investigates their impact on students' understanding of Tamil texts and examines whether their engaging format can encourage interest in reading, particularly among reluctant readers. Specifically, the aim of the study is to:

- to evaluate whether Tamil comic books enhance students' comprehension of textual material compared to traditional methods.
- to assess the level of motivation among students when exposed to Tamil comic books as part of their reading curriculum.
- to identify specific features of comic books (e.g., illustrations, humor, storyline) that contribute to improved engagement and learning outcomes.

### ***Research Question***

1. How does the integration of Tamil comic books into the curriculum impact students' ability to comprehend and interpret Tamil texts, including their understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, and narrative flow?
2. In what ways does the use of Tamil comic books influence students' interest in reading Tamil texts and their motivation to develop a reading habit?
3. Does the engaging format of Tamil comic books encourage reluctant readers to view reading as an enjoyable and rewarding activity?



### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Rationale, Application and Strength of Comics*

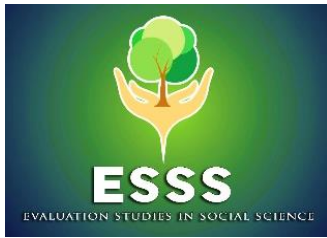
Comics, as a unique medium of storytelling, blend visuals and text to deliver narratives that are both engaging and accessible, offering a dynamic way to present information. Defined by Damanik and Harianja (2022) as “words and images combined into a sequence,” comics are characterized by their use of illustrations to enhance the flow of the narrative. This combination of elements allows them to stand out among literary forms by providing content that is not only entertaining but also informative. The use of vivid imagery and relatable characters makes comics particularly appealing, as they enable readers to process complex ideas in a more intuitive manner.

Their potential as an educational tool is widely recognized, particularly in teaching reading to diverse learner groups. For Tamil language learners, comics present an opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and modern learner needs. According to MA'ARIF (2023) and Kanapathy et al. (2023), the integration of comics into the curriculum can transform reading from a mundane task into an enjoyable activity. The engaging format of comics fosters a love for reading, making them especially effective in motivating reluctant readers. Their use of everyday language alongside visual storytelling not only improves students' vocabulary and grammar but also helps them connect with the material on a deeper level.

Arikunto (2010) underscores that the humor, entertainment, and relatable contexts presented in comics captivate students, increasing their willingness to engage with reading materials. The visual context provided by comics plays a critical role in aiding comprehension by reducing cognitive load. This allows students to focus on understanding the content without feeling overwhelmed, enhancing their ability to grasp factual information, interpret narratives, and identify underlying themes. The visual aids also serve as memory anchors, helping learners recall new words and expressions more effectively.

Comics further stand out for their cultural and universal appeal, which makes them suitable for learners from diverse backgrounds. By connecting with characters and narratives that reflect both local and global cultures, students gain a richer understanding of linguistic nuances and cultural contexts. This dual benefit of linguistic skill development and cultural awareness positions comics as a valuable tool in language instruction. For Tamil language learners, comics provide a scaffold for mastering complex linguistic concepts while simultaneously building confidence and motivation through a non-threatening and enjoyable medium.

The literature suggests that comics can revolutionize the teaching of reading by offering a more inclusive and stimulating approach to learning. Their ability to combine visual engagement, narrative richness, and cultural relevance allows educators to address diverse learner needs effectively. By incorporating comics into Tamil language instruction, educators can create a learning environment that not only fosters reading comprehension but also



promotes a lasting connection with Tamil culture and language. Through this approach, students are encouraged to view reading as both a rewarding and enriching experience, paving the way for improved academic outcomes and lifelong learning.

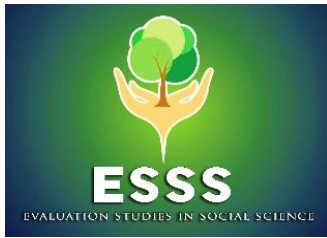
### METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of Tamil comic books on students' reading comprehension skills and motivation to read. A non-randomized control group pre-test and post-test design is used, involving two groups: an experimental group that receives instruction with Tamil comic books and a control group that follows traditional reading instruction. Participants, selected from two comparable secondary school classes, are assigned to groups based on convenience rather than randomization. The intervention spans one week, with both groups participating in equal instructional sessions of 40 minutes each. The experimental group engages in guided reading activities using Tamil comic books, focusing on vocabulary, main ideas, and narrative analysis, while the control group uses conventional Tamil reading materials such as textbooks.

The study utilizes two primary instruments to measure outcomes: reading tests and a motivation questionnaire. The reading tests, administered as a pre-test and post-test, consist of 20 multiple-choice questions assessing comprehension of main ideas, vocabulary in context, and narrative understanding. The pre-test establishes baseline reading skills, and the post-test evaluates changes following the intervention. Scores are analyzed statistically to compare improvements between groups. The motivation questionnaire, administered post-test, includes 10 Likert-scale items assessing students' interest in reading, enjoyment of materials, perceived comprehension improvements, and preferences for visual aids. Responses provide qualitative insights into students' engagement with the reading materials.

This study evaluates two key outcomes: reading comprehension as a cognitive outcome and motivation as an affective outcome. By comparing pre-test and post-test results and analyzing questionnaire responses, the study seeks to determine the effectiveness of Tamil comic books in enhancing reading comprehension and fostering a positive attitude toward reading in the Tamil language classroom.

The participants of this study were 20 form two students enrolled in a secondary school in the Muallim district, selected through purposeful sampling to meet the research objectives. This group was chosen due to a noticeable decline in engagement and participation in Tamil language classes compared to form one students, who displayed consistent enrolment and interest. Form two students, aged 13 to 14, had a foundational understanding of Tamil through at least one year of formal instruction, but exhibited varying levels of motivation, making them ideal for assessing the impact of Tamil comic books on reading comprehension and motivation. The sample size, representing the entire population of form two Tamil students at the school, allowed for a focused and comprehensive analysis. The study aimed to address the specific



challenges faced by this cohort, using innovative tools like comic books to enhance their reading skills and interest in Tamil, providing critical insights into improving language education for students at risk of disengagement.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Informed consent was obtained from both the students and their parents or guardians prior to participation. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were informed that their responses and performance would be used solely for research purposes. By focusing on this specific and contextually relevant group, the study aims to provide meaningful contributions to the field of Tamil language education, offering practical strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

### *Research Procedure*

This study followed a systematic approach to implementing and evaluating the use of Tamil comic books as a teaching tool for improving students' reading comprehension and motivation. The methodology was adapted from the Kemmis and McTaggart model (1992), which includes four distinct phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted over a single cycle, as the results achieved met the school's standard (KPM) criteria. A second cycle was deemed unnecessary as the intervention proved effective in this initial phase. The detailed steps of the procedure are outlined below:

#### **1. Planning Phase**

During this phase, the groundwork for the research was laid out. Key activities included:

Developing the Research Instruments:

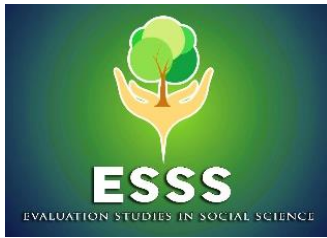
A pre-test and post-test, consisting of 20 questions, were carefully designed to measure students' reading comprehension skills.

A Likert-scale questionnaire with 10 statements was prepared to evaluate students' motivation and attitudes toward reading using comic books.

Selecting and Preparing Materials:

Tamil comic book were chosen as the teaching tool based on their suitability for the students' language level and potential to engage them visually and narratively.

Supplementary teaching aids were prepared to support the use of comics during classroom activities.



## Setting the Benchmark:

The minimum competency criterion set by the school, was identified as 75%. This benchmark was used to evaluate whether the intervention was successful.

## 2. Action Phase

In this phase, the planned intervention was implemented in the classroom. Key activities included:

### Introduction of Comic Books:

The researcher introduced Tamil comic books to the students as primary reading material, highlighting their visual and narrative elements to make the learning experience engaging.

### Classroom Activities:

Students were assigned to read and analyse selected sections of the comic books, focusing on identifying main ideas, vocabulary, and sentence structures.

Group discussions were facilitated to encourage collaborative learning and deepen students' understanding of the text.

## 3. Observation Phase

This phase involved systematically recording and monitoring the effects of the intervention on students' learning and engagement. Key activities included:

### Classroom Observation:

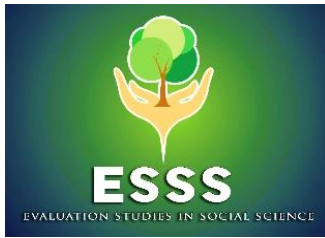
The researcher observed students' behaviour, participation, and overall engagement during the lessons.

Special attention was paid to students' ability to comprehend the comic book content and their responses to the teaching methods.

## 4. Reflection Phase

In the final phase, the researcher analyzed the data collected from the tests and questionnaires and reflected on the effectiveness of the intervention. Key activities included:

The research utilized both post-tests and questionnaires to gather data, focusing on reading comprehension improvements and changes in students' motivation and attitudes. The pre-test and post-test results were compared to assess any gains in reading comprehension, while questionnaire responses offered qualitative insights into students' interest, engagement, and overall attitudes toward the use of Tamil comic books. As the MoE benchmark of 75% was surpassed, a second cycle of the study was deemed unnecessary. Through this process, the



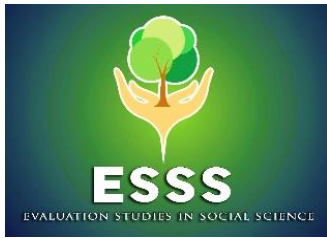
researcher identified lessons learned about the effectiveness of comic books as an instructional tool in Tamil language education, highlighting their potential for future applications.

### *Data Collection*

In terms of data collection, the post-test served as a direct measure of students' comprehension after exposure to comic books, featuring 20 questions designed to gauge understanding of the material, vocabulary, and concepts presented. Meanwhile, the questionnaire—administered post-test—adopted both closed-ended (Likert scale) and open-ended questions in accordance with Sugiyono (2011), allowing for a deeper exploration of students' personal experiences, preferences, and challenges. To analyze the data, the researcher applied quantitative techniques, notably the mean formula ( $X = \sum f_i x_i / \sum f_i$ ), to determine average performance differences pre- and post-intervention, as well as percentage calculations ( $P = F / N$ ) to evaluate motivation levels indicated in the questionnaires. To analyze the data, the researcher applied quantitative techniques, notably the mean formula ( $X = \sum f_i x_i / \sum f_i$ ), to determine average performance differences pre- and post-intervention, as well as percentage calculations ( $P = F / N$ ) to evaluate motivation levels indicated in the questionnaires. These data analysis methods, combining cognitive and affective dimensions, offered a robust understanding of whether Tamil comic books effectively enhanced students' reading comprehension and sustained their interest in Tamil language learning, thus underscoring the overall success of the intervention in this single-cycle study.

Pre-test and post-test results were collected to measure improvements in reading comprehension. Questionnaire responses were gathered to assess changes in motivation and attitudes toward reading. In terms of data collection, the post-test served as a direct measure of students' comprehension after exposure to comic books, featuring 20 questions designed to gauge understanding of the material, vocabulary, and concepts presented. Meanwhile, the questionnaire—administered post-test—adopted both closed-ended (Likert scale) and open-ended questions in accordance with Sugiyono (2011), allowing for a deeper exploration of students' personal experiences, preferences, and challenges. To analyze the data, the researcher applied quantitative techniques, notably the mean formula ( $X = \sum f_i x_i / \sum f_i$ ), to determine average performance differences pre- and post-intervention, as well as percentage calculations ( $P = F / N$ ) to evaluate motivation levels indicated in the questionnaires. These data analysis methods, combining cognitive and affective dimensions, offered a robust understanding of whether Tamil comic books effectively enhanced students' reading comprehension and sustained their interest in Tamil language learning, thus underscoring the overall success of the intervention in this single-cycle study.





### *Data Analysis*

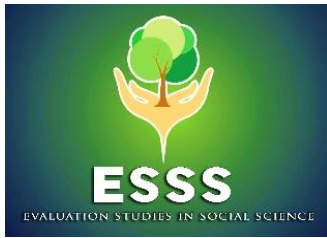
In this study, the change in performance scores and motivation levels was calculated by examining pre- and post-treatment averages, while student motivation levels were converted into percentages to indicate their degree of engagement. This descriptive analysis offered an overview of both the shift in scores and the level of motivation among the students. Beyond these measures, the study employed the quantitative data analysis method, focusing on mean calculations and motivation percentages. Quantitatively, the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) was determined by summing all scores ( $\sum f_i x_i$ ) and dividing by the total number of scores ( $\sum f_i$ ), as outlined by Sugiyono (2017). The frequency counts ( $F$ ) were divided by the total number of cases ( $N$ ) to obtain a percentage ( $P$ ). This percentage was then interpreted using a Likert scale (1–10) and subsequently classified according to the score-interpretation criteria, ranging from very low (0%–25%) to very strong (76%–100%). By integrating these methods, the study provided a comprehensive evaluation of both performance outcomes and motivational levels, thereby establishing a robust framework for determining the effectiveness of the intervention.

### **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Classroom observations revealed several challenges that students were facing in terms of both reading comprehension and motivation. One significant issue was that many learners struggled to identify and develop the central theme of the texts they were reading. This difficulty often led to students taking longer to grasp the key ideas of the material, which affected their overall comprehension. Furthermore, students had trouble paraphrasing sentences, a skill essential for rephrasing and understanding the text in their own words. They found it difficult to break down the material into clear, coherent sentences, so their writing was often poorly structured. This challenge in processing and re-expressing ideas showed a gap in their ability to comprehend and convey the text's meaning fully.

Another concern identified through observations was a lack of motivation to engage with the reading material. Despite the importance of reading in second language learning, many students showed little enthusiasm for the task. This is a common issue in second-language contexts, as Richards and Renandya (2002) noted, where reading is often emphasized but students still struggle to stay engaged. According to Harmer (cited in Rengur and Sugirin (2019), reading is a multifaceted skill that not only aids in comprehension but also offers opportunities to improve vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and overall text construction. However, the students' disinterest in reading hindered their ability to benefit from these language learning opportunities.

Despite these challenges, the researcher observed some positive changes in motivation and comprehension as the first cycle of the intervention progressed. While the improvement was not drastic, there was evidence of progress in students' ability to engage with the reading material and a slight increase in their willingness to participate in classroom activities. The introduction of Tamil comic books, which integrated visual and textual elements, helped make



the reading process more engaging. The students' ability to comprehend and paraphrase the material improved slightly, indicating that the intervention had some beneficial effects. This progress suggests that with continued use of engaging materials like comic books, students may show further improvement in their comprehension and motivation over time.

In addition to administering the test to the participants, the questionnaire was administered. The participants could fill it out and return it within a specific time frame. The questionnaire has 10 questions based on motivational indicators and will be used to gauge how much learners' motivation improved during the teaching and learning process.

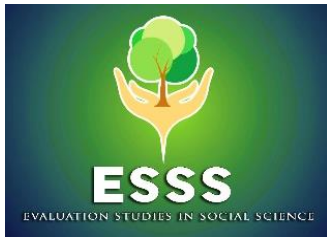
**Table 1**  
*Interval Score of Students' Motivation*

Interval Class	Xi	fi	$\Sigma f_i x_i$
61-66	63.5	1	63.5
67-72	69.5	6	417
73-78	75.5	6	453
79-84	81.5	6	489
85-90	87.5	1	87.5
Total		20	1510

The result average of the questionnaire table is  $X = 1510/20 = 75.5$ . So, based on the result above the percentage of students' average or mean is 75.5%, that is if the comic book can improve students' motivation by using comic book.

***The Result of the Reading Test***

To gather information and determine whether or not utilising Tamil comic books to teach reading is beneficial, a post-test was conducted. The results have revealed that the students have become more proficient readers with the help of comic strips as it encouraged them to focus on their reading. They were split up into groups of three to four students each. The researcher discovered that the comic strips significantly improved the students' comprehension of the text reading compared to the teacher's prior teaching aids. It is corroborated by Rokhayani and Utari (2014), who claimed that using comic strips to teach junior high school students English was successful. They go on to say that the Comic Strip has also helped pupils better comprehend how the characters in the comics express themselves. According to Jatta Kölin (2021), who looked into how comic strips affected Turkish EFL



learners' reading comprehension. Because comic strips incorporate visuals or pictures to improve reading comprehension, the results indicate that all students who received instruction using them performed better in understanding the content.

**Table 2**  
*Students' Post-Test Scores*

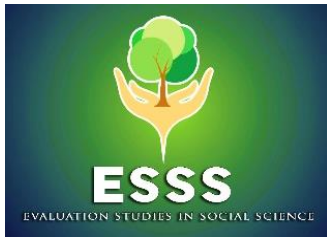
No	Mean	Category	No	Mean	Category
1	72	PASS	11	80	PASS
2	84	PASS	12	80	PASS
3	76	PASS	13	76	PASS
4	88	PASS	14	76	PASS
5	56	FAIL	15	76	PASS
6	76	PASS	16	80	PASS
7	52	FAIL	17	52	FAIL
8	84	PASS	18	84	PASS
9	88	PASS	19	80	PASS
10	72	PASS	20	88	PASS

Formula: .

$$X = \frac{\sum fxi}{\sum fi}$$

Where:

- X : the symbol of mean
- $\Sigma$  : the symbol for summation
- $xi$  : For any score in the set
- $fi$  :Frequency



**Table 3**

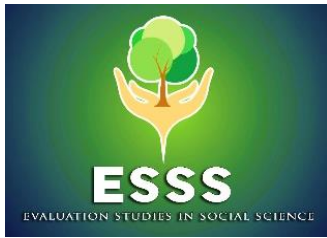
*Interval Score of Students' Post Test Scores*

Interval value	Xi	fi	$\Sigma fi x i$
52-59	55.5	3	166.5
60-67	63.5	0	0
68-75	71.5	1	71.5
76-83	79.5	10	795
84-91	87.5	6	525
Total		20	1558

The outcome of applying the following calculation is  $X = 1558/20 = 77.9$ . This indicates that employing comic book enhances learners' reading comprehension. This study aims to determine whether using comic book might enhance learners' motivation and reading comprehension. Following this, several findings were obtained. According to the questionnaire results, learners' willingness to learn to read in Tamil increased when they used comic books as the medium.

Alongside, four levels of motivation are distinguished: very low motivation is defined as a score of 0–25, low motivation is defined as a score of 26–50, strong motivation is defined as a score of 51–75, and very high motivation is defined as a score of 76–100. Then, according to the questionnaire's percentage, 85% of students were very motivated to use comic book to teach and learn to read in Tamil. The students' maximum score was 85, and their lowest score was 61, according to the results of the data analysis on cycle 1. Overall, 3 students in cycle 1 showed extremely high motivation while reading through comic book, and 2 students showed strong motivation when reading through comic strips. Regarding the proportion, the researcher may state that in this instance, 45% received a high level of motivation and 55% received a very high level. In this instance, the average or mean score of the students is 75.5%. The first cycle's results demonstrated that using comic book could enhance learners' Tamil reading comprehension. The utilisation of comic book had increased their support and boosted learners' enthusiasm for studying Tamil language, particularly when it came to reading in the classroom.

Following this, the learners' reading test results were excellent. As a result, all of them have passed. 65 is the lowest possible score, and 85 is the highest. The researcher may conclude that, out of the 20 participants in the sample, 100% passed the reading test and none failed. The average or mean of the pupils' reading test scores in this case, which the researcher also had to count, is 77.9. It indicates that this study was successful and that comic book could help pupils' reading comprehension.



### CONCLUSION

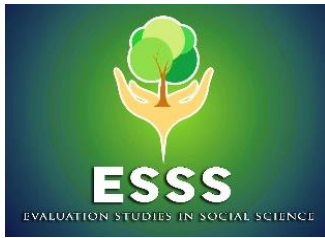
In conclusion, the use of Tamil comic books has demonstrated a significant positive impact on both reading comprehension and motivation among language learners. Prior to the introduction of comic books, students showed limited progress in their reading abilities, struggling with comprehension and exhibiting low motivation. However, following the intervention, the learners' development during the teaching and learning process showed notable improvement. This progress is supported by the post-test results, which revealed an average score of 85% in the first cycle, indicating a marked enhancement in their comprehension skills. The data analysis further confirms that the use of comic books as a teaching tool played a key role in improving students' ability to understand and engage with Tamil texts.

Additionally, the intervention had a positive effect on the students' motivation to learn Tamil. Prior to the use of comic books, many students lacked enthusiasm for reading, but after being introduced to this visual and interactive medium, their interest in the language increased. The comic books not only captured their attention but also helped to reignite their passion for learning Tamil, as evidenced by their improved engagement in classroom activities and their higher motivation to participate in lessons. The students themselves reported that the comic books made learning Tamil more enjoyable and accessible, sparking a renewed drive to continue their studies.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Tamil comic books are an effective and appropriate tool for enhancing both comprehension and motivation in secondary school students. The visual and narrative elements of the comic books were well-suited to the learners' needs, helping them develop their language skills in an engaging and interactive way. This approach holds promise for future use in Tamil language education, offering a compelling strategy for improving reading comprehension and fostering a greater interest in language learning.

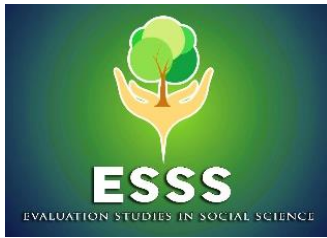
### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The study extends its deepest gratitude to Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) Tanjung Malim, especially the Academic Affairs Division and the students, for granting permission and providing support to conduct the Service-Learning Malaysia-University for Society (SULAM) program.



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## Evaluation Studies in Social Sciences (ESSS)

eISSN.xxxx Vol 10/ 2021 (4-6)

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