# Teaching Thirukkural using Memes to Malaysian Tamil Secondary School Students

**Logeswary Arumugum**
SMK Pokok Sena, Jalan Pokok Machang, 13220 Kepala Batas, Penang, Malaysia

**\*Kingston Pal Thamburaj**
Faculty of Languages and communication, Sultan Idris Education University,
35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

**Selvaraj Ramasamy**
Associate Professor, Government Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

email: artkls@yahoo.com, \*fkingston@fbk.upsi.edu.my, selvarajarts1979@gmail.com

**Abstract** In the contemporary classroom, engaging students often necessitates the adoption of innovative educational technologies that not only pique their curiosity but also seize their attention. Within the Malaysian Tamil secondary school context, this assessment delves into the use of memes and blended learning methodologies to facilitate the comprehension of Thirukkural and Tamil literature. The incorporation of technological tools such as memes and storyboards serve a dual purpose: fostering creative thinking and rendering the learning process more accessible and effective, especially for students well-versed in digital platforms and social networking. This study focuses on the Tamil language curriculum at the secondary school level, encompassing the pivotal language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Specifically, this study investigates the impact of employing memes as an instructional tool in teaching Thirukkural to Malaysian Tamil secondary school students. This study seeks to evaluate the extent to which this innovative approach enhances student engagement and deepens their comprehension of this classical Tamil text. To conduct this assessment, a quantitative approach was adopted, involving a sample of 10 students from secondary schools in the state of Perak. The findings revealed that during the pretest phase, students demonstrated a reading fluency level of 48.33%, with an average score of 7.25 marks per student. In contrast, the post-test results revealed a substantial improvement, with students achieving a reading fluency level of 82%, averaging 12.30 marks per student. Consequently, this study asserts that the integration of memes and digital tools significantly augments the learning experience of Form Two students in the realm of Tamil literature. The implications of this research extend to educators and students, offering valuable insights into how pedagogical approaches driven by technology can elevate learning outcomes and foster a deeper understanding of the literature. This innovative educational strategy represents a seamless and effective means of engaging and educating students in the digital age.

**Keywords:** memes, storyboards, technology, Thirukkural, learning

## INTRODUCTION

Tamil literature stands as one of the worlds 's finest literary traditions, spanning over two millennia. It encompasses a wide array of expressions that reflect the diverse facets of life. Tamil literature comprises various forms, including poetry, couplets (known as Kural), epics, essays, proverbs, and the Thirukkural The oral tradition of Tamil literature also holds a significant place. Among these diverse forms, the Thirukkural holds a unique position, representing a remarkable achievement in Tamil literature. The Thirukkural, often referred to as the Kural, is a revered work in Tamil literature. It has been instrumental

in imparting valuable life lessons to students. In this era, where technology pervades every aspect of our lives, it plays a pivotal role. Technology has made learning the Thirukkural more accessible and engaging for students. Moreover, in this digital age, technology is a powerful tool for acquiring knowledge. This technological advancement has breathed new life into the Thirukkural, making it an invaluable resource for students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers Nancy Hofert, Rita Doomid, and Soumana Chamun Nasser (2016) studied the study with the aim of learning a lesson in pharmacology through graphics. The study used data from the use of sketches for internship and other learning pedagogy among medical students. The study found that the use of a sketch helped students recall important concepts and carry them out.
Gomathi Anthony (2020) has taught Tamil language grammar to students through graphics to improve their understanding Through this study, the researcher has noted that punariyal should be taught in the form of a script and interest should be aroused among them. Accordingly, researchers Haydam Abuzaid and Murad Al-Gayeed. (2020) aimed to examine the role of sketches in improving reading ability among third-grade students with learning disabilities in Jordanian schools. Throughout the study, the researcher has noted the strategy of enriching students with difficulty because the letters have almost the same shape, but their pronunciation is different. These two studies, which have now been discovered, aim to enrich narrative reading skills and grammar.
Continuing, Lisa Hidayanti (2020) and David L. Both researchers, Bruce (2011), have conducted their research in a way that improves narrative reading skills. Lisa Hidayanti and her team aimed to determine the effect of applying the technique of graphics in class X on students' reading comprehension. The researcher used this study to find ways to approach teaching through engaging learning.

## METHODOLOGY

The current research delves into the impact of using the storyboard method for teaching Thirukkural through Memes to secondary school students of Malaysian Tamil descent. This study employs qualitative research methods, specifically adopting a case study approach. The case study method is a qualitative research technique that allows the researcher to thoroughly examine and comprehend a specific phenomenon, which can serve as both the subject and outcome of the investigation. Essentially, it enables the researcher to gather comprehensive and detailed insights into real-life scenarios, existing systems, or a limited set of cases within a specific timeframe through means such as observations, interviews, document analysis, and reports (Creswell, 2018). In this context, the study utilizes a case study design to conduct an in-depth exploration of the effectiveness of the storyboard method in imparting value education."

**Exploring Thirukkural Through Technology**

**i.    MEMES**

Memes, known as "போன்மி" (Ponmi) in Tamil, have become a universally recognized phenomenon. They are prevalent on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Memes have evolved into a form of visual communication that is widely consumed by users in online communities. The term "meme" was coined by Richard Dawkins, who initially introduced the concept to describe the spread of cultural information. Memes often take the form of humorous images, text overlays, or short videos, and they play a significant role in shaping contemporary digital culture. They are frequently used to convey ideas, opinions, and reactions in a light-hearted and engaging manner. In the context of Tamil literature, memes have also been created to introduce and educate individuals about Thirukkural. This creative use of memes has made it easier for many people to grasp

the essence of this ancient Tamil text. Memes have emerged as a unique and effective tool for both promoting Thirukkural and enhancing the understanding of Tamil literary works.

## Creating Memes: The Process

The creation of memes is a challenging task. It requires the presence of appropriate content Afterward; it necessitates a certain level of creativity. Previously, generating memes used to be a daunting task for many. However, numerous online tools and resources are currently available that simplify the process significantly. Platforms such as Canva, meme generator free, meme generator – create funny memes, and many others offer various templates and editing options, making meme creation an easily accessible endeavour This increased availability of user-friendly tools has empowered individuals to craft memes effortlessly.

## II. STORYBOARD

A storyboard is a series of small, sequential images or frames accompanied by brief descriptions or captions that collectively tell a story. Storyboards are primarily used in the field of cinema and serve as a visual roadmap for filmmakers. Each frame is carefully planned to illustrate a specific moment or scene in the narrative. This storyboard concept is widely employed in filmmaking. The storyboard artist sketches out each scene, determining the composition and arrangement of shots to create a cohesive visual representation of the story. It is a vital tool in pre-production, allowing filmmakers to visualize and plan their shots before filming begins. In an educational context, not only professionals but also students use storyboarding to create narratives. They may transform their storyboards into various formats, including comic books, magazines, or even newspaper articles, to share their stories with a broader audience.

## Creating A Storyboard

If you have a great story in mind, anyone can create a storyboard. You can bring your preferred images and chosen colors to visualize your story. All of this can be done using a tool called "Storyboard that," created by Aaron Sherman. With this tool, you can customize frames and add text, allowing you to craft your own unique narrative. Moreover, the use of these tools not only help students but also broadens their understanding of literature. In particular, Thirukkural, a monumental work, becomes accessible. Thirukkural is not just a wealth of wisdom for individuals but also a source of global recognition for Tamil literature. Thirukkural serves as a guiding light for humanity, not only for those fortunate enough to have it but also for 21st-century newcomers. Its timeless nature makes it an invaluable treasure and making Thirukkural accessible through tools such as storyboarding, and memes represents a new way of preserving and sharing this remarkable literary work. In this approach, a total of six Thirukkural couplets were used. Five Thirukkural couplets were employed for the creation of one storyboard, and one Thirukkural couplet was used for a meme. The six couplets mentioned in Form1 are included in various editions and versions of the Thirukkural. The meanings of these couplets are different from those of the main Thirukkural verses. They have been incorporated into specific editions to provide additional context or explanation to the original text, especially for students and readers who may benefit from further elaboration on the meanings of the couplets. These additional verses are often referred to as "படைப்பு" (explanatory verses) or "கதை" (stories). They help students understand and appreciate the Thirukkural better by providing practical examples and explanations related to the main verses.

This meme, called "Appa," portrays a scene from a movie. In this, when the son receives an accolade, his mother, upon seeing it, becomes overwhelmed with joy and pride. This scene perfectly aligns with the principles of the Thirukkural. The idea here is that when students see this movie scene again, either on television or on their mobile phones, they will automatically be reminded of the Thirukkural. This serves as a clever way to help students remember and relate to the teachings of the Thirukkural, whether they are watching it on television or talking about it on the phone.
Next, Verse 505. "Why does wrath, which serves both greatness and littleness,

Become indeed the stone for censure?" In this, a short story has been created based on the Thirukkural mentioned by Paarthomai. It depicts two young women engaging in a conversation and eventually engaging in a debate among three people. Next couplet 392: This Canva, with its colourful letters, was created to showcase movie scenes. It mainly highlights the visual appeal of text and writing to the eyes. It is designed to make it easy to understand and appreciate the beauty of colors, even in your thoughts.

Next, Verse 596. " Beware of trusting men who have no kith of kin; No bonds restrain such men, and no shame deters them from sin. This profound verse encourages humility and noble behaviour, emphasizing the unity of all beings, unlike raindrops that though small individually, collectively fill the oceans. Understanding this verse requires deeper exploration. Furthermore, Verse 420. "This Canva, along with the storyboard, has been created. Although they both express a single concept, they take different forms and occupy the mind. Laughter-inducing Canva and thought-provoking storyboards engage the students. Just as our lives are filled with various experiences, the presence of storyboards enriches the students even more." This verse emphasizes the value of diverse learning tools such as canvas and storyboards in engaging students' minds and enriching their educational experiences. Finally, Verse 786. "This, too, is similar to what was mentioned earlier. It comprises a presentation and a story. When you look at the story within the storyboard, you can understand the verse in the same way." This verse underscores the resemblance between the presentation in the storyboard and the story, emphasizing how understanding the story within the storyboard helps in comprehending the verse.

Furthermore, publishing things like blogs, similar to Storyboard, online is the next step. Why do we publish on the internet? What is the reason? Can we learn through the avenue of online discussion by using multimedia content, or should we simply provide information on the webpage? Many questions may arise. We need to understand one thing. At present, technology is advancing rapidly. Not only that, but the internet is becoming a platform for education. Whether it is presenting information through web pages or educating through multimedia content, both will have their place. However, when we look at the internet, it's not only about displaying content; it's about developing the skills to quickly sift through the information. That is why, when we navigate the internet, we should keep our discernment sharp. Moreover, acquiring knowledge about online publishing is essential." Most online publishing is a collective effort where people express their thoughts. The term 'WebLog' was coined by Jorn Barger on December 17, 1997, and it gained popularity. Some write stories, some are adept at poetry, and others share their knowledge on various topics without having to distribute them physically, allowing us to share our knowledge with people around the world. In essence, a blog is a platform that enables us to contribute, learn, and share. The content created through online publishing can be found here: https://thirukkural00.blogspot.com/. This platform also serves for students to acquire knowledge about technology."

**The Benefits of Using Memes, Storyboard, and A Blog are as Follows:**

"Memes, Story Boards, and web blogging are considered valuable resources. Ponni, through her educational content, generates interest among students. The reason is that she excels in engaging with a larger audience through various social media platforms. In addition, when she presents an essay, some find it difficult, such as a singer facing challenges when singing a song. It is the same with this as well. When she takes on the task of teaching cinema, she is enthusiastic. Furthermore, when Ponni takes up teaching, students automatically acquire various skills such as linguistics, listening, and speaking. Moreover, she provides them with valuable insights into the literature. In this way, Ponni 's efforts not only impart knowledge but also enhance students' capabilities."

Next, Storyboard. It serves as a platform for creating short stories. When Storyboard engages in teaching students through these short stories, students do not lose their simplicity. During various challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, education is one of them. During this era, all students had access to online resources. Therefore, teachers must devise innovative ways to impart knowledge to their students. Extra time spent online can affect both mental and physical health, just as excessive internet use can lead to addiction. This is why it is important to find ways, such as engaging with a good literary piece, to keep the mind and body in balance. Additionally, this approach reduces stress among students. This is because, as previously mentioned, excessive time spent online can lead to both mental

and physical fatigue. Therefore, by engaging with a good literary piece, students can experience relief. Moreover, this method of teaching via Storyboard enhances students' literary skills short stories, novels, and other such literary works are created. the knowledge gained from these readings, such as a short story, a novel, or others, helps in improving the writing skills of a writer.

Finally, the internet. It poses a challenge to many, not just students. They grapple with the dilemma of whether what they have created is correct or not. This is where the internet comes as a solution. It allows individuals to freely publish their creations online. When students publish their work online, it becomes a resource for others without losing their uniqueness. This means that students can learn from each other through online resources without any sense of competition. Furthermore, when students publish their work online, they automatically acquire various skills, including language, listening, and communication skills, in addition to the subject matter. By engaging with the internet and sharing their knowledge, students can become more confident in their abilities. This approach not only helps students but also provides a platform for an accomplished writer. A short story, novel, and many other literary forms can be created. this knowledge, gained through reading various forms of literature online, enhances the writing skills of a writer.

Therefore, by incorporating tools such as Ponni, Storyboard, and blogging into education, students can greatly benefit. It not only serves as a guide for their future life but also provides them with valuable skills. These three tools can pave the way for students' future careers and financial independence. Thus, these tools are useful resources for students.

**PRE-TEST**

*Student's Score in the Pre-Test*

The first objective was to determine the achievement of Form I students' thirukural skills via a pre-test. The researcher conducted a pretest on 10 students who were surveyed. The pretest consists of 25 questions based on Thirukural. Questions were prepared by mixing each section of the Thirukural. Approximatelyfive questions were prepared for each section, and a total of twenty-five questions were preparedfor five sections. All the questions were divided into two sections namely internal and external The researcher knows the form1 students achievement level of Thirukural through the pre-test. Table 1 shows the marks obtained by the students in the pretest.

**Table 1:** Student's Score in the Pre-Test

| Students | Scores (/50) |
| --- | --- |
| Student 1 | 15 |
| Student 2 | 20 |
| Student 3 | 17 |
| Student 4 | 12 |
| Student 5 | 13 |
| Student 6 | 16 |
| Student 7 | 15 |
| Student 8 | 23 |
| Student 9 | 18 |
| Student 10 | 17 |

**POST TEST**

**Students' scores in Post-Test**

Once the problems faced by the students in Thirukural skills were identified, the researcher prepared memes with the help of a storyboard and conducted Thirukural teaching based on the students.

Then, the researcher conducted the post-test with the same 10 students who were subjected to the pre-test. This test was administered to students with slightly modified questions from the pre-test. The researcher determined about the students Thirukural through a post-test. Table 3 shows the marks obtained by the students in the post-test after using Memes.

| Students | Scores ( /50) |
|----------|---------------|
| Student 1 | 30 |
| Student 2 | 33 |
| Student 3 | 37 |
| Student 4 | 32 |
| Student 5 | 30 |
| Student 6 | 29 |
| Student 7 | 28 |
| Student 8 | 35 |
| Student 9 | 40 |
| Student 10 | 42 |

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ten students from the third form and two Tamil language teachers were included in this study. A pre-test and post-test were conducted to collect data for this study. Pre-test and post-test were conducted to determine the achievement level of the students. The researcher has also tried to avoid the problems faced by the students in their ability to read stories. In addition, the researcher collected students' perceptions about the Memes through a questionnaire.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of memes and storyboards as educational tools offers a promising approach to teaching Thirukkural to Malaysian Tamil secondary school students. These tools enhance accessibility, engagement, and comprehension, thus providing students with a modern and effective means of learning this classical Tamil text. In preserving and sharing the invaluable treasure of Thirukkural, technology-driven pedagogical approaches will pave the way for a brighter future for Tamil literature education in the digital age.

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