

POWTOON ANIMATED VIDEO FOR TEACHING TAMIL GRAMMAR SKILLS TO STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Tamil Language is an elective subject under the Pupil's Own Language offered to students in Malaysian public secondary schools. The importance of learning Tamil language and the need to master *ilakkanam* to master the language was explained along with the current teaching and learning scenario in Malaysian secondary school. The purpose of this literature review paper is to provide a deeper understanding to the reason why teachers need to explore and develop resources for teaching and learning Tamil grammar skills. At the same time, the potentials of Powtoon animated video are discussed to motivate teachers to be creative and innovative to develop instructional module for teaching Tamil grammar skills at the secondary school level. This paper provided some of the identified research gaps from the literature which support the need for developing more teaching and learning resources for Tamil language instruction.

Keywords: Powtoon, Tamil language, Grammar, *Ilakkanam*, Animated video

1.0 Introduction

Malaysia is a multicultural country with major languages like Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil spoken in both formal and informal domains. The diverse nation is made up of 62% Malaysia and other indigenous ethnic groups, 27% Chinese, 8% Indians and the remaining 3% of other races (Muthusamy & Farashaiyan, 2016). The uniqueness of Malaysia is linked to its cultural diversity that is rich in culture, tradition, ethnicities and languages which serve as a national heritage which should be shared with future generation. The education system in Malaysia provides ample opportunities for the learning of mother tongues such as Chinese and Tamil besides Malay and English languages in primary and secondary schools. Hence, the Malaysian Education Blueprint

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(MEB) 2013-2025 included Tamil language as an additional subject in the Malaysian primary and secondary schools, to be taught as Pupil's Own Language (POL) (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Grammar or *Illakanam* is an important aspect of Tamil language learning as it ensures fluency and accuracy in speaking and writing well in Tamil language. However, mastering *Illakanam* in Tamil is not easy and proved to be quite a challenge to most students (Baggialakshmi & Ramesh, 2016). Furthermore, with the younger generation speaking more in other languages such as Malay and English, the challenge is felt even more by both teachers and students (Albury, 2020; Muthusamy & Farashaiyan, 2018; Rajantheran et al., 2012; Sinayah et al., 2017).

The advancement and application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the education system has provided teachers with opportunities to explore, develop and use teaching and learning aids with technological support. The use of multimedia support for instance, has given positive impact to students learning scientific process in Indonesia (Vebrianto & Osman, 2012). Likewise, Norhayati et al. (2012) found that the use of animation made learning Arabic language more interesting and less boring to students. The use of interactive text, audio, video, graphics, pictures and animation promote students' interest to follow the teaching and learning activities (Basiron, 2012; Ibrahim, 2013; Vebrianto & Syafaren, 2018).

Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) stated that the use of technology in school such as Power Point presentation and YouTube made learning more interactive and interesting. The availability of newer applications and software such as Powtoon provides the teachers with greater means to enhance the delivery of instruction through video presentation (Semaan & Ismail, 2018). Hence, this paper presented a review of the literature to explore the use of application technology such as Powtoon in developing an instructional resource for teaching *Illakanam* in Tamil language.

2.0 Problem Statement

Tamil is one of the Pupil's Own Language (POL) that is offered to students in primary and secondary public schools in Malaysia. Dhanalakshmi et al. (2010) stated that Tamil has a rich morphological structure which could make teaching *Illakanam* a challenging task for teachers. Using conventional methods such as 'chalk and talk' might be boring to the millennial students who are used to use of technological gadgets like smart phones, tablets, i-pads and laptops. Although there have been studies on the use of technology to teach Tamil language such as the use of mobile technology (Thamburaj et al., 2020), multimedia (Jayasree et al., 2019) and comics (Anthony, 2019), but there is still a dearth of studies in the use of technological applications such as Powtoon in developing instructional resource for teaching *Illakanam*.

Further to that, Ambikapathy et al. (2020) who conducted a study on the use of ICT among Tamil teachers had shown that the use of ICT tools among teachers is at a moderate level. Hence, this literature review highlights current situations of Tamil language teaching and learning in secondary schools, and the potentials of Powtoon as a means of creating effective instructional resources for teaching *Illakanam* in Tamil language.

3.0 Tamil Language Curriculum for Secondary Students

Tamil language is a traditional language with its origin from the Dravidian language such as Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. This language was used mainly in the southern region of India, especially in Tamilnadu. Tamil language is spoken by the minorities in Malaysia and Singapore (Isaac Samuel & Thamburaj, 2015). The language itself is not only taught in Malaysia, but also in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka and Singapore. Besides that, Tamil language is also taught in other countries such as Canada, Australia and USA (Nargunan, 2013).

Tamil is taught as a language subject in Tamil vernacular primary school but only in 1989, it began to be offered as an elective language subject at the secondary level in schools with abundant enrolment of Indian students (Ministry of Education, 2019). Now, Tamil Language and Tamil Literature are examination subjects at Form 3, Form 5 and university levels (Rajendaran, 2008). In secondary school, the Assessment Curriculum Standard Document for Form Four students stated that there are five scopes of skills that must be mastered by students which are listening, speaking and reading (வாசிப்பு), writing (எழுத்து), literature component (செய்யுளும் மொழியணியும்) and grammar (இலக்கணம்).

In the Malaysia Certificate of Education (MCE), Tamil Language, coded as 6354 is an examination paper. Prior to 2011, the paper was divided into two: Paper 1 (6354/1) carries 60% marks where students are assessed in terms of writing skills (open response composition with 70 marks in Section A and directed writing with 30 marks in Section B) while Paper 2 (6354/2) contributes 40% marks whereby the assessment include multiple choice questions and subjective questions. In Paper 2, Section A has questions related to comprehensional skills which carries 34 marks while Section B with 26 marks is about understanding and grammar questions. Meanwhile, Section C is related to *ceyyul* and figurative language with 20 marks. Section D is about summary with 20 marks (Malaysia Examination Board, 2012).

However, in 2012, the examination paper was revised with Tamil Paper 1 (6354/1) consisting of Section A (30 marks on directed writing) and Section B (70% of open response composition). Meanwhile, Paper 2 (6354/2) has 22 structural questions with four parts. The first part has multiple types of comprehension questions with 30 marks, while the second part has comprehension questions based on creative writing with 30 marks. Additionally, the third part comprises of questions related to *ceyyul* and figurative language with 20 marks and the final part has 20 marks with questions on grammar (Malaysia Examination Board, 2017). Thus, from an assessment perspective, learning grammar is considered as an important aspect of the Tamil language in secondary school context. The importance of grammar in Tamil language was further stressed in the Form Four Syllabus as shown below:

“மொழியாளருக்கு அடிப்படையாக அமைவது இலக்கணமாகும். இலக்கணத்தை நேரடியாக கற்பிக்காமல், வரையறுக்கப்பட்டுள்ள கேட்டல், பேச்சு, வாசிப்பு, எழுத்து ஆகிய நடவடிக்கைகளுடன் ஒருங்கிணைத்துக் கற்றுக்கொடுப்பது பரிந்துரைக்கப்படுகிறது. ஆகவே, மொழியை வழுவின்றிப் பயன்படுத்துவதற்குப் பின்வரும் இலக்கணக் கூறுகள் திட்டமிட்டுக் கற்பிக்கப்பட வேண்டும்.

(Ministry of Education, 2002: 32)

“*Moliyārralukku aṭippaṭaiyāka amaivatu ilakkaṇamākum. Ilakkaṇattai nēraṭiyāka karpikkāmal varaiyaṛukkappaṭṭuḷḷa kēṭṭal, pēccu, vācippu, eluttu ākiya naṭavaṭikkaikaḷuṭaṇ oruṅkiṇaittuk karpikkap parinturaikkappaṭukiratu. Ākavē, moliyai vaḷuvinrip payaṇpaṭuttuvataṛkup piṇvarum ilakkaṇak kūrukaḷ tiṭṭamiṭṭuk karpikkappaṭa vēṇṭum*”

Which is translated in English with the following meaning:

“Grammar is the foundation of language usage. Teachers are advised to not teach grammar continuously but to integrate them in activities that combine with listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Hence, the grammar elements must be planned and taught accordingly to avoid grammatical mistakes”

(Ambikapathy, 2020)

4.0 Grammar in Tamil Language

Grammar (*Ilakkanam*) is about the rules of a language. It explains about the rules to make sentences including the meaning that is to be delivered using such a sentence (Thornbury, 1999). In Tamil language, there are four aspects of *Ilakkanam* that the teachers must master in order to be able to teach students to communicate fluently in Tamil. These are phonology (*Eluttiyal*), morphology (*Colliyal*), syntax (*Todariyal*) and morphophonemic (*Punariyal*).

The combination of words in Tamil for instance can change the morphophonemic aspect through the process of addition (தேர்ந்தல்), replacement (திரிதல்) and deletion (கெடுதல்) to the phoneme or changes to the morpheme structure. The morphophonemic rules of Tamil language are divided into two which are: combining two words that does not bring any changes to the formation of a new word, called *Iyalpu Punarci* (இயல்பு புணர்ச்சி), and *vikarappunarci* (விகாரப்புணர்ச்சி) which are changes leading to the formation of a new word due to combination of two words. This implies the need for *Ilakkanam* to be taught formally so that the language can be accurately used.

5.0 Grammar Learning Strategies

Strategies for learning a language is considered important not only to ensure mastery of the language but also deals with the motivational aspect of achieving the goals of learning (Hung, 2019; Jantawong et al., 2018; Suwanarak, 2019). Oxford (1990) defined learning strategies as the specific actions taken by the learner to make learning much easier, faster, more interesting, self-directed, more effective and can be transferred to new situation. More specifically, language learning strategies are the conscious efforts or behaviours used by language learners to improve the acquisition, storing, retention and recalling as well as use of new information (Rigeney, 1978). In general, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) explained that there are three main categories of learning strategies that include cognitive (using specific techniques for a task such as repeating, reasoning and analyzing), metacognitive (deals with the process of learning such as managing, planning and monitoring), and socio-affective (deals with self and others such as cooperating with peers and getting clarification). For learning a second language however, Oxford (1990) stated that learning strategies can be direct or indirect whereby direct strategies include memory, cognitive and

compensation while indirect strategies comprise of metacognitive, affective and social. Figure 1 illustrates these types of learning strategies.

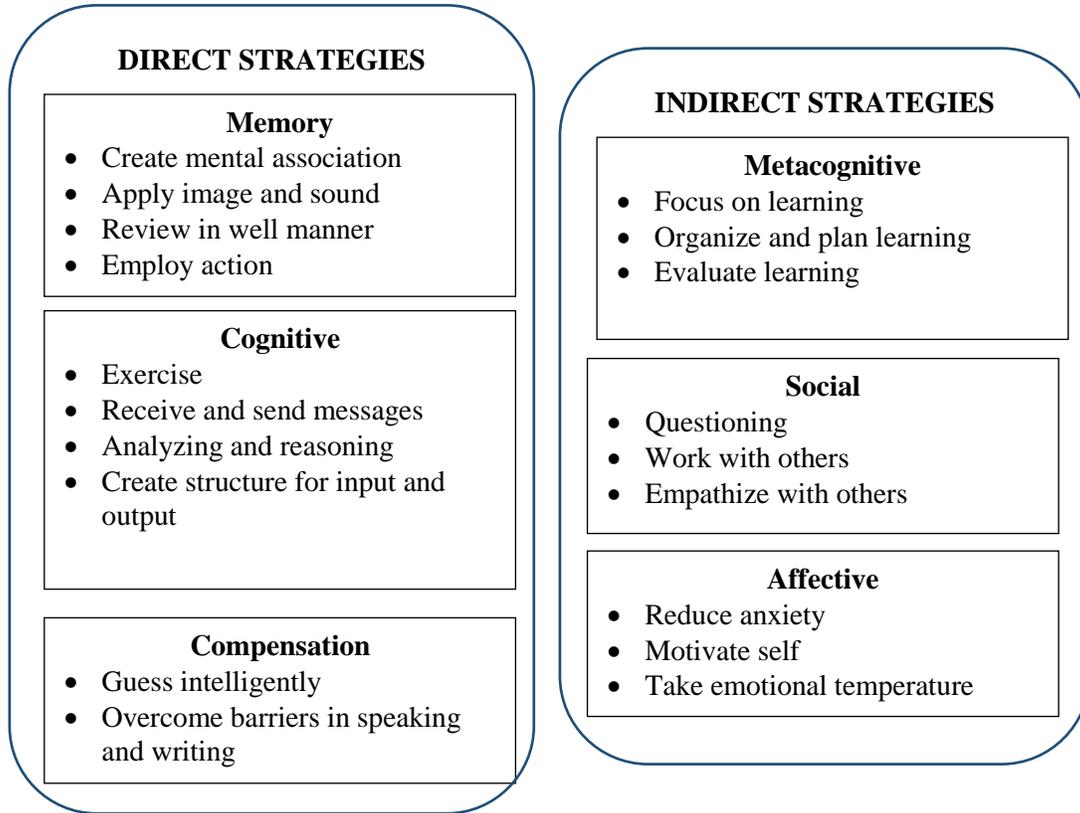


Figure 1. Language Learning Strategies
Source: Kazi (2017)

The memory strategy is used at the early stage of learning a language to learn vocabulary and language structure. This helps the students to learn and regain the information using a logical way with acronym, image, key word method, body movement, mechanical ways and such (Solak & Cakir, 2015). Meanwhile, cognitive method is the direct use of language materials where learners manipulate these materials by taking notes, rearranging the sentence, summarizing, synthesizing, making exercises and repetition (Hardan, 2013). The third direct strategy, compensation is the way that learners try to guess from the context through themes or context of reading as well as tones and movement while listening to others.

The indirect strategies include metacognitive strategy which enables the students to plan and manage the whole process of learning; the social strategy that refers to the action of learners asking others to give explanation and exercising with friends or asking questions; and affective strategy where this is associated with moods, emotions and feelings of the learners to maintain their motivation to learn the language (Kazi, 2017).

Due to the various strategies for learning a language, a teacher could act creatively and innovatively in planning and preparing an effective lesson to help students master the Tamil language effectively. It is also important to understand the mechanism of learning as this could further help the teachers to understand how learning of language actually happens.

6.0 Learning Mechanism

The learning mechanism explains about how someone learns something. The Information Processing Model which is shown in Figure 2 is an important theory in cognitive psychology to explain the three types of memory which are: sensory memory, working memory and long-term memory. These memories interact with one another to decipher information received by the learner. The sensory memory received information from the environment and send them to the working memory so that the learner can ponder on it. The information must be processed in the working memory to ensure that learning happens as the mental activities are carried out. However, the thinking memory is limited due to time and capacity (Baddeley, 1999). For processing information in the working memory, the learner needs maintenance rehearsal which is the process of repeating information mentally so that the memory can be kept (Khalil & Elkhider, 2016). Therefore, this reminds the teachers to plan the activities during the lesson so that learning can happen effectively (Paas et al., 1994).

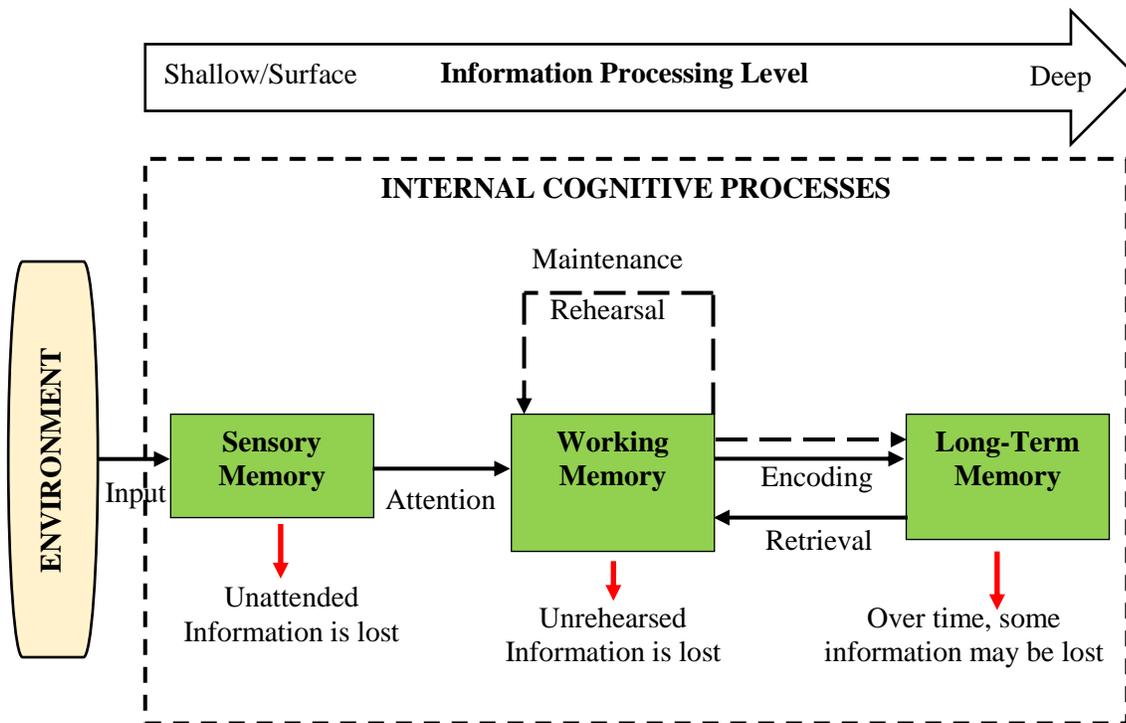


Figure 2. The Interrelationships of the Three Types of Memory and Type of Exercise for Information Coding

7.0 Powtoon Animation in Teaching and Learning Language

Teachers are provided with textbook and the Assessment Curriculum Standard Document for teaching Tamil Language in secondary school but Alagesan et al. (2020) noted in their study that there is a lacking in printed materials for teaching the subject in secondary school. Shanmugam et

al. (2020) highlighted in the study about the need to develop more instructional materials to solve the gross lacking of teaching and learning resources for Tamil language. Currently, teachers mostly refer to *Tolkappaiyam* and *Nannul* as the main reference materials to teach Tamil language. The situation calls for teachers to develop more teaching and learning resources for learning Tamil language.

Powtoon animated video was first created by Ilya Spitalnik and Daniel Zaturansky in 2012 (Adnyani et al., 2021). Powtoon is a web-based animation software that facilitates the quick and easy development of an animated presentation by manipulating readily existing objects, imported images or video, a background music and voice over to make teaching and learning more interesting to learners (Syafitri et al., 2018). It is available for free but for more advance use of icons, animations and sound, the software must be purchased. The animated video from Powtoon by itself requires an internet connection. However, Powtoon can be uploaded to YouTube for students to use. The video from YouTube can be downloaded and showed without the need for Internet connection.

Powtoon has the same operational concept as Power Point, Impress and Prezi as it used slides where texts and images are added with animation, music and sound in the same application or from other external sources. The final product shows an appearance of a Power Point presentation with comic features (Fimbriani, 2016). The visual presentation is fast and can attract the attention of the audience to deliver various messages in short period of time (Sutisna et al., 2019). According to Puspitarini et al. (2019), Powtoon application has some advantages such as: (i) animated features like texts, cartoon and variety in transition effects; (ii) reduce teachers' oral instruction during teaching; (iii) motivating students to learn; (iv) can be use in small or large learning groups; and (v) Powtoon is suitable for learning at primary school level because of its attractive appearance that can reduce students' boredom.

Adnyani et al. (2021) added that the Powtoon video presentation can enable students to share the topics of learning. The videos are designed in such as way that it can encourage active learning among the students as it requires the students to read and synthesize the information so they can produce the information again. Further to that, Powtoon software is compatible with various operational system including using it for teaching Tamil language.

Table 1 provides a summary of past studies which have used Powtoon in teaching and learning. Findings from these studies showed the effectiveness of Powtoon as a learning material, tool or teaching aid to deliver instruction in various classroom scenario such as mathematics, English language, Physics and others.

Table 1. Summary of Past Studies on Powtoon in the Classroom

Authors	Year	Scope of Study	Main Findings
Syafitri et al.	2018	Application of Powtoon as a digital media to improve pronunciation in speech	Powtoon was able to improve students' speech and increase their motivation, attention, interest and participation in the learning activities.

Sutisna et al.	2019	Students' perception and challenges in using Powtoon in the process of learning	The animated video made learning more interesting but the movement of animation distract the students. The duration of the video was also too short.
Puspitarini et al.	2019	Development of Powtoon based video in social science	Students' achievement in the experimental group were significantly better than the control group.
Adnyani et al.	2021	The implementation of Powtoon as an edutainment for younger students	The post-test scores of the experimental and control groups were significantly different implying the positive effect of Powtoon on students' comprehension. Students showed positive response to the activities.
Pais et al.	2017	Powtoon as a learning activity in the Technology Innovation Course as a didactic resource for pedagogical program	Powtoon contributes to motivation and new learning content, as well as building teachers' capacity to develop technological-based teaching resources.
Oktaviani & Mandasari	2020	Use of Powtoon as a digital media to optimize students' cultural performance in ELT classes	Students were motivated to learn English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Their ability towards the language and technology also improved.
Mujib et al.	2020	Development of mathematics video using Powtoon in contextual learning approach	Respondents confirmed that the learning media was interesting and able to provide good results in its implementation.
Buchori & Cintang	2018	The influence of Powtoon-aided group on changes in the speaking chip aided by Powtoon for primary school	An increase in creative thinking ability in mathematics among students.
Muliyati et al.	2020	Powtoon for learning Physics through video	The video was suitable as a Physics learning media in the classroom.

Megawati & Utami	2020	Learning English with Powtoon animated video	The video was developed using ADDIE model and its use showed excitement and focus among students.
Ramachandiran & Mahmud	2019	Powtoon as a formative assessment tool in higher education institutions	Powtoon as a formative assessment was liked by the students.

8.0 Research Gap

Based on the review of literature on teaching of Tamil language, especially for grammar aspect, several gaps in the literature were identified and summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Gap on Teaching and Learning Tamil Grammar

No	Identified Gaps	Explanation	Sources
1	Lacking of instructional resources for teaching Tamil language for Malaysian students	Besides text books and syllabus, texts either in printed or online version are grossly lacking.	Ambikapathy (2020); Shanmugam (2020)
2	Development of instructional module for Tamil language is still lacking	Scarcity of instructional module for teaching and learning Tamil language	Ambikapathy (2020); Shanmugam (2020)
3	The use of numerous elements of technology for teaching and learning in schools	There are numerous evidences of using technology for teaching and learning in schools but for other subjects such as English, Science and Mathematics.	Kalaiselvi & Balamuralithara (2019); Baharudin et al. (2019); Muliya et al. (2020); Puspitarini et al. (2019)
4	Variety of technological element that can be used for learning language	The market is flooded with numerous ICT software and tools such as Google Slide, Apple Keynote, Prezi, Haiku Deck, SlideDog, LibreOffice Impress, Powtoon, Curator dan Adobe Spark Page but teachers' exploration of these tools is limited specially for teaching Tamil language.	Shanmugam & Balakrishnan (2020)

5	Use of Powtoon in teaching and learning Tamil language has not been studied or applied extensively	Although the use of Powtoon in other subjects is increasing but it has not been used for teaching Tamil language.	See Table 1
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9.0 Conclusion

The review of literature has shown the importance of learning Tamil language, and most particularly, in mastering *ilakkanam*. Although the Indian community by percentage is smaller compared to the Malay and other indigenous ethnicities, and Chinese, yet, their contribution to the progress and development of Malaysia cannot be denied. Further to that, Tamil language itself is rich in culture and should be part of the cultural heritage for future generations. The literature review highlights the need to use technological based application to create more instructional resources that can compensate the glaring deficiency of Tamil language learning resources. With the advent of numerous applications and software in the market such as Powtoon, the teachers should take the challenge to be creative and innovative in development instructional module that they can use for teaching Tamil grammar effectively to their students.

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