

Learning Tools for Tamil as a Foreign Language

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Abstract—Tamil is one of the ancient living languages in the world. There are many speakers around the world. Teaching and learning take place in many countries in different educational institutions. The advancement of technology took language education in hand. Several language tools are adopted in teaching and learning languages and Tamil is not an exception. This study is based on two objectives such as to design a tool for Tamil language with the grammatical components and to get the feedback from the Tamil language learners who learn Tamil as foreign language. Mixed research method is adopted in this study. Data are collected after designing the Tamil language tool through the feedback of the foreign learners of Tamil language. The Tamil language tool is designed as learning tool to enhance learner motivation, engagement, communicative competence, and overall Tamil language proficiency among non-native or foreign learners. The findings of the study are from the feedback of the users. This designed Tamil language tool significantly enhance learning autonomy and structural comprehension, developers must actively bridge the gap between rigid, literary Tamil rules and the flexible, spoken registers used in everyday communication. The study recommends to design and implement the technology-supported learning resources, and to offer valuable implications for language educators in foreign language education.

Keywords: Language tools, Tamil, foreign language, feedback

I. INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in shaping the learners how they learn, acquire, process and communicate. Each and every country has its own language to communicate and share their ideas and thoughts. Hence, teaching language with its components such as phones, morphs, sentences and meaning are essential. Due to the advancement of technology, the teaching atmosphere has changed. Teaching and learning process became easier because it merged with the current developments in the technology. The advancement of technology started to use the phrase 'e' in every aspect. For instance, e-ticket, e-wallet, e-billing, e-book, etc. The same phrase can be used in teaching and learning too. This is the application of electronics in the disciplines. The use of the modern technology didn't leave education especially in teaching and learning languages. New innovations took place in teaching languages with e-content, e-materials, applications APPS, software, etc. Such techniques are common among the educators. The effectiveness of classroom teaching is highly dependent on educators' adept use of efficient teaching strategies and techniques (Anusia, K. & Kumar, Muniisvaran, 2024). This article glimpses to have a tool for teaching and learning Tamil as foreign language.

II. TAMIL LANGUAGE

Tamil language is rich in literature and it is one of the ancient languages in the world apart from Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and other classical languages. Tamil language is mainly spoken in Tamilnadu in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, South Africa, Fiji and other parts of the world. It is the first language, second language and foreign language in different countries. Tamil language has its own unique peculiarities. The retroflex sound is found only in few languages including Tamil. It is agglutinative in nature. The vocabularies are constructed with suffixes and a few prefixes. It is called as suffixed language. The major grammatical terms like noun, verb, etc. takes suffixes with them.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

- to design a tool for Tamil language with the grammatical components and
- to get the feedback from the Tamil language learners who learn Tamil as foreign language.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several works done in teaching and learning and learning language as in a foreign state.

Subramaniam Rajagopal (2017) conducted a study on the implications for the teaching of Tamil with CLT approach. This article discusses the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to Tamil. Moreover, it explains how Tamil can be taught as a first, second, third, and foreign language. It also recommends learner-centred teaching, authentic communication, and meaningful interaction instead of grammar-translation methods. Finally, the study highlights the importance of listening and speaking skills for beginners.

Another study was conducted by Nirukshi Perera and Iryna Khodos (2024) in the area of learning Tamil for non-native speakers. The study explores how Tamil language learning supports multilingualism and intercultural understanding. And it also discusses language policy, curriculum, and motivation in learning Tamil as a non-native language. The findings say that, Tamil language can be learnt by non-native speakers with ease if the appropriate methods are implemented.

Bipin Bihari Dash (2022) in his study on 'Digital Tools for Teaching and Learning English Language in 21st Century' mentions that the recent technologies like Blogs, the Internet, Interactive Boards, Mobile Phones, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, and many more have added not only stimulus but also learners' engagement and true interactivity within the classroom. The major objective of the study is to establish various elements of the technology used in English teaching and learning which brings innovative technique and promote to ensure effective and quality teaching. The findings of the study show that, the present teaching-learning without digitization is inscrutable, unintelligible, and incomprehensible.

Further, Jeong-Bae Son (2011) has conducted a research on the title, Online tools for language teaching. The major objective of the study is to increase awareness of the tools generates a need for computer-assisted language learning (CALL) researchers and practitioners to develop and implement CALL widely by exploring, selecting, using and evaluating the tools in a variety of contexts. The study discussed the place and role of online language teaching tools in CALL and present a categorised list of the tools, which provides a basis for further research and practice in CALL.

Yet another study was carried out by K Latha (2020) entitled, 'Significance of E-Learning Tools in Teaching English'. This study stresses on the need to make English language lessons easy and enjoyable through innovative ELT methods. Moreover, this study discusses the availability of various tools of ICT and their practical uses. The study concludes with the findings that learning with e-tools are essential and it plays a significant role in the education.

Another article entitled, 'Role of Modern Technology in Teaching and Learning the English Language in Indian Educational Institutions' written by Sinha, Kanhaiya Kumar, (2022) explains about the role of technology in teaching and learning. Moreover, it explains the conventional strategies that are especially primarily based totally on lecturing and rote studying lessen English language studying to mechanical memorization and miserably fail in growing the English language as an ability for most of the newcomers. Also, the role of teachers, via the usage of the modern ELT (English Language Teaching) strategies like English songs, film clippings, dramatics, advertisements, sports activities, commentaries and plenty of greater values, can have interaction with the newcomers to come to be professionals in the English language. The study specializes in the want to make English language coaching smooth and exciting through modern strategies.

Genova, M M (2019) has conducted another study entitled, '21st century language classroom with digital tools and resources'. In this study the researcher has discussed about the importance of implementing alternative teaching and learning methods of instruction in the 21st century Foreign Language classroom. Moreover, the main focus is on integrating specific digital tools and resources in teaching English using an approach called English through Literature Approach. The objective of this study is to foster students' skills to interpret texts from British and American literary canon not only through traditional medium of instruction, but also technology-rich instruction regardless of time, place and electronic devices. Further, in this study the researcher has summarised and evaluated the teaching methods, through an online survey conducted with twelfth-grade students after a two-year experiment.

V. METHOD OF THE STUDY

This study adopts the mixed research method. It is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Jebamony and et.al, 2022). The Tamil language tool is designed with the combinations provided in the multimedia tool proposed by ASSURE model. It elaborates the experience and practical ideas apart of teaching and learning.

The study is based on two objectives and these objectives are achieved through stages. In the first stage the grammatical categories for Tamil language are identified and framed to design a tool. Later, the designed tool is implemented for the foreign learner to get the feedback from the learners.

VI. FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier, Tamil is a language characterized by its highly agglutinative morphology and a different syntax structure when compared to English language. The Tamil language has the sentence structure as Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). Unlike English, words are constructed by adding multiple structural suffixes to a lexical root.

The first objective is based on designing a Tamil language tool with the prompt grammatical information. An effective digital grammar tool must be broken down into specific computational and linguistic modules. The scripts of Tamil language is listed as vowels, consonants and combinations of vowels and consonants (termed as *uyirmeḡ*). Next, information on the word-level components are collected. With the morphological analyser, the complex words are break down and the agglutinated words are integrated. For instance, a root verb takes on tense, person, gender, and number suffixes.

paadikkiren = sing [root] + present tense + 1st person singular.

oodinaan = run [root] + past tense + 3rd Person masculine singular.

Rules for transforming the verb with its affixes and incorporating written and spoken forms are carried on. Moreover, the POS tagger is used to identify the verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs and grouping them into phrases or sentences to clarify how Tamil relies on case markers rather than rigid word order. The Subject-Object-Verb will be informed and designed so that any group of words can be arranged according to the sentence structure. With all these information a Tamil language tool is designed.

The second objective is about the feedback from Foreign Language Learners. The study evaluated the users of modern digital Tamil tools and feedback from the non-native or foreign language learners of Tamil language are revealed. The feedback are based on the benefits, difficult points, and necessary adjustments for computer-assisted language learning. The feedback includes, traditional textbooks often overcome foreign learners with intellectual grammatical terms. Moreover, the Tamil language tool allows learners to deduce grammar naturally by actively breaking down sentences and observing pattern changes. Apart from these, the learners state about the preference of digital tools over printed worksheets. This is because, of the features like instantaneous correction, interactive feedback, possible amendments, suggestions for improvement and supports independent study outside the classroom. Further, the foreign learners feedback is on the writing and reading the Tamil scripts. In the initial stages, they read and write with Romanized script using the transliteration provided. This Tamil language tool allows input in transliteration, convert it to Unicode Tamil, and then analyze the grammar which are appraised the uppermost for usability.

VII. CONCLUSION

Incorporating all the grammatical information of Tamil language system and designing a Tamil language tool is not an easy task for the language experts. This study, implemented a digital tool for the Tamil language by incorporating the morphological analysers and syntax parsers. It successfully addresses the language learning associated with the language's highly agglutinative structure and Subject-Object-Verb framework. Feedback from foreign Tamil language learners informed that while such computational tools significantly enhance learning autonomy and structural comprehension, developers must actively bridge the gap between rigid, literary Tamil rules and the flexible, spoken registers used in everyday communication. Further, this Tamil language tool can evolve from an error-detection system into a highly effective, empathetic pedagogical companion that fosters genuine fluency in non-native speakers of Tamil language. The study recommends to design and implement the technology-supported learning resources, and to offer valuable implications for language educators, curriculum developers, and researchers involved in foreign language education.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher and co-researchers acknowledge the OTPAM Sdn. Bhd. Malaysia for providing the grant to conduct the research. The grant is under Sultan Idris Education University with research code **2023-0054-106-29**. The research team acknowledges the **Research Management and Innovation Centre (RMIC)** of **Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI)** for allowing to utilize the grant from outside which facilitated to complete the research work successfully

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