

# Rendering stories in English from Periya Puranam as a strategy to promote reading skills through Cultural contexts: A study with a group of Undergraduates

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## **Abstract**

Teaching of English as a Second Language is conducted at the Faculties of Arts, Hindu Studies and Visual and Performing Arts of the University of Jaffna in various groups. The undergraduates of the respective faculties find it difficult to refer books in English even after following a ten-year programme of learning English at Sri Lankan schools. To improve their proficiency in English, General English is taught in the First year and English for Humanities, English for Social Sciences, and English for General Purposes in the Second year and English for Career Development and English for Academic Purposes in the Third year respectively. However, the students found it difficult to manage their reading comprehension passages based on alien and irrelevant topics. It was also observed that the students were poor in oral and written communication. Therefore, it was proposed to use a set of stories, and culturally-friendly texts from Periya Puranam in English on the assumption that reading such pieces would promote language learning in cultural contexts. The paper is confined to the experimental study conducted with a group of Hindu students from the University of Jaffna using questionnaires, interviews with the students, lecturers, and administrators, and diary notes of the researcher. The workshop sessions four in number were conducted at different intervals during the three-month study. The study concentrates on how stories from Periya Puranam, a non-native religious text could motivate the learners and analyzes qualitatively the students' task sheets and responses to check with their improvement. Finally, recommendations are made in the light of the findings achieved. It has been found out that culturally friendly texts have promoted the students' reading skills with more interest while encouraging other skills.

**Keywords:** Culturally-friendly texts, Non-native Religious texts, Second language learning, Periya Puranam, Undergraduates

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