LEXICAL USAGES IN TAMIL
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3.1 Lexical Usages: General

Any language operates with three major levels/units viz., phonological/graphological unit, lexical unit and discourse unit. Classical linguistics as well as modern linguistics aims at a systematic study of all these levels/units.

Lexical items are given importance both in the grammatical tradition and lexicographical tradition, because vocabulary is felt to be a complex unit with one organisation and it bridges the conceptual world with the world of language or code. Vocabulary also reflects the way in which the society perceives the world and indicates the social norms, social attitudes, social behaviour, social system, social context and social development.

When one looks at the social history of a society along with language history, he or she will be able to notice that words are constantly developed, modified and deleted according to the social conditions, necessities, etc.

Vocabulary of a language can be broadly classified as general vocabulary and technical vocabulary. Structural
linguists, historical linguists, linguists working on typology and universals, lexicographers and sociolinguists had given considerable amount of attention to the study of vocabulary items, their variations, significance in use, social meaning, etc.

Folk taxonomists tried to identify the taxonomy of the cultural vocabulary items prevalent in different societies. Plant names, animal names, kinship terms, colour terms, etc. are some of the themes which attracted the attention of folk taxonomists.

Historical linguists gave importance to the creation of basic vocabulary list and the genealogical and typological vocabulary core. Sociolinguists drew their attention towards the vocabulary variation that occurs in a language due to various social parameters such as age, sex, education, social status, social class, caste, occupation, economic status, etc. and social contexts. They also pointed out various domain-based vocabulary items. Applied linguists gave importance to vocabulary gradation while discussing about the planning of language for pedagogical purposes, that is, for language teaching, prepa-
ration of teaching materials and curriculum development. Our interest in this chapter is to identify the lexical usages in Tamil with special reference to the technical terms which are employed in various developing fields like science and technology, mass media, education, etc.

3.2 Lexical Usages in Tamil

Words play an important role in language use. The development of a language can be identified through the development of lexical items and it is controlled by the needs of a society. Social development takes place due to the expansion of ideas and conceptions which in turn are controlled by the technological and scientific development. Languages normally borrow certain lexical items from other languages in order to satisfy and fulfill their needs to express so many ideas such as scientific and technological/concepts, etc.

Many languages lose their vocabulary items also in the course of time due to the influence of various factors (bilingualism, convergence, etc). For example, the names of old coins, old measurements, old administrative terms, old war instruments, old business terms, have lost their status and significance in modern Tamil.
3.2.1 Why do we use lexical items?

Words have an important role to play in communication. Every vocabulary item is represented by a single sound or a sequence of sounds. It is only through the categorised meaning associated with words, we communicate with others. If words and their meanings are known to the speaker and hearer concerned, communication becomes easy and we say that it has taken place. Thus, communicability and intelligibility depend upon the shared knowledge of the speaker - hearer, in a communication system or process.

Words are used in different ways in different contexts. Words have a role to play in informal language use situations like family domains, domains outside the family, domains related to business, agriculture, etc. The use of lexical items can be identified and differentiated in a society on the basis of the conceived formal and informal contexts of language use. The role and the use of lexical items get widened in various domains like administration, education, business, mass media, religion etc. when a society advances.

3.3 Classification of words on the basis of their functions

Words are classified on the basis of their functions
specifically under two headings: viz.,

1. General words

and 2. Technical terms

General terms are normally used in most of the informal and formal contexts which occur in our social life. General vocabulary items in Tamil as in other languages are used in a variety of ways. We can bring the uses of lexical terms under three major headings viz., grammatical use (Grammar), referential use (Semantics), contextual use (Pragmatics). Those studies conducted over the use of lexical items can be subsumed under three headings. Depending upon the role a lexical item takes in the syntactic construction, words are stamped with grammatical names reflecting their grammatical roles. Most of the grammarians are interested in the grammatical use of the items concerned.

When words are used to represent the external world, social world, mental world, words come to receive signification. When words are used to represent the objects of the world, they acquire referential use. Experts in semantics show interest in the semantic use of lexical items.
When words are used in different social and cultural domains, by a variety of users who are classified through various social parameters, stylistic parameters, etc., words receive their pragmatic use. Words may be used,

1. for the elevation of styles

2. for the establishment of various standards available in a society

3. for the actualisation of various speech acts such as requesting, scolding, praising, denying, performing actions, ..........., etc.

All these users of words are subsumed under pragmatic use of words. Sociolinguists, litterateurs, speech act specialists, advertisers, media people, show interest in the stylistic, contextual, pragmatic use of words. So, several words have grammatical, referential and contextual usages.

When we look at the history of the Tamil language, we could find that Tamil has borrowed several lexical items of the
general and semi-technical types from different foreign languages such as English, Perso-Arabic, Sanskrit, French, Portuguese, etc. These borrowings have come into the language because of the need-filling and prestige-motives and also due to the administrative superiority of the language of the rulers. Since, India as well as Tamilnadu was ruled by people belonging to different language groups and since different movements did occur in the Indian cultural context, a large number of foreign vocabulary items got entry into the lexical stock of Indian languages. The following list illustrates some of the loan words which are currently used in Tamil (loan words and loan-word-based creations reflect the changing patterns of vocabulary use due to various socio-cultural factors).

1. Sanskrit words

1. pu:;jai 'worship/puja'
2. ja:kkiratai 'care'
3. natcattiram 'star'
4. sa*igi;tam 'music'
5. stalam 'place'

etc.
2. Arabic/Urdu

1. ila:kka: 'department'
2. amo:l 'enforce'
3. ja:min 'bail'
4. kaja:na: 'treasury'
5. ma:co:ta: 'bill'
6. nakal 'duplicate/copy'
7. vacu:l 'collection'

etc.

3. French words

1. ba:ttil 'bottle'
2. tampura: 'a kind of musical instrument'
3. du:dju 'coin'
4. kakku:su 'latrine'
5. la:ndar 'lantern'

etc.
4. English words

1. \texttt{bɛnk} \quad 'bank'
2. \texttt{bas} \quad 'bus'
3. \texttt{cinima} \quad 'cinema'
4. \texttt{kampuːtar} \quad 'computer'
5. \texttt{kandaktar} \quad 'conductor'
6. \texttt{karantu} \quad 'current'
7. \texttt{reːdiyo} \quad 'radio'

5. Portuguese words

1. \texttt{alamatsri} \quad 'almirah'
2. \texttt{peːnaː} \quad 'pen'
3. \texttt{caːvi} \quad 'key'
4. \texttt{jannal} \quad 'window'
5. \texttt{kiraːmpu} \quad 'clove'
6. \texttt{meːsai} \quad 'table'
Another type of vocabulary in a language is constituted by technical terms. In order to differentiate the core of general lexical items from the core of technical lexical items, linguists employ the word 'vocabulary' for the former and 'terminology' for the latter. Technical lexical items are called as technical 'terms'.

Technical terms are those which are used in limited domains of language use such as education, administration, etc.

Technical terms, unlike general vocabulary items, have some general characteristic features. They are: (1) specificity, (2) scientificality, (3) monosemy, and (4) systematicity, Liu Yongquan (1986: 37 - 38).
(1) **Specificality**: Terms which are not widely used receive this quality. The terminology of a particular field is usually unknown to practitioners in another field because they have the quality 'specificality'.

(2) **Scientificality**: Terms which are accurate in the sense that they express concepts precisely and differentiate between concepts acquire the quality 'scientificality'. A science, on the one hand, produces its terminology and on the other hand, with the help of the produced terminology, it consolidates its need, achievements in cognition, which in turn becomes more profound in proportion, depending upon the semantic precision of the terminology.

(3) **Monosemy**: In a particular field, a term has one meaning. When a term carries only one meaning it is treated as monosemous. Terms may have parallel homographs in general vocabulary. For example, 'fatigue', as a physical term is a homograph parallel to the word 'fatigue' in the general vocabulary of every day usage. Terms that belong to more than one field are called multi-subject terms.
(4) **Systematicity**: Each term has a value of its own and this value is determined by the whole conceptual system of the subject of field in which the term appears. This characteristic feature termed as systematicity, is most clearly demonstrated by the tables of categories or classification in science. For example, in linguistics, terms with -eme as a suffix, belong to a classificatory level superordinate to those with the allo-prefix.

In general, a term which is referring to a specific concept and is characteristic to a specific field of knowledge is known as a technical term. Generally, a set of common lexical items (words) which are used in the day-to-day life of a social group, meeting the general functions, is termed as vocabulary and a set of items which are specific to a domain of knowledge (science, technology, social science, art, etc) is termed as terminology. Micheal West (1926) says that there are two kinds of language. They are:

1. The language of house and emotion

and 2. The language for representing fact, knowledge, argumentation over scientific truth, etc. One could correlate Micheal West's conception of language with the dichotomy in words, namely, vocabulary and terminology.
3.4 Words and Usages

Even though Tamil is a classical language and has quite a number of vocabulary items, due to the vast and fast developments in the domains of scientific inventions, technological findings, etc., there arose the necessity to represent the scientific inventions through language. In that respect, Tamil appears to be deficient as such. If properly elaborated, Tamil could be used to express scientific concepts. For the exposition of scientific concepts, Tamil has borrowed several technical terms from other languages and adapted them through processes such as translation, transliteration, blending, shifting, etc.

With reference to the usage of Tamil in the developing domains, one could observe the frequent use of foreign lexical items. For example, English words such as bank, draft, chalan, cheque, pass book, etc. are very often used in the banking context in Tamilnadu without much modification.

In Tamil, we also find certain lexical items which are of semi-technical status and are found to be used in more than one formal domain. For example, let us consider the following words:
a:yva:\lar and pativa:\lar: Though these words generally occur in the domain of education, they are also used in other domains with different meanings.

a:yva:\lar
Inspector 'Health Department'
Researcher 'Education Department'
Inspector 'Police Department'

The degree in which the technical terms are used, appear to be high in the domain of administration, education, science, technology and mass media. One could find variation in the use of technical terms in different domains. When English technical terms are translated into Tamil, every translator adopts his own mode of translation. Because of the different translation techniques, technical terms appear to manifest heterogeneity. The following examples present different English technical terms and their translated Tamil equivalents.

3.4.1 One-to-one correspondence

English technical terms for which only one Tamil equivalent is available, are presented below:
3.4.1.1 Education

1. tunai vešntar  
   'Vice-Chancellor'

2. mašlaik kallu:ri  
   'evening college'

3. mulu ne:ra  
   'full-time'
   etc.

3.4.1.2 Fire Service Department

1. utavikkayiru  
   'guyl ine'

2. uyartti  
   'elevator'

3. ti:yanaippi  
   'extinguisher'
   etc.

3.4.1.3 Registration Department

1. kuttakaikkku vittavar  
   'leaser'

2. ma:vatap pativa:lar  
   'district registrar'

3. niraive:rrunar  
   'executor'
   etc.
3.4.1.4 State Planning Commission

1. urpatti  
   'output'

2. kaṭanittup pattiram  
   'debenture'

3. vali muraikal  
   'norms'
   etc.

3.4.1.5 Port Department

1. tiranta paṭaku  
   'open boat'

2. kappal me:ltalam  
   'deck'

3. ko:ṇamaini  
   'sextant'  
   etc.

3.4.1.6 Agricultural Department

1. paruttik ka:yp pulu  
   'ball worm'

2. karical nilam  
   'black soil'
   etc.
3.4.2 One-to-two correspondence

Examples of English Technical terms for which there are two equivalent Tamil words are presented below:

3.4.2.1 Education

1. aŋai
   kattalai
   'directive'

2. pirivu
   patippu
   'course'

3. vali
   vaːykaːl
   'channel'

3.4.2.2 Fire Service Department

1. aṭaippi
   ceruki
   'plug'

   etc.
2. tanal
    kanal

3. manu
    vinnaṇḍam

3.4.2.3 Registration Department

1. tanṭam
    tanṭapappam

2. viruppuruti alla:ta
    uyil alla:ta

3. veluttuppo:kum pativu
    velirum pativu

    etc.
3.4.2.4 State Planning Commission

1. tarakarkal
   itainilaiya:lar kal
   'intermediaries'

2. miraive:ram
   ceyala:kkam
   'performance'

3. vitam
   nicaloci
   'incidence'
   etc.

3.4.2.5 Port Department

1. cu:ra:vali
   puyal
   'hurricane'

2. karaiyo:rama:na
   karaippakuti
   'littoral'

3. kutainta vallam
   kutainta cirupataku
   'dugout canoe'
   etc.
3.4.2.6 Agriculture Department

1. itukki
   ca:manam 'forceps'

2. ce:rkkaipporul
   ce:rmam 'ingredients'

3. curappi
   kiranti 'gland'
   etc.

3.4.3 One-to-Three correspondence

Examples of English technical terms for which three equivalents are available are presented below:

3.4.3.1 Education

1. me:rkol
   kuri 'reference'
   pa:rvai
2. 

mu:ṇrupaṭī
mu:ṇrupaṭinya:na 'triplicate'
muppaṭī
e tc.,

3.4.3.2 Fire Service Department

1. tiṭṭa vaṭṭama:na
tuṭlama:na 'concrete'
urutiya:na

2. tanīmam
tanipporul 'element'
muslapporul 

etc.

3.4.3.3 State Planning Commission

1. vinaicceyāl vakai
cyaltiṭṭam 'strategy'
kolkaī 

etc.

3.4.3.4 Port Department

1. to:qi

na:va:y 'boat'
paṭaku
2. ni:r valip po:kkuvat
kaṭalvalip po:kkuvat
kappalai katalil celuttum
ariviyal

3.4.3.5 Agriculture Department

1. puṭakkucai
    muscai 'crucible'
    puṭakkinni

2. pu:cciyyiyal vallunar
    pu:cciyyiyal ariha
    pu:cciyyiyala:r

3.4.4 One-to-Four correspondence

Examples for English Technical terms for which four equivalents are found are presented below:

3.4.4.1 Technical Education

1. ki:l vaiy kayiru
    kurik kayiru
    paiyccuk kayiru
    kalkatti kayiru 'ground rope'
    etc.
3.4.5 One-to-Five correspondence

There are cases where five equivalent Tamil words are found for a single English technical term.

3.4.5.1 Education

1. arivuruttal
2. arivuṭṭal
3. paṇittal 'instruction'
4. poṭtanai
5. karpittal etc.

3.5 Modernization of Lexical Usages

Ferguson (1966) has pointed out that languages in general and lexical terms in particular are expected to undergo the process of standardization and modernization. Standardization and modernization are the two main processes of language planning. They are employed in order to make the use of language and lexical items simple, easy, efficient and rational,
in various formal domains of language use in a society. For the expansion of vocabulary, processes like,

1. Loan translation
2. Loan blends
3. Loan words
4. Loan shift are employed.

3.5.1 Loan Translation

When there is a need for using native terms for a loan word, due to the language attitudes of the speakers of a language, the usual practice is to take the technical terms and to translate them literally. What we arrive at in this process is known as loan translation. The structure and meaning of the loan and translated words will be the same here.

Given below are some of the examples of loan translation in Tamil:

1. irakkumati urimam 'import licence'
2. ulaka vanki 'world bank'
3. pattarai utaviya: 'workshop attender'
3.5.2 Loan Blends

A loan blend is a new idiom developed in the borrowing situation, in which both the loan word and loan shift mechanisms are involved. The borrower imports part of the model and replaces part of it by some thing already in his own language. In loan blends both Tamil and other tongue words are mixed. This can be seen in English and Sanskrit.

The following items are some of the examples for loan blends in Tamil use:

4. potu maruttuva manai 'general hospital'
5. ciraitturai 'jail department'
6. cirai nu: lakam 'jail library'
7. cemman 'red soil'
8. karuttaran'ka arai 'seminar hall'
9. karrru itaiveli 'air gap'
10. maiya va:yil 'main gate'
11. viruntinar illam 'guest house'

etc.
3.5.2.1 English Loan Blends

1. Nouns

1. po:lis + ka:rar 'policeman'
2. prayve:š + va:nti 'private bus'
3. ran + kal 'runs'
4. vā:takai + bilįingv 'rented building'
   etc.

2. Verbs

1. areštu + pannu 'arrest'
2. ork + cey 'work'
3. bihe:v + pannu 'behave'
4. će:ks + po:tu 'tax'
   etc.

3.5.2.2 Sanskrit Loan Blends

1. Nouns

Sanskrit + Tamil

1. evasara + alaippu 'emergency call'
2. parivarttanai + mařram 'reciprocal transfer'

3. prataːna + aluvalar 'chief officer'

etc.

2. Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. arcanaːi + pānu</td>
<td>'chant'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. paradam + aːtu</td>
<td>'dance'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. viniyoːkam + cey</td>
<td>'distribute'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

etc.

3.5.3 Loan Words

In loan words, the borrower may adopt the word along with the object or practice concerned. Here, the word may be adopted in the borrowing language according to its phonological structure.

3.5.3.1 English words

1. inspektar 'inspector'
2. ay ko:rttu 'high court'
3. o:ttal 'hotel'
4. bo:nas 'bonus'
5. da:kṭar 'doctor'
6. dairaktar 'director'
7. cinima: 'cinema'
8. ce:yar 'chair'
9. kampaːni 'company'
10. reil yeː san 'railway station'
11. reji:straːr 'registrar'
12. re:diyo: 'radio'
13. skuːl 'school'
14. helikaːptar 'helicopter'

etc.

3.5.3.2 Sanskrit words

1. aːtikaːri 'officer'
2. aːtteːpam 'objection'
3. piratiniti  'representative'
4. piratama mantiri  'prime minister'
5. mukya viṣayam  'important matter'
6. niti amaiccar  'finance minister'
7. naṭcattiram  'star'
8. nastam  'lose'
9. lō:k saba:  'lok sabha'
10. ra:ṭrapati  'president'
11. sāngittam  'music'
12. stalam  'place'

3.6 Loan Shift

When confronted with a new object or practice or concept for which words are needed to express the same, the borrower may not accept the donor's words along with the new cultural item. Instead, he may somehow adapt materials already in his own language. The precise adaptation may be in one way or another
patterned on the donor's verbal behaviour. In Tamil, the items given below are some of the examples for loan shift.

1. pe:runtu 'bus'
2. pu:nka: 'park'
3. ka:llurai 'socks'
4. ka:lcattai 'pants'
5. mitivanti 'cycle'
   etc.

It is evident from the foregoing that the lexical items of a language are constantly under flux according to the changing needs of the society. Also, it is evident that there are innumerable ways of enriching the vocabulary items of a language through processes such as loan adoption, loan translation, loan blending, etc. In the next chapter lexical usages will be looked upon from the point of view of different socio-linguistic aspects.