

LANGUAGE OF ADMINISTRATION Kannada : A Case Study

Dr. B. Mallikarjun
Central Institute
of Indian Languages
Manasagangotri
Mysore - 560 006

1.0 Structure of Communication

A segment, register comprising of elements that are frequent and essential for functioning in certain specific domains of the users of a language develops for specific communicative purposes. In this paper, use of language in administration in general and use of Kannada in administration in particular are discussed.

2.0 Sub-domains of communication

In order to understand the structure and functioning of the language used in administration, the communicative process has to be looked at from four angles. These angles form four sub-domains of communication. Each sub-domain has an initiator and a recipient.

Sub-domain	Initiator	Recipient
a. General	People - Public	Officials-Government
b. Public	Officials-Government	People-public
c. Officialese	Officials-Government	Officials-Government
d. Processing and Interpretation	Officials-Government	Officials

The General domain receives applications, petitions, filled in forms etc. from the public to be responded to or processed by the officials of the Government.

The Public domain consists of the responses that are being sent to individuals or people in general, but drafted and prepared by the officials for the government on the basis of receipts from public or for those originated within the Government.

The officialese domain encompasses all communications between and among various offices, departments and secretariat. These communications are meant for officials only.

The Processing and Interpretative domain restricts itself to the processing of the communications received from public and other offices, departments and interpretation of them as and when necessary in the light of rules, procedures and norms of the Government.

2.1 General

Most of the communications received within this domain are open ended ones. These open ended petitions, applications etc., originate normally without any stimulus from the Official-Government. The other types of close-ended responses are responses for the stimulus provided by the Official-Government. They, in general have only required amount of message in the form of details in prescribed forms.

The communications in this domain are normally characterized by elaborate description of items and events and have very less or no technical terms. The repetition of set phrases except the terms of request and address are totally absent. The communication takes place in the language of the people and also in the form actually in use among them. These instances are seen in the maintenance of land records, petitions of the people which happen to be in peoples language even when a foreign language was used in the Government for administration. Hardly one can find a format in the open-ended communications of this domain. Also it is not possible to ascribe a specific standardized format for them.

2.2 Public

This is a domain of rich use of language patterns. Also a complicated area from the point of view of language analysis. The variety of language used here ranges from

simplest to the most complicated ones. This is so because here the communication is to be carried out with the people of different levels of educational background, comprehension and competence by the persons educated and trained in administration. This being the reality, the message has to be communicated in simple form of the language so as to be comprehended by all facets of target audience. The message also should be unambiguous, short and appealing to its recipients. A blend of the use of administrative terms and common language expressions is required at this level. The communications from the Government go to the people in various forms like letters, notices, tenders, notifications etc.

2.3 Processing and Interpretation

This is the interpretive and governing domain where legislation, rules are framed and interpreted. Here the official transactions are also carried out in the language, which may not be the language of the people being administered. Use of English in Karnataka for making legislation, rules etc., in post independent India for many years can be seen as an example. The persons using the language in this sub domain are educated, trained in administrative procedures and they are capable to use appropriate language forms. So, here the interpretations and communications are precise, consist of larger number of technical terms and repetition of set phrases. The communications, here are in the form of 'noting', 'drafts' by the subordinates, supervisors and 'decisions' and 'approvals' by the officers. Similarly, are the formulations of 'orders', 'legislation', 'rules' etc., by the Government.

2.4 Officialese

The communications from one office to the other and from an employee to the other in the form of letters, circulars, notifications etc., are included in this sub-domain. Here also both sender and recipient are trained to encode and decode the message of the communication.

3.1 Mode of Communication

Language of administration is mainly written language communication. This written mode is chosen for the following reasons: (1) continuity in administration demands permanence of the communicated message; (2) the distant communication and (3) authentication of the communicated message. (3) The written mode is further emphasized because it is believed that the oral communication is liable to be ambiguous and subject to wrong decoding. Since the language of administration is a written mode, the distance between the language of day to day communication and the forms of language used in the domain of administration is are widened.

3.2 . Register

The existence of different dialects in a language leads to standardization of a dialect under various social, regional, political, academic and other conditions. As the process of standardization taking place in the common language influences the nuances of the language of administration, so the standardization of language of administration too influences the language in general. The language of administration is a single register with several sub-registers like language used in revenue administration, fisheries, sericulture, industry, etc. The development of this register influences the informative register at all levels of analysis and understanding. It influences on the phonetic system by adding new speech sounds to the phonetic system of the language. The existing graphemes of the informative register get additional symbols or the graphemes get additional markings or on occasion they get other phonetic values also, thus leading to the changes in the graphemic system of the language. This register consists of sounds and symbols that are not existing in the informative register. May indicate the simplification processes of sound symbol correspondences in case of difficult representations. The language of administration of one region jibes with the language of administration of other regions of the same State, and also across the States within the Federal setup.

4.0 Technical Terms

The Technical Terms in administrative language synthesize the possible long statements to precise units of expression leading to specific restricted meanings and bring an end to the possible misinterpretations and possible ambiguity of long statements that are used. In many Indian languages the administrative terms may be borrowed terms or coined terms. These may be borrowings from other linguistic resources or from the past resources of the same language or coined ones with the help of suitable linguistic elements to suit the specific administrative concept.

Four tendencies are noticed in the formation of Technical Terms. They are international, national, regional and local. A choice of the appropriate process or processes has depended mainly upon the users of the language and historical reasons constitute to the tendency that develops in it. For example, Hindi exhibits nationalist and Tamil prefers purist or native tendency. Whereas administrative Kannada has an amalgamation of all the processes to frame the technical terms but heavily draws from Urdu-Persian and English sources.

However, it is to be noted that Banking Kannada draws from Hindi and Scientific Kannada draws from Sanskrit sources. The choice of the process also depends upon the characteristics of the target audience. Sometimes certain specified objectives not governed by the users or the target audience may also influence the choice of the process to choose words to represent specific concepts.

4.1 Characteristics

Five important characteristics of the Technical Terms are to be noted. They are productivity, transparency, clarity, eligibility and necessity.

The basis characteristic is productivity. A term is presumed to be productive if it is possible to create, as many derived terms as possible as and when necessity arises in the language with the help of the basic technical term, using the productive elements of the language. If a technical term is there either by borrowing or by coining or by another process, if it is not productive up to the requirements of the user language it may lose currency and fall into disuse. If a particular technical term is not productive, it is unfit for use as a technical term. One example from Kannada can be cited for this character. In the initial stages of the development of administrative Kannada the word *vidye* 'education' was used. Gradually, this was replaced by the word '*shikshaNa*' education and helped to create terms like *praathamika shikshaNa* 'primary education', *taantrika shikshaNa* 'technical education' *computer shikshaNa* computer education etc.,

Transparency in the sense, the technical terms of administrative language are opaque. These are not named after a person or plant or place etc., as it happens in case of other registers like scientific register. Here there is a direct relation between objects and the term and the action referred to by the technical term.

Until and unless there is a need for a technical term the question of borrowing or coining of it does not arise at all. When there are two terms for the same concept the question of eligibility of the term arises. Whatever are eligible stays and the unfit terms fade away. Whatever the technical term thus presents has a clear identity with the object or action it refers and is unambiguous.

4.2 Grammatical Category

Maximum number of the technical terms are nouns. The derived adjective, adverb or verb forms of these nouns may also be present but as derivatives. The glossaries presenting the technical terms generally do not assign any grammatical category. Also gender and number are not assigned to these technical terms. The technical terms are used to indicate both the females and males. That is in case of technical terms the gender distinction gets neutralized. Also natural gender may not coincide with the grammatical gender. Gender affixes are rarely used to indicate the sex differences of the persons referred to. Normally coined technical terms are two worded. The un-coined but of a native origin or directly borrowed ones are single words. When two or more words join to form a technical term the case markers and other markers that are supposed to link them together normally drop.

The administrative language is characterized by its use of specified vocabulary. The vocabulary used in this register consists of: (1) approximately 80% of the technical terms connected by the form or function words and the rest are taken from the informative

register and (2) many of the words taken from the informative register are less frequently used in the informative register.

5.0 Phrases

The language of the administration is also known for the exploitation of set phrases. The repetition of set phrases is motivated by several reasons. More often than not, it is the office assistant who puts up the papers and initiates action on receipts. With his educational level, competence in the general, use of language in administrative contexts, and the requirements of his duties, he is expected not to decide but to explain the pros and cons of the cases, and to observe the rules already laid down, are the grounds for the repetition of set phrases.

Moreover sanctity by usage and a legal sanction and legal interpretation of the implication of set phrases, orders and rules also contribute to this state of usage. Decision makers fear that use of phrases other than the set phrases might lead to an interpretation other than the intended ones. The set phrases also become in a sense linguistic signs, like words with specific connotation. Lexical innovations in this register by individuals are not generally encouraged. The recipient of the communication more often is also conditioned to the set phrases and he anticipates the same interpretations. In a sense there is a general tendency to become conventional in the use language of administration.

6.0 Sentence Patterns

Every register is characterized by the abridged grammar of the language. Administrative register is not an exception. This register is characterized by usage of a few structures with maximum frequency. Such frequent constructions in Kannada are listed here.

- a. Verb-less constructions.
- b. Use of prohibitive constructions instead of negative imperative constructions.
- c. Use of definitive imperative constructions instead of imperative constructions.
- d. Use of the following types of constructions to bring impersonal impression,
 1. Passive constructions
 2. Verbal noun constructions
- e. Use of derived transitive verbs, and verbs derived from nouns.
- f. Non-use or rare use of intransitive verbs.
- g. Rare use of constructions with verbs of the informative register.
- h. Use of constructions in which a non-human noun is referred to by the human pronoun and usage of human personal ending to the verbs.
- i. Use of paragraph sentence constructions.
- j. Non-use of 1st and 2nd person pronouns in the constructions.
- k. Use of tense less constructions.
- l. Constructions rendered in the written style of the language.
- m. Constructions using the adverbs that are not in frequent use in the informative register.
- n. Constructions using more than one connector.
- o. Constructions using the nouns as verbs
- p. Constructions with deleted case markers
- q. Constructions with unusual case markers to the noun.
- r. Constructions without figurative.

7.0 Formats of Correspondence and their Properties

The administrative language is used in many types of administrative communications. The selection of a format of correspondence is governed by the person or persons addressed to and the content of the correspondence. Thus selected format of correspondence has its own selection of vocabulary, set phrases and a set of sentence patterns. In terms of vocabulary the selection of words is predictable. That is to say that

each format of correspondence has a set of verbs that are invariably used irrespective of the content of the subject matter.

7.1 Statistical Study of a few formats of Correspondence

In order to understand the pattern of use of vocabulary in the administrative communications prepared in Kannada five communication types: letter, tender, announcement and noting were studied for the language they use. In each category, 25 samples were selected on random basis and the words counted for their occurrence. The result of the tabulations are given below.

Table 1

	Letter	Tender	Announcement	Letter	Notings
Sub-Domain	a	b	c	d	e
Average total words	89.3	144	96	92	91.5
Average total recurring Words	16.6	65.5	31.3	24.6	40.5
Average total sentences	10	11.2	4.3	6.3	9.5
Average No. of words per sentence	8.9	13	24	15.0	9.8
Ratio of total words to total recurring words	5.38: 0.19	2.20: 0.45	3.08: 0.33	3.74: 0.28	2.26: 0.44

7.2 Language Patterns of a few formats of correspondence

Table 2

Sl. No.	Format of Correspondence	Domain	Pronoun	Tense
01.	Letters	a	I, II, III	Past and Non Past
02.	Tenders	b	Nil	Non Past
03.	Announcement	b	Nil	Non Past
04.	Memorandum	b	III	Past and Non Past
05.	Letters	c	II	Both
06.	Noting	d	III	Pre Perfect
07.	Minutes	d	III	Past
08.	Decisions	d	Nil	Tense-less

Table 3

Sl. No.	Format of Correspondence	Sentence Type	Type of Statement	Vocabulary Verbs
01.	Letters	Personal	Descriptive & Explanatory	Verbs from IR
02.	Tender	Impersonal; Passive	Descriptive	Verbs from AR
03.	Announcement	Impersonal & Passive	Descriptive & Explanatory	Verbs from IR & AR
04.	Memorandum	Impersonal & Passive	Descriptive	Verbs from AR
05.	Letters	Personal Impersonal Passive- Active	Descriptive	Verbs from IR & AR
06.	Noting	Impersonal & Personal	Explanatory & Interpretative	Verbs from AR
07.	Minutes	Personal & Active	Descriptive	Verbs from IR & AR
08.	Decisions	Impersonal & Passive	Short	Derived verbs

8.0 Observations

The following are the observations on the statistical study of administrative communications in Kannada.

1. Tender uses more words, more recurring words and more number of total sentences in its formats than any other format of correspondence
2. Letters in the GENERAL domain use less number of words and less number of recurring words in each sentence.
3. Announcements carry large number of words in each sentence. The sentences are long.
4. In the official written communication system noting carry more number of recurring words.
5. When letter in general domain and officialese domain are compared the letter in latter consists of more longer sentences and more number of recurring words.
6. The language of administration has to be studied domain wise in order to understand the accurate linguistic structures involved in its communications.
7. More formalized the format of correspondence is, more longer the sentences, more recurring words and more impersonal constructions will be used.