

THE COMPETENCY OF THE DICTIONARIES COMPILED IN JAFFNA : THE 19TH CENTURY EFFORTS

Gayathree Srikandavel

Abstract

Sustainable regional development requires emerging knowledge in Science, Technology, Arts and other fields. Translation plays a vital role with the march of time in order to be familiar with the latest developments and to cope with the dissemination of knowledge. Among all types of translation tools, dictionary is the most essential, prominent and very much supportive tool for translators. Valuable information and vital facts in dictionaries serve as a treasure trove for translators. The 19th century had been a period of vigorous translation activities in the Tamil world. With the advent of Westerners the present form of dictionaries was introduced in the Tamil milieu. Western scholars with the assistance of the native scholars involved themselves in the noble task of compiling authoritative dictionaries as the potential tool for translation. Translation may be enriched and embellished by employing the proper tool from the same milieu. This research aims at analysing the competency of the dictionaries, compiled in Jaffna in the 19th century, for Translation and this is based on descriptive and comparative methodologies. Especially the dictionaries compiled in Jaffna are taken into consideration in this study. The period of this research is limited to the 19th century. This research may facilitate translators by introducing the dictionaries, compiled in Jaffna.

Key words: Translation tools, Tamil milieu, Authoritative Dictionaries

Introduction

Appropriate use of dictionaries may enrich the performance of translation. The concept of dictionary in Tamil milieu could be traced back to the Uriyiyal of Tolkaappiyam. Before the compilation of the present form of the dictionaries in Tamil milieu people had to depend on Nikandu for reference.

The present form of dictionaries was introduced in the Tamil milieu with the advent of Westerners. Western scholars with the collaboration and cooperation of the native scholars involved themselves in the noble task of compiling dictionaries for reference. These are considered to be the authoritative and potential tools for translation. It is always appropriate and appreciable during the process of translation

to seek the help of a dictionary which has been compiled in the society in which the language had been nourished and cherished for long. This paper deals with such works.

This study is limited to word-level from the Linguistic perspective. Only the dictionaries compiled in Jaffna are taken into consideration in this research. The period of the compilation of dictionaries in Jaffna is limited to the 19th century. The Mono-lingual dictionary :Tamil-Tamil and the Bi-lingual dictionaries : Tamil-English and English –Tamil are considered here. The objectives of this research are to facilitate the translators by introducing the dictionaries, compiled in Jaffna, to give due recognition, respect and a place to the dictionaries compiled in Jaffna and to analyse the competency of the same. This research is based on descriptive and comparative methodologies. The data are derived from the available dictionaries, compiled in Jaffna. An analysis is made to find out the competency of the dictionaries. These are compared with the recent dictionaries from Tamil Nadu in a small scale. Finally, the findings are recorded logically.

Dictionary as a tool in translation

Among all tools of translation, dictionaries play a significant role in translation. Valuable information and vital facts in dictionaries serve as a treasure trove. The performance of translation is enhanced by referring to a right and appropriate dictionary.

Dictionary is a reference book or a list of words in an alphabetical order together with a guide to their meanings, definitions, information such as etymology, the use and usage of a word with examples and contexts, pronunciation, spelling and equivalents in other languages or in simple words. Plurals of nouns and forms of verbs are available. Relevant idioms and phrases, too, are included. Sentences and uses of the words in relevant contexts are added. The grammatical aspects including the morphemes should be dealt with utmost care with appropriateness.

An active or production-oriented bi-lingual dictionary is compiled with the intention of helping the user to express the given ideas in the target language. This means, the translator or the user has already known the meaning or what is denoted by the word, but finds it difficult to search for a proper equivalent as per the context. This type of dictionary is helpful in this circumstance.

A passive or reception-oriented bi-lingual dictionary helps to comprehend a given lexical item in the target language. The translator or the user is unaware of the meaning or what is denoted by the word. To have an exact comprehension of the word, this type of dictionary may lend a hand.

The performance of translation is enhanced by exact comprehension and appropriate employment of equivalents. In order to have the translation with textual accuracy and precision a translator uses dictionary as the effective tool for reference. While doing so the reference should be adequate enough to encounter the barriers regarding words and equivalents in translation.

Compilation of dictionaries in Jaffna

Lexicon in the Tamil context has been in vogue for centuries. It could be traced back to Tolkāppiya era. Nikandukaḷ alone were in vogue amidst Tamils till the advent of Europeans and were widely written and referred. Since the Lexicography has been considerably developed in the occident, the Western scholars were able to identify the deficiency in Nikandukaḷ as soon as they started learning Tamil.

With the advent of the Westerners, the Tamils too were introduced to a proper alphabetical arrangement, in dictionaries. VeeramaMunivar compiled caturAkarāti in 1732 in four volumes. Then the dictionary called MānipāyAkarāti / YāzhppānaAkarāti appeared in 1842. ChandrasekaraPanditar, the compiler of the dictionary named the dictionary as ‘Peyarakārāti’ because it is an expansion of the firstpart peyarakārāti of caturAkarāti. As the dictionary was printed in Mānipāy, it got its name.

A committee was appointed under the leadership of Rev Joseph Knight in 1833 to compile a dictionary in Tamil. Levi Spaulding, Samuel Hutchings, Miron Winslow and Peter Percival, the Missionaries functioned as the members of the committee. The native scholars Gabriel Tissera, A. Chandrasekara Pandithar, Carol Visvanathapillai, William Nevins Sithamparapillai and Irupalai CenathirayaMutaliyar also cooperated in the first attempt of compiling dictionary in Tamil in Ceylon. Unfortunately, Rev Joseph Knight, the chairman of the committee passed away in 1838. Levi Spaulding succeeded him by proceeding further and the dictionary was completed and published in 1842 in Jaffna. This dictionary later has come to be known as YāzhppānaAkarāti or MānipāyAkarāti (Jaffna Dictionary or Mānipāy Dictionary). The 58 500 words in this dictionary are the four fold number of words of caturAkarāti. Kalaththoor Sami Vethakiri Mudhaliyar and Kaanchipuram Ramasami Nayudu improved this Tamil – Tamil dictionary by appending some more terms and published as ‘Peyarakārāti’ in two editions before 1893. The word Akarāti is first employed in MānipāyAkarāti. The term Akarāti was given in the Manipay Dictionary for the first time. Joseph Knight and Levi Spaulding engaged themselves in the republication of the MānipāyAkarāti or YāzhppānaAkarāti. In the second edition of YāzhppānaAkarāti or MānipāyAkarāti 36 737 words in English are being defined.

Each lexical item in the second edition by Joseph Knight and Levi Spaulding has explanation in Tamil and English. This dictionary has been very much supportive for the non-natives in their effort to learn Tamil. The salient feature of this dictionary is the explanation given in Tamil and English for each word.

Winslow’s Tamil–English dictionary was published in 1862 by the American Mission Press, Diocesan Press (now CLS Press). It contains the unpublished work source of Rev. Joseph Knight and Rev. Samuel Hutchings. This dictionary is based on the works of Johann Rottler, which itself got inspiration from Johann Fabricius’s Work in the mid 18th century.

Earlier attempts made in language revival in Jaffna in the 19th and 20th centuries embrace many fields. Yet they can be broadly classified into three main branches such

as Works Conforming to Conventional Literary Forms, Works on Research Studies and Works on Modern Forms of Literature. Compilation of Dictionary falls under the ‘Works on Research Studies’.

Tamil scholars of Ceylon were the pioneers in the field of lexicography in Tamil. The first Tamil dictionary compiled by Tamil scholars titled *MānipāyAkarāti / YāzhppānaAkarāti* was published in Jaffna in 1842. As a joint effort of many scholars the dictionary was brought out with about 58,500 words. Having felt the need and importance of dictionaries the native scholars of Tamil engaged themselves as individuals or in groups in the noble task of compiling dictionaries. Wyman Kathiravepillai, Chunnakam Kumaraswami Pulavar and A. MootootambyPillay were such scholars.

Analysis

In *YāzhppānaAkarāti* or *MānipāyAkarāti*, dialect words are given and certain entries are explained with more details. Some categorizations are observed in it. Winslow’s Dictionary seems to be a storehouse of words for those who want to learn Tamil or for the specific comprehension. Equivalent terms for the technical terms in Tamil Literary Tradition, Astrology, Astronomy, Puranas, Botany and Zoology are also available in Winslow’s Dictionary. The names of gods are clearly elucidated. These words and their elucidations may be helpful for a translator to enrich His performance in a wide spectrum. Even some special terms in aesthetics are available in Winslow’s Tamil – English Dictionary. Specific religious terms are given there in with various elucidations. Even some alien words which are adapted into Tamil too could be referred from Winslow’s Tamil – English Dictionary. In order to encounter the cultural barrier in the process of Translation, these entries are supportive. Words that are not generally entered in other Dictionaries could be found in Percival’s English – Tamil Dictionary. Many equivalents are given in Percival’s English – Tamil Dictionary. The translator can select the appropriate equivalent as per the context. These equivalents may be helpful to meet the contextual barrier in Translation.

Each entry is elucidated well in *Na KathiravepillaiAkarāti*. Many rare words from various fields are Listed. The words from Myths and Puranas too are available in it. As the Manual Dictionary by Joseph Knight and Levi Spaulding is the re-edition of *Yāzhppāna Akarāti* or *MānipāyAkarāti*, it carries more entries. Knowledge of Sanskrit words which are liberally mingled in Tamil is indispensable in the process of translation. In *Yāzhppāna Akarāti* or *MānipāyAkarāti*, only the pure Tamil entries were being used in the first edition. With the march of time entries from Sanskrit are also included in the editions to enhance the quality of the dictionary and to facilitate the users. Grandha letters are used in Winslow’s Dictionary and *Na Kathiravepillai Akarāti* for the sounds not available in Tamil (ஷ, ஷெ).

Alien words are amply employed in Winslow’s Tamil – English Dictionary.

E.g பவித்திரி - Sacrificial grass, தருப்பை (A Sanskrit word)

They are denoted by the abbreviations. The first few letters of the languages are used to refer to those words. Sanskrit terms are denoted by asterick in order to distinguish them from the Tamil terms in it. Sanskrit terms are used and notes are added for some important terms for reference.

It is appreciable that some Tamilised Sanskrit terms too are available in certain entries in Percival's Tamil – English Dictionary. It is indeed appreciable to adapt some alien words into a language in order to enrich it Those words should be included in the dictionaries too. Then the words are adequate enough for users especially for translators.

The significant aspect of Winslow's Tamil to English Dictionary is that the entries are well elucidated in English and proper equivalent are given. It brings out even subtle differences with great accuracy. Alternative elucidations are provided in Percival's Tamil – English Dictionary. Certain words have commendable equivalents in Percival's Dictionary. Certain colloquial entries are precisely given with explanation and equivalent in Winslow's Tamil – English Dictionary. The translation could be done with clarity by employing these equivalents as per the context. In Percival's dictionary certain equivalents are not in vogue as the language evolves.

E.g Abhor - வெறு, அருவரு, அரோசி

In the English – Tamil Dictionary of Peter Percival, generally the elucidations follow the equivalents.

In Winslow's Tamil – English Dictionary ample elaborations are given to some entries. This helps in Translation to distinguish the subtle differences. It is to be noted that certain entries can be used for the production-oriented purpose as well as reception-oriented purpose in translation. In Winslow's English to Tamil Dictionary even some rare entries are included with the equivalents.

E.g Quixotism - மனோகற்பிதம்

These entries and their respective equivalents help to have appropriateness in translation. Due attention is to be paid for every word whether obsolete or in vogue in Translation. For finding equivalents for those rare words this dictionary can be a valuable resource. In Percival's English – Tamil Dictionary the equivalents are formed as per the main entry. If the main entry is an adjective, the equivalent too is an adjective. Most of the equivalents for the entries are appropriate, acceptable and current. This may be beneficial for the purpose of translation.

For certain entries some rare words generally found in literature are given as equivalents. An enriched Translation may be possible with these equivalents. At times translators may find it difficult to comprehend the equivalents as rare words are included as equivalents.

E.g cormorant - நீர்க்காகம்,காரண்டம்,பேருணன்

Sometimes the translator has to look up another Dictionary to check the validity of the word. In Winslow's Dictionary the equivalents are formed with clarity. A translator can choose the proper equivalent as per the context from Winslow's Dictionary. Certain equivalents in Percival's Tamil – English Dictionary seem to have been compiled for the use of aliens especially for those who have English as their first language.

E.g வைபோகி - A voluptuary

Some equivalents are not accessible by simple means. In Winslow's Dictionary some entries are simply explained with clarity. It is very helpful to comprehend the meaning of the term easily in Yāzhppāna Akarāti or MānipāyAkarāti as per the context. In order to have a better understanding of the original this kind of simple explanation may help translator.

E.g The term ஓடு is defined as

ஆமை முதலியவற்றின் ஓடு, இரப்போர்
கலம்,உடைந்தமண்பாண்டம்,ஓடென்னேவல்,கொட்டைகளின் உறை,
முன்றலுருபு and வீடு வேயும் ஓடு

In the process of Translation from Tamil to English the translator can infer the proper meaning of these kinds of words by referring this Yāzhppāna Akarāti or MānipāyAkarāti. In the English – Tamil Dictionary of Peter Percival the distinguished meanings are not always clearly provided. Certain equivalents are simply provided in the Manual Dictionary

Pronunciations for the Tamil words are transliterated with English phonemic symbols in Winslow's English to Tamil Dictionary. The accents too are indicated for the main entry words in Winslow's English - Tamil Dictionary and Percival's English – Tamil Dictionary. The parts of speech are indicated in Winslow's 'A Comprehensive Tamil to English Dictionary'. In Percival's English – Tamil Dictionary the parts of speech are denoted as per the abbreviations explained in that Dictionary. In the English to Tamil Dictionary of Peter Percival, the main entry words selected are rich and high. Proper accent notations are given wherever necessary. In Winslow's English – Dictionary the verbs are explained on the basis of second person imperative i.e.Kd;dpiyVty;. Some cross references can be found in Percival's English - Tamil Dictionary and Winslow's English – Tamil Dictionary. Certain entries are being cross referred to in Winslow's Tamil – English Dictionary. In Percival's Tamil – English Dictionary, a list of Anglo – Tamil alphabet is provided to ease the use of the dictionary especially for transliteration.

Etymology of the words could be found in Winslow's Tamil – English Dictionary. The loan words from other languages are denoted by abbreviations. Some interchangeable letters are employed in Winslow's Tamil – English Dictionary. In Peter Percival's English - Tamil Dictionary often the words used to elucidate the English entries are antique Tamil words. In Yāzhppāna Akarāti or MānipāyAkarāti priority is given to the words which are in general use among people. Elucidation of terms in Mathematics, Astronomy and Science are taken from the Tamil Literature of antiquity in Na KathiravepillaiAkarāti.

In this respect the 'Effectiveness of the dictionaries' is assessed from three perspectives with citations from the dictionaries. The adequacy of vocabulary is measured, efficacy of the equivalents is assessed and the competency of the dictionaries is analysed. These are the measures taken to assess the adequacy and competency of the dictionaries for translation. Assessing the competency of the dictionary is helpful for a translator to cope with the linguistic barrier in Translation.

Findings

The mono lingual dictionaries Yāzhppāna Akarāti or MānipāyAkarāti and N.Kathiravepillai's Akarāti are identified as reception-oriented dictionaries. In some cases they serve for the production-oriented purpose in translation to have a better equivalent and are helpful to comprehend the obsolete Tamil words.

The Manual Dictionary of Joseph Knight and Levi Spaulding is also a production-oriented and reception-oriented dictionary to some extent.

Winslow's English – Tamil dictionary can be a loadstar especially to foreigners in their study of Tamil language and to whom Tamil is vernacular in acquiring a sound knowledge of the English tongue. It is a true companion for translation from Tamil or to Tamil.

Winslow's Tamil to English dictionary was found as production-oriented dictionary as well as reception-oriented dictionary.

English to Tamil and Tamil to English dictionaries of Peter Percival are very much helpful for comprehension whereas equivalent terms are concerned inadequacy is felt. They can be considered as reception-oriented dictionaries where the meaning can be comprehended.

There are dictionaries published by the Indian scholars. In 1679 A.D a Tamil – Portuguese Dictionary was published by the Christian Missionaries. A Western methodology was introduced in the production of dictionaries. One of these was compiled by Rev Fr. Belchi. Then along with the dictionaries published in Jaffna Madurai Tamil Sangam published Tamil Lexicon in 1910 based on C.W

Kadiravetpillai and Na .Kathiraivetpillai.In today's standard the University of Chennai published a Tamil Lexicon. There are six volumes followed up with the supplement in 1930s. 1,24 405 words are found in these dictionaries. Assistance from the international scholars was received including the Sri Lankan Tamil scholars in compiling these dictionaries.

Scholars included the words found in ancient Tamil works and words in current usage. Words in regional dialects and how their usage were also mentioned. There are many meanings with literary citations. The words are denoted with grammatical constituents.

There are new dictionaries like Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil (1992 & 2008). Actually scholars modified further the dictionaries through their experience. Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil has inducted scholars from Sri Lanka too. But there are criticisms with regard to Sri Lankan Tamil words. Although the revised editions consists of Sri Lankan Tamil words (1700 words in number). Suseendrarajah. S. (2011) levels a criticism on the manner the Sri Lankan Tamils words are included. He criticizes the wrong records of the Sri Lankan dialects and points out there are regional varieties spoken by the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Conclusion

Thus, the scholarly pursuits of compiling dictionaries in the Tamilian world, especially in the society in which the language is nourished and cherished for long, have been facilitating the translators to encounter the three barriers in the process of translation. These dictionaries Seve as a prominent tool of translation to have a better translation through which sustainable regional development could be achieved .

But some suggestions are necessary. As a language evolves with the march of time, further revisions, refinements and improvements of these dictionaries have become a need of the time to meet the demand, trend and tenor of the language.

The dictionaries compiled in Jaffna in the 19th century may be modified as production-oriented as well as reception-oriented dictionaries by adding current usages and coined-up words with the respective equivalents in order to facilitate the translators to cope with the latest development. In the dissemination of knowledge, translation contributes a lot.

References

Annamalai, E., et al, *Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil*, Chennai , Nagaraj& Company Pvt Ltd, 2008.

Jeyathevan, V., *Tamizh Akarāṭiyiyal vaĪarcci varalāru*, Chennai , Aintiraipattipakam, 1985.

Jebanesan, S., *Ilankai Tamizhvalarcciyum Amerikkan Mishanum*, Colombo, Kumaran Puttaka Illam, 2007.

Maathaiyan, P., *Akarātiyiyal*, Tañcāvūr, Tamizhp Palkalakkazhakam, 1997.

Sivalingarasa, S., *īzhattu Tamizh Ilakkiya celneri*, Colombo, Kumaran Puttaka Illam, 2009.

Suseendrarajah, S., *Tamizhiyalsar cintanaitulikal*, Colombo, Cemamadu Patippakam, 2011.