

HOMONYMS IN CLASS INDEX HEADINGS

(PROBLEMS IN CATALOGUING, 7)

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In spite of the Class Index Headings in the classified catalogue being a technical language, the incidence of homonyms among Class Index Headings increases with the intension of the Class Numbers from which the headings are derived by Chain Procedure. As a means of resolving the homonyms, the use of auxiliary words with semantic value but without ordinal value is suggested. This method is also available to highly inflectional languages provided we separate out an inflected word into its stem with the nominative form and the inflection proper and write them as if they were different words.

1 LANGUAGE OF NOUNS

The Class Index Headings in a classified catalogue and the subject Headings in a dictionary catalogue are alike. Taken together, the Class Index Headings form a technical language, though its words are taken from a natural language. A Class Index Heading is to be derived from the Class Number according to prescribed rules [R1]. A special quality of this technical language is that it has to help in the arrangement of the Class Index Headings. This implies that each Class Index Heading should have a unique ordinal value. To satisfy this demand, a rule [R2] prescribes that each heading or sub-heading is to be a noun. Thus, the technical language of Class Index

Headings is a language of nouns alone. This rule excludes the occurrence of auxiliary words, in particular, in a Class Index Heading. It also excludes the morphological variation of a noun, not yielding a noun.

2 INCIDENCE OF HOMONYMS

Consider the two following class numbers:

- 1 2.51v History of Classification
- 2 2.51.9(V) Classification of History

These two class numbers yield the following Chains and Class Index Headings:

- 1 2 = Library Science = 2
- 2 2:51 = Classification = 2:51
- 3 2:51v = History, Classification
= 2:51, 9(V)

The above chain shows that the Class Index Heading "History, Classification" is a homonym. This homonym should be resolved. There appears to be no way of resolving it without violating the rule prescribing that the terms in a Class Index Heading should be only nouns. Therefore, this problem had been for long left unsolved till now.

3 USE OF AUXILIARY WORD DEPRIVED OF ORDINAL VALUE

A new idea developed during the last few days while teaching Classification. It showed

some way to a solution. The idea is this :
A word of a symbol may have,

- 1 Ordinal value as well as semantic value; or
- 2 Ordinary value alone without semantic value; or
- 3 Semantic value alone without ordinal value.

The solution to the problem on hand is to retain the semantic value of an auxiliary word, such as 'of' and 'in', but take away from it its ordinal value. Applying this solution, the result will be:

History, Classification = 2:51,9(V)
History, (of) Classification = 2:51v

Enclosing the auxiliary word in brackets is to be taken as a signal for depriving it of its ordinal value. The original proposal was to underline (put in italics) the auxiliary word. But when the problem was put before the monthly meeting of librarians held in Madras on 2nd February, 1963 under the joint auspices of the Madras Library Association and USIS, Shri Sankaranarayana, retired Librarian of the Pudukhottai College and an old student of mine suggested that the use of brackets would be more natural to indicate a word supplied for a special purpose.

4 A FURTHER CONFLICT

This solution, however, brings us into conflict with an important principle laid down for alphabetical arrangement, [R3]. According to it, alphabetization should be guided by every symbol actually existing in the items to be alphabetised. In other words, no symbol or word should be ignored. We have thus to choose between not inserting the auxiliary word and facing homonym on the one hand, and inserting the auxiliary word and violating this principle in arrangement on the other. The latter appears to be the lesser of the two evils. On that assumption, we shall add the following rule to guide alphabetization

An auxiliary word in italics (or underlined) should be ignored in alphabetical arrangement of Class Index Headings.

Thus, we can avoid both Scylla and Charybdis.

5 INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT AMONG HOMONYMOUS CLASS INDEX ENTRIES

The next problem that arises in the internal arrangement among the two homonymous Class Index Entries is given in Sec. 2. This is looked after by the ordinary rules for arrangement. The heading section by itself is impotent in arranging the two entries among themselves. We have, therefore, to be guided by the index numbers. Even among them, the first four digits are the same in both the index numbers. Therefore, by themselves they are impotent. The fifth digit is a comma in one case and v in the other case. According to the rule of Ordinal Values [R4], the comma should come earlier than v. This settles the question. It may be remarked that the anteriorising value of v need not be brought into use. It is to be used only in arranging class numbers among themselves.

6 NON-AGGLUTINATIVE LANGUAGE AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

The above solution is available for an agglutinative language or a near-agglutinative one such as English. But in a language, in which the function of a substantive word taken with an auxiliary word has to be performed by a morphological variant of the substantive word, this solution becomes inoperative. For, the ordinal value of the morphological variant is different from that of the substantive. This is apart from the morphological variant being no longer a noun. This problem was discussed among G K Arora representing Hindi, B S Mane representing Marathi, C V Subba Rao representing Telugu, and myself representing Tamil. We found that the following solution is possible.

61 The Solution: Separate the Substantive and the Inflectional Part

The morphological variant should be broken into two parts consisting of the substantive in the noun form and the suffix used to get the variant from it. These two parts may be written as separate words in the heading. It is true that in the natural language, they

cannot be written as separate words. But the technical language formed of subject headings, is not bound by the strict grammatical practices of the natural language from which it has taken its substantive terms. Thus, it is permissible to write the two parts as two different words. In our mutual test and discussion it was found that the heading continues to be intelligible even if the parts are written as separate words. Moreover, the meaning yielded is the same in both the cases. Of course, the suffix should be underlined to signify that it has no ordinal value. Thus, the difference between the English Language and the various Indian languages arises only in that the extra word without ordinal value added to resolve the homonym is written before the substantive word in English and after the substantive word in the Indian languages.

Examples:

(English) History, (of) Classification	2:51v
(Hindi) Itihas, Vargikaren (ka)	2:51v
(Marathi) Itihasa, Vargikaren (aca)	2:51v
(Bengali) Itihas, Bargikaren (er)	2:51v
(Tamil) Caritram, Pahupadu (udaiya)	2:51v
(Telugu) Caritra, Vargikaranamu (vokka)	2:51v

Perhaps, similar solutions may be of use also in some other languages at a similar stage of development.

7 CLASSICAL LANGUAGE

The modern Indian languages considered above yield a fairly admissible solution.

This is because they are languages of recent origin and in them the morphological variation is virtually giving way to agglutination. But in the case of an ancient language such as, Sanskrit, it is different. Here the morphological suffix is not so easily separable as it is in the modern Indian languages. But even here, is it not open to use to break the morphological form into the substantive word and the morphological suffix and write them as if they were separate words? Perhaps, we can. At any rate, we should do so taking advantage of the fact that the technical language made of Class Index Headings is a technical language and not the original Sanskrit language; with the result, though its terms are taken from the Sanskrit language, we need not coalesce the substantive noun and the morphological suffix as it is done in the original Sanskrit.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- R1 Sec 1 RANGANATHAN (S R). Classified catalogue code. Ed 4. 1958. (Madras Library Association, publication series, 24) (Ranganathan series in library science, 2) Sec 341.
- R2 Sec 1 ---, ---, Sec 0352
- R3 Sec 4 ---, ---, Sec 0824 and its subdivisions.
- R4 Sec 5 ---. Colon classification. Ed 6. 1960. (Madras Library Association, publication series. 26) (Ranganathan series in library science, 4). Sec 025.