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## **A lexical analysis (extended meaning) of selected English words used by Indian railways**

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**Abstract**---The purpose of this study is to analyse the extended meaning of the variety of English words used by the Indian Railways in their signages, trackside indicator boards, station name boards and symbols, directives etc in different forms of railway territories, and find out the differences in choice of expression among them. The data for the study were collected from the published sign boards symbols in the railway premises, platform in different zones across the Indian Railways network, passenger directives displayed at the railway premises and inside the coaches, other notifications and directives published in time tables etc. All these can be classified under advertisements of two broad categories: commercial and non-commercial.

**Keywords**---extended meaning, Indian railway, platform, sign boards, symbols, signages.

### **Introduction**

Precision of communication is important, more important than ever, in our era of hair trigger balances, when a false or misunderstood word may create as much disaster as a sudden thoughtless act,” says James Thurber (1961:44), American author, cartoonist and celebrated wit, highlighting the importance of language used in making human communication highly effective. This is true not only of language use in interpersonal communication at an informal level but also in the fields of education, administration and mass communication at a formal level. Signages and Symbols play a vital role in the overall development of the modern society through quick dissemination of information pertaining to all aspects of life to a wider public. In this respect, the different medium used such as signages, posters, hoardings and paintings aim at brevity, preciseness and clarity of information besides attempting to inform, attract and persuade people towards

certain action or change. In this endeavour, the way language is used remains an important influencing factor, which demands a systematic study.

A public notice in the form of sign boards or symbols are generally a formal announcement or warning that is legally required to be published. By publishing rules or information on signages, an organisation serves the public's right to know and maintains its own transparency. It influences and persuades people to act or believe. It is also something which affects most people in a number of different spheres of lives. Sign Boards are a reliable, accessible form of circulating public information to the public. There are many special and specific reasons for using semiosis in its several forms. In the process of creating signages for all these reasons, language, i.e., choice of expression is of crucial importance. What kinds of choices make public information boards highly effective is something worthy to be studied from a linguistic perspective? Indian Railways' indicators and signages are a combination of public information and safety notification, which demand and include some amount of authority at the first hand. This may place these indicators under the category of Legal writings which place heavy reliance on authority. So, an analysis based on the language of signages and indicator's symbols/language may appear relevant.

### **Analytical Framework**

The lexical data for the present study had been collected from the Corpus consisting of different kinds of written correspondences from different departments of the Railways, viz., letters, circulars, memoranda, notes and the like. For the lexical analysis work of Nihalani *et al.* (1979) on Indian English has been taken as the base and in order to suit the present study the model has been devised. In their 1979 work Nihalani *et al.* categorized the lexical item of Indian English on the basis of (i) Style, (ii) Collocation, (iii) Meaning, (iv) Loan words, and (v) Neologism.

Slight modification has been made while adopting the model of Nihalani *et al.* which has been described in the categories below. For example, Style and Collocation have been considered as one and to suit the present research lexical items under those categories were recategorized on the basis of their acquired meaning and their extended meaning. While working on the register with intensive use of Codes, creation of another category was felt necessary. This modification is done on the basis of connotation they carry in the Railway administration and the frequency of their usage in the correspondences:

- i. Words with acquired meaning;
- ii. Words with extended meaning;
- iii. Compound words;
- iv. Abbreviations and acronyms;
- v. Codes;
- vi. Coinage.

Codes were further divided into following categories:

- a) Station codes

- b) Designation codes; e.g., DRM, CRB
- c) Words used in conjunction and in abbreviated form; e.g., S&T, C&W
- d) Linguistically 'code mixed' words; e.g., Rail Yatri Niwas, tatkal ticket

The meaning of a sentence is best understood in terms of the functions of its constituents, i.e., the words. A sentence and its constituents may carry different meanings in different contexts. A dictionary entry of a word normally defines a word in its typical usage and sometimes sort of sentences they usually occur in. But a word itself tends to convey different meanings, though rare may be, according to contexts they are used in. It is up to the reader and user to select the meaning of a word in a particular situation or environment. Sometimes words acquire a totally different meaning as have already been discussed or sometimes may have a different usage with the nearest meaning possible. The latter kind of words has been referred to here as words with extended meaning in the present study. Apparently, such words have same meaning as that is given in the dictionary, but the connotation of the word differs in railways from the general usage. For example, one meaning of the word 'crew' in the dictionary means "a group of people with special skills working together". The word originally referred to the people working in a ship or plane, but in railways the word 'crew' refers to the people who are associated with driving the train. Like the crew in a ship or plane, the drivers and guard of a train is responsible for the running train they are working. The extended meaning of the word refers to people with somewhat similar job and responsibility.

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### **Words with Extended Meaning: A Lexical Analysis**

In the following section a detailed analysis of some words with extended meaning has been made.

#### **Power (N)**

Dictionary Meaning: Control, ability, strength, energy, authority  
(OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended Meaning: A locomotive.

The word 'Power'(N) meaning 'strength' of 'energy' in general, is used to signify 'a locomotive' in the railway operations. In railway operations power sometimes replaces the term 'locomotive', since locomotive is the 'power' or energy to move the train. For example,

#### **Section (N)**

Dictionary meaning: Any of the parts into which something is divided (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: Tracks between two important railway stations

The word section has various connotations in general usage, while in railways it refers to the portion of rail-route between two important stations. This word in railway parlance can be used in several compounds, both as a noun and an adjective.

#### **Crew (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A group of people who work on and operate a ship, aircraft, etc.

Extended meaning: The driver, Assistant driver and Guard of a train.

Crew originally referred to 'the steersman and the associated personnel in a ship'. Not very different from this, but in a restricted sense, Crew (N) in the Indian Railways, includes the driver, the assistant driver and the Guard of a train. The term crew combines with other nouns to form compounds of the type - Crew Lobby.

#### **Cab (N)**

Dictionary meaning: 1. A taxi  
2. The driver's compartment in a lorry, bus, or train.

Extended Meaning: drivers' cabin of the locomotive.

This is the term associated with the seating in the locomotive. The cabin from where the drivers operate the locomotive is termed as Cab.



Picture 1. Locomotive 'Cab'

Most of the diesel locomotive classes have only one cab. All the electric and two classes of diesel locomotives have two cabs marked as Cab 1 and Cab 2 (as visible in the picture). The driving technique and other related phenomena are described in relation to the driving seat or the cab. The word frequently occurs in the locomotive inspection notes or correspondences regarding modification of existing or designing of new locomotives. For example,



Picture 2. Railway 'Cabin'

It is to be noted that the term 'cab' is not the truncated form of the word 'cabin' (N). Both are markedly different in railway operations and have specific meanings attached to them. Cab is the driving space provided for the drivers in a locomotive while Cabin in railway refers to the cubicle from where line alignments and signals are controlled.

**Formation (N)**

Dictionary meaning: The action of forming or process of being formed

Extended meaning: Arrangement of coaches/wagons in a rake

The term 'formation' is frequently used in railway operations. It refers to the structure or arrangement of a train rake. In railway operations the term acquires the form of a concrete noun, the visible structure of the rake, whereas in general usage it is more of an abstract noun.

**Siding (V) and (N)**

Dictionary meaning: 1. (V) supporting someone

2. (N) A short track at the side of and opening on to a railway line, used chiefly for shunting or stabling trains.

Siding in railways is never used as a verb. The noun form of the word has been associated with the railways only ever since its inception. Siding as a noun refers to the short track that goes apart from the main line to some area in the station or yard where trains can be stationed for loading/unloading or when not put in use. The word can be used in compounded form as well.

**Reservation (N)**

Dictionary meaning: An arrangement for a seat on a plane or train, a room in a hotel etc. to be kept. (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: The booking of seats or berths in a train in advance.

The dictionary meaning of reservation is somewhat close to the railways' use of the term. Indian Railways use it to refer to booking ticket in advance. The term in railways has used both as noun and as adjective.

In the above examples, reservation has been used both as a noun and adjective. Sentence number a, c and d show the word as adjective in pronominal modifier position. Also, it should be noted that the term is exclusively used for booking of berths and compartments in Indian Railway's context. So, the term can be considered to have extended meaning in Indian Railways.

**Passenger (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A person who is travelling in a car, bus, train, plane or ship and who is not driving it or working on it (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: train services carrying passengers

The word passenger is a noun generally having (+) human features. But in the context of Indian Railways the word has acquired extended meaning beyond the (+) human features, and refers to something with (-) human features also. Though the word with (+) human feature is also in use in the railway's same way as outside the specific context, the same with (-) human features is quite specific to the railways only, where it means a passenger carrying train. The word in Indian Railways context is used both as a noun and as an adjective. As an adjective it is used in compounded form. For instance:

**Control (N)**

Dictionary meaning: power, regulation, managing, limiting (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: the unit that manages the train movements and also receives, passes the information regarding train movement

The word control is generally used both as a noun and as a verb. But in railway operations it is used only as a specific noun which differs in connotation from the common usage. In railway operations a Control office, or simply referred to as Control, monitors and regulates the movement of trains in a section, receives the information of train movements from one control office and passes to another, and also sends instructions to Cabins regarding signaling. Though the word carries similar meaning, yet the meaning can be considered as an extended one. The word can also be considered as a truncated form of 'control-room'.

**Guard (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A person who keeps watch, especially a soldier or other person assigned to protect a person or to control access to a place

Extended meaning: The person in the crew who is responsible for halts of a train and also authorized to stop the train in case of emergencies if the drivers fail to do so.

The guard in the Indian Railways form the part of a train crew who watches the irregularities of his train and takes necessary action whenever situation demands. The guard has to communicate with the driving crew regarding aspects of the signals, exchanging signal with the driving crew in sharp curves, sectional speed limits etc and record the same in his logbook, and also communicates with the ground controls while passing by a station regarding any irregularity they might have noticed. Though the form and function of the word do not differ from general usage, yet the usage in the railways is more specific. In other countries the term is considered as old fashioned and has been replaced by train conductor, while in Indian Railways the term strictly restricts the guard to perform a set of specific duties only. Station Master/Driver/Guard will clearly mention his identity while communicating and also confirm the identity of the speaker at the other end.

**Wagon (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A vehicle used for transporting goods or another specified purpose

A vehicle with four wheels pulled by horse or oxen and is used to haul heavy goods.

Extended meaning: Certain kinds of vehicles meant to carry goods

The dictionary meaning refers to railway vehicle used for carrying goods. The meaning was attached in the earlier days of the railways when goods train vehicles were no more different than ordinary four-wheeler goods vehicles. Over the century railway trucks have changed a lot both in size, design and with increased wheels. But the term for them is still remained as wagon. In fact, railways use different classes of wagons with different designs to carry specific

goods and each class of wagons have specific class name. Thus, the word these days is often used in a compound form in railways.

### **Punctuality (N)**

Dictionary meaning: Happening or doing something at the agreed or proper time

Extended meaning: maintaining the schedule of trains.

The meaning of the term both in general usage and in railway operations is the same. In railway operations, however, the term is strictly restricted to the adherence to the schedule of the train movements. In general sense the term is used to mean keeping exact time. While in general usage the term act as a noun, in railways it can be used both as a noun and an adjective working as a pronominal modifier.

### **Crossing (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A place where two lines, two roads or two tracks cross

(OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: overlapping point of tracks or tracks and road

The word crossing in general sense bears several meanings, but here the closest meaning is considered for the present analysis. This term is used in the railways with an extended meaning of the general use. The term can be considered as a truncated form of the level crossing when it refers to the intersecting point of the railway tracks and road. Otherwise, it refers to the crossing points of the railway tracks in a railway yard. Another significant use of the term in railway parlance is the crossing of two trains in opposite directions in the same section. The term in all its connotations in railways is used always as a noun only.



Picture 3. X-ing

### **Parcel (N)**

Dictionary meaning: An object or collection of objects wrapped in paper in order to be carried or sent by post

Extended meaning: consignments carried in a passenger train.

The word 'parcel' in general sense means any goods consignment or package wrapped properly and mailed or couriered to another place. In railway operations, however, the meaning is extended to any consignment that has been transported in a passenger train. Every passenger train has at least one parcel van for this purpose. The term farther acquired more significance when railways introduced



parcels special train consisting only of such parcel vans to carry goods instead of carrying them in a goods train. Parcels are thus different from goods or luggage carried by a train.

### **Shunting (V)**

Dictionary meaning: 1. to move a train from one track to another  
2. to move somebody or something to a different place

(OALD 8<sup>th</sup> Ed.)

Extended meaning: Shifting from one track to another

The word both in dictionary meaning and railway usage has no difference either in form or meaning. But what makes it special is that it is quite specific to the railways and has no relevance outside the context. In railway operations, the word is also quite frequently used as a compound noun rather than as a verb. An interesting derivative of shunting is the word shunter which refers to both the crew working on shunting duties and the specific classes of locomotives used for shunting purposes.

### **Trip (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A short journey to a place and back again  
(OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: A single run by a locomotive with a train until it gets detached.

'Trip' in railways also bear almost the same meaning like the common usage. But the connotation of the word is quite restricted in case of the railways. Trip also occurs both as noun and as adjective in the railway usage. It means a single run by a locomotive with a train until it is detached at a next point. It also means the stretch a crew work on a locomotive from taking charge of it till they hand over the charge to the next crew in the crew changing point. The word is more associated with the running staff and departments dealing with locomotives. Like many other nouns this word also is used in compounded form where this may be considered as an adjective in pronominal modifier position.

### **Platform (N)**

Dictionary meaning: A raised level surface on which people or things can stand

Extended meaning: The raised surface area beside the tracks at a station where one can get on or off the train

Apparently, railway platform carries the same meaning as that of the general usage when it refers to the raised walk area at a station where passengers can get on or off the train. But platform in Indian Railway also carries interesting lineage of its British root. In American usage there are track numbers instead of platforms from where passengers can catch a train. But both British and Indian railway systems use platform numbers while referring to the position of a train at a station. In both Britain and India trains arrive and stand a platform. But of late

a gradual change has been observed in Indian Railways' platform announcements where 'at' is being replaced by 'on'. Whatever the reason be, for this change, the change had first taken place in the Northern Railway and then gradually spread to other railways.

### **Bogie (N)**

Dictionary Meaning: An undercarriage with four or six wheels pivoted beneath the end of a railway vehicle.

Extended Meaning: pivoted undercarriage

Bogie, both in dictionary meaning and railway parlance means the same these days. In railway terminology bogie is a pivoted undercarriage on which an engine or coach or wagon is mounted. But there are instances where people in India still refer to a passenger coach as bogie. Such misnomer is actually a continuation of the earlier days reference to the four-wheeled carriages which had four wheels underneath without any pivots. Such carriages were also called bogie. But later technology under the carriage changed and instead of four wheels carriages started coming with two sets of four wheeled pivoted bogies which allows faster and safer negotiation of the sharp curves. But this change was irrelevant to railway passengers and thus new kind of coaches also continued to be called as bogie, though technically older meaning of bogie became obsolete in railways.

### **Haulage (N)**

Dictionary meaning: 1) The commercial transport of goods  
2) A charge for the commercial transport of goods

Extended meaning: 1) act of hauling  
2) a rate or charge levied for the transportation of goods

The term haulage is associated with the commercial transportation of goods. In railway operations also the term retains its meaning, but for operational convenience the term does not confine itself to transportation of goods only. It refers to any hauling activity by a locomotive. Thus, when a train is not moving any goods but running empty, railway uses the term empty haulage for it. On the other hand, haulage as the charge levied on goods transportation has quite limited usage in railways and is often used in correspondences regarding the taxation etc to other departments outside the railways. Instead, railways use the term haulage charge for it.

### **Special (Adj)**

Dictionary meaning: Better, greater, or otherwise different from what is usual

Extended meaning: Occasional train services introduced outside normal timetable

Special in railway parlance refers to Special Train services. Special trains are ordinary trains in terms of accommodation and speed. They are so termed because they do not appear in the normal timetables and are run during vacation/festival times and at other times when there are seasonal surges of

traffic along certain routes. Such trains are also known as several other names like 'Holiday Specials', 'Festival Special', 'Summer Special' etc. Thus, the term differs from general connotation, being used as a noun instead of an adjective.

### **Through (Prep.) (Adj.)**

Dictionary meaning: (Prep) Moving in one side and out of the other side of (an opening, channel, or location)

(Adj.) (With reference to public transport) continuing or valid to the final destination

Extended meaning: type of coaches detached from one train and attached to another

Type of ticket with intermediate changes of trains when there are no direct services between the two end points. The term 'through' adheres to the adjective meaning of its general usage when talking of transportation. But in railway connotation it differs from the general usage. In railways it is used as an adjective, more often as a pronominal modifier. A through coach is a coach destined to a station but attached to a train destined to some other station till the midway and then reattached to another train for the same destination that coach is destined to. The purpose of the through coach is to save the passengers from the inconvenience of deboarding enroute and boarding another train for their destination. A through ticket on the other hand saves the passenger from booking several tickets to his destination even when there is no direct connectivity between source station and destination station. The through booking or through ticket allows a passenger to change train at intermediate stations without having to terminate his journey at that point.

### **Timing (N)**

Dictionary meaning: The choice, judgement, or control of when something should be done

Extended meaning: Scheduled time of a train's arrival or departure at a station

The extended meaning of the word 'timing' in railways is almost the same both in form and function as in general use. But connotation varies slightly from the general usage as it refers to not only the scheduled time of a particular future event but a regular schedule. Also, this term in Railways is used as a countable noun.

### **Express (N) (Adj)**

Dictionary meaning: 1. A service for sending or transporting things very quickly (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

2. travelling very fast, operating quickly (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: A fast train that does not have many halts

'Express' in railways is used both as a noun and an adjective which means a speedy train with limited halts. It is very close to general meaning of the term. When used as a noun the term refers to the train service and when used as an adjective the term is compounded with some other nouns.

**Mail (N) (V)**

Dictionary meaning: 1. An official system that is used for sending and delivering letters, packages etc. (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

2. Letters, packages etc. that are sent and delivered. (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

3. to send something to somebody using postal service

(OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: A fast train service that carries mails

The extended meaning of the term in railways refers to a train that is a combination of both the dictionary meanings 1 and 2 mentioned above. A mail in railways also acts both as noun and adjective. Such trains act as part of the postal service apart from carrying passengers and often has a carriage attached to them that acts as a moving post office. In fact, such services later on led to the formation of Railway Mail Service.

**Composition (N)**

Dictionary meaning: The different parts which something is made of (OALD 8<sup>th</sup> ed)

Extended meaning: Different kinds of coaches forming train

The meaning of the term composition in railway usage is an extended form of the general usage. The extended meaning suits the purpose of railways which means different classes of coaches put together to form the train. The word has the same function in railways as in general usage.

**Conclusion**

An important feature of Railways' register is use of different levels of codes. Codes help in reducing the writing time, eliminating possible redundancy in correspondences and facilitating speedy communication process. Codes are an integral part of railways' operations and highly standardized lexical items in its register. Codes are generally not distinguished from abbreviations, but in railway operations both codes and abbreviations maintain their distinction. Indian Railway also names their trains apart from assigning service numbers. In most of the other major railway systems in the world, trains are known by the name of their termini. But in IR trains have names with several logical factors acting behind the naming process. Train names can be broadly categorized under two groups: series names and individual names. Series names commemorate a particular event or a particular mission. Individual service names are dependent on the following factors: based on river, river pairs and river confluence, based on mountains, river-mountain pairs, based on gods/pilgrim centres/landmarks, based on cities and towns or their alternate names, based on ancient kingdoms, based on kings, queens and historical figures, based on some historical events, based on geographical direction and geo-political regions, based on natural resources, manufacturing, based on linguistic predominance, based on literary work etc.

As yet another part of the nomenclature two other suffixes follows the train names; i.e., *up* and *down*. These two words relate the trains' movement according to major geographical gradients. Apart from the names and movement direction indicated by *up* and *down*, trains in IR bear individual service numbers which defines the direction of the train's movement. Based on the average commercial speed, trains have been classified under several categories such as passenger, express, mail and superfast.

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