



Language as a Tool for Cultural Diplomacy through International Media: Special Reference to CRI Sinhala Service

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Abstract

Language is an important part of any kind of relations. Because it is the most basic way to share ideas and information. Language also indicates as reflection of culture. Language in the context of international relations could be identify s one of the main factors for the good relations and connections. China as one of the largest countries with enhancing economy has been implemented its international media named China radio International which has been spread more than 45 countries in the world. This international media is using different types of tactics and strategies to have good relations with different countries. CRI- Sinhala Service is the international media used to address Sri Lankan audience. This research has been conducted in order to identify the impact of language integrations in international media for the cultural diplomacy. This research has 3 main objectives and questions addressed through the research findings. This is qualitative research and the data collected through interviews and the content analysis. The interview sample size is 25 and the sample collected with purposive sampling method. The content analysis conducted for a moth of a period. The data analysed with using thematic analysis. It indicated that language integrations have a huge impact on the international relations and cultural diplomacy between Sri Lanka and China. Therefore, the website language using to teach the Chinese beliefs, food, festivals, daily life and etc. are very important for the audience to know overall the Chinese culture. Further the Sinhala speaking Chinese presenters making the entire media more attractive and persuasive for the audience to learn Chinese culture.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, CRI sinhala Service, language, international media

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in international relations, acting as both a tool for communication and a shaper of diplomatic interactions. It facilitates negotiation, shapes perceptions, and influences the outcomes of global events. A powerful tool of influence that pervades many facets of our life is language. Individuals and institutions may establish power and control by carefully choosing their words. It's indicated that the language is a power dynamic

involved in the purposeful manipulation of language by mining George Orwell's dystopian classic "1984," which portrays Newspeak as an instrument of thinking limitation. In addition, to its function in expressing authority, language is a crucial component in the expression of both individual and societal identities. It acts as a means for us to express our racial, ethnic, and social identities. Language became one of the most powerful things in the entire world to have the relations with each other as well in



different communities. Its very importance to have the proper language skills to communicate the feelings, ideas and emotions to another person. Additionally, language has a significant impact on how society functions. It generates social hierarchies, shapes interpersonal interactions, and may either support or obstruct successful communication (Blommaert, 2010). By examining these elements, we will throw light on the difficulties and chances posed by language in promoting social inclusion, comprehension, and integration.

Cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, language, and other aspects of culture between nations to foster mutual understanding and build positive relationships. It's a form of soft power that can be used to promote a country's image, enhance its foreign policy goals, and encourage cooperation and dialogue. China is pioneering in cultural diplomacy through its main international media.

The CRI Sinhala service began on January 1st, 1975. The frequenters 1, 61, 25, and 64 have been used to begin this. In the beginning, the shows were broadcast from 5.30 to 6.30 a.m. and from 8 to 9 p.m. During this period, the CRI Sinhala Service broadcast programs on Chinese economics, Chinese culture, Chinese aesthetics, Chinese special places, and the road to the Olympics, postage stamps, and Chinese social life, as well as a variety of other topics. Many Chinese presenters visited Sri Lanka to offer CRI-Sinhala Service programs.

The programs of the CRI-Sinhala Service were co-hosted by Sri Lankan and Chinese presenters. The CRI-Sinhala service station is located in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital. The CRI Sinhala service has mostly concentrated on disseminating Chinese cultural and economic information to Sri Lankans. Because Sri Lanka and China have been friends for a long time, the information they share has a big impact on Sri Lankans.

The CRI-Sinhala service has been conducting programs to create a friendship bridge between Sri Lanka and China. The CRI has been more focused on spreading information about Chinese culture, Chinese socio-economic background, Chinese

aesthetics, etc., to the Sri Lankan community. The CRI-Sinhala service has been organizing different programs to grab the attention of the listeners. There was one general knowledge competition, and the winners got a chance to visit China. They got an opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and feel more about the Chinese socio-economic background there itself.

This paper has been focused in order to identify the language importance for cultural diplomacy through CRI Sinhala service. Language is very important as a soft power tool in the globalization arena nowadays. The paper focused to identify the language importance towards the better understanding of the China and Sri Lankan culture through the international media of China for Sri Lanka.

This research conducts to address the below mentioned research objectives

1. Indicate the impact of Chinese language conversations through CRI- Sinhala Service towards Sri Lankan audience
2. Identify the impact of Sinhala speaking Chinese presenters towards cultural understanding of China
3. Understand the impact of language for cultural relations between Sri Lanka and China

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives this research, address the below mentioned research questions.

Q1- What is the impact of Chinese language conversations through CRI- Sinhala service towards Sri Lankan audience?

Q2- What is the impact of Sinhala speaking Chinese presenters towards Sri Lankan audience understanding about Chinese culture?

Q3- Does Language impact for cultural relations between Sri Lanka and China through CRI Sinhala service

Literature Review

As a result of globalization, the idea of bridging cultural divides is assuming an increasingly vital role (Edwards, 1998). Today, education that spans more than one culture is regarded as essential, and it is



increasingly being used in administrative positions overseas. as a result of the fact that many people in these regions do not understand the culture of the other regions, this may have an influence on the formation of the relationships between these regions. due to the fact that the language is a significant factor in the communication barriers that exist between the various cultures and areas.

The literature has been strongly indicating the cross-cultural importance towards international relations and the language importance towards the cross-cultural understanding. The proper literature could be indicated about the language importance in international media for cross cultural relations. This research will be addressing the indicated gap through the literature.

Methodology

This is qualitative research. The data collected through interviews and content of CRI- Sinhala service Facebook and Web page for a moth of a period from 2025.06.01-2025.07.01. The interview has been conducted with 25 people through purposive sampling from Sri Lanka. Purposive sampling has been used in the present study in order to address the research questions properly. Therefore, the interview sampling could be indicated as below.

Table 1 Sample of the Interviewees

Country	Categories	No of participants
Sri Lanka	University academics	5
	University students	5
	Media officers	5
	Government officers	5
	Private sector officers	5

The interview has been conducted as face to face in semi structured format. The data collected though interview was analyzed through thematic analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The web content of the CRI-Sinhala service has been given a priority for Chinese language. There is a separate column offered for the Chinese language on the website. Chinese language was thought in a very interesting way in the CRI- Sinhala website. It indicates the most important day-to-day activities for both countries, as well as the day-to-day-needed dialogues. Therefore, it explains at least one new Chinese word per one day. Moreover, this one Chinese word was taught along with a dialogue or sentence which it can be used in daily life. The words which were being taught and introduced on the CRI website were basically very important for both countries. The common words that can be used and important for both nations were mentioned in the website. For the audience who follows the website daily, they can learn and have a good knowledge of the language. It indicates the tones of the Chinese word and the sentence where the word can be used. Therefore, the words were chosen with timely importance. Furthermore, the words mentioned to introduce itself, indicates some important food items, different traditional and cultural activities, greetings, local medicines, important local economic places and etc. Besides, the language was explained with the audio and catchy images related to the words and sentences. Furthermore, in the Chinese language column, it has been mentioned that the Chinese famous proverbs. This explains historical thinking, Chinese belief, mythical ideologies, etc. It indicates the Chinese word, which is important in the story. The audio and the images are used to explain the proverb stories. The audio recording has been done with the Sri Lankans and Chinese presenters. The specialty is that Chinese presenters can speak good Sinhala, where the explanations are very clear and interesting for the listeners.

Therefore, summery of mainly indicated facts in the theme of Chinese culture could explain as below table.



Table 2 Chinese Language through CRI Sinhala Service

Chinese Culture									
Category 1	Category 2	Reporting Frequency					Format of Reporting		
		<10	10-50	51-100	101-200	>200	Text only	Text and images	Audio or Video
Chinese Language	Proverbs					X	Low	High	High
	Daily Conversations				X		High	low	High
	Festival words and conversations				X		Low	Medium	High
	Special words in Sri Lanka and meeting conversations			X			Low	High	Medium

The Chinese language in the CRI- Sinhala service website has been highly impacted to the audience to learn the proper Chinese culture. Further this also supports Sri Lankan audience to understand the Chinese culture and the Chinese people mentality. Language teaching, explanations and the support through international media always supports the international audience to be familiar with the country of media represents. As international media always well focused on the public diplomacy this could be mentioned as one of the best ways to create soft power and culture.

Integrating Sinhala Speaking Chinese Presenters

According to the findings indicated through in-depth interviews and content analysis integrating Sinhala speaking presenters has been identified as main communications strategy which CRI- Sinhala service implemented. This factor supported the audience to grab their attention very clearly towards the content of the different sections especially about the relationship of two countries. There are several Chinese presenters call “Sheng – Li”, “Sunimali”, “Rasika”, “Waruni” in CRI- Sinhala service. They are carrying out different information of China to Sri Lanka. This research sample mentioned that it’s very

interesting to listen a different nationality presenter speaking in Sinhala very fluently. The respondents have mentioned that as it’s not their mother tongue and they have Chinese accent when pronouncing Sinhala which can be added a different flavor to the program. Most of the time the presenters in audio and video programs were representing the two countries. They both speak Sinhala and both presenters have the two different accents in Sinhala. This has been indicated as one of a main communication strategy that CRI- Sinhala service has been used to attract the audience to strengthen the relationship of two countries. This strategy became very interesting as the both national presenters conduct the programs. The language learning became very much interested with this communication strategy. Because the CRI wanted to give their messages clearly to the foreign audience who has no idea about China. This communication strategy has taken the attention of the audience towards the content. Because this indicate that China has an interest of being friendly with Sri Lanka. Further, Sri Lankan audience has been impressed with this strategy, even though Sinhala is not a global language the Chinese nationals are speaking in Sinhala language became very much interesting and



important for the audience. This strategy was used in most of the audio and video reporting in digital media platforms. Further the all-Chinese presenters have Sinhala names and it made the audience to be very familiar with them. They can remember the names of the presenter as well with this strategy. Further in the videos posted on Facebook prepared by the Chinese and Sinhala presenters give extra level of interest to listen and watch. Because the audience felt the familiarity. Moreover, it's motivating to see the details about China from a Chinese person, who speaks fluently in Sinhala. The clear voices and pronunciation in Sinhala and Chinese are also grabbing the audience attention. The friendly manner of speaking of the presenters create a positive vibe about the China among audience. Therefore, this could identify as one of main strategy which CRI- Sinhala service implemented to attract the audience to strengthen the two country relations.

As Sinhala is one of the least speaking languages in the world, while its only speaking by Sri Lankan Sinhalese, to listen Sinhala from another nationality presenters are one of the most persuasive strategies used by CRI- Sinhala service to teach about their culture to an international audience through international media. CRI- Sinhala Facebook page became much more attractive and gained more followers because of the reporting and the interesting content doing by the Sinhala speaking presenters. Further this the language competency is highly impacting on audience to understand China's culture.

The conclusion of findings about the language as a cultural diplomacy tool in CRI Sinhala service.

- **Enhanced Communication and Understanding:**

Chinese presenters who speak Sinhala can explain cultural nuances and complex topics with greater clarity and relatability, making the content more accessible and engaging for the Sinhala-speaking audience.

- **Increased Trust and Credibility:**

The ability of Chinese presenters to speak Sinhala builds trust and credibility, as it demonstrates a genuine effort to connect with the local audience and bridge cultural gaps.

- **Promotion of Chinese Culture:**

CRI's Sinhala service, with its Sinhala-speaking Chinese presenters, effectively promotes Chinese culture, traditions, and daily life, contributing to a better understanding and appreciation of Chinese society.

- **Soft Diplomacy:**

This approach is a key element of China's soft diplomacy strategy, using media to build positive relationships and influence perceptions abroad. By using local languages and cultural ambassadors, CRI can effectively communicate China's message and build goodwill.

- **Stronger Connection with Local Audience:**

The use of Sinhala, a local language, ensures that the content is relatable and easily understood, fostering a stronger connection between CRI and the Sri Lankan audience.

- **Increased Engagement and Positive Feedback:**

The use of Sinhala-speaking presenters has been shown to increase audience engagement, with listeners responding positively to the content and expressing interest in learning more about China.

- **Persuasive and attractiveness of content**

As this language is one of the major parts of communication the use of the language in media became very persuasive and attractive towards the audience to understand the facts and the content.

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