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CHINESE MULTILINGUAL DICTIONARY PREPARATION FOR SRI LANKAN NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

Past research studies demonstrate that the Chinese language learning and teaching process is not much developed and is not a very student-friendly education process in Sri Lanka. One of the reasons is lack of teaching materials including Chinese dictionaries. This study aimed at developing a multilingual dictionary as a media to support literacy in Chinese language learning for beginners in Sri Lanka. The study used mix method to apply Design and Development Model (DD Model). In the beginning of the 21st century Chinese and local scholars begun to compose bilingual Chinese dictionaries with Sinhala and other local language options. But there are significant shortcomings in these works. DD Model is applied in this research to construct a Chinese multi-lingual dictionary. The steps were: 1. Analysis, 2. Design, 3. Development, and 4. Finalizing. The process of Analysis in this study is based on previous research. Among three types of results which carried out in Chinese speaking and non - Chinese speaking countries to formulate the number of most commonly used Chinese words or characters, the chosen concept is called one thousand most common Chinese words or characters to develop as words with multi-lingual explanations in this research. Design is done according to the traditional Chinese monolingual dictionaries. Development process basically included following these six categories: (1) Chinese word in character form (2) Picture in early Jiaguwen or/and Jinwen forms (3) Pinyin (4) Part of Speech (5) Multilingual meaning and (6)

Example. Finalizing process is the completion and publication of a Chinese (Sinhala/English/Tamil) Multilingual Dictionary for Chinese language learners in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Chinese, Sinhala, English, Tamil, Multilingual, Dictionaries

INTRODUCTION

As an island Sri Lanka has been influenced by various foreign cultures including Chinese culture since early Chinese navigators found this country as a turning point of their sailing route in Indian ocean. This island was one of very important destinations for Chinese sailors due to its location. "Sri Lanka was one of last stops for Chinese navigators in the Han period as Han Shu mentioned. At that time, it used the term of Sichengbu for Sri Lanka which can be identified as Sinhadipa, one of ancient names of Sri Lanka." (Dhammadinna, p.10) Therefore early Chinese navigators used to call this tiny island with more than 30 different Chinese names within few centuries. "In Chinese sources dating from the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220AD) to the Qing dynasty (1616-1911AD) alone, more than thirty names have been used to denote Sri Lanka." (Sobhitha).

But it is unclear how did Chinese navigators communicate with local people in Sri Lanka in early period. Of course, there are some hints also available in early Chinese records about how did early visitors communicate with local Sri Lankans. For example, one of famous

Chinese Buddhist monks called Fa Xian (Fa Hsien) who had visited Abhayagiriya Temple of Sri Lanka in 411 AD had mentioned how did Sri Lankan people communicate with foreign navigators in pre-historic era. According to “A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms” of Fa Xian monk “The country originally had no human inhabitants, but was occupied only by spirits and nagas, with which merchants of various countries carried on a trade. When the trafficking was taking place, the spirits did not show themselves. They simply set forth their precious commodities, with labels of the price attached to them; while the merchants made their purchases according to the price; and took the things away. Through the coming and going of the merchants (in this way), when they went away, the people of (their) various countries heard how pleasant the land was, and flocked to it in numbers till it became a great nation.” (Legge, p. 101-102)

In 5th century AD Fa Xian translated 6 of 11 or 12 Buddhist texts from Pali or Sanskrit language with the help of Nepal Buddhist monk called Buddhahadra. This Nepal Buddhist monk was a resource person and a “living dictionary” in the translation process as well. Until the application of modern translation methodologies with dictionaries the process of translating and communicating from language to language was very primitive from the pre-historic era to the medieval period of Sri Lanka. Dictionaries are not only useful for translation process but also, they are much more needed for language communication. The primary aim of this research is to propose a scientific guideline for the preparation of Chinese multilingual dictionaries for Sri Lankan Needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past research show that the Chinese language learning and teaching process is not much developed and is not a very

student-friendly education process in Sri Lanka. One of the reasons is lack of teaching materials including Chinese dictionaries.

“The teachers are also advised to use variety of teaching methods to stimulate the learner by motivating students and encouraging learning Chinese language in TCFL classroom. The teachers should focus on teaching materials in terms of enabling Chinese language communication in the classroom.” (Sammanie, p. 22-23) Yang (2016) stated that compiling Chinese dictionaries for CFL learners should follow four basic principles: simplicity, practicality, comprehensiveness and explicitness. However, a fundamental problem lies in the fact that lexicographers in many cases fail to capture the specific learning needs of users, which are often deeply rooted in their learning process. (Yang, p. 45-51)

METHODOLOGY

The study used mix method to apply Design and Development Model (DD Model). Data is gathered from written work and questionnaires. The steps were: (1) Analysis, (2) Design, (3) Development, and (4) Finalizing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of analysis in this study is based on previous research. Among three types of results which carried out in Chinese speaking and non - Chinese speaking countries to formulate the number of most commonly used Chinese words or characters, the chosen concept is called one thousand most common Chinese words or characters to develop as words with multi-lingual explanations in this research. In the beginning of the 21st century Chinese and local scholars begun to compose basic Chinese dictionaries with Sinhala and other local language options. Following five versions are the only Chinese dictionaries published up to

date in China or Sri Lanka with Sinhala language option (Figure 1).



Figure 1: [Basic Chinese bilingual dictionaries with Sinhala and other local language options]

Shortcomings of these Dictionaries

1. Three of five dictionaries have published in China; therefore, they are not available in Sri Lanka.

2. They do not fulfill the local requirements as Sri Lankan learners prefer locally composed dictionaries.

3. Two of five dictionaries are published in Sri Lanka, but their entries are few with compared to the other foreign language dictionaries.

4. All five dictionaries are not very suitable for the beginners due to various weak points in the contents.

5. Entries of Chinese dictionaries must consist with Chinese Characters following by words that start from entry character. But all above dictionaries are lack of this facility.

Bilingual Chinese dictionaries given with Sinhala language explanation are not very common to the local Sinhala language users in Sri Lanka even now. This situation occurs huge barrier to the

development of Sinhala-Chinese language-based communication. Sinhala dominant society needs more efficient Chinese dictionaries to carry out positive activities in the process of socio cultural academic and political aspects. To fulfil these requirements at least there must have preliminary studies regarding for preparing modern Chinese dictionaries for local needs.

Monolingual Chinese dictionaries with Chinese definitions are not suitable for local people in Sri Lanka though they may have certain Chinese knowledge. They may prefer Chinese bilingual dictionaries with Sinhala definitions as such dictionaries are more convenient to use. But monolingual Chinese dictionaries are more user-friendlier than locally prepared dictionaries due to those books are improved with modern scientific methods. Following is the Chinese definitions for the character “爱” in a monolingual Chinese dictionary (Figure: 2).

爱(愛) ài ①喜爱;热爱;怀有很深的感情:~祖国|~人民|~父母|~子女。②特指男女爱情:求~|情~。③喜好:~旅游|~看球赛|~画画。④爱护;爱惜:~面子|~公家财物。⑤容易发生的行为或变化:~发脾气。

Figure: 2 [The Chinese character “爱” shown in a Chinese monolingual dictionary
王继红、陈鸣、任丽青主编《现代实用汉语词典》上海远东出版社、第3页。]

Here each Chinese entry consists of both simplified and complicated (Traditional) forms of the character, Pinyin pronunciation with the tone, different meanings and examples of the usage of each definition, some of definitions are given with synonyms. This type of dictionary can be said to be a user-friendly dictionary with modern scientific methods. We suggest to apply this method as called “Design” in this research which is used in the traditional Chinese monolingual dictionaries.

Sinhala/Tamil/English speaking Sri Lankan people will not be able to read and

understand completely these definitions as those are written only in Chinese language (Monolingual). Correct pronunciations and understanding of meanings of Chinese characters are essential for foreigners but monolingual Chinese dictionaries are prepared for professionals or fulfil local Chinese needs. Local community of Sri Lanka usually abide with basic grammatical components such as verbs, nouns, tenses and more. Therefore preparation of Chinese dictionaries must be more localized. This is an example of a Chinese entry in proposed Chinese Sinhala bilingual dictionary (Figure: 3).

爱(愛) ài ① [动] අදාලයි, 对人或事物有很深的感情: ~祖国 | ~人民 | 他~上了一个姑娘。② [动] කැමැත්තයි, 喜欢: ~游泳 | ~劳动 | ~看电影。③ [动] රකින්නයි, 爱惜; 爱护: ~公物 | ~集体荣誉。④ [动] යම්කිසිවක් නිතර නිතර සිදුවෙන්නයි, 常常发生某种行为; 容易发生某种变化: ~哭 | 铁~生锈。⑤ (Ài) [名] එකමමෙහි, 姓。

Figure: 3 [The proposed entry of the Chinese character “爱” with Chinese Sinhala bilingual options]

Above quotation of the proposed Chinese-Sinhala bilingual dictionary includes Chinese character form in both simplified and complicated (Traditional) definitions same as in monolingual Chinese dictionaries and more definitions in Sinhala too such as Sinhala meanings, types of words and sometimes more explanations in Sinhala than in Chinese. Also, it seems bilingual dictionaries are more practical rather than Chinese monolingual dictionaries (with Chinese definitions).

There are two types of Chinese monolingual dictionaries mainly using in modern days. They are Chinese character dictionaries (汉语字典) and Chinese word dictionaries (汉语词典). Chinese character dictionaries offer Chinese

characters with their meanings and usage. But they haven't meanings of Chinese words. Chinese experts and professionals use this type of dictionaries for special purposes. For example, following quotation is copied from 《古汉语常用字字典》(Dictionary of Frequently Used Classical Chinese Characters). Here are the main Chinese characters with Chinese definitions, characters are given in dark and large format and according to the Pinyin order. This format is not suitable for Sri Lankan needs, especially for those who are studying Chinese or working in Chinese (Figure: 4).

簸 bǒ ㄅㄛˇ 用簸箕盛粮食等上下颠动,扬去糠秕尘土等物。《诗经·大雅·生民》:“或一或蹂。”(蹂:踩。)④颠动,播动。张衡《西京赋》:“荡川浚,~林薄。”(林薄:草木丛生的地方。)韩愈《别赵子》诗:“婆娑海水南,~弄明月珠。”

擘 bō ㄅㄛ ①大拇指。《孟子·滕文公上》:“吾必以仲子为巨~。”(仲子:人名。)“巨擘”后喻指能手。②bāi(掰)。用手指把东西掰开,分开。贾思勰《齐民要术·种红花蓝花梔子》:“取醋石榴两三个,一取子。”(醋石榴:酸石榴。)

Figure: 4 [Chinese entries in a bilingual Chinese character dictionary

《古汉语常用字字典》, 商务印书馆出版, 2001, 22页。]

版, 2001, 22页。]

On the other hand, commonly used Chinese abbreviations in monolingual Chinese dictionaries are also can be used in localized Chinese-Sinhala bilingual dictionaries. Chinese characters are logographic letters, though most of characters contain at least two parts, especially a meaning part and a pronunciation part. Ordinary practitioners may have not be able to understand the inside components of Chinese characters, but they can understand the meanings of Chinese characters by using Chinese abbreviations. In the process of the preparing Chinese-Sinhala bilingual dictionaries, the editorial must finalize the basic Chinese abbreviations to clear and correct usage. At the beginning the ordinary practitioners may face some difficulties when they use bilingual dictionaries, because the formation of the content of an entry (Chinese character or word) consists of both Sinhala and Chinese definitions with Chinese abbreviations. But users of Chinese-Sinhala bilingual dictionaries can be encouraged this way to use monolingual Chinese dictionaries too. In this way it is easier to overcome from many difficulties as practitioners face when they use monolingual Chinese dictionaries. There

are too many Chinese abbreviations in monolingual Chinese dictionaries, but it is convenient if the editorial limits the number of abbreviations. For example, there are most used Chinese abbreviations of dictionaries as follows, “名, 英, 方, 波斯, 阿拉伯, 前缀, 梵, 见, 拟声, 叹, 形, 同, 助, 注, 动, 介, 副, 口, 旧, 代, 见” etc. The list of abbreviations must have a user-friendly order, for example (Figure: 5).

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----|--------------------|
| 名 | නාම පදය |
| 英 | ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව |
| 〈方〉 | උපභාෂාව |
| 波斯 | පර්සියානු භාෂාව |
| 阿拉伯 | අරාබි භාෂාව |
| 前缀 | උපසර්ගය |
| 梵 | සංස්කෘත භාෂාව |
| 见 | බලන්න |
| 拟声 | ශබ්දානුකරණ පද |
| 叹 | විශ්මයාර්ථවාචී පදය |
| 形 | විශේෂණ පදය |
| 同 | සමාන යි |
| 助 | ආධාරක පදය |
| 注意 | අවධානය පිණිසයි |
| 动 | ක්‍රියා පදය |
| 介 | නිපාත පදය |
| 副 | ක්‍රියා විශේෂණය |
| 〈口〉 | කථිත භාෂාව |
| 旧读 | පැරණි උච්චාරණය |
| 代 | සර්වනාම පදය |
| 见下 | පහත බලන්න |

Figure: 5 [Proposed method for abbreviations in a bilingual Chinese dictionary]

唉āi [叹] ① එකඟවම කියවෙන “ආ” යන්න, 表示应答: ~, 我在这儿 | ~, 我知道了。② අනෙක් 表示 叹息: ~, 有什么办法呢? | 他双手抱着头, ~~地直叹气。

【唉声叹气】 āi shēng tàn qì ෧. වේදනාව හෝ කණගාටු නිසා පිරවෙන සුළුම් දහ හඬ, 因伤感、烦 闷或痛苦而发出叹息的声音。

媿āi [媿] (āi jiù) (方) 名 ① අප්පි, 祖母。② වයසක කාන්තාවන් ආමන්ත්‍රණය කරන පදයකි, 尊 称年老的妇女。

欸āi 同“唉”(āi)。

暖(暖)āi 同“哎”。

镱(镱)āi 名 අතින්කර්මයකි, පද්‍රවර්ණයකි මලින් සකසා ගත් විකිරණශීලී මූලද්‍රව්‍යයකි, 金属元素, 符号 Es(Einsteinium)。有放射性, 由人工核反应获得。

挨(推)āi 动 ① පීඩනය පත්වෙන්නා, 遭受; 忍受: ~饿 | ~了一顿打。② 困难地度过(岁月); 苦日 子好不容易~过来了。③ කල් ගත කරනවා, 拖延: 他舍不得走, ~到第二天才动身。

Figure: 6 [The application of proposed method for abbreviations to a bilingual Chinese dictionary]

In this research, we have focus into main body of an entry in a dictionary. The “entry” means a Chinese character or a Chinese word which is given in a dictionary according to the alphabetical order. This step is named Development in this research process. This step basically consists of following six categories: (1) Chinese words in character form: This part consists of one or two (or more than two) syllable Chinese characters (2) Pictures of early Jiaguwen or/and Jinwen forms: These written forms of Chinese characters are the most earliest written styles in Chinese history (3) Pinyin: is the official system to romanise Mandarin Chinese, using the Latin alphabet and diacritics to represent sounds and tones. It enables learners to read, pronounce, and type Chinese characters, and it is the

foundational phonetic tool used in mainland China and globally for Chinese language education. (4) Part of Speech: Most of parts of this section are given as examples in abbreviations. (5) Multilingual meaning: This research suggests to apply the trilingual policy of Sri Lanka by applying English, Sinhala and Tamil meaning in construction of Chinese multilingual dictionaries for Sri Lankan needs. (6) Example: Each entry is given at least one example in Chinese to understand the meaning(s) of Chinese word.

After the completion of each entry in this proposed dictionary method, Development procedure seems to be as follows. Here is given ten entries of one thousand most common Chinese words as an example (Figure: 7).

汉语-英语-僧伽罗泰米尔词典
 Chinese-English Sinhala Tamil Dictionary
 1000 Most common Chinese words

- 1
 【列别】 li yie. Amut, තුල්ලා, මගේ, අනුමත. ~, 附近有地铁站吗?
- 2
 【啊】 a nr. used to express surprise, exclamation, or agreement, ඉඳහා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා දැක්මට මොහොට්, ආශ්ච්චයාලා: මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා දැක්මට මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. ~, 这儿的环多么好啊! 你们家住在哪儿? ~, 好的, 我现在就去.
- 3

 【矮】 (矮) ai ai. short, low, ඔටු, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, අඳුරු, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 弟弟的个子比我~.
- 4

 【爱 (爱)】 (爱) ai v. love, ආදරා කරමින්, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 妈妈, 我~你, like doing sth. 妈妈 爱~吃米饭.
- 5
 【爱好】 ai hao n. hobby; an interest, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. අනුමත, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 我最大的一就是打篮球. v. be fond of, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 我从小就~音乐.
- 6
 【爱情】 ai qing n. love, ආදරා කරමින්, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 这是一个感人的~故事.
- 7

 【安】 (甲)
 【安静】 ai jing adv. quiet, calm, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 因为教室里没什么人, 所以很~. v. quiet down, keep silent, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 孩子们都睡着了, 家里~了下来.
- 8
 【安排】 ai pai v. arrange, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 下午的会议, 我已经~好了. n. plan, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 他的一~让大家都很满意.
- 9
 【安全】 ai quan adv. safe, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 晚上开车要注意~. n. safety, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 请放心, 我们会保证您的~.
- 10

 【按】 (兼)
 【按时】 ai shi adv. on time, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා, මමෝ මම ආශ්ච්චයාලා. 我~完成了任务.

Figure: 7 [The application of proposed method for the preparation of Chinese multi-lingual dictionary]

The fifth step of this research is called Finalizing process. It is the completion and publication of a Chinese (Sinhala/English/Tamil) Multilingual Dictionary for Chinese language learners in Sri Lanka.

CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka is one of earliest countries that has started teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Asia. But the development of Chinese education throughout past decades cannot be satisfied as according to the results of past research work. The result of this research

will expand the existing knowledge of Chinese education in Sri Lanka. As any other dictionary, Chinese multilingual dictionary should also be a product of high lexicographic achievement in Chinese language studying. Since this study only involved basic aspects of Chinese multilingual dictionaries, further studies are needed to get more valid results that can be generalized for the benefit of Chinese language learners.

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