Comparing and Contrasting Kinship Terms of Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese for Second and Foreign Language Teaching in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study is projected to discuss prominent issues in teaching kinship terms of Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese in second and foreign language teaching in Sri Lanka. This study involves with communicative functional approach methodology. Detail descriptive analysis is done on the usage of the kinship terms in different cultural backgrounds, based on the information collected from different languages. The concepts of language, culture, kinship term will be defined, respectively. The relationship between language and culture will also be pointed out. Moreover, factors such as grammatical importance that have an impact on the success of teaching culture-oriented kinship terms to second and foreign language students will be examined. Detail analysis was done to understand the functions of the kinship terms in different languages. From the communicative approach, it is investigated how kinship terms are used in various social environments and how could teach them in second language teaching. The work and analysis undertaken in this paper significantly contributes to identify the language patterns via the kin relationship between the society and the language.
Key words: Second language teaching; Tamil; Sinhala; Chinese; Kinship terms

INTRODUCTION

Despite the acceptance of kinship as a universal concept, it has been clearly defined neither by anthropologists nor by sociolinguists. Kinship terms are words that are used to designate a family member who is connected to other family members by blood, marriage, adoption, or fostering (Schwimmer, 2001). It includes definite social groups of which the most important is the family. Consistent with this definition, kinship, constitutes part of that total network of social relations called social structures and it is indeed part of them. On the other side, the use of kinship has its own function which depends on the culture and context in every society's communication which is produced by language. Kinship terms are influenced in language functions also.

In relations to this, this study intends to find out the differences in kinship terms and its influence on cultures namely Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese. In order to do this, the study will consider the following research questions, 1. Are there differences in kinship terms system in these languages? 2. If there are differences in kinship terms, how do they affect the language usages?

The main objective of this paper is to classify the kinship terms used in modern Sinhala, Tamil and Chinese social contexts which were collected and identify usages and grammatical influences of them to introduce on effective L2 teaching process successfully in Sri Lanka. This classification is basically undertaken by considering differentiating, identifying the semantic contents, and useable in day-to-day communication of the collected kinship terms.

The government of Sri Lanka has taken an action to teach Tamil or Sinhala as a L2 in different ways, from the ethnic conflict come to the end in 2009 (Sreemali, 2015). Ministry of Education (MoE) has implemented Tamil or Sinhala as a L2 in government schools. Under the guidance of Ministry of National Languages and Social

integration, Department of official Languages (DOL) and National Institute of Language Education and Training (NILET) are conducting Tamil or Sinhala as a L2 for government and non-government servants.

From the establishment of Confucius Institute for the teaching of Chinese as a second language at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka in May 2007 and University of Colombo in 2016, it was observed that many students stated to learn Chinese as a L2. The most recent circumstances that from 2015 other universities also started to teach Chinese as a L2 for their undergraduate students. The Chinese government also sends teachers of Chinese language to teach at various universities in Sri Lanka. Chinese Proficiency Competition exams also are conducted at these Confucius Institutes in Sri Lankan univerities with co-organized by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Linguistic studies investigated manifestations of culture in language teaching and learning and concerned primarily the effects of body language, eye contact, and other manifest communicative behaviors (Hinkel, Ed., 1999). Comparisons of culturally defined behaviors focused on such forms of address, or terms of kinship and personal relationships that do not exist outside the specific societies in which they are used. Acquiring cultural knowledge of another language is often considered the fifth skill in language learning, in fact being aware of the cultural differences help people to prevent misinterpretation caused by confusing cultural situation.

Cultural knowledge acquires a special importance in the fast changing world people live in today. Yet words are generally used by people to communicate, but at the same time the acceptance of their meaning and their usage often goes with cultural norms. Nida (1979) maintains that language and culture are two similar systems of interdependent symbols. Cultural factors are deeply interlinked with the language, and thus are morphologically and structurally reflected in the forms of the language. At the same time the aim of language teaching is to develop both linguistic and cultural competence as well as intercultural communicative competence.

The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. In Hymes's view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and actually performed. Halliday (1975) has elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language, which complements Hymes's view of communicative

competence. Currently, many researchers and language teaching methodologists largely assume that, in real terms, communicative competence involves socially and culturally appropriate language use, which is almost invariably culture specific.

Language users' social backgrounds and identities, as well as social meanings, are conveyed by means of language. Hymes (1972) noted that in linguistics, a descriptive theory of speech and interaction has to take into consideration how language is used in a particular community both in speech and writing. Accordingly, Detail descriptive analysis is done on the usage of the kinship terms in different cultural backgrounds, based on the information collected from different languages.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This study uses the quantitative and qualitative study methods to provide information on kinship terms of different languages for comparison and contrast for analysis of the semantic domain of words with regards to their relations and linguistic functions. In order to do this, descriptive analysis also collaborated with quantitative and qualitative methods. By using descriptive method it was trying to illustrate the characteristics of kinship terms factually and accurately for this study. In this method whose data was words or someway phrases. There are efforts to describe, the terms and, analyze the conditions that occur. Quantitative approach is based on the counting of the special characteristics of the kinship terms, and it was dealing with the people and their language in their social context.

The data-kinship terms and corpora - have been collected using the different Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese bilingual dictionaries as well as specific monolingual dictionaries of each language. Moreover, bilingual dictionaries and selected monolingual web pages were also leisurely sought. Furthermore, in order to know contemporary usages of kinship terms, apart from the fact of limiting the search only to dictionaries which collect the formal and standardized forms of the language, the corpus has been enriched also with the contribution of the Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese native speakers, in order to add any relevant expression or meaning and functions they might know.

DATA ANALYZING AND FINDINGS

Kinship systems constitute one of the universals of human culture, at the same time it is universally determined in the lexicons of all languages. The kinship terminology of a language reveals the way kinship relations are patterned in a particular linguistic culture. They are linguistic elements that characterize the mutual relationships between kinsmen. A comparison among the Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese kinship terminologies is quite revealing.

Kinship systems have their origin in the individual's membership in two nuclear families - the family of orientation in which one was born and reared, and the family of procreation which one establishes by marriage. Every person forms a link between the members of his or her family of orientation and those of his or her family of procreation, and ramifying series of such links bind members of individuals to one another through kinship ties. Depending upon the type of link in the relation whether of blood or that of marriage, relatives are classified respectively as consanguine and affine. Kin term products are thus culturally specific and convey cultural concepts about how the kinship relations identified by the terms in the terminology may form a system of relationships.

Kinship terms are classified in three different ways - according to their mode of use, according to their linguistic structure and according to their range of application. The mode of use classifies kinship terms into two types,
- Kinship terms of address
- Kinship terms of reference

A term of address may be defined as a term by which a relative who in the instance of speech communication is the first person, addresses another who is the second person. It is a term used in speaking to a particular relative. A term of reference designates the name given to a kinship relation. It is a term usually used in referring to a particular relative who is the third person in the act of communication. In some languages, kinship terms of address and reference can be represented in same word or phrase.

The theoretical basics for analyzing kinship terms, as also the available limitations for classifying kinship terms are briefly documented below.

Table 1
Kinship terms of reference and address in Sinhala and Tamil

No.	Term in English	Reference form Sinhala	Address form Tamil	Reference form Tamil	Address form Sinhala
1	Father's father	*attaa*	*attaa, seeyaa*	*appappaa*	*appappaa, taataa*
2	Father's mother	*mittani*	*attammaa, aachi*	*appammaa*	*appammaa, paaddi*
3	Mother's father	*attaa*	*attaa, seeyaa*	*ammappaa*	*ammappaa, taataa*
4	Mother's mother	*mittani*	*attammaa, aachi*	*ammammaa*	*ammammaa, paaddi*
5	Father's elder brother	*mahapaa*	*loku taattaa*	*periya tanthai*	*periyappaa*
6	Father's younger brother	*vaapaa*	*vaapaa*	*siriya tanthai*	*sittappaa*
7	Father's elder sister	*nænthaa*	*loku nænthaa*	*attai*	*attai*
8	Father's younger sister	*nænthaa*	*podi nænthaa*	*attai*	*attai*
9	Mother's elder brother	*maamaa*	*loku maamaa*	*maamaa*	*priya maamaa*
10	Mother's younger brother	*maamaa*	*podi maamaa*	*maamaa*	*sinna maamaa*
11	Mother's elder sister	-	*loku ammaa*	*periya taai*	*periyammaa*
12	Mother's younger sister	-	*punchi, choodi ammaa*	*siriya taai*	*sitti, sinnammaa*
13	Father	*piyaa*	*taattaa*	*tanthai*	*appaa*
14	Mother	*mava*	*ammaa*	*taai*	*ammaa*
15	Husband	*swami prusaya*		*kaNavan*	
16	Wife	*bhariya*		*manaivi*	
17	Husband's father	-	*maamaa*	-	*maamaa*
18	Husband's mother	-	*nænthaa*	-	*maami*
19	Wife's father	-	*maamaa*	-	*maamaa*
20	Wife's mother	-	*nænthaa*	-	*maami*
21	Elder brother	*ayyaa*	*ayyaa*	*aNNan*	*aNNaa*
22	Elder brother's wife	-	*akkaa*	*aNNi*	*aNNi*
23	Younger brother	*malli*	*malli*	*tambi*	*tambi*
24	Younger brother's wife	-	*nangi*	*machchaal*	*machchaal*
25	Elder sister	*akka*	*akka*	*akka*	*akka*
26	Elder sister's husband	-	*ayyaa*	*attaan*	*attaan*
27	Younger sister	*nangi*	*nangi*	*tangai*	*tangachchi*
28	Younger sister's husband	-	*massina*	*machchaan*	*machchaan*
29	Son's wife	*leli*	*duwa*	*marumahal*	*marumahal*
30	Daughter's husband	*bænaa*	*puttaa*	*marumahan*	*marumahan*
31	Siblings	*sahotaravarun*		*sahotarar*	
32	Brother	*soyru*		*sahotaran*	
33	Sister	*soyri*		*sahotari*	
34	Child	*lamayaa*		*pillai*	
35	Children	*lamun*		*pillaihal*	
36	Parents	*themoppiyan*		*pettror*	
37	Son	*puttaa*	*mahan*	*mahan*	*puttaa*
38	Daughter	*duwa*	*mahal, pillai*	*mahal*	
39	grandson	*munupuraa*		*peran*	
40	granddaughter	*minipiriya*		*petti*	

Through this descriptive kinship analysis, in all three languages, terms of reference are felt to be more dependable and terms of address very useful in day-to-day communication. This is because the former are more specific in their application and usually more complete than the latter. Complete, because terms of reference always cover a larger area of the kinship domain than those of address. Besides, there is more duplication and overlapping in some terms of address than in those of reference.

As regards linguistic structure, kinship terms are classified as elementary, derivative and descriptive terms (Murdock, 1949). In all three languages, elementary term, like Sinhala 'taataa', 'ayya', Tamil 'appa', 'tambi' which cannot be analyzed into component lexical elements with kinship meanings; derivative term, like Sinhala 'attamma', Tamil 'aNNi', 'maami', Chinese 'dìmèi', 'jiěfu' are compounded from an elementary term; descriptive term like Sinhala 'swami prusaya', Tamil 'appammaa', 'marumahan', Chinese 'zǔfù', 'wài zǔmǔ' combines two or more elementary terms to denote a specific relative. It is identified the many Chinese kin terms are descriptive terms.

Table 2
Kinship terms of reference and address in Chinese

No.	Term in English	Reference form	Address form
1	Father's father	zǔfù	zǔfù, yéye
2	Father's mother	zǔmǔ	zǔmǔ, nǎinai
3	Mother's father	wài zǔfù	lǎoyé
4	Mother's mother	wài zǔmǔ	lǎolǎo
5	Father's elder brother	bófù	bóbo, bófù
6	Father's younger brother	shūfù	shūshu, shūfù
7	Father's elder sister	jiějiě	gūgu, jiějiě
8	Father's younger sister	gūgu	gūgu
9	Mother's elder brother	jiùjiu	jiùjiu
10	Mother's younger brother	jiùjiu	jiùjiu
11	Mother's elder sister	yímā	yímā
12	Mother's younger sister	yímā	yímā
13	Father	fùqīn	bàba
14	Mother	mǔqīn	māma
15	Husband	zhàng fu, xiānshēng	lǎogong
16	Wife	tàitài, qīzi	lǎopó
17	Husband's father	gōnggong	gōnggong
18	Husband's mother	pópo	pópo
19	Wife's father	yuèfù	yuèfù
20	Wife's mother	yuèmǔ	yuèmǔ
21	Elder brother	gēge	gēge
22	Elder brother's wife	sǎozi	sǎozi
23	Younger brother	dìdi	dìdi
24	Younger brother's wife	dìmèi	dìmèi
25	Elder sister	jiějie	jiějie
26	Elder sister's husband	jiěfu	jiěfu
27	Younger sister	mèimèi	mèimèi
28	Younger sister's husband	mèifu	mèifu
29	Son's wife	xífù	xífù
30	Daughter's husband	nǚxu	nǚxu
31	Siblings	xiōngdì jiemèi	

To be continued

Continued

No.	Term in English	Reference form	Address form
32	Brother	xiōngdì	
33	Sister	jiemèi	
34	Child	háizi	
35	Children	háizi	
36	Parents	fùmǔ	
37	Son	érzi	
38	Daughter	nǚ'ér	
39	grandson	sūnzi, wàisūn	sūnzi, wàisūn
40	granddaughter	sūnnǔ, wàisūnnǔ	sūnnǔ, wàisūnnǔ

According to the categorization, there are same kinship terms in both Sinhala and Tamil are grouped under two categories - denotative and classificatory. A denotative term is one which applies only to relatives in a single kinship category as defined by generation, sex and genealogical connection like Sinhala 'piya', Tamil 'tantai', A classificatory term is one that applies to persons of two or more kinship categories as these are defined by generation, sex and genealogical connection like Sinhala 'ayya', 'nangi', Tamil 'attai', 'paaddi'. There are kin terms used commonly in both Sinhala and Tamil denoting same relationship like 'maamaa', 'akka', 'amma'.

From the readings of the data for kinship terms of all there languages, is found that there are differences in the terms used for the male and female gender. This means that if one is capable in these languages, by listening to the terms used, one could identify and differentiate the male and female gender and learn the culture and way of life of the people in general.

In terms of communicative functional analysis, is found that the corpus studies show that there are grammatical differences in the making of utterances in Sinhala and Tamil. In Sinhala, only singular and plural forms of the kinship terms take different morphemes as suffix of verb in all tenses. No gender variation in sentence making. E.g.:

Father went.	taataa geeyeya.	ye- for singular
Fathers went.	taataawarun geeyoya.	yo- for plural
Mother went.	amma geeyeya.	e- for singular
Mothers went.	ammwarun geeyoya.	yo- for plural

But in Tamil, there are different morphemes for denoting number, gender and honor in both written and spoken. According to inflectional rules, Tamil language is functioned and its grammar is created.

Table 3
Grammatical morphemes denoting number, gender and honor in Tamil

Number	Pronoun	Gender	Kinship term	Grammatical morpheme
singular	avar	male/female	appaa	aar
			ammaa	
honorific (older than)	He/She		aNNa	
			akka	
			maamaa	

To be continued

Continued

Number	Pronoun	Gender	Kinship term	Grammatical morpheme
plural	*avarkal* They	male/female	*appaamaar* *ammaamaar* *aNNamaar* *akkamaar* *maamaamaar* *tambimar* *tangaimar*	*aarkal or anar*
singular younger than	*avan* He	male	*tambi*	*aan*
	aval she	female	*tangai*	*aal*

E.g.

1. (past) Father came.   *appaa vanthaar.*   *aar*
2. (present) Mother comes.   *ammaa varukiraar.*   *aar*
3. (future) Sisters will come.   *akkaamaar varuvaarkal.* *aarkal*
4. (present) Younger brothers come. *tambimaar varukiraarkal.* *aarkal*
5. (past) Younger brother comes. *tambi varukiraan.* *aan*
6. (future) Younger sister will come. *tangai varuvaal.* *aal*

From the example, one can identify gender, number, manner even subject through these morphemes like *aar, aarkal, aan*, and *aal*. Tamil language has distinct grammar characteristics and lexicon (vocabulary), it may be misleading to define the differences among other languages exclusively in terms of kinship terms meanings and their grammar rules.

Being polite in all three languages is obviously a complex linguistic matter. Age, sex, kinship term, and social status determine the ways of speaking politely. The relevant context also influences the choice of words that people will use. The fact that kinship terms have a central role within the cultural-linguistic investigation is demonstrated also by the fact that they raise a very important translation issue, due to the connotations they have in different communities.

Second language learners obviously become learners of the second culture because a language cannot be learned without considering the cultural context in which it is used (Hinkel, 1999). Currently, many researchers and language teaching methodologists largely assume that, in real terms, communicative competence involves socially and culturally appropriate language use, which is almost invariably culture specific. Without an understanding of the manifestations and outcomes of sociocultural values, norms, and concepts on speech and behavior in language use, it may not be possible to become fully linguistically competent in possible to become fully linguistically competent in another language. Being aware of the sociocultural frameworks does not mean, however, that learners have to become native-like, but an awareness of the second cultural norms can allow learners to make their own informed choices of what to say and how to say it. Because language use reflects the culture of its speakers in a myriad of ways, teaching the second culture together with the essential linguistic skills more adequately represents the connections between language and culture than teaching second language linguistic skills – or culture - in isolation.

It can be suggested some instructional strategies such as role play, sending students into the target language community to teach kinship terms in L2 language teaching in Sri Lankan context that may seem helpful for teachers looking for some practical ways to integrate culture in their language lessons. And it will help to increase students' communicative competence through appropriateness and knowing how to use kinship terms for a range of different purposes and functions.

CONCLUSION

It is reasonable to accept that among Sinhala, Tamil, and Chinese, there are actually similarities in the use of kinship terms as oriental cultures to a certain degree. Comparatively, the Sinhala and Tamil kinship terms show more similarities than the Chinese kinship terms. Accordingly, the results suggest that the difference in kinship terms may influence the learners' perception and use of them in the L2 language classroom. The role of a teacher in a communicative classroom is to facilitate language learning in meaningful ways. To achieve this end, most communicative classrooms make use of authentic materials about kinship terms with their linguistic functions. Teachers may try to create a real-life contexts such as how to use kinship terms forms – reference, address - to offer great motivation to learners and it will provide students with the opportunity to learn the pragmatic skills of using kinship term appropriately.

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