

Indic Loanwords in Chinese and Sinhala: A Semantic Analysis

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Along with the revival of philosophy, literature and language in Tang Dynasty, a large number of Indic loanwords were introduced to Chinese language which became an integral part of Medieval as well as Modern Chinese lexicon. Indic loanwords in Chinese language have largely been borrowed from Sanskrit and other *Prakrit* languages in India such as Māgādhī, Gandhāri and Pāli. Since Sinhala also has borrowed a number of Indic loanwords from these languages, a phonological and semantic relationship has been established between Sinhala and Chinese through Indic loanwords. The present study aims to analyze Indic loanwords in Chinese and Sinhala from a semantic perspective. A list of 765 words have been selected as the sample of the study which are both available in Sinhala and Chinese. The words were first categorized into three types as transliterations (349), free translations (285) and phono-semantic matchings (131). The semantic relationship between the two languages has been analyzed using four variables, namely similarity in general meaning, usage in modern language, number of morphemes and change of meaning. Similarity level was evaluated using the criteria $4.5 \geq$ = Very High, $4-4.49$ = High, $2.5-3.99$ = Average High, $1.5-2.49$ = Low, $0-1.49$ = Very Low. The study has found out that the similarity levels of free translations are relatively low compared to transliterations and phono-semantic matchings. Transliterations account for the highest similarity rates and phono-semantic matchings have recorded medium similarity levels. It was found out that the major reason behind the low similarity levels of free translations is their higher Sinicization level. Most transliterations, even ones which have penetrated into modern Chinese with highest Sinicization levels show higher similarity levels in Chinese and Sinhala. The study concludes that Sinicization of Indic loanwords and semantic similarity between Sinhala and Chinese are two dependent variables.

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