

# Chinese Language as a soft-power instrument in Sri Lanka

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## Abstract

The people's Republic of China is regarded as one of the most prominent countries which have utilized their soft power in order to expand their influence. PRC attempts to use its economic power through debt-trap diplomacy and language/cultural influence to gain over South Asia. Whilst Belt and Road Initiative is the main economic mechanism endorsed by President Xi, Chinese language teaching through Confucius Institutes has been able to propagate their cultural influence. Confucius Institute is a public educational organization under the ministry of education of the people's republic of China. Although the stated aims of the institute are to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally and facilitate cultural exchanges, scholars have raised concerns over their subsidiary role in attaining non-academic goals such as expanding China's economic, and diplomatic reach through the promotion of Chinese language, intelligence collection and influencing host countries' perspectives on China. Although previous studies have captured the popularity of learning Chinese as a foreign language among Sri Lankan universities, there has been less focus on the strategic manipulation of Chinese language teaching to establish influence over Sri Lanka as a soft power paradigm. Against this backdrop, this study provides an in-depth analysis of China's usage and implication of soft power through Confucius's institution of the University of Kelaniya, general and special degree programs at the University of Sabaragamuwa and University of Kelaniya and Confucius classroom. To conduct this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Questionnaires and Interviews were used to collect primary data while online sources, journals, and reports were used to collect secondary data. To analyze the collected data descriptive analyzing method was employed. The research findings suggest that while providing many academic opportunities to Sri Lankan undergraduates, Confucius institute and the Chinese language degree programs in Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa universities have been hubs of China's overseas propaganda set-up which also thrive in uplifting China's image.

**Keywords** - Chinese Language, Confucius Institute, Cultural influence, Sri Lanka, soft power

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