

A Study of Chinese Language Teaching and Learning in the Department of Chinese Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
尼日利亚纳姆迪·阿齐克韦大学中文系汉语教学现状调查研究

Miracle Uzochukwu Okafor
Chinese Studies Department,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: mu.okafor@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

With the advancement of the Chinese economy and increasing win-win cooperation between China and Nigeria, Chinese language teaching and learning in Nigeria has made rapid growth in recent years. There has been the establishment of many Confucius institutes, Chinese language centers, and Chinese cultural exchange centers across Nigeria. Some States and educational institutions have started including Chinese studies in their curriculum. Therefore this paper through the use of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and participation methods, surveyed the current situation of Chinese language teaching and learning in the Chinese Studies Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU). The study investigates the Department's current situation of teaching and learning, courses/curriculum, teaching and learning materials, and other challenges. Finally, the paper suggested ways of how to improve Chinese teaching and learning in the Department.

1.0 Introduction

China has gained influence on the world stage and has much to offer economically, academically, and culturally. The ramifications of the China and Nigeria economic partnership involve intercultural education, with emphasis on language and culture, and the establishment of Confucius Institutes and Centers across Nigeria (Usman, 2015; Ogunkola et al, 2008). While some scholars see this cooperation as healthy and win-win, with promising prospects (Egbula & Zheng 2011; Luo & Zhang, 2014; Guo, 2016; Edeh & Wang, 2018), others believe that it is China's Neo-colonization strategy (Beuret & Michael, 2008; Odigboh, 2012). As at the time of this research, there are only three universities in Nigeria offering a Degree programme in Chinese studies, they are; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, University of Lagos, and Kaduna State University. Other centers for Learning Chinese in Nigeria are; Confucius Institute UNIZIK (Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka), Confucius Institute UNILAG (University of Lagos), Confucius Institute Classroom Federal Polytechnic Oko, Confucius Institute teaching point Kano State, Confucius Institute teaching point Imo State, Confucius Institute teaching point University of PortHarcourt, and Chinese Cultural Centre in Abuja. As the interest in China and the Chinese language grows in Nigeria, the Department of Chinese Studies in Nnamdi Azikiwe University is established to primarily enable undergraduate students to listen, speak, read and write standard Chinese (普通话/汉语), which is the official language of China; this will help the students to gain cultural insight into the world's most populous country, which in recent years has attained vital positions in several global contexts. In addition to language and culture teaching, the Chinese studies program exposes students to areas relating to China's social conditions, history, culture, and media. Most of the teaching is about China's current development and challenges both internally and with the outside world, exploring the connections between political, societal, and cultural matters. In various courses, students acquire profound knowledge regarding China's politics, economy, society, and

history, and receive excellent training in the modern Chinese language. The Chinese Studies department's degree programme is dedicated to preparing students for the future, with a solid foundation in Chinese language and culture. Learning in the Chinese Studies department offers students a wide range of career and employment opportunities in international organizations, multinational corporations, media, tourism, NGOs, education, government, etc. Students can also take advantage of the University's exchange program agreements and study at some of the best Chinese universities even on scholarship. Since there are no previous in-dept research on teaching and learning in the Chinese Studies Department, NAU, this research is crucial as it investigates the current situation of teaching and learning in the department, highlighting the history of the department, courses/curriculum, overall teachers and student's current situations, challenges facing the department, and recommendations.

1.1 History of Chinese Studies Department Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

The history of Chinese Studies at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka started in 2004. The idea of Chinese studies was given to Prof. Ilochi Okafor (SAN), the then Vice-chancellor by late Mr. Ike Mbaonu, who was from Nibo community in Anambra State and a graduate of the University of Nigeria. He was a staff of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Abuja. At one of his visits with President Olusegun Obasanjo to China, he got the information of the intention of the Chinese government to introduce Chinese language in a Nigerian university. The Vice-chancellor welcomed the idea and immediately began to pursue the introduction of the Chinese language at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. He went to the Chinese Embassy in Abuja and met Mr. Jiang Wenmin, the cultural counselor at that time. Through the effort of Mr. Jiang Wenmin, the Chinese Embassy visited Nnamdi Azikiwe University in 2005 for inspection. After the visit, the Chinese ambassador agreed to assist Nnamdi Azikiwe University to introduce Chinese language through the establishment of the Confucius Institute. This was just the beginning of the journey of the Department of Chinese Studies.

In 2005, Nnamdi Azikiwe University with the approval of the Vice-chancellor, Prof. Ilochi Okafor nominated and sent Sunny Ifeanyi Odinye, a young lecturer in the department of Linguistics to study Chinese language and culture at Beijing Foreign Studies University, China. In 2006, the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture started at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, in the department of African and Asian Studies. The Chinese lecturer, Prof. Liu Guancai was the pioneer foreigner to teach Chinese language and culture at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. He stayed only for one year and returned to China.

After Sunny Odinye's graduation in 2007, he returned to the university to teach Chinese language and culture. He took over from where Prof. Liu Guancai stopped. With his ability to speak Igbo, English, and Chinese language; his teaching was easily understood by his students. This is the advantage of a local Chinese teacher over a foreign Chinese teacher. Mr. Odinye became the first Nigerian indigenous Chinese lecturer in Nigeria since Nnamdi Azikiwe University is the first university to introduce the Chinese language and culture, and also the first university to establish the Confucius Institute in Nigeria.

Sunny Odinye was the only lecturer at that time until the arrival of another Chinese lecturer, Mr. Zhang Jinping arrived in 2008. The first set of diploma students were successfully graduated in 2009. Some of the students got admission to study Chinese language and culture in China the same year. In March 2008, the first Confucius Institute in Nigeria was

established at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, under the leadership of Prof. Ilochi Okafor (SAN). Prof. Okafor, the Vice-Chancellor appointed Mr. Odinye the acting director of the Confucius Institute until the arrival of the Chinese director, Prof. Ji Nengwen in 2009. Mr. Zhao Zhiyuan, another Chinese lecturer was sent to the Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University by HANBAN in 2009. He stayed only for one year. In 2010, Prof. Boniface Egboka (FAS), who was Vice-chancellor after Prof. Ilochi Okafor, appointed Sunny Odinye as the first deputy director to assist Prof. Ji Nengwen. Mr. Elochukwu Anas of the Department of History joined the Confucius Institute after a year's study in China. In 2010, Prof. Sam Omenyi, the Vice-chancellor (Academics), was appointed the first Nigerian-side director of Confucius Institute. In 2013, Dr. Ifeanyi Sunny Odinye came back from Xiamen University, China after a successful completion of a doctorate degree in Chinese language. He becomes the first Nigerian lecturer with a doctorate degree in Chinese.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) approved the commencement of a Bachelor's degree in Chinese Studies at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the programme started in the 2014/2015 academic session. The Vice-Chancellor at that time, Prof. Joseph Ahaneku (FAS) appointed Dr. Ifeanyi Sunny Odinye as the first coordinator (Head) of the Department of Chinese Studies, who handed over to Mrs. Chinenye Okoye as the second coordinator. In 2018, the department graduated her first set. In 2019, the current Vice-chancellor, Prof. Charles Esimone (FAS) appointed Dr. Sunny Odinye the acting Head of the Department of Chinese Studies. Currently, about 2,000 and 200 students are learning Chinese language and culture at the Confucius Institute and the Department of Chinese Studies respectively.

2.0 Review of Related Literature on Chinese Teaching and Learning in Nigeria

Investigation of Chinese teaching and learning has been going on for a while, Shao (2012) investigates the current situation of Chinese teaching in Medan, Indonesia, expounds the existing teaching forms, teachers, specific curriculum and teaching materials, analyzes the existing problems, and points out the development direction of Chinese teaching. Huang, et al (2013) discusses the development of Teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language in central Thailand. Their investigation points out students' interest in learning Chinese and difficulties in learning Chinese. Through the collection and analysis of the survey data, they found that the main interests of Thai students in learning Chinese are Chinese traditional culture and Chinese food. Furthermore, Chinese characters and writing are recognized as difficulties in teaching by teachers and students. In Nigeria, to sustain further economic transactions with China, Nigerian politicians, and educational policymakers do not only embrace the inclusion of Chinese language as part of educational change, innovation, and reform but also prepare current and future generation of Nigerian students to actively engage with their Chinese counterparts in global development and peace sustainability (Olufowobi, 2012; Usman, 2015). Odinye (2013) Ph.D. thesis explored the teaching and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. Some of his findings prove that Nigerian students have a positive attitude towards learning Chinese, most Nigerian learners of Chinese language are extrinsically motivated, Nigerian learners have good proficiency in Chinese Language, Chinese language teachers have the same belief in teaching and learning of Chinese language. There was also research on the challenges Chinese language teaching and learning are facing in Nigeria and recommendations. Some crucial part of the research was later published in 2016 by Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, Germany. Odinye (2015) study on the Development of Chinese Language in Nigeria, learning of the

Chinese language in Nigeria is necessary because China has become the new destination for economic growth and technological development. The study further shows that the first Nigerian Confucius Institute was established in Nnamdi Azikiwe University in 2008, followed by the University of Lagos Confucius institute in 2009. However, Lagos State is the first Nigerian state to adopt the Chinese language as a curriculum in public schools, with few other tertiary institutions where the Confucius institute classrooms are currently located. Ten schools in Lagos State serve as a model for teaching and learning Chinese language as a formal foreign language subject. Odinye (2017) explored the attitude of Nigerian learners of Chinese using students studying at Confucius Institute Nnamdi Azikiwe University as a case study. The purpose of his research was to find out if the learners of Chinese language there have a positive or negative attitude towards Chinese language. The result was positive as in Odinye (2016). Wang (2017) Investigation and Research on Chinese Teaching in Confucius Institutes in Nigeria states that in 2017, a total of about 2,500 students are actively learning Chinese at Confucius Institute Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Total of 20 teachers/ staff members, which includes 2 Directors (1 Chinese and 1 Nigerian), 6 administrators (4 full-time, 2 part-time), 5 Native Chinese teachers, and 7 Chinese volunteers. The study also highlighted some 3 programs offered there which are certificate program, business Chinese, and degree program (run in partnership with the Chinese Studies Department). Teaching materials used and challenges were also looked into. Odinye (2018) made a comprehensive study on the problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria. The finding of his research includes; lack of learning centers (Confucius Institutes), lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for language teaching and learning, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistic environments, and high cost of learning fees.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research methods

This study adopts the method of combining a questionnaire survey and personal observation, interview, supplemented by practical teaching experience. This survey designed questionnaire was done through Google form online survey resource for both students and lecturers, to obtain comprehensive and accurate information. After the questionnaire was collected, some teachers and students were interviewed personally.

3.2 Sample description

The survey samplings are lecturers and students from the Chinese Studies Department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, because there are very few researches on teaching and learning in Chinese Studies department. It is one of the regions worthy of investigation and research on Chinese teaching and learning. Most of the research on Chinese teaching and learning is only focused on either the Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University or Confucius Institute at Lagos state University. In this study, 7 lecturers and 43 students from 4 levels in the department were surveyed.

3.3 Data collection and statistics

A total of 50 questionnaires were sent out in this survey. Among them, 50 questionnaires were distributed to students and 7 teachers' questionnaires were distributed to lecturers. Among 50 questionnaires sent out to different students from different levels, 43 responses were received. Male students accounted for 31.6% and female students for 68.4%, ages ranged between 17 to 32. Student's respondents includes; 100Level (freshmen) 46.5%, 200Level (sophomore) 18.6%, 300 Level (junior) 14%, 500 Level (seniors) 20.9% . Among the students' ethnicity, 89.4% are Igbo, 2.6% Yoruba, 2.6% Ogoja, and 2.6% are Igala. Besides, 1 expatriate Chinese teacher and 6 local Chinese lecturers were interviewed.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Current Situation of Teaching in the Department of Chinese Studies

4.1.1 Teachers

The total number of Lecturers at the Chinese Studies Department, NAU. From the table, the Department currently has 16 academic staff, 56% female and 44% male. Among the 16 lecturers, 8 are permanent lecturers of the Department, 7 external lecturers from other departments within the Faculty of Arts, and 1 expatriate lecturer. In terms of highest academic qualification, 38% have a Doctorate (Ph.D.), 56% have obtained a Masters degree (MA), 6% have a Bachelors degree (BA). Including the expatriate lecturer, most of the lecturers have a degree in either International Chinese Education or Teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages, from Xiamen University (厦门大学) of Hebei Normal University (河北师范学院), with good professional knowledge of teaching Chinese and intercultural communication skills. Generally speaking, almost all the teachers in the department have a general knowledge of Chinese and at one point have received systematic training in Chinese Language teaching theory and teaching methods.

4.1.2 Teaching Materials

Presently, the Chinese Studies department offers only a Bachelor Degree programme and each course has its textbook. Some of the textbooks in use are published by Beijing Language or Culture University Press, Peking University Press, such as "New Practical Chinese Reader 新使用汉语", "Boya Chinese 博雅汉语", "Developing Chinese 发展汉语". Some other materials are gotten from an online resource. From personal observations, Chinese teaching materials used are rich in content and have clear objectives, but the teaching lacks interest and less interactive which makes it difficult for students to take the initiative in class. Therefore, lecturers must integrate teaching materials with local characteristics. There are also a few extracurricular reading materials, and there is little room for expansion. Student's contact with Chinese is very low, so it is urgent to increase extra-curricular reading materials.

From the teaching material survey below, 39.5% of the students are not satisfied with the teaching materials used while 25.6% are satisfied and 34.9% are not sure if they are satisfied or not.

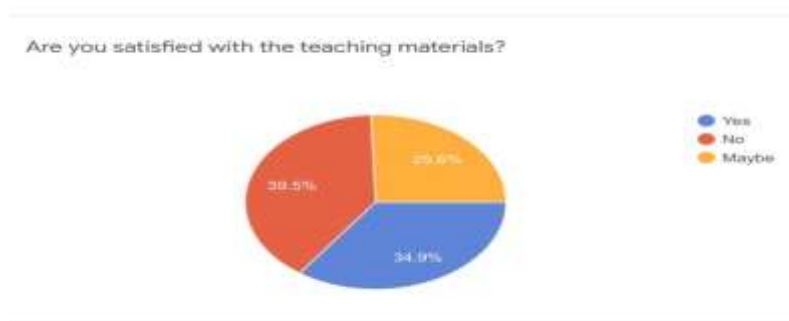


Fig.4 Students questionnaire

4.1.3 Courses/ Curriculum

First year (first semester)			First year (second semester)		
G.S Courses	Course Title	Credit Unit	G.S Courses	Course Title	Credit Unit
GS 01	Use of English I	1	GS 02	Use of English II	1
GS 03	Introduction to philosophy and logic	2	GS 04	History and philosophy of science	2
GS 07	Nigerian people and culture	2	GS 09	Basic Igbo studies II	1
GS 08	Basic Igbo studies I	1			
Care Courses			Care Courses		
CHS 05	Elementary Chinese	2	CHS 02	Modern Chinese history	3
CHS 03	Chinese orthography Approximation	1	CHS 08	Speaking/Oral Chinese	3
CHS 06	Listening Chinese	3	CHS 12	Writing Chinese Character	3
CHS 11	Reading Chinese	3	CHS 09	Conversational Chinese	3
CHS 07	Early Chinese History	3	CHS 11	Chinese measure words and tonalities	3
Intra Faculty Courses			Intra Faculty Courses		
FRE 05	Elementary French I	2	FRE 06	Elementary French II	2
SPS 05	Elementary Spanish I	2	SPS 06	Elementary Spanish II	2
	Total	24		Total	25

Second year (first semester)			Second year (second semester)		
Inter Faculty Courses	Course Title	C. Unit	Inter Faculty Courses	Course Title	C. Unit
CSC 04	Computer programming and language I	2	CSC 102	Computer programming and language II	2
			ENT 200	Introduction to Entrepreneurial studies	0
Care Courses			Care Courses		
CHS 20	Introduction to Chinese culture	3	CHS 202	Introduction to Chinese grammar	3
CHS 20	Intermediate Chinese I	3	CHS 204	Intermediate Chinese II	3
CHS 20	Writing composition in Chinese	3	CHS 207	Writing essay in Chinese	3
CHS 21	Reading comprehension in Chinese	3	CHS 212	Practical translation	3
CHS 209	HSK level 3	3	CHS 210	Introduction to Chinese literature	3
Intra Faculty Courses			Intra Faculty Courses		
IGH 01	Elementary Igbo I	2	IGH 102	Elementary Igbo II	2
ENG 104	Introduction to Nigerian literature I	2	ENG 102	Introduction to Nigerian literature II	2
	Total	21		Total	21

Third year (first semester)			Third year (second semester)		
Care courses	Course Title	C. Unit	Care courses	Course Title	C. Unit
CHS 301	Advanced Chinese I	6	CHS 302	Advanced Chinese II	6
CHS 303	Advanced listening Chinese	4	CHS 305	Advanced spoken Chinese II	4
CHS 306	Advanced spoken Chinese	4	CHS 312	Modern Chinese literature	2
CHS 311	Modern Chinese Grammar	2	CHS 307	Language practice	5
CHS 306	Survey of China	2	CHS 322	Chinese as a second language teaching theory and methods	3
CHS 313	Survey of Chinese Economy	2	CHS 308	Modern Chinese vocabulary	3
	Total	28		Total	23

Fourth year (first semester)			Fourth year (second semester)		
Care courses	Course Title	C. Unit	Care courses	Course Title	C. Unit
CHS 401	Introduction to Chinese religion & philosophy	3	CHS 402	Governance & politics of China	3
CHS 403	China and globalization	3	CHS 404	Advanced Chinese IV	3
CHS 405	Advanced Chinese III	3	CHS 406	China's foreign policy in Africa	3
CHS 407	History of Chinese civilization	3	CHS 409	Modern Chinese economy	3
CHS 411	Introduction to Chinese linguistics	3	CHS 412	Introduction to Chinese morphology	3
CHS 413	Research methodology	3	CHS 422	Project	6
	Total	25		Total	23

F.g 3 Bachelor of Arts (B. A) Degree Curriculum (Department of Chinese Studies Handbook)

The undergraduate course curriculum of The Department of Chinese Studies Nnamdi Azikiwe University sets clear requirements for credits and course setting. Students must complete the major courses, obtain the required credits, pass the thesis defense, pass the HSK Tests (汉语水平考试 Chinese Language Proficiency Test) before they can graduate

and be awarded Bachelors Degree in Chinese Studies (B.A Chinese Studies). Status of Courses in the Department includes;

- a. General Studies Courses
- b. Intra Faculty Courses
- c. Departmental/Core/Major Courses
- d. Inter-Faculty/Electives

4.1.4 Timetable and Class Duration

Each of the Chinese course is mostly held twice a week depending on the semester and level. Teaching time is 50mins (1 class period) per class. Therefore each course is taught 1hr40mins per week. According to the survey, 58.1% of respondents think that 50 minutes per class is not enough, 23.3% think it is fine, while 18.6% are not so sure. In terms of teaching satisfaction, 38% of the students are not satisfied, 30% are satisfied while 32% are indecisive.

4.1.5 Teaching Challenges

- a) Not enough time to cover the course outline and syllabus. Since each class period is just 50 minutes, teachers do rush the teaching contents to be able to meet up with the course outline. This affects students' learning. According to some respondents;
 - i. *The time frame for teaching is a bit short, the student doesn't learn much.*
 - ii. *I wish the department will take it easy with us, no rushing, we have 4years, let's learn easily and make a difference, that's why we are degree students. 慢慢学.*
 - iii. *Some teachers teach fast, especially those taking the language part.*
- b) The shortage of local Chinese teachers. The Number of Local Chinese teachers currently in the department is not enough to meet up with the increasing number of students and courses.
- c) Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is a vibrant and dynamic system that requires constant developments and improvements, with many local and foreign advanced teaching ideas and teaching methods. Local teachers in the Chinese Studies department have fewer opportunities to make further studies and participate in academic seminars and have even more rare opportunities to go overseas for exchange and study.
- d) Insufficient materials. There are no sufficient materials. Some textbooks are not enough or available to students. Textbooks used lack systematic methods and continuity, and the compilation of textbooks ignores the integration of cross-cultural communication. Teaching materials some of the teachers are using are not suitable for the student's level they are handling.
- e) There is no multimedia classroom for Chinese listening class. This is not only inconvenient for teachers handling listening courses but also uncondusive for learning. Multimedia teaching can arouse learners' interest, accelerate knowledge input, and stimulate students' learning enthusiasm.

4.2 Current Situation of Learning

4.2.1 Students

Presently, the department has a total of 140 students, 100 level students are 83 (and still increasing), 200 level students are 20, 300 level has 14 students while 400 level has 22 students. At the 300 level, students have the option to study in China for one academic session or continue in the Chinese Studies Department.

4.2.2 Student’s Interest

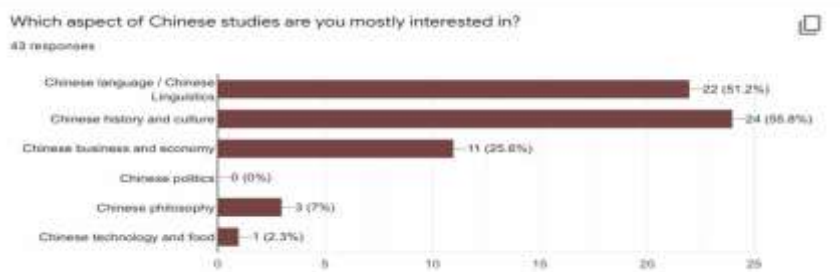
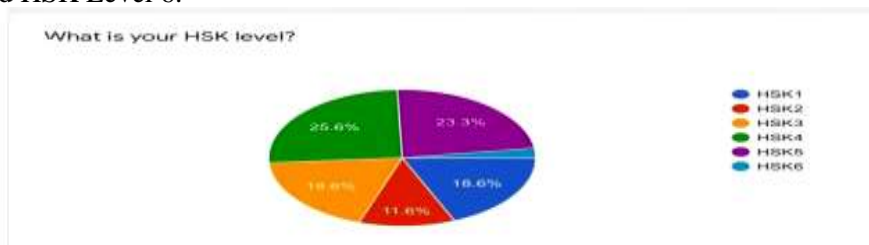


Fig.2 Aspect of Chinese Studies that students are most interested in.

After statistical analysis of the data from student's responses, students are mostly interested in Chinese history and culture, accounting for 55.9%. Followed by Chinese language/ Linguistics for 51.2%, followed by 25.6% for Chinese business and economy, 7% for Chinese philosophy, 2.3% for Chinese technology and food, and no interest in Chinese politics.

4.2.3 Student's Chinese Proficiency Level

The Chinese Language Proficiency Test (HSK) is a standardized test of international Chinese language proficiency for people whose mother tongue is not Chinese. It tests student's ability to easily understand Chinese language information they hear or read, and their ability to express themselves fluently in Chinese, either orally or in writing. HSK test is one of the criteria for graduation in the Chinese Studies Department. HSK test has 6 levels which are; HSK Level 1, HSK Level 2, HSK Level 3, HSK Level 4, HSK Level 5, and HSK Level 6.



From a random survey of students' HSK level, it is discovered that 18.6% of students have passed HSK1, 11.6% are at the level of HSK2, HSK3 is 18.6%, 25.6% is HSK4 level, while 23.3% of students are at the level of HSK5 and 2.3% has reached HSK level 6.

4.2.4 Student’s Motivation

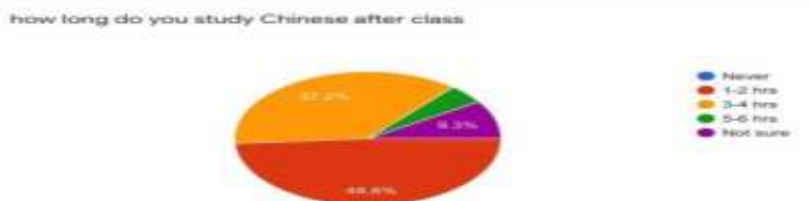
As part of the second section of the survey, which focuses on the learning attitude and studies motivation of students, one of the questions is "why do you choose to study Chinese?". The goal of this question is to find out whether the students are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to study Chinese. The question is was open-ended and requires the respondent to go give a short text answer. Here are some of the responses;

- *To build a stronger relationship between China and Nigeria (in the movie industry, music, novels).*
- *To be able to express myself to people across the world as I have many things to share with us through books, oral, and media.*
- *To get a lucrative job*
- *To travel.*
- *I love the Chinese people.*

- *To enable me to establish a cordial relationship between me and China.*
- *To be an international student, explore the world and able to widen my horizon.*
- *China has become a global economy, I love business and I will love to do business with Chinese people in the future.*
- *China's vast culture made me have a keen interest in studying Chinese and to also know more about their way of life.*
- *To learn more about China and build relationships with Chinese people who cannot communicate well in English.*
- *I choose to study Chinese because the Chinese language is a very interesting course and there are job opportunities.*
- *I love languages it promises a better perspective in the future.*
- *I have a passion for the Chinese language so I do not get tired while studying it, it is something I do willingly.*
- *China is my dreamland, hope to work in a Chinese embassy in the nearest future or any Chinese company.*
- *I chose to study Chinese because I love everything about China...their culture, movies, their sweet language, and most especially their songs.*
- *Of all languages studied in Nigeria, Chinese is very rare and I want to stand out by studying it Love for the course Love for the culture because it's rare.*
- *I love learning languages and I want to be multilingual, therefore other than my language and English language, Chinese is a tough language that will widen my knowledge.*
- *I want to be a Chinese language translator.*
- *For future business purposes, in case I go to China, communication won't be a problem.*
- *I'm not sure.*
- *I don't know.*

From the above responses, it becomes obvious that the students' motivation for studying Chinese is both intrinsically and extrinsically which includes Passion for Chinese language and culture, love for China, curiosity, business opportunity, employment purpose, easy communication, and travel opportunity.

4.2.5 After Class Study Attitude



According to survey response, 48.8% of students study Chinese between 1-2 hours after class, 37.2% study for 3-4 hours after class, 4.7% between 5-6 hours, while 9.3% of the respondents are not sure how many hours they study Chinese after Class. This result shows that students have a positive attitude toward learning. However, there is still a need for improvement since the majority of the students study only 1-2hrs after class.

4.2.6 Chinese Studies Department Students' Participation in Chinese Speech Competition

Students of Chinese Studies Department for the first time took part in the “Cup for Chinese Speech Competition 汉语演讲杯比赛” and Mr. Dike Paul Chinedu, a second-year student of the Chinese Studies department, emerged national champion in the competition. This Chinese speech competition was held via Zoom on December 18, 2020, by the Chinese Embassy, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC), and the Chinese Cultural Centre in Abuja, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between China and Nigeria. 22 participants were selected from Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University (CI, Unizik), the Confucius Institute at University of Lagos (CI, Unilag), Chinese Studies department Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and other Chinese Teaching Points affiliated to the Chinese Embassy took part in the competition. The 7 participants selected from CI, Unizik won all the 6 awards set by the competition panelists—the Champion, the 2 second places, and the 3 third places, and 1 participant from the Chinese Studies department, Unizik, emerged as the Champion. Each of these winners went home with either a ThinkPad laptop or a Huawei smartphone.

According to Prof. Job Yu (current Director of Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University), "Mr. Dike Paul Chinedu, the champion, has become the first student from the Chinese Studies Department to challenge the dominance of Confucius Institute HSK students who have astounded the world with their exploits in diverse areas and competitions. Without a shadow of a doubt, this great breakthrough and achievement by the Chinese Studies department have demonstrated the excellence and competitiveness of Chinese language teaching in Nigeria".

4.2.7 Learning Challenges

- a) Lack of language environment for practicing Chinese. Apart from 7 Native Chinese teachers at Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, who are usually busy with classes, the students have no other opportunity to practice their Chinese with native speakers. The Department only has 1 expatriate Chinese language teacher.
- b) Lack of a good learning environment. The place for learning is too noisy and according to some respondents;
 - *The Department lacks a good ambiance for lectures (if we are going to be sincere).*
 - *That is my highest challenge and not quite a conducive learning space.*
 - *No good learning environment. Too much crowd.*
- c) Shortage of classrooms for learning. Presently, the Chinese studies Department has two fixed classrooms for teaching. The classrooms are small and can barely contain an increasing number of students. Due to the shortage of classrooms, teachers, as well as students, find it very challenging for the teaching and learning process.
- d) Student's learning motivation is still not enough. Although most students have specific and clear reasons for learning Chinese, such as doing business with Chinese people, becoming a Chinese diplomat, Chinese translator, Study abroad, etc. Few students answer "I don't know, I'm not sure". Although the goal is well established, the interview question to some students if "they are working hard enough to learn Chinese language and culture", almost half of the students said,

"they are not working hard enough". This shows that students are aware of the importance of Chinese in real life, but they have not yet been inspired to develop more interest in learning it. Therefore, how to inspire students' interest in Chinese learning is one of the problems that the school, Department, students, and Chinese teachers must solve.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the survey results, the following suggestions are put forward, hoping to improve teaching and learning in the Department of Chinese Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

5.1 Teaching Recommendations

I. Increase the number of Teachers.

Presently, the teaching staff is insufficient, the level is uneven, and there are big problems in teaching materials. Therefore the University management should consider the following solutions:

- a. There is a great need to employ more Local teachers with Chinese language studies background. Wang (2017) noted that due to the characteristics of Nigerian students and the Nigerian education system, it is more necessary for local Chinese teachers to manage the students who are learning Chinese. This will ensure the smooth progress of Chinese teaching and make Chinese teachers from Nigeria and China help each other and jointly promote the development of Chinese teaching and learning in the Chinese Language Department.
- b. Work closely with the Confucius Institute to appropriately increase the number of Chinese volunteer teachers in the Department.
- c. The university can recruit and reserve Chinese teachers sent to Confucius Institute after their volunteer work ends.

II. Increase the quality and competence of Teachers

- a. Local Chinese teachers should have Chinese language ability, cross-cultural communication ability, ability to grasp the teaching schedule and syllabus, ability to deal with teaching materials and the spread of Chinese culture, ability to solve students' academic problems, and to correct students' mistakes appropriately. After teaching, they should have the ability to summarize, self-reflect, and self-evaluate.
- b. Provides platform and environment for frequent exchange of teaching experience. It is necessary that the University and the management of the Chinese Studies department partner with more Chinese universities, private and government parastatals, which will provide more opportunities for Local teachers to participate in teachers exchange programs, targeted lectures offered by Chinese experts, hold seminars to increase cross-cultural communication opportunities, and also go to China for further study.
- c. In terms of teacher training, Hanban or Confucius Institute can organize teachers to carry out training on holidays to improve their teaching level. Local teachers can be provided with opportunities for further study in China through the cooperation of the Department, Hanban, and universities in China.

III. Teaching materials/ equipment

- a. In terms of teaching material resources, the Chinese studies department should cooperate with Confucius Institute, Unizik to provide them with Chinese teaching resources and Hanban promotion materials. In so during the department can choose the latest teaching materials close to students' learning and according to the situation

of students.

- b. The university should provide teaching equipment like, slides, projector, computer, speakers, smart boards which are very interactive and highly recommended for Chinese language teaching.

IV. Adjust Teaching Time.

Due to the limited teaching schedule of the course, the teacher did not give the students time to review and make presentations in each class, because teachers had to rush lessons through 50mins to finish up a lesson plan. To avoid this, there is a need to extend each class time to at least 1 hour 30 minutes.

5.2 Learning Recommendations

I. Create an active Chinese environment

In the non-target language environment, students rarely have the opportunities to speak and practice Chinese. Therefore the Department and teachers should actively create an environment for students to speak Chinese. The lecturers should encourage students' participation and make the classroom interactions between teachers and students, leaving half of the time for students to practice spoken Chinese. Situation dialogue, free discussion dialogue, group dialogue, and topic connection can be set up.

II. Create more extracurricular activities

The Department should work towards creating extracurricular Chinese activities, such as Chinese corner, Chinese speech, Chinese cooking class, Chinese songs, Chinese recitation competition, Chinese drama, Chinese movie class, etc. so that students can improve their oral Chinese ability and interest in the language, and also help to fish out the hidden talents in the Department.

III. Strengthen exchange programs

The Department and Confucius Institutes should cooperate with more universities in China to train students to improve their oral skills rapidly in the target language environment through exchange students programmes or winter and summer camps in China.

IV. Add more Chinese elective courses

Since most students are interested in Chinese culture, courses related to Chinese cultures, such as paper cutting, Taijiquan 太极拳, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese songs, and others, which are not included in the curriculum should be made elective courses. This is necessary for the cultivation of students' interest in Chinese learning.

V. Assign course advisers to students

Chinese course advisers should be assigned to each class to help attend to student's academic problems and carrying them along at the same time. This will help reinforce the teacher-student relationship and promote student's interest in learning. Although the department has started the process, yet there is a need for strict implementation and reinforcement.

Conclusion

Chinese Studies Department is a new and young department in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, with a short history of teaching and learning Chinese just started 5 years ago. This paper does not only investigate the history of the department, the overall situation of teachers and students, classrooms, learning satisfaction, but also analyzes problems about teachers, textbooks, and curriculum that occurred in the Chinese learning process, which finally suggests that the University should strengthen teacher training, choose suitable textbooks and optimize the curriculum. Through this study, the following conclusions were drawn: In learning, most of the students said they like Chinese class and most of them chose

Chinese because of their strong interest in Chinese language and culture; the majority of the students are not satisfied with the teachers teaching style; Most of the students are not satisfied with that the arrangement of Chinese class time; Almost all the students have a positive attitude and both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated towards Chinese learning; Majority of the students support the inclusion of extracurricular cultural activities and interest classes in the department. In teaching, the problems of teachers, teaching materials, shortage of classrooms, classroom teaching, and curriculum need to be strengthened and improved. This study had some limitations, therefore there is a need for further research on teaching and learning in the Department of Chinese Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, especially as regards teachers and teaching strategies.

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