AN ANALYSIS ON THE CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN CHINESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Abstract
Teaching materials used for foreign language learning should be in line with the students' actual learning needs and objectives so as to help the students achieve their objectives for learning such language, and this is the same for Chinese language learning in Nigeria. The research was conducted to analyze whether the current textbooks used in the Nigerian Confucius Institutes can meet the students' learning needs and also help them achieve their learning objectives. The data used for this research was taken from the questionnaires distributed to 188 Nigerian elementary Chinese language students who are studying Chinese language in the Confucius Institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the Confucius Institute of Lagos University, Nigeria, after which a descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data using SPSS. This research analyzed the students' learning needs, goals and difficulties in learning Chinese language. The research found out that the textbook has played a role in improving the learners' abilities and language skills and also help improve their HSK performance. However, there is a certain gap between students' learning needs and the real content of their teaching material and as such does not completely satisfy the learning needs of the students. The textbook did not cover the topics related to Nigerian folklore and culture and there is also no consideration of any of the Nigerian local language in the phonetic teaching content of the textbook currently used as showed by the students' needs analysis. According to the actual needs of students, the researcher suggested a need for the adaptation or revision of the current teaching materials to suit the Nigerian Chinese language students' situation or provide an additional Chinese language textbook that will include topics related to Nigerian folklore and culture. In addition to this, provide auxiliary learning materials, hold more cultural activities, etc. which is hoped will be helpful in the teaching of the Chinese language in Nigeria.
Keywords: Needs analysis, challenges, Chinese language, Nigerian elementary Chinese language students, teaching material

Introduction
Since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and China in 1971, the two countries have cooperated in different areas, especially in the areas of trade, politics and cultural cooperation(Embassy 2007). China is considered one of Nigeria's closest allies and partners. According to Bai (2016), 80% of Nigerians have a positive impression of China and only 10% have a negative impression of China, which makes Nigeria one of the countries regarded as friends of China in the world. The establishment of the Confucius Institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the Confucius Institute of Lagos University in 2004 and 2008 respectively, led to the formal introduction of Chinese language learning and teaching in Nigeria and also became the main channels for Nigerians to understand China and Chinese culture (Li 2012). The two Confucius Institutes mainly focused on Chinese teaching, translation services, and the dissemination of Chinese culture. The existing cultural activities

include cultural month, Chinese Bridge competition, and traditional festival celebrations. Today, the Confucius Institute has language classes for full-time students and adults (Bai 2016). The Confucius Institute of Lagos has 14 Chinese teaching centers, including private primary and secondary schools and public middle schools. In addition to offering Chinese classes in Nnamdi Azikiwe Primary and Middle schools, the Confucius Institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University has also set up more than eight Chinese language teaching centers in different parts of Nigeria.

Although Chinese language learning and teaching in Nigeria has continued to make tremendous progress, however, some areas still needs to be improved, such as the lack of applicability of teaching materials (textbooks), the relative lack of teaching resources, the shortage of Chinese language teachers, students' emphasis on listening, speaking and ignoring reading and writing, students' low Chinese character writing ability and Chinese pronunciation level (Ozioko 2015, Madukasi 2016).

Nigerian Chinese language students' subjective needs and challenges have somewhat not been fully considered in the course of selecting textbooks for Chinese language learning and teaching in Nigeria. Several Chinese teaching materials and textbooks such as "Developing Chinese", "Great Wall Chinese", "New Practical Chinese", "HSK Vocabulary Syllabus", "Boya Chinese", "HSK Standard Course" etc. has been introduced in the Nigerian Confucius Institutes in an attempt to satisfy Nigerian Chinese language students' learning needs, but the limitations embedded within the textbooks such as not considering the characteristics of the mother tongue languages of the Nigerian Chinese language learners which in turn has led to a negative transfer of phonetic habits the learners have formed overtime from speaking their mother tongue into Chinese language learning. If the main purpose of these textbooks are only to help the Nigerian Chinese language students pass their HSK exams so as to gain HSK certificates, then it will only partially satisfy the Chinese language students' needs of gaining HSK certificate without their real life writing, reading and speaking skills actually matching their HSK certificates.

The researcher hopes that the research results of this paper can help the current and future Chinese teachers in Nigeria, whether local teachers or native Chinese teachers, to improve the teaching effect. Through the research of this paper, Chinese teachers can understand whether a single teaching material is suitable for Nigerian primary learners, or whether some auxiliary teaching materials and teaching resources are needed. The results of this study will also inspire teachers on how to deal with the existing textbooks, how to simplify the textbooks so that students can easily understand and teachers can easily teach, which is a win-win situation. Also, the research results of this paper will be helpful to Chinese teachers in other aspects on matters such as the compilation of auxiliary teaching materials, curriculum design, classroom evaluation, and even the formulation of educational policies. Finally, the research results will help to revise the HSK standard course textbook.

Theoretical Background
The research on students' needs analysis has been recognized by many authors in the field of language teaching, they have confirmed the value of needs analysis in the field of foreign language teaching as early as the 20th century. They agree that the research findings will be

of great help to the formulation of teaching syllabus, compilation and adaptation of teaching materials, curriculum arrangement, and teaching principles in teaching practice.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987), divided Needs Analysis into two models, namely, Target needs and Learning needs. Target needs analysis focuses on learners' future language use while learning needs analysis focuses on the process of language learning and the conditions associated with language learning. The two scholars compare learning a second language to a journey, "Target needs analysis can determine our destination and guide us to it like a compass while learning needs analysis is like the route we have to choose in line with the existing transportation (learning conditions), road conditions (learners' knowledge, skills, and learning strategies) and motivation". Target needs require learners to master the knowledge that they need to be able to complete any task successfully given in the target situation while learning objectives require learners to master everything they need to learn a foreign language. Chuanbin (2006) also agreed that needs analysis can be divided into Target needs and learning needs: Target needs focus on learners' wishes (wants), needs (needs), and gaps (lacks); learning needs focuses on the conditions and needs of learners in the learning process.

Brindley (1989) and Robinson (1991) proposed the need analysis model of objective needs and subjective needs. Objective needs include the objective situation of learners (such as learners' current foreign language level, difficulties in language learning, etc.). Subjective needs include learners' cognitive and emotional needs (confidence, attitude, etc.) in language learning. Guo and Wu (2012) believes that only by analyzing the subjective and objective Chinese language learning needs of foreign students can we improve the quality of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Empirical support should be provided from the perspective of foreign students' Chinese language learning needs to solve the practical problems in Chinese teaching for foreign students, such as curriculum, textbook selection, teacher role, classroom form, etc. Tang (2002) believes that needs analysis is a link that must be considered in the analysis and design of English textbooks. He focused on the needs of language learners and introduced the new development of foreign scholars' research and needs analysis. According to Long (2005), Need analysis can be conducted in different sectors or fields; public sector, professional sector, and academic field. Students' need analysis belongs to the academic field.

Research Methodology
Dudley-Evans and John (1998) proposed six main data collection methods for needs analysis, thus: questionnaire survey, analysis of oral and written materials, structured interview, observation, and evaluation. Also, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) pointed out that questionnaires, interviews, observation, informal consultation, and so on are commonly used methods when collecting data for need analysis. Chen (2009), after reviewing need analysis related researches proposed that need analysis should be conducted through interviews, observations, and questionnaires, these methods have been widely used in education, economic and trade, manufacturing, and service researches. More importantly, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) believe that foreign language needs analysis can be carried out in many ways, such as pre document analysis, observation, case study, questionnaire, interview, etc. Since the questionnaire method is the most widely used in the foreign language needs analysis, hence, this paper adopted the questionnaire survey method to collect data for the

research. A questionnaire survey is a kind of quantitative analysis that is generally used to analyze the quantitative characteristics of a certain social phenomenon. The researcher used the questionnaire survey method to analyze the students' personal information, students' learning needs, students' attitude, and style of learning Chinese.

The specific contents of the questionnaire included: (1) Repondents' profile; (2) the Chinese language learning objectives of Nigerian elementary students; (3) the target level of Chinese learning of Nigerian elementary Chinese language students; (4) the difficulties of Nigerian elementary Chinese language students in using and learning Chinese; (5) the Chinese language learning and target needs of Nigerian elementary students. The questionnaire survey was completed by hand filling by 188 respondents who are studying Chinese in the Confucius Institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the Confucius Institute of Lagos University, Nigeria. The data was then collected and analyzed using SPSS (statistical package for Social Science). A descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data (frequency, percentage and cumulative frequency).

Analysis of Findings
The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey of two different schools within the same period of research. The first set of questionnaires were administered to the elementary Chinese language students of the Confucius Institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. A total of 120 questionnaires were sent out and 106 were returned, out of which 93 were valid. The recovery rate was 88.33%, and the validity rate was 77.5%. The second set of questionnaires were administered to the elementary Chinese language students of Lagos Confucius Institute in Nigeria. A total of 110 questionnaires were sent out to the Lagos Confucius Institute, 104 were recovered, 95 were valid, the recovery rate was 94.55%, and the validity rate was 86.36%. A total of 230 questionnaires were sent out to the two Confucius Institutes in Nigeria, 210 were recovered, 188 were valid, the recovery rate was 91.30%, and the validity rate was 81.74%.

This section describes the findings from the questionnaires which were hand filled by 188 respondents on students' needs towards Chinese language learning and teaching material. The data collected from the questionnaires were divided into different aspects including students' purpose of learning, target Chinese language proficiency level to be attained, difficulties in learning the Chinese language, students' needs towards texts, most needed language skills, preferred type of teaching material and favourite way of learning.

1. **An analysis of the learning purpose of students in Nigeria.**
Table 1. The survey results of the learning purpose of elementary students in Nigeria

Question	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
To obtain an HSK certificate	13	6.9	6.9
To study in China	61	32.4	39.4
For tourism	7	3.7	43.1
To understand Chinese culture and Chinese lifestyle	24	12.8	55.9
Help me find a better job	21	11.2	67.0

To gain more knowledge about the world	19	10.1	77.1
To make Chinese friends	2	1.1	78.2
To do business with Chinese people	11	5.9	84.0
To become a Chinese teacher	5	2.7	86.7
To become a translator	22	11.7	98.4
To engage in missionary work	2	1.1	99.5
To become a Chinese actor	1	0.5	**100.0**
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**	

Table 1 describes the various purposes of Nigerian primary Chinese learners in learning Chinese. As shown in the table, the main purpose of learning the Chinese language is due to needs related to studying in China (32.4%) and obtaining an HSK certificate(6.9%). 33.1% of Nigerian students learn the Chinese language for the needs of work and business. 22.9% of Nigerian students learn the Chinese language to understand Chinese culture and also gain more knowledge. Just a small percentage of Nigerian students learn Chinese for the sake of making friends with the Chinese (4.8%). From the above results, it is obvious that Nigerian students have taken the learning of Chinese very seriously as it is seen by them as a means of self-development and acquiring a better future.

2. **Students' target Chinese language proficiency level**
Table 2. The survey results of the Students' target Chinese language proficiency level

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Beginners level	5	2.7
Intermediate level	20	10.6
Advanced level	163	86.7
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows that only five students (2.7%) choose to remain at the beginner's level, 20 students(10.6%) hopeto get to the intermediate level, while a greater number of the students (86.7%) hope to reach the advanced level. This shows that a great number of Nigerian students have high expectations for their target Chinese language proficiency level.

3. **An analysis of the most needed Chinese language skill to improve on by the students**
Table 3. The survey results of the most needed Chinese language skill by elementary students in Nigeria.

Question	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Listening	31	16.5	16.5
Speaking	119	63.3	79.8

Reading	5	2.7	82.4
Writing	13	6.9	89.4
Translation	20	10.6	**100.0**
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**	

Table 3 shows that among the five options: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, most of the students prefer to improve their oral Chinese. A total of 119 people chose this item, accounting for 63.3% of the total number of the respondents.

4. An analysis of the challenges in learning the Chinese language
Table 4. The survey results of Chinese learning challenges of elementary Chinese language students in Nigeria

Question	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Pronunciation	80	42.6	42.6
Vocabulary	10	5.3	47.9
Grammar	33	17.6	65.4
Chinese characters	40	21.3	86.7
Teachers' teaching methods	1	0.5	87.2
Learning materials	2	1.1	88.3
No time to practice my spoken Chinese	10	5.3	93.6
Learning environment	12	6.4	100.0
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**	

The biggest challenge in the process of learning Chinese in Nigeria as shown in table 4 indicates that a total of 80 people believe that their biggest challenge is Chinese pronunciation, accounting for 42.6% of the total number of respondents, followed by Chinese characters and grammar, accounting for 21.3% and 17.6% respectively. Besides, some students are not satisfied with the vocabulary, learning materials, learning environment, speaking time, and teachers' teaching methods. According to the above survey results, we can find that the biggest challenge for Nigerian students in learning Chinese is pronunciation.

Comparing the above findings with the mother tongue (Igbo language) spoken by most of the Nigerian Chinese language students. First, like Chinese, the Igbo language is also tonal. There are four tones in Chinese: one is Yin Ping (一声阴平), the other is Yang Ping (二声阳平), the other is Shang Sheng (三声上声) and the other is Qusheng (四声去声). There are only two tones in the Igbo language, which are almost equivalent to the second tone of Yangping (二声阳平) and fourth tone of Qusheng (四声去声) in Chinese. Generally, Igbo language words can only be distinguished by tone. For example ákwá -"cry/哭", àkwà -"bed/床", àkwá -"egg/鸡蛋" 和 ákwà-"cloth/衣服". Since the tones of Igbo language are similar to the Chinese second tone of Yangping (二声阳平), and the fourth tone of Qusheng (四声去声), it is difficult for Nigerian Chinese learners to distinguish between these two

tones, although they share some similarities the difference lies in the tone's degree of rising and falling. Secondly, some consonants in the Igbo language are very similar to those in Chinese, such as ch /tʃ/ （chineke/God/上帝）, j /dʒ/ (jide/hold/拿) 和sh /ʃ/（Nshiko/crab/螃蟹）and ch [tʂ]（吃/eat）, j [tɕ]（接/recieve）and sh [ʂ']（谁/who）.

Yoruba language which is also the mother tongue of some the Nigerian elementary Chinese language students like the Igbo language is also a tonal language, but the tones are rather categorised into three tones: high, mid, and low (Eme and Uba 2016). These are similar to the Chinese language's Yang Ping (二声阳平), Yin Ping (一声阴平), and Qusheng (四声去声) respectively. A word may have different lexical meanings depending on its sound, just like in Igbo language, examples includes; kó (high) 'build/建', ko (mid) 'sing/唱歌', kò (low) 'reject/拒绝'.

The fact that most Nigerian students might have some difficulties in distinguishing between the differences in pronunciation of the local Nigerian languages and the Chinese language, and also coupled with the fact that the phonetic teaching in HSK standard course does not have a specific content specially designed for the similarities and differences between the Chinese language and the Igbo language and Yoruba language spoken in Nigeria. Although this does not have a direct impact on the HSK performance of the Nigerian elementary Chinese language students, but it does have a direct impact on the language acquisition process of the students, as they would negatively transfer the habit they formed from their mother tongue into Chinese language learning. How well the Nigerian Chinese language students are able to acquire and master the pronunciation details of Chinese language will not just help overcome their challenges related to pronunciation but will also help them improve their most needed Chinese language skill, which is the speaking(oral) skills as illustrated in table 3.

5. **An analysis of students' preferences for texts**.
Table 5.1 The survey results of texts preference of beginner level udents in Nigeria

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Daily life	51	27.1
Social development	37	19.7
Nigerian folklore and culture	29	15.4
Science and technology	3	6.4
Chinese folklore and culture	12	1.6
Chinese folklore and culture, social development and daily life	10	5.3
Social development and Nigerian folklore and culture	13	6.9
Nigerian folklore and culture and Chinese folklore and culture	7	3.8
Science and technology and Nigerian folklore and culture	3	1.6
Daily life and Nigerian folklore and	21	11.1

culture		
Chinese folklore, culture, and science and technology	2	1.1
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**

As for the kind of texts/discourse that Nigerian students want to learn, table 5 shows some text topics chose by the students alone. 51 students chose to study texts related to daily life only; 37 students wanted to study texts related to social development only; 29 students chose Nigerian folklore and culture only; 12 students chose Chinese folklore and culture only, and 3 students chose science and technology-related texts only.

Table 5.2 The survey results of texts preference of junior students in Nigeria in one or more disciplines (chosen alone or with other options)

Question	Frequency
Daily life	82
Nigerian folklore and culture	73
social development	60
Chinese folk custom and culture	31

(extract from table 5.1)

From the table 5.2, a total of 82 people hope to learn texts related to daily life in one or more discipline; 73 people want to learn texts related to Nigerian folklore and culture in one or more discipline; 60 people choose to study the topic related to social development in one or more discipline, and 31 people choose the topic related to Chinese folk custom and culture in one or more discipline.

This shows that Nigerian students hope the topic of their texts will not be limited to only daily life, social development, and Chinese culture as 73 students also want to learn texts related to Nigerian folklore and culture. Based on the above analysis, we believe that the texts in the HSK standard course cannot fully meet the needs of Nigerian students, and it is necessary to add Nigerian folklore and culture-related topics.

6. **An analysis of students' favourite way of learning.**
Table 6. The survey results of students' favourite way of learning

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching materials	47	25.0
Extracurricular reading	16	8.5
Using multimedia	58	30.9
Communicating with Chinese people	20	10.6
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**

Table 6 shows that a total of 47 people, accounting for 25.0% of the total number, expressed their preference for using textbooks. Secondly, 58 (30.9%) people believed that multimedia was the best way to learn Chinese. Thirdly, 20 and 16 people respectively think that the best way to learn Chinese is to communicate with Chinese people.

7. An analysis of the students' preferred type of teaching materials
Table 7. The survey results of the students preferred type of teaching materials

Question	Frequency	Percentage
General Chinese textbook	65	34.6
Business Chinese textbook	12	6.4
Academic Chinese textbooks	13	6.9
Help to practice Chinese skills	73	38.8
Textbooks related to HSK / HSKK	25	13.3
TOTAL	**188**	**100.0**

Table 7 shows that most Nigerian students prefer general Chinese textbooks and textbooks that help them practice Chinese language skills. Few students choose HSK / HSKK related textbooks, academic-related Chinese textbooks, and business Chinese textbooks. According to the survey results, Nigerian students hope to use textbooks not only to help them cope with HSK / HSKK tests but also to help them practice their Chinese language skills.

In the practice section of the HSK standard course, the form of exercises is consistent with the HSK examination. For example, the reading part of HSK level 2 is divided into four parts. The first part is to select the picture that best matches the sentence, the second part is to fill in the correct words or language points, the third part is to indicate if the sentence given is either right or wrong, and the fourth part is to choose the correct answer according to the content of the dialogue. This means that the HSK standard course can only fulfil the student's HSK needs while neglecting other learning needs.

Discussion
From the above findings, it is evident that the HSK standard course has not fully been able to meet all the needs of students in the following aspects:
1. None of the themes of the texts in the HSK standard course is related to Nigerian folklore and culture and the students would want this to be part of the textbook as they are closely related to their immediate environment, and will help them understand the content of the text easier. Examples of such topics includes Nigeria customs and traditions, festivals, etc.
2. There is no consideration or comparison of Nigerian phonetic features in the Chinese language phonetic teaching. Hence, the HSK standard course cannot effectively solve the pronunciation difficulties encountered by learners in learning as some of the students are still confused with the difference between the Chinese pronunciation and some of the similar pronunciation found in Nigerian local language.
3. The textbook is mainly focused on fulfilling the students' HSK needs. The result from the analysis show that only 25 students would want to use HSK/HSKK

textbooks while 73.4% want to use general Chinese textbook and textbooks that will help them practice Chinese skills and not just about passing HSK examinations.

Suggestions

I. Textbook adaptation

（1） Phonetic teaching

When learning a foreign language, to be able to speak a standard and fluent language is the goal of every foreign language learner, and Nigerian Chinese learners are no exception. According to the survey results of "Chinese skills you most want to acquire", 63.3% of Nigerian students hope to acquire spoken language skills most. 42.6% of Nigerian students, pronunciation is their biggest challenge. To solve this problem, Nigeria phonetic teaching can not only use imitation and memorizing method to learn Chinese pronunciation, comparing and contrasting method should also be used in teaching phonetics so as to reduce the confusion caused by Nigerian local language pronunciation.

To improve the practicability and pertinence of this textbook, the editor of this textbook and the Chinese teacher must consider and investigate the characteristics of the Nigerian local language, make a scientific comparison between Chinese pronunciation and Nigerian local language pronunciation and put forward the best method for Nigerian students to learn Chinese phonetics.

（2） Subject matter of text

The real life topics found in the HSK standard course, such as daily life, profession, education, etc. are helpful for students to learn and use relevant language skills, which is one of the purposes of compiling the HSK standard course. At the same time, it is also necessary to add topics related to Nigerian folklore and culture. First, it can meet the needs of students in Chinese learning. Secondly, it can improve the learning interest of Nigerian students. The reason why Nigerian students want to learn about Nigerian folklore and culture-related topics is that such topics are closely related to their real life, and will help them understand the content of the text easier. At present, the competitiveness of Chinese learning in Nigeria is relatively high. Many Nigerian Chinese language learners do not get the opportunity to study in China, so they feel Chinese culture is a little abstract and boring, because they may not be able to experience what they have learned in their lifetime.

II. Confucius Institute and the role of Chinese teachers

Nigerian Confucius Institute and Chinese teachers also need play an important role in meeting the learning needs of Nigerian students.

（1） Provide learning aids

According to the results of the "favorite way to learn Chinese" survey, only 47 students agreed that "Reading Textbooks" is their favorite way to learn Chinese. The survey of students' personal information shows that 109 students are university students, and some with majors other than Chinese language. They are not willing to read the textbooks all the time because their time for learning Chinese language is limited. Confucius Institute and the teachers can provide students with some auxiliary learning materials. Teachers can download relevant videos, files, music, movies, and other materials useful to students from the Internet, and send them to the students' through E-mails, WhatsApp or WeChat groups. Confucius Institute can establish an E-library to help teachers to save and share some online and soft copy teaching materials amongst themselves. This would increase students' interest in

learning, reduce the pressure of learning foreign languages, and improve the level of students' Chinese language skills. Xu Yinghong (2014) also believes that using multimedia in teaching as other methods can improve the general situation of Chinese language teaching in Nigeria.

（2） Hold more cultural exhibitions and exchange activities

To make up for the insufficient time of learning Chinese language by the students, the Confucius Institute in Nigeria can hold more cultural exhibitions and cultural exchange programs. In this activity, students can practice their language ability through talent performance and display. To reduce the workload of teachers, the Institute can ask senior students to help organize these activities, which will provide an avenue for the junior students to communicate and exchange ideas with the advanced students.

The advantages of these cultural activities are to increase students' interest in learning, and to improve students' ability.

Conclusion

The result showed that there is a gap between the HSK standard course, the students' needs, and the challenges faced in Chinese learning. The gap is in the theme of the text because it does not relate or include Nigerian folklore and culture and lacks consideration or inclusion of Nigerian phonetic features in Chinese language phonetic teaching. Finally, through the help of the Confucius Institute and the Chinese language teachers, the teaching materials can be adapted or reviewed to suit the real situation and characteristics of Nigerian students.

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