

PROBLEMS FACING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CHINESE LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is evident that the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Nigeria are faced with series of problems. This work focused primarily on the current problems facing the effective teaching and easy learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey with the application of participant/observer method of investigation. Two types of questionnaires were designed, distributed, and collected by the researchers during second semester of 2017/2018 session at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. The data were elicited from the questionnaires and used for analysis. The problems identified include: lack of learning centers, lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistics environments, and finally high cost of learning fees. At the end, the paper proffered some solutions to the problems by suggesting establishment of more Confucius Institutes, recruiting and training of more teachers, provision of teaching materials and aids, provision of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, provision of language laboratories, establishment of effective exchange programs for language immersion and construction of ‘Chinese village’ in Nigeria, and finally, reduction or removal of learning fees.

Keywords: Teaching, learning, Chinese language, problem, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

An American business magnate, investor and philanthropist, Warren Buffett; who ranked the world’s wealthiest person in 2008 and is widely considered the most successful investor of the 20th century once said, “The 19th century belonged to England, 20th century belonged to the U.S., and the 21st century belongs to China. Invest accordingly”. This once world richest man saw the future of China and gave a timely advice. The advice is to invest accordingly. When the word ‘invest’ is said, what usually comes to mind is money. Yes, it is good to invest money in one business or the other in China but it is not only money you can invest in China. You can invest your time to study Chinese people, culture and language. Your monetary investment will flourish when you first invest your time to understand Chinese people, culture and language. Warren Buffet’s advice is to invest accordingly (in China). This can mean to invest your time to study Chinese language. Jim Rogers of *Worth Magazine* gave a more direct advice when he said, “If the 19th century belonged to Britain, and the 20th century to the United States, then the 21st century will surely belong to China. My advice: make sure your kids learn Chinese”. Since kids

(children) are the future of tomorrow, Jim Rogers' advice is to give the kids keys of tomorrow's investment. The Chinese language is the key to the 21st century investment and career. If 21st century belongs to China, then Chinese language is a vital tool to invest, work, study and live in China.

In today's increasingly close international interaction, language as mankind's most significant tool for communication plays an irreplaceable important role in international exchanges. It is said that the world is a global village. The invention of internet makes the world a closer global village. However, language is an important tool in internet. Without language, the purpose of internet is useless. Human communication, whether in a real community or on the internet; makes use of language. In the past, people made great effort to learn Latin, French and English according to their time of influence and importance, but today Chinese language has become a new growing choice for many people around the world. There is a global or trending language in every century. This language is a product of a super nation of the century. Many centuries ago, the global language was Latin but recent centuries ago, it was French and English. Although English language is still a global language in this century but Chinese language is taking over. This may take a long time but it will surely come to pass if China sustains its economy as the richest nation in the world by GDP. China will soon overtake United States of America as the richest nation in the world by every measurement.

The teaching of Chinese language to foreigners both within and outside China is not a recent phenomenon. Westerners started learning different Chinese languages in the 16th century. The serious study of Chinese language in the West began with the missionaries coming to China during the late 16th century. Among the first were the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. They mastered the language without the aid of any grammar books or dictionaries, and are often viewed as the first Western sinologists. Ruggieri set up a school in Macau, the first school for teaching foreigners Chinese, translated part of the Great Learning into Latin, the first translation of a Confucius classic in any European language, and wrote a religious tract in Chinese, the first Chinese book written by a Westerner. The earliest Chinese grammars were produced by the Spanish Dominican missionaries. In the recent past, there are evidences around the world of non-native speakers who are proficient in Chinese language. Here are some notable non-native speakers of Chinese: Frederick W. Baller, British missionary, linguist, translator, educator and sinologist; Jessica Beinecke, American entertainer and host of online show *OMG Meiyu*; Cuong De, Vietnamese prince; Arif Dirlik, Turkish historian; Wolfram Eberhard, German sociologist; Herbert Hoover, American president; Bernhard Karlgren, Swedish sinologist; Michiko Nishiwaki, Japanese actress; Kevin Rudd, Australian former Prime Minister; Richard Sorge, Soviet spy; and many other too numerous to mention. Today, there are millions of non-native speakers of Chinese around the world.

Although the need to learn foreign languages is almost as old as human history itself, the origins of modern language education are in the study and teaching of Latin in the 17th century. Latin has for many centuries been the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in much of the Western world, but it was displaced by French, Italian, and English

by the end of the 18th century. The study of modern languages did not become part of the curriculum of European schools until the 18th century. The study of Chinese language outside China started first by the neighbouring Asian nations, then the European and American nations and lastly the African nations. The establishment of Confucius Institute in 2004 assists in taking Chinese language to the world. The first Confucius Institute was opened in Seoul, South Korea on 21st November, 2004. Currently, there are more than five hundred Confucius Institutes around the world. There are few Confucius Institutes in Africa and only two in Nigeria.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The People's Republic of China (PRC) on Friday March 7, 2008 opened its first Confucius Institute in Nigeria at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and the second Confucius Institute was established at University of Lagos on October 16, 2009. This means that the study of Chinese language is up to a decade. Both institutes have graduated thousands of students in diploma, certificate and HSK. The Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University is established with the partnership of Xiamen University, China while the Confucius Institute at University of Lagos is established with the partnership of Beijing Institute of Technology, China. Most Confucius Institutes are managed by a foreign director and a local director. The Confucius Institutes are sponsored by Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International), an organization affiliated with China's ministry of Education. This makes the institutes directly under the government of People's Republic of China. Most Confucius institutes operate in co-operation with local host universities and colleges around the world, and financing is shared between Hanban and the host institutions. There are Confucius Classrooms are like branches of Confucius institutes. They operate under Confucius institutes in their localities. There are more than ten Confucius Classrooms in Nigeria.

There is another aspect of Chinese language study in Nigeria besides the Confucius institute. Both Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos have a degree programme in Chinese studies. University of Lagos graduated first set of degree students in 2017 while Nnamdi Azikiwe University graduated its first set of degree students in 2018. At the University of Lagos, students spend two (second and third) years in China while students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University spend no year abroad at the time of this research. This is one of the problems of learning Chinese language in Nigeria. There are some Chinese native teachers and few Chinese non-native teachers in Nigeria. This is another problem in teaching Chinese language in Nigeria. There are many students willing to learn Chinese but no adequate and qualified teacher. This is also a problem of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria. There are many other problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria. We shall discuss them and proffer solutions to them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section is a review of the problems of teaching and learning foreign or second languages in Nigeria. These foreign or second languages include English, French, Arabic, etc but it excludes Chinese language. Chinese language is the newest foreign language in Nigeria. The second section is a review of the problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria.

Kolawole (2015) wrote on the “Problems facing the teaching and learning of French language in colleges of education in Oyo State”. The research was set to examine the problems facing the teaching and learning of French language in the three colleges of education existing presently in Oyo State. The study adopted descriptive survey to collect the data on the problem at hand. Forty participants were involved in the study as a result of the limited number of French students in the colleges. Questionnaires on the teaching and learning of French language were used to gather the data. The result of the research had shown that there were diverse problems such as negligence on the part of the government toward the language, unfavourable mode of admission, joblessness on the part of the French graduates, lack of motivation, attitudes of the parents and some other problems. He recommended that the government should embrace a more positive attitude towards French language learning in the country and also motivate both teachers and students of French language throughout the country.

Urujzian (no date) wrote on the “Issues in English language teaching and learning: problems and prospects”. The paper focused primarily on the current issue militating against the proper teaching and learning of English language in order to bring growth and productivity to the nation. It therefore, examined the problems of teaching English studies at the junior secondary school level, negligence of the teaching of literature in English by the teachers teaching English studies, mastering of the language, reading/comprehension and mother tongue interference. The paper highlighted the importance of English language and what should be incorporated into the contents of the curriculum so as to bring its teaching and learning to international standard for the purpose of productivity to the nation. She finally gave some suggestions or remedies on some of the issues raise so as to enhance the improvement on the usage of the language by the learners in schools. The suggestion are the following: government support language; regular conferences, seminar and workshop; new practical teaching approaches; recruitment of more qualified teachers; and provision of teaching materials.

Gella and Kwaja (2017) wrote on “The problem of teaching French language in secondary schools in Adamawa State: problems and prospects”. The paper examined the problems that hinder effective teaching and learning of French language in secondary schools in Adamawa state. The paper focused on the need for integrating French language into the school curriculum, the government efforts, and the major problems militating against proper teaching and learning of French language. The paper recommended the following: government efforts and positive attitude toward French language, giving French the status of second official language in Nigeria,

making French language compulsory for primary and secondary students, making French language a compulsory art subject for high institution admission.

Obiegbu (2016) wrote on “The challenges of teaching English language in Nigeria”. The paper examined some of the challenges the teachers faced in the classroom ranging from decline in reading culture, lack of adequate attention in the classrooms, cultural and psychological background of the learners, poor motivation of the teachers, lack of exposure to the modern teaching methods and teachers inadequacy to teach effectively. She proposed the following suggestions as a solution to the problems: improvement in reading culture, the employment of more qualified teachers, the use of internet facilities and ICT, availability of adequate resources such as larger classrooms, public address systems, language laboratories and in-service training for teachers.

Adewuyi, Bernard and Adewuyi (2015) wrote on the “Problems of learning foreign languages in colleges of education and universities in Nigeria: a comparative study of English and French languages”. The paper attempted to unveil some areas that serve as barriers to easy and effective learning of French and English languages in colleges of education and universities in Nigeria. The paper identified the following problems: languages in contact, grammatical, semantic, phonological and socio-political problems. The paper concluded by saying that to attain a relatively high level of fluency, there should be a lot of practices in the area of oral speech and spontaneous writing. This demands a lot of effort from both the teachers and the learners. They went further to say that adequate mastery of the foreign languages could be attained if a systematic approach is adopted in the case of Nigeria.

Sirajudeen and Adebisi (2012) wrote on “Teaching Arabic as a second language in Nigeria”. The paper studied the challenges associated with the teaching of Arabic in Nigeria as a foreign language and consequently recommended appropriate interventions in light of the material and human resources required for teaching a second language in a developing country such as Nigeria. At rudimentary level of Arabic studies, majority of the pupils who learn Arabic do so through the non-formal Qua’anic schools. The attendant constraints of lack of a curriculum, haphazard nature of instruction, poor learning environment, lack of adequate teaching and learning aids, the excessive use of the cane to maintain discipline and limited scope of learning largely restricted to the basic literacy skills of reading and writing the Arabic script. The main teaching method in this school is parrot-like repetition and memorization method. The teacher copies the alphabets on pupil’s wooden slates and then employs the choral technique in teaching them. The paper stated that although some students are able to advance their studies through the more organized *madaris*, the totality of instruction at the lower level discourages many potential Arabists who might possess a strong aptitude for language learning but are advertently forced to terminate their studies at this level. In the Nigerian public formal school system, Arabic is not offered in public schools as an independent subject. The weaknesses associated with the teaching of Arabic at the primary level are carried on to the secondary level. This situation has inexorably provided a recipe for deficiencies in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language at the tertiary level. The researchers found out that a combination of poor motivation and labeling produce a

psychological complex among learners of Arabic that not only led to performance but also abandoning their career in Arabic in favour of other competing 'high priority' disciplines after their first degree in Arabic. The paper says that the most major obstacle to effective teaching of Arabic is the gaps which exist in the training of the manpower expected to ensure that teaching Arabic is effective. The lack of qualified professional educators with specialization in teaching Arabic as a foreign language is a critical challenge. In conclusion, the paper recommended the following: government support; establishment of Arabic language village; encouraging the teaching of Arabic in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions; training more qualified Arabic teachers; the use of modern teaching methods with CALL; and provision of teaching materials suitable for Nigerians.

Odinye (2016) published a book in Germany titled "Chinese language in Nigeria: Teaching and learning". This book is a product of his doctorate degree thesis at Xiamen University, China in 2013. The work is the first detailed research on Chinese language teaching and learning in Nigeria. The thesis has five research questions which centered on the learners' language attitude, motivation and proficiency, teachers' beliefs, challenges in Chinese language teaching and learning. He found out that Nigerian learners of Chinese language have positive attitude and were extrinsically motivated. It was also found out that Nigerian learners of Chinese language have above average in the HSK proficiency test. Nigerian Chinese language teachers have similar and common beliefs in foreign language teaching and learning. The research equally identified some challenges facing the teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria which shortage of Chinese language teaching/learning centers, lack of adequate and qualified teachers, short duration of stay for volunteer teachers and lack of local Chinese teachers. The thesis gave many recommendations to Hanban, Nigerian universities, Nigerian Confucius institutes and Classrooms, and the Nigerian government. Some of the recommendations include: send more teachers from China, training more local Chinese teachers, increase the duration of stay for volunteer teachers up to two years, establish more Confucius institutes in Nigeria, make teaching Chinese language free unless for certificate and diploma programmes, maintain a cordial relation with the second management, make Chinese language available for primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The field of second language acquisition draws upon theoretical frameworks from many other fields. The following of related literature draws upon linguists as well as psychologists, psycholinguists and other theorists whose knowledge paves way towards a better understanding of first and second language acquisitions. Whether the complexity of second language learning can be or needs to be singled into one theory has been stated by Ellis (1994:689-690), "No doubt, over time the pictures provided by different sides of the prime will become clearer, but whether this will lead to single, unifying account of L₂ acquisition, as some believe is necessary, remains to be seen". Although a single explanation of L₂ acquisition could theoretically facilitate L₂ pedagogy, the theories by which a second language is learned by adults (Breen 1985; Long 1993;

Gregg 1993; Elli 1994; Lantolf 1996; Block 1996) suggest that it is yet too early or simply too complex to formulate a single account of L₂ learning.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, theorizing about SLL was still very much an adjunct to the practical business of language teaching. However, the idea that language teaching methods had to be justified in terms of an underlying theory was well-established, since that pedagogic reform movement of the late 19th century at least. The writings of language teaching experts in the 1950s and 1960s include serious considerations of learning theory, as preliminaries to their practical recommendations (Lado 1964; Rivers 1968). By the mid-1980s, SLL research was no longer subordinate to the immediate practical requirements of curriculum planning and language pedagogy. Instead, it had matured into a much more autonomous field of inquiry, encompassing a number of substantial programmes of research with their descriptive theoretical orientations and methodologies (Methcell and Myles, 2004).

Early studies on L₂ acquisition in the 1950s and 1960s were mainly based on the assumptions of the Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypothesis according to which difficulties that L₂ learners face are related to differences between the L₁ and L₂. It was assumed that by comparing the linguistic systems of the learner's L₁ and L₂, researchers and teachers would be able to predict the areas of difficulty in L₂ acquisition and this would ultimately lead to more effective language methodology. This main thrust of the Contrastive Analysis model is rooted in the dominant psychological and linguistics frameworks of the time, namely Behaviourism and Structuralism. The L₂ learner was assumed to replace his or her L₁ habit with new habits by responding to stimuli and receiving feedback on the use of L₂ constructions. The primary mechanisms of language learning were memorization, repetition and practice of correct responses, which ultimately led to the rise of the Audiolingual Method in language teaching. It was considered that when students became aware of structural differences between languages, the teacher could focus on their errors and help them overcome the difficulties.

The linguistics theoretical approach continued to be concerned with an adequate description of interlanguage as well as its explanation. That is, scholars in this camp focused on the nature of the learner's internal mental representation and what constrained it. A central tenet of this approach is that language is special. By special, these scholars meant that language is uniquely human, is encapsulated in its own module in the mind or brain, and comes equipped from birth with a set of language-specific constraints called Universal Grammar. Thus, acquisition is a particular kind of experience for human's data from the outside world. The theory of Universal Grammar or UG was developed by Chomsky as an explanation for language acquisition. Universal Grammar relates to the brain, in that brain is considered at birth to have a structure called the 'Language Acquisition Device' or LAD (Macaro 2003; Sharpe 2001; Johnson 2004). Chomsky argued his concept of LAD that children were born with the facilities to learn a language (Sharpe 2001; White 1989). Chomsky believed that children could produce language without having natural conversations with others. He also stated that children and adults can produce and understand sentences they have never heard before (White 1989; Sharpe 2001). This device allows children to sort the input that they receive, the language. This theory states that

children use this Universal Grammar regardless of their native language (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Mitchell and Myles 2003).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a descriptive survey with the application of participant/observer method of investigation. The study benefitted from the teaching and administrative experiences of the researcher at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. At the time of carrying out the research, the researcher was a senior lecturer and adjunct senior lecturer at the above universities respectively. He was the pioneer acting director and later deputy director of the Confucius institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. He studied Chinese language, culture and linguistics at Beijing Foreign Studies University and Xiamen University, China. The researcher has spent more than five years in China. He has more than a decade of teaching experience in Chinese language and culture. He is a pioneer in Chinese language education in Nigeria.

Data collection in second language research is multidimensional. There is no single prescribed elicitation measure, nor is there a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ elicitation measure. The choice of one measure over another is highly dependent on the research question asked and may also be related to the theoretical framework within which research is conducted (Mackey and Gass, 2005). One of the most common methods of data collection in second language research is the use of questionnaire. The popularity of questionnaire is due to the fact that they are easy to construct, extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable (Dornyei, 2003). Brown (2001) defines questionnaire as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers”. In addition to different varieties of questionnaires, two types of questionnaires are popular: open-ended and closed-ended. An open-ended questionnaire allows participants to answer in any manner while closed-ended questionnaire does not allow the participants to answer in any manner. In this type, the researcher determines the possible answers. This study employed the use of open-ended questionnaire to elicit information from the participants – teachers and learners. This type is chosen because it allows the participants to express their thoughts and ideas in their own way. There were two questionnaires. One was designed for the teachers and another for the students (learners). The teachers’ questionnaire was intended to elicit the problems facing teachers and teaching of Chinese language in Nigeria. The students’ questionnaire was designed to collect data on the problems facing learners and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria.

One hundred (200) students’ questionnaires and ten (20) teachers’ questionnaires were distributed to the students and teachers of Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos respectively. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher during second semester of 2017/2018 session. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) questionnaires (eighty-eight (88) students’ questionnaires and five (5) teachers’ questionnaires from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and eighty-one (81) students’ questionnaires and six (6) teachers’ questionnaires

from University of Lagos) were returned and used for the study. The data were elicited from the questionnaires according to two topics: problems facing the teachers and teaching of Chinese language in Nigeria and the problems facing the learners and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. It was found from the data that the teaching and learning problems are similar except one or two. Therefore, they are grouped into one: problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria.

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CHINESE LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

Lack of learning centers (Confucius Institutes)

The popularity of Chinese language learning has increase in recent years across Africa. Evidence suggests ambitious young Africans are increasingly inclined to take up Mandarin as a way to land a dream in China or benefit from China's growing influence on the continent (Einashe, 2018). The learning of Chinese language in Africa is motivated by the offer of scholarship by the Hanban or Chinese government. Heever (2017) says that "China's growing scholarship program is motivation enough for students...Recent data shows a remarkable spike in the number of African students studying in China, from just 2,000 in 2003, to almost 50,000 in 2015, whether on scholarships or their own steam". Mandarin Chinese is fast gaining ground in Africa and might be a threat to former colonial masters' languages like English and French. Heever (2017) thus states, "China's economic success is its most potent public diplomacy tool in Africa where ambitious Africans increasingly view Mandarin as a fast track to their own success".

It is a little difficult to say exactly how many Confucius institutes around the world. This is because of varying figures from different bodies. According to Hanban, there are fifty-four (54) Confucius institutes in Africa but Statista says there are only forty-eight (48) Confucius institutes in Africa. Heever (2017) does not give exact figure. He states there are "over forty (40) of them in Africa". The same confusion exists with the number of Confucius institutes in the United States. Hanban says there are one hundred and ten (110) Confucius institutes in the United States but National Association of Scholars (NAS) counts a total of one hundred and seven (107). It means that Hanban has higher or highest figure in terms of number of Confucius institutes around the world. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, there are only two (2) Confucius institutes at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos with some Confucius classrooms. These Confucius institutes and Confucius classrooms are located at the southern part of Nigeria. There is no Confucius institute at the northern part of Nigeria. Nigeria has up two hundred million population and most of them are young people. There are few private foreign languages learning centers in Nigeria that offer Chinese language. Many people want to learn Chinese language but there are no adequate learning centers. The few available learning centers have no adequate qualified teachers.

Lack of qualified teachers

It is said that teaching is a noble profession and a divine calling. Teaching has been defined and described by different scholars. Shulman (1987) as cited in Erbay et'al (2014) sees teaching as one of the most difficult profession as teachers are supposed to be familiar with a great number of issues. Teaching in general is difficult but teaching a language, especially to foreigners, is more difficult. Harmer (2007) as cited in Erbay et'al (2014) argues that teaching a language is a demanding activity and could be categorized as both a science and art. If teaching a language is difficult and demanding, then teachers' qualifications are very important. Dincer et'al (2013) say that the quality of education is associated with teacher qualifications. However, there is a lack of qualified language teachers around the world. Chinese language is not an exception.

The harvest of Chinese language learning in Nigeria is much but the harvesters (teachers) are very few. There is a high demand of learning Chinese language in Nigeria but there is a lack of adequate teachers. The introduction of Chinese language through the establishment of Confucius institutes in Nigeria is a decade ago. Most of the teachers are native Chinese. There are about ten Nigerian Chinese language teachers at the time of conducting the research. The native Chinese teachers hardly stay up to three to five years before traveling back to China. Some of them, like the volunteer teachers, stay just one or two years. Some of the native Chinese teachers are not qualified to teach Chinese as a foreign language. Some the teachers have no linguistic background. Some are still undergraduate or postgraduate students with no teaching experience. The Nigerian Chinese teachers are not without shortcomings. Some of them have no linguistic background and teaching experience. Some of them do not have a degree in Chinese language.

Lack of teaching materials and aids

Teaching material is a material used by a teacher to supplement classroom instruction or to stimulate the interest of students while teaching aid is an object (such as a book, picture, or map) or device (such as a DVD or computer) used by a teacher to enhance or enliven classroom instruction. Teaching materials and aids have a basic instructional viewpoint, approach, method, and content, including which provide linguistic and cultural knowledge. Jolly and Bolitho (1989) say that teaching "materials should also be contextualized to the experiences, realities and first languages of the learners. An important part of this involves awareness on the part of the teachers-designer of the 'socio-cultural appropriacy' of things such as the designer's own style of presenting material, of arranging groups, and so on". The teaching materials particularly books should be appropriate and suitable for the learners. Teaching materials should be flexible, alluring in terms of appearance, user friendliness and durability. There is a lack of adequate Chinese language teaching materials and aids in Nigeria. The significance of teaching materials cannot be overemphasized. Allwright (1990) says that teaching "materials should teach students to learn, that they should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/learning, and that they should give teachers rationales for what they do".

Lack of ICTs for language teaching and learning

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is another/extensional term for Information Technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications (Murray, 2011) and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, which enables users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information (FOLDOC, 2008). The term Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) includes technologies in which the computer plays a central role, that is, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the internet, and variety of generic computer application (Fitzparick and Davies, 2002). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used in almost all fields of life, including education. In education, the use of ICT has been incorporated in curriculum and classroom. The use of ICT in education has recently started to appeal the potential and important progress in language teaching and learning. The use of ICT plays important role in the language teaching and learning. Hartoyo (2008) states, “a computer is a tool and medium that facilitates people in learning a language, although the effectiveness of learning depends totally on the users”. Some language experts and practitioners in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) support the use of ICT in language learning to improve efficiency and effectiveness of learning that can improve the quality of the language studied. Computer-assisted language learning is defined by Levy (1997:1) as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning.” Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is becoming the latest language teaching method. Students especially the young learners learn faster with the use of ICT. Dale (2014) say, “Young people live their lives through technology: they are the web generation and they are hungry for more. Our challenge is to channel the natural enthusiasm our pupils have for ICT by using it in their everyday lives and embed it purposefully into the foreign languages (MFL) classroom”. Most schools in Nigeria have no ICT to facilitate the teacher to teach the students in the classroom. The ones that have ICT are not effective and reliable because of no or poor electricity supply. The same problem is experienced at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos.

Lack of language laboratories

The language laboratory is an audio or audio-visual installation used as an aid modern language teaching. In the 1950s up until the 1990s, they were tape-based systems using reel to reel or cassette. Currently, the use of multimedia computers is popular. The advent of affordable multimedia computers in the late 1990s led to a resurgence and transformation of the language laboratory with software and hard drives in place of reels of analogue tape. In the 1990s new digital, hybrid computer based systems allowed extended functionality, in terms of better ‘management’ of student/teacher audio with some levels of internet and video formats. The content that is now used in the new language laboratories is much richer and self authored or free: now not just audio, but video, flash based games, internet, etc and the speed and variety of delivery of media from teacher to student, student to teacher, is much quicker and therefore much more engaging for both teacher and student. The method and purpose of ordinary language laboratory and digital language laboratory are similar. They are still teacher-controlled systems connected to a number of student booths, containing a student’s control mechanism and a

headset with a microphone. A software-only language laboratory is different from them. A software-only language laboratory can be located in one room, from room-to-room or campus-to-campus. Language laboratory provides equal opportunity to all the students to hear the instructor irrespective of place where they are seated. With language laboratory, there is less miscommunication because of direct nature of the sound transmission. Language laboratory also provides the privacy that encourages the shy students to speak without any hesitation. Another usefulness or importance of language laboratory is that the teacher/instructor can speak to individual or group of students in privacy without interrupting rest of the class. Again, with language laboratory, attention on subject is increased resulting in better retention of the concepts. Language laboratory develops the listening and communication skills, since they hear correct pronunciation through their headphones. The language laboratory brings variety in teaching learning process instead of boring verbal centered teaching. Also, with language laboratory, the students can learn the lesson at their own pace thus allowing the classroom as student-centered approach (Leon, 1962; Roby, 2004; Singh, 2013; Hmoud, 2014). The importance of modern language laboratory cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, there is no modern language laboratory at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. The ones they have are not well equipped.

Lack of linguistic environments

The environmentalist theories of learning hold that an organism's nurture or experience, are of more important to development than its nature, or innate contributions. A foreign language or second language is usually learned but to some degree may also be acquired or 'picked up' depending on the environmental setting and the input received by the second-language learner. We can say that some people learn a language naturally without classroom instruction. This is not to say that classroom instruction is useless but formal (classroom) instruction is rarely a sufficient condition for learning (Wang, 2009). The linguistic environment for language acquisition is very important. What hinders students from learning foreign language and communicate with native speakers is the problem of non linguistics environment for foreign language acquisition. Nigerian learners of Chinese language have few opportunities to communicate with native speakers in Nigeria. What they need is language immersion program within the country or abroad. Matusky (no date) defines language immersion as "a teaching method whereby the student is exposed to the nonnative language (L₂) at a high consistency". Students will not only have L₂ as a class, but they will also have other non language classes taught in that second language. Learning a second language is a difficult task, and the learner must often be exposed to that language in order to truly absorb it. Language immersion programs in school is a great way to expose students to that new language, since being immersed throughout the day (month or year) aids in absorption of the language. University of language has a two year language immersion program in China for their students while Nnamdi Azikiwe University is yet to start.

High cost of learning fees

Before we discuss the fees being charged by the Confucius Institutes in Nigeria, let us first know what Confucius Institute is. Sahlins (2013) states that a “Confucius Institute is a non-profit public educational organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China”, whose aim is to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges (Penn, 2014 & Mattis, 2012). According to the Confucius Institute Headquarters,

“As China’s economy and exchanges with the world have seen rapid growth, there has also been a sharp increase in the world’s demand for Chinese learning. Benefiting from the UK, France, Germany and Spain’s experience in promoting their national languages, China began its own exploration through establishing non-profit public institutions which aim to promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries in 2004: these were given the name the Confucius Institute”

In other words, a Confucius institute is an educational non-profit organization set up by the Chinese government to promote, propagate and teach Chinese language and culture abroad. Our concern in the above definition of a Confucius institute is the phrase “non-profit organization”. It means that it is a non-business entity or nonprofit institution. However, some Confucius institutes charge money for teaching or other activities or services. According to Wikipedia, the Confucius Institute program, which began establishing centers for Chinese language instruction in 2004, has been the subject of criticisms, concerns, and controversies during its international expansion. Many such concerns stem from the Confucius Institute’s relationship to Chinese Communist Party authorities. Additional concerns have arisen over the institutes’ financial and academic viability, teaching quality, and relations with Chinese partner universities (Starr, 2009).

Students learning Chinese language in Nigeria complain bitterly of high cost of learning Chinese language. Both the Confucius Institutes at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos charge school or teaching fees. Students of the universities pay between 20,000 to 30,000 naira while students from outside the universities pay between 30,000 to 50,000 naira. This is contrary to the tenets of establishing the Confucius Institute as a non-profit organization. This money is paid per semester which means that a student from either of the university pays between 40,000 to 60,000 naira while a student from outside of the universities pays between 60,000 to 100,000 naira. This is more than the average federal university school fee in Nigeria. Most federal universities in Nigeria charge between 15,000 to 30,000 naira per year.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS

In the course of the research, we have identified seven major problems facing teaching and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria through the use of questionnaires and researcher’s observation and experiences. These identified problems are as follow: 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. After identification of the problems, we will try to proffer solutions to the problems. First, Chinese government through Hanban should establish more learning centers (Confucius Institutes) around Nigeria. Nigeria needs at least more five Confucius Institutes, that is one Confucius Institute at every senatorial zone. Second, again Chinese government through Hanban should recruit more qualified teachers, both native and non-native. Hanban should train more non-native Chinese language teachers. Also, Hanban should extend the teachers' duration of stay to five years. Third, Hanban should provide more teaching and learning materials and aids. These include printed books, electronic books and devices, pictorials, maps, dictionaries, etc. These materials and aids should be tailored for Nigerian's learners of Chinese language. Hanban should also encourage non-native Chinese language teachers to write text books suitable for Nigerian learners. Fourth, Hanban in collaboration with host universities and schools should provide ICTs for teaching and learning of Chinese language. These include desktops, laptops, projectors, power supply, sound system, internet, etc. Fifth, again Hanban in collaboration with host universities and schools should provide language laboratories for teaching and learning Chinese language. Both teachers and learners should be trained on how to use the language laboratory for effective teaching and learning. Sixth, Chinese government should provide effective exchange programs for language immersion. Governments of China and Nigeria should work towards providing a 'Chinese village' in Nigeria. Finally, the cost for learning Chinese language should be reduced or removed (subsidized). Many students are discouraged from learning Chinese language because of the high cost of learning fee. More students will be motivated by free Chinese classes and scholarships.

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified seven major problems facing the teaching and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. The problems identified include: lack of learning centers, lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistics environments, and finally high cost of learning fees. It has suggested some solutions to tackle the problem. If these suggestions are taken into consideration by the affected bodies and organizations like the Chinese government, Hanban, and host universities, then it will not be long before "Ni hao" becomes the new "Hello" used by Nigerians across the nation.

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