



## **Acceptability of Chinese language education in public primary and secondary schools in Nigerian**

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### **Abstract**

The importance of language, as a means of communication, is clearly evident in Chinese and Nigerian bilateral engagements. Understanding and mastery of each other's language and culture have become inevitably important. The research explored the acceptability of Chinese language teaching and learning in public primary and secondary schools. This objective was investigated using a comprehensive method of documentary review and interviews. The findings of the study show that, overall, Nigerians have a positive view of Chinese language teaching and learning in public primary and secondary schools as a foreign language in the country. They favored the idea of teaching and learning of Chinese language in primary and secondary school. However, they expressed some concerns that need consideration. The study results were discussed and limitations outlined, and offered recommendations for implementing Chinese language teaching and learning as a foreign language in Nigerian public primary and secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Chinese language acceptability, teaching and learning, language adoption policy

### **1. Introduction**

According to the Oxford dictionary, acceptability refers to *satisfactoriness by virtue of conforming to approved standards*. In his work "Acceptability in Context", VanDijk, (1977) [37] noted that in an accepting situation, there exists a serious possibility that the thing offered may be refused or rejected. However, there is always a reason behind the decision to accept or refuse. These reasons, according to Van Dijk, (1977) [37] are based on our evaluation of the object(s) offered with respect to the chance that its acceptance realizes or continues a desired state of affairs. With the above definitions we can boldly state that acceptance of foreign languages like English, French and Arabic to be taught in public primary and secondary schools as stipulated in the national education policy in Nigeria have been well received. Thus, these languages enjoy considerable degree of acceptability among the Nigerian public. On the strength of English as a foreign language in Nigeria, Ogunmodimu (2015) [22] believes that, English canonizes the nation's history and law, and that it is Nigeria's literature, archival and library language which is part and parcel of the nation's life and not as a mere colonial tool. Additionally, there are other foreign languages like Japanese, Spanish, German, Swahili, and Chinese, etc. whose speakers reside in the country.

Nonetheless, most of these languages have not been officially adopted for teaching and learning in education policy of the nation. However, with the rising interest of policy makers in Chinese language as has been demonstrated by the adoption of the teaching and learning of the language in some Nigerian states including Lagos, Ogun and Calabar, the assessment of the language's acceptability among the consuming public is pertinent. The present study samples the views of Nigerians towards Chinese language teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. In addition, the study explores ways the findings contained in this study could be useful in policy

development on Chinese language adoption as a foreign language in Nigeria. This topic is crucial for a multilingual country like Nigeria which actually do not have a separate language policy (Akinnaso,1990; Kaplan and Baldauf, 2007 vol.2:219) [11, 12] to address its linguistic challenges but rely on English language against the local languages to promote national unity (1977; Ogunmodimu, 2015) [22]. In addition, it will also serve as an important preliminary study for Nigerian policy makers on how best to appropriate the opportunities within Nigeria-China cooperation for the need of the Nigerian people.

### **2. Theoretical Background**

Nigeria is a multilingual country consisting of over 450 languages (Kaplan and baldauf, 2007) [12]. However, of the official languages recognized in the national policy in education (henceforth, NPE), English is highly promoted by the federal government due to its neutrality and the cohesive role it plays in the national unity (1977; Akinnaso, 1990; Shaibu, 2013; Ogunmodimu, 2015) [11, 28, 22]. The NPE made English a subject and the medium of instruction of whatever is to be learned from the fourth year of primary education till the tertiary level, while French is taught as a subject. On the other hand, Arabic which is predominately taught in schools in the northern Nigeria owing to Islam's influence in the region, is recognized as well. Lateef and Usman (2014) [36] observed that, it is not taught as a separate course on its own but as part of Islamic studies in primary and secondary school. The primary or basic education is the first form of education process which a child undergoes to prepare for other levels. It is the foundation upon which other education structures of an individual are built, as such it's very vital in the life of an individual, especially a child. The primary education ushers in the secondary level, and thereafter, the tertiary. As Musa (2012) [21] noted, the core objectives of

primary education in Nigeria, are the universality of access and quality in the delivery. Other objectives include, inculcating in the school children permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. Such permanent literacy according to (1977) is more easily obtained for everybody in their mother tongues of the people than in a foreign language. By these, we mean the native languages are also subjects of learning within the formal educational process and also the media of learning for all other subjects studied at this stage. This shows the importance of language as a tool in education and as an important component of culture, values, norms and beliefs.

The purpose of pre-primary education shall be to: (a) effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; (b) prepare the child for the primary level of education; (c) provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc); (d) inculcate social norms; (e) inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc; (f) develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit; (g) learn good habits, especially good health habits; and (h) teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colors, shapes, forms, etc, through play (NPE,2004:11). The mother tongue will be the medium of instruction for the first three years of the primary education while English medium starts from the fourth year. This implies that early literacy in mother tongue education or the language of the immediate community (any of the major local languages; Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba) helps to set the tone for the child to be used to the habits or culture of his or her immediate environment, at the same time it helps in the easing of learning difficulties of the child. However, it is not fully in practice as Bamgbose (2004) <sup>[5]</sup> noted: *the limited regulatory influence of the government, the middle income earners who prefer English medium to Nigerian languages and proprietors of pre-primary schools, who determine the language of instruction policy, bow to the wishes of the parents, since their aim is to maximize profits through higher enrolment, as such it becomes important for government to pay critical attention to this area.* As English continues to wield its influence in the country, there are other foreign languages in Nigeria which have not been given statutory recognition by the NPE, but, whose speakers inhabit Nigeria as stated by Mba (2012) <sup>[20]</sup>, where he referred to all foreign languages both recognized and non-recognized in the NPE as the languages in Nigeria, they include Chinese, Japanese, Fante, Zulu, Ewe, Swahili.

Chinese language being the most prominent one and the subject of discussion here have been on spread both in Africa and around the world through the Chinese language organ known as Confucius institute supported by HANBAN. The approach adopted in the spread of Chinese language follows the path of cultural diplomacy through which countries promote their arts, culture, music, education and language. The spread of Chinese language has been linked to their socio-economic impact around the world. In a globalized economy, the need to break the language barrier became important and the Chinese government began the spread of Chinese language. In 2004, the Chinese government established the Confucius institute overseen by the office of Chinese Language Council International (HANBAN) headquartered in Beijing. By 2017, there were 512 Confucius institutes and 1076 Confucius classrooms established in 142 countries(regions) around the world (China Daily). In 2005,

Africa's first Confucius institute was established in Kenya in East Africa. In 2008, under the supervision of Hanban, the first Confucius institute was established at Nnamdi Azikiwe University awka with affiliation to Xiamen University in china. While the second institute was established in 2009 at Lagos state University (Li, 2012; Ozioko, 2016; Mmaduka, 2016; Edeh & Wang, 2018) <sup>[25, 9]</sup>. Following the demand to deepen cooperation between Nigeria and china, the Chinese embassy in 2016, opened a Chinese learning center in Abuja as a sister institute of Nnamdi Azikiwe with affiliation to Xiamen University in China. The institute also set up professional degrees to train and cultivate specialized talents that will foster the teaching and spread of Chinese language as a second or foreign language abroad. For instance, students obtain master's degree and graduate certificate of Chinese international education (Master of teaching Chinese to speakers of other language (MTC SOL) to engage in Chinese teaching abroad.

Chinese language teaching in Nigeria officially began with the establishment of the two Confucius institutes located at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in the east and University of Lagos in the western part of Nigeria and in 2013. Lagos state became the first to adopt Chinese language into the curriculum of public primary and secondary schools. Although, Chinese language is yet to be officially recognized by the national policy in education, its spread has been significant among Nigerian states who further included the language in their curriculum owing to its perceived economic potential. However, teaching and learning of Chinese language in public primary and secondary school is not peculiar to Nigerian states alone, some African countries like Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Tanzania (Oluka, 2013; lily, 2015; Laura, 2015; Ludovick, 2016) <sup>[3, 23, 17, 14, 18]</sup> have made this bold move with the same reason of global economic trends and the rise of china as a world economic power. On the other hand, western countries like United States of America and UK encourage the learning and teaching of Chinese language in their primary and secondary schools. According to report on Xinhuanet (2017) <sup>[36]</sup>, except south Dakota, all states in US offers Chinese in primary and secondary schools. In the same report, Dr Dan Davidson, the president of American councils for international education read out the national K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report which shows that a total of 10.6 million U.S. students ranging from kindergarten to grade 12 are studying a world language, making up approximately 20 percent of U.S. school children. Among them, as many as 227,086 students have enrolled in Chinese language courses, falling behind 7.36 million students in Spanish, 1.29 million in French and nearly 331,000 in German language courses.

In the UK, a mandarin Chinese teacher Xiao (2017) <sup>[37]</sup> stated that schools in UK make the decision to introduce mandarin because they want to give their students an opportunity to learn another rich language and culture. A report by the "British Association for Chinese Studies" shows that there has been a significant increase in the teaching of Chinese in schools. In 2005, only 7-8% of state secondary schools were offering Chinese. While by 2016 that number went up to 13%, alongside 46% of independent schools (CfBT Languages Trends 2015/16). The number of motivations that have informed the spread of Chinese Language Education in several developed and developing countries are as numerous as the number of countries that adopt it. With the increasing trend and currency of Chinese Language Education in

Nigeria, it is important to assess public acceptability of the penetration of Chinese language and for what reasons. In this respect, this study serves as preliminary enquiry into the levels of acceptability of Chinese language in Nigeria.

**3. Methods**

This research followed an interview guide and investigated the different opinions of Nigerians within and outside the country towards Chinese language teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. Further quizzed their support on the possibility of granting statutory recognition to Chinese language education in Nigeria alongside English, French, and Arabic. A sample of 300 persons which includes students, teachers, policy makers and other professionals in Nigeria were randomly selected for interview. All the data were transcribed for content generation and interpretations. The questions adopted to construct the interview guide for the Chinese language acceptability assessment in Nigeria were adapted from Riitta & Sirpa (2007). The final questions on the guide were 30, and composed of three parts: Part one gathered Personal Information of the respondents and language skills (question 1-6 and 7-15); in part two, respondents responded to items on Chinese language education (16 - 23); and part three centered on the social-linguistic information on global view of Chinese language (23-30).

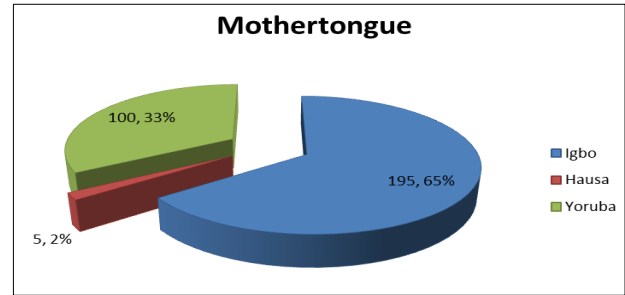
**4. Results**

The study results are reported in tables and graphs descriptively in the following sections. These methods of results presentation are employed to offer intuitive sense of the underlying patterns captured by the data. Of 300 total respondents, 200 (66.7%) comprised of females and 100 (33.3%) males with a mean age of 1.5 years (standard deviation =.76065). Thirty three (33) constituting (11%) of the respondents have completed their secondary education, 200 (66.7%) have completed undergraduate level of education, 52 (17.3%) have completed graduate level, and 15 (5.0%) have completed postgraduate level. On occupational level, 102 (34.0%) respondents were students, 62 (20.7%) were teachers, 121(40.3%) were civil servants and 15(5.0%) were diplomats. The table below shows the distribution of the respondents' language of basic education.

**Table 2:** What was the language of your basic education?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	173	57.7	57.7	57.7
	Arabic	43	14.3	14.3	72.0
	Mother tongue	81	27.0	27.0	99.0
	French	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

From table 2: It is obvious from the tabular distribution above that, English language is predominantly employed in our basic education in Nigeria, and this is followed by indigenous languages (mother tongues). This distribution strongly indicates the power of English language in the fabric of the Nigerian society. That notwithstanding, the native languages at the basic educational level play not less of a role too.



**Fig 1:** What is your mother tongue?

Figure 1. Presents the dominant mother tongue of the respondents. Igbo appears to be the most widely spoken or employed native languages at the basic education level. This assessment is inclusive in view of the size of the data contained in this study.

From question 7-15 we gathered information on language skills of the respondents. Sixty-three (63) constituting (21.0%) of the respondents stated in the interview that they are monolingual, with 143 (47.7%) representing bilingual and 94 (31.3%) being multilingual. We also gathered information on the factors that contributed to the bi-or multilingual situation of the respondents. from the study, 142 (47.3%) attributed their linguistic states to their parents, 49 (16.3%) of the respondents believed it is as a result of relationships (friendship, marriage, etc), 99 (33.0%) of the respondents picked time abroad and 10 (3.3%) selected two of the following reasons: education, work, hobbies, friends, and travel respectively as the factors that contribute to their bi or multilingualism. When asked for their interest in learning Chinese language, 263 (87.7%) of the respondents indicated to be *much interested*, 33(11.0%) was just *interested* and 4(1.3%) were *not interested* in learning Chinese language. The respondent's motivation towards learning Chinese language were indicated as follows; 3(1.0%) want to become Chinese teachers, 195(65.0%) aim at furthering their studies through scholarship in China, 2(0.7%) chose business purposes and 100 (33.3%) chose employment opportunity as their motivation behind learning Chinese language.

We also collected information on the estimated period the respondents have studied Chinese, we stated that the study here includes any form of institutional education and self-study. One ninety-five (195) constituting (65.0%) of the respondents selected that they have not studied Chinese at all, 99 (33.0%) selected less than one year, 6 (2%) with each pair selecting one to two years, three to five year, six to ten years respectively, as period they have studied Chinese. The respondents were asked how they learned their Chinese, 200 (66.7%) indicated through Chinese lessons while 100 (33.3%) indicated outside the classroom. To determine how they perceive their language skills, they were asked to indicate areas where they feel their Chinese language skills are inadequate. Two hundred and twenty-five (225) constituting (75.0%) chose when reading in Chinese, 12 (4.0%) chose when writing in Chinese, 49 (16.3%) chose when making call in Chinese, 5 (1.7%) chose when discussing with a native speaker, while 9(3.0%) chose when discussing with non- native speaker. They were asked to describe their Chinese skills and 186 (62.0%) felt that they

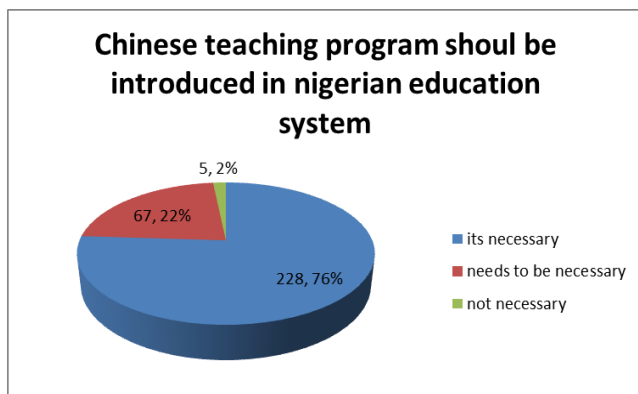
know Chinese better than average Nigerians, 10.3% felt they know Chinese as well as a native speaker, 100(33.3%) want to learn more Chinese, 5(1.7%) are proud of their Chinese skills, 4(1.3%) are ashamed of their Chinese skills, and 4(1.3%) felt they know Chinese well enough. In other to determine how useful their Chinese skills are to them, they were asked the following question as part of the personal information survey, where do you use Chinese the most? 195(65.0%) of the respondents selected school or in their study, 3(1.0%) selected their free time, 100(33.3%) selected at work, while 2(0.7%) said they don't use Chinese.

The second part of the questions on the interview guide were geared towards Chinese language teaching in Nigeria and the respondents were allowed as usual to select the options that best suit their personal opinions. The following questions were asked: Do you think studying Chinese as a second language is important? 262(87.3%) of the respondents thought it *very important* 33(11.0%) of the respondents felt it was just *important* and 5(1.7%) felt it was *not important* as shown in table 3.

**Table 3:** Do you think studying Chinese as a second Language is important?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	262	87.3	87.3	87.3
	important	33	11.0	11.0	98.3
	not important	5	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The respondents that selected the options that says it is important or very important to study Chinese as a second language in Nigeria were asked their views about introducing Chinese teaching program in Nigeria educational system, 228 (76.0%) indicated it was *necessary*, 67(22.3%) were not certain as to the necessity of Chinese language introduction in Nigerian basic schools, while 5(1.7%) suggested it was *not necessary*.



**Fig 2:** Chinese teaching program should be introduced in Nigerian education system?

In other to ascertain the views of the respondents about introducing Chinese into Nigerian education system, they were asked what they think about Chinese language teaching in primary and secondary school, 195(65.0%) of the respondents thought it *necessary*, 5(1.7%) were uncertain, while 100(33.3%) felt it was *not necessary* (see table 6).

**Table 6:** If chosen question 17A-B from the above, do you think Chinese Teaching Program should be introduced in the Primary and secondary Educational system in Nigeria?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes its necessary	195	65.0	65.0	65.0
	need to be necessary	5	1.7	1.7	66.7
	not necessary	100	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

They were further asked their views about Chinese course as a major program in the technical and higher educational system. 167 (52.2%) of the respondents felt it was *necessary*, 67(20.9%) of the respondents were undecided, whilst 66 (20.6%) of the respondents thought it was *not necessary*. They were also asked how, if at all, Chinese should be taught in higher education system. 63(21.0%) thought it be a compulsory course, 143(47.7%) suggested being an elective course would be better, while 94(31.3%) felt it should be restricted to a training course. In view of the purpose of this research, we asked the opinion of the respondents on how best to promote Chinese language teaching in Nigeria. One hundred 100 (33.3%) respondents expressed that there should be a campaign in electronic and press media to enlighten Nigerian about Chinese language, and 200 (66.7%) opted for organization of Chinese cultural programs in communities and inviting the community people to participate.

The third part of the survey centered on the social-linguistic information on global view of Chinese language among Nigerians. In question 24. The respondents were asked their views on Chinese as a global language, 2(0.6%) of the respondents agreed that Chinese is displacing other languages in the world while 226 (75.4%) disagreed, and 72(24.0%) indicated they do not know. Again, 82 (25.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Chinese skill should become more common in the world, 138(46.0%) agreed that Chinese should be more common in the world, 5(1.7%) disagreed, and 80 (26.7%) indicated don't know. Also, 4(1.3%) agreed the set of values that comes with Chinese is destroying other culture, 206(68.7%) disagreed with this view, and 23(7.7%) strongly disagreed whilst 67 (22.3%) expressed no definite position on it. Moreover, 78(24.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Chinese is spreading the market economy and materialistic values, 148(49.3%) agreed that Chinese is spreading the market economy and materialistic values, 11(3.7%) disagreed that Chinese is spreading the market economy and materialistic values, and 68(22.6%) had no opinion on that. Further, 70(21.9%) strongly agreed Chinese is the language of advancement, 205(68.3%) agreed Chinese is the language of advancement, and 29(9.8%) disagreed Chinese is the language of advancement. Again, 60 (20.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed Chinese skills add to mutual understanding on a global level, 224 (74.6%) agreed Chinese skills add to mutual understanding on a global level, whilst 16 (5.4%) had no idea.

To determine how important Nigerians view Chinese language, the respondents were asked to respond to question 25, by showing their agreement, disagreement or lack of knowledge on the matter, 222 (74.0%) of the respondents agreed that young people should know Chinese, while 78(26.0%) disagreed; 5 (1.7%) agreed that people of working

age should know Chinese, 260(86.7%) disagreed, while 35(11.6%) expressed no particular opinion. Sixty-seven 67 (22.3%) agreed that the spread of Chinese in Nigeria is a threat to our local language, 159 (52.9%) disagreed while 74(24.8%) were blank on the question. On culture, 2(0.7%) agreed the spread of Chinese in Nigeria is a threat to culture, 266(88.7%) disagreed with this assertion whilst 32(10.6%) were undecided. Two 2(0.7%) respondents agreed that knowledge of Chinese is important for the development of a multicultural society, 279(93.1%) disagreed while 19(6.2%) said they do not have an idea. Two 2(0.7%) disagreed that Nigerians should know other languages in addition to English, while 298 (99.3%) of the respondents agreed Nigerians should know other languages in addition to English. The respondents were further asked to respond to question 26 by selecting “yes, no, or don’t know”. 246(88.0%) of the respondent admitted that in 20 years’ time Nigerians might become outsiders in certain areas if they do not know Chinese, 3(1%) said this might not be the case, while 33(11.0%) selected “don’t know”. Then question 27, was aimed at identifying which areas the respondents think Nigerians could become outsiders, 2(0.6%) of the respondents thinks in 20 years’ time Nigerians could become outsider in the areas of up-to-date information (information is mediated through other channels), 70(21.9%) of the respondents thinks Nigerians could become outsiders in Services provided on the internet and in the entertainment media (e.g. television), 4(1.3%) selected international interaction, 78(24.4%) selected educational opportunities, 82(25.6%) selected possibility of getting a job, 64(20.0%) selected opportunities offered by travel. For question 28, the respondents were asked to choose among these four languages: English, French, Arabic and Chinese, the ones the following groups need to know in 20 years’ time. We shall present only their response to Chinese language, meanwhile English language undisputedly scored the highest numbers among the groups, 2(0.7%) of the respondents selected that children under 12yrs need to know Chinese, 164 (54.7%) of the respondents selected that young people need to know Chinese, 129 (43.0%) selected people of working age, 1(0.3%) selected elderly people, 4(1.3%) selected academics. Again we asked the respondents in question29, the possibility that Chinese language in 20yrs time could compete with English language for the status of the most important international language in Nigeria, 229 (76.3%) of the respondents selected “yes”, 4(1.3%) selected “no”, while 67(22.3%) selected “don’t know”. Finally, we asked them to respond to the possibility of Chinese emerging as one of the official languages in Nigeria in 20yrs time by indicating the likelihood of this happening. One hundred and sixty-four (164) constituting (54.7%) of the respondents felt it was very likely 82(27.3%) of the respondents thought its likelihood to be fair, 49 (16.3%) indicated this was very unlikely 5 (1.7%) of the respondents thought they had no idea.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 overall summary of the results

The goal of this study was to assess the acceptability of Chinese language education in Nigeria. To this end, an interview guide with 30 items was employed for Chinese language acceptability measurement. Overall, it was revealed by the results (87%) that Nigerians interest in Chinese language adoption policy is very high. However, a large percentage (65.0%) of the respondents have no experience

with Chinese studies. An indication that Chinese education is yet to gain momentum in the society, if at all will. Nevertheless, a good number of the respondents think it is very important to learn Chinese as a second language in Nigeria and thought it is necessary to introduce Chinese in Nigeria educational system. Moreover, an intriguing trend was observed where opposing views on Chinese language adoption policy were overwhelmingly those of Nigerians in diaspora. Their argument was primarily that such a move poses a great threat to indigenous languages which entrenched foreign languages like English have already weakened their liveliness. The crux of their contention can be summarized into four (4) main bulletins: (1) That, Chinese language is like Arabic, entirely different in its orthography, and ways of learning and acquisition. They believe Nigerians should, first, be grounded in our major indigenous languages before acquiring any foreign language(s). (2) That, it is improper to rush into another language considering that foreign languages such as English, French and Arabic, with English as the exception, have become white elephants in the educational system and unnecessary drain on students’ energy and time as they exhibit little to no utility outside the usual classroom learning drudgery of memorization. (3) That, Chinese language should be taught, if at all necessary or adopted, in technical or higher education just like any other Language specializations (i.e. Spanish, Japanese and German) at the institutions of higher learning. (4) That, Chinese is still new to Nigerians and the populace’s reactions have not assumed a definite shape yet, so it would be premature to design a policy in this direction, they argue. Interestingly, it is elicited that the majority of the respondents who want Chinese language education in Nigeria prefer the language be taught in higher educational institutions and as an elective course, just as articulated by the point three (3) of Nigerians in diaspora who objected to the language’s adoption but cede on certain conditions. It is pertinent to note that one of the Confucius institutes (i.e., the one in Nnamdi Azikiwe University), now offers Chinese language degree programs with an academic department (Department of Chinese Language Studies). On promotion of Chinese language, a greater segment of the respondents (66.7%) thought Chinese could best be promoted through organizing Chinese cultural programs in communities and inviting the community members to participate. Moreover, the majority of the respondents who expressed favorable disposition towards Chinese language adoption policy felt strongly that, this policy should target particularly the youth. Overwhelmingly, respondents admitted that without solid grounds in Chinese language education in 20yrs time, Nigerians might become outsiders in in this globalized world, and that the youth needs to prepare for their tomorrow world. Coincidentally, reasons cited for expressed interest in Chinese language education were accessibility to educational opportunities, job prospects and the chance to see the world beyond their borders through educational and job travels. All these vehemently trumpet the weight of the Chinese as an economic juggernaut and the keen awareness of the world of this reality. In respect of this, it came as no surprise that the majority (76%) of the respondents thought Chinese language could rub shoulders with the English language for relevance in Nigeria in the next 20 years, and would not be taken aback if it became one of the official languages by that time. Nevertheless, we cannot generalize the state of Chinese language education in Nigeria using the present findings.

That notwithstanding, the data represents the opinions of segment of Nigerians within and outside the country and we believe these findings reflect the respondents firmly-held opinions toward Chinese language education in Nigeria.

These opinion points regarding Chinese language acceptability in the result summary are quite revealing, especially in the areas of teaching Chinese language in public primary and secondary schools. Some of the points raised by the majority of Nigerians in Diaspora complements the views of some educational and cultural commentators within the country. For instance, in 2012, when Lagos state first proposed the introduction of Chinese language in public primary and secondary school, the stakeholders were divided on which path to take, some said it would be a misplaced priority while others welcomed it as innovative decision. The then Lagos state chairman of the Nigerian Union of Teachers said, the introduction of the language would be “a policy somersault” (*Premium Times*, 2012)<sup>[31]</sup>. However, Chinese language serving as a means of education in a pluralistic society resonates with Lantana’s (2015) concept of education in globalization, where societies must *benefit from globalization of education without losing orthodox national value systems and directions*. In tandem with Lantana’s (2015) position, Aboderin (2012)<sup>[1]</sup> (cited in Odinye (2015)<sup>[33]</sup>) believe that Chinese language education will not interfere with Nigerian languages and culture, rather, it will create a synergy for globalization of Nigerian indigenous languages. Lantana (2015) have described Chinese language education as progressive educational policy reform that ignores the history of education and takes a rhetoric definition of change. In other words, its spread is quite unlike the other recognized foreign languages in Nigeria that were historically propagated through the basis of religion and conquered territories rather than the demand of the people which are more economically driven. Globalization, education and economic demand (Andrzejewski and Alessio 1998; Spolsky 2005; Davy 2011; Sitti and Ahmed, 2014)<sup>[4, 2, 29]</sup>, are the major driving factor for bilingualism and language adoption as such underpin the spread of Chinese language and its possible introduction into the national education policy in Nigeria.

## 5.2. Study limitations

In spite of the valuable contributions of the study to theory and practice, the following noteworthy limitations were noted. First, the study’s sample size (N=300) is not sufficiently large enough to warrant a nation-wide generalization of the results adduced from the data. Nonetheless, the views expressed in this study must be taken as preliminary case for Chinese language acceptability in Nigeria and must be interpreted within the scope of the research. Second, financial constraints; due to lack of funds for the research, we could not motivate more people to participate in the interview. We got the impression that some members of the population from which the sample was drawn felt they needed to get some incentives in exchange for their time of participation and therefore did not participate in the interview. Third, Logistic constraints; reaching more people for interview required transportation fares and printed interview guides for the interviews. Financial constraints limited the number of people that could be reached and interviewed.

## 6. Recommendations

### Direction for future research

We wish to make the following recommendations in concluding the study, that:

1. Future studies should use larger sample size to get more Nigerians involved.
2. Further studies should be conducted in light of the information obtained from this research on the views of Nigerians in diaspora regarding Chinese language education in private and public primary and secondary schools in Nigeria
3. The graduate research committee in the ZJNU should make sufficient financial resources available for graduate students to be able to undertake research with less constraints. This could be done through partnership with different organizations that are willing to fund the targeted research. In addition, adequate funding will lessen other constraints like logistics and contribute to overall strength of the research.

### Policy recommendation

1. Nigerian policy makers and the Chinese counterpart as well should consider relevant information from this research and similar ones as a component for future decisions regarding policy making on Chinese language education in Nigeria.
2. The Nigerian government can deepen partnership with the Confucius institutes in Nigeria to serve as a platform for intercultural exchanges between Nigeria and China.
3. Studies be carried out on the economic importance of Chinese language to Nigerians to know if Chinese language could be an important economic tool for Nigerians. This will in-turn bolster the spread of Chinese language in Nigeria.

These policy recommendations outlined in this study are in great harmony with the policy innovations developed by Lantana (2015). The author stipulated educational policy innovations which are recognized as useful for this study and would be adapted to create a balance between the mother tongue and Chinese language education in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. They include: 1) the use of cyber field trips (classrooms without borders) to remedy the pedagogical challenges as “tongue twisting” in learning oral Chinese language for Nigerians learners as practiced in Canada and USA. The advantage of cyber classroom is that it facilitates learning through imitation and observation, a language education theory embedded on Social Learning Theory (SLT) of Bandura (1977)<sup>[7]</sup> and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky (Tudge & Moll, 1992). 2)<sup>[35]</sup> Implementation of one year Chinese and English language graduate exchange program between China and Nigeria where exchange teachers will be allowed to teach languages in primary and secondary schools in both countries. This will boost the quality of teachers and will ensure positive effects on the students learning outcomes. 3) Partnership and collaborations between Chinese and Nigerian local publishers should be facilitated in the production of affordable and cheap Chinese language e-books and textbooks. 4) Encourage Chinese and Nigerian university researchers on Chinese language and culture to collaborate in

research and innovations by developing instructional resources. 5) Use of language software in Nigerian public and private schools should be encouraged to facilitate rapid oral language development.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the systematic investigation of the views of Nigerians towards Chinese language teaching in primary and secondary schools by this study is one of the few attempts to understand the acceptability of Chinese language education in Nigeria. The results from our interview guide shows that, overall, Nigerians have positive view about Chinese language education in Nigeria, and are very much in support of learning Chinese as a second language. They favored the idea of teaching and learning of Chinese language in primary and secondary school. However, it was not without criticisms as outlined in the discussion section above. From our study, major emphases were laid on the youth towards having a grasp of Chinese language to widen their access to education, job, and travel opportunities for a meaningful participation in the global economy. To this end, recommendations are proffered to inform policy formulation to ensure that the opportunities presented by Chinese language education in Nigeria are appropriate for the betterment of Nigerians.

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