

# African postgraduate students learning Chinese language at Zhejiang Normal University, College of Education: Challenges and strategies

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## ABSTRACT

This abstract presents a study of challenges African students face in learning Chinese at Zhejiang Normal University College of Education, which is a significant void in understanding students' educational experiences. Mixed-method research was adopted for this study, using a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to acquire factual information from thirty participants. The sample of students was comprised of Master's and Doctoral students. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and literature reviews. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, charts, and graphs, while the qualitative data were presented based on themes. Findings speak to the way tonal pronunciation complexity, the intricacy of Chinese writing, and the cultural barriers limit language acquisition in the students and their overall adjustment. Notably, 80% of the respondents have reported significant struggles with Mandarin's tonal variations, with 67% having not been previously exposed to tonal languages, negatively impacting their learning experience. Further, the participants also expressed feelings of isolation and alienation as a result of cultural disconnections and language barriers, which affected their confidence and motivation levels negatively. Recommendations include increasing opportunities for peer interaction in the classrooms by having mixed classrooms to promote some cultural exchange and language proficiency. Some went as far as to suggest establishing tonal awareness programs to deal with pronunciation problems specifically. They have targeted action put forward by the institutions of learning to shape some forms of inclusion and enhanced experiences for such students to support their academic journeys.

**Keywords:** African postgraduate students, Chinese language, Learning challenges, Zhejiang Normal University, Language acquisition.

## INTRODUCTION

The continuous globalization of education has led to an increased volume of international students pursuing language studies, especially in learning Chinese. It is reported that the international student population grew from 1.9 million in 1997 to over 6.1 million in 2019 (Martel et al., 2020). Moreover, the report mentions the increasing trend of students from middle-income countries in India and China, respectively. The UNESCO report further claims that out of the 492,185 international students studying in China, the country ranks third in hosting international students (UNESCO, 2021).

Due to its business and cultural importance, the Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world. This results in many non-native speakers being interested in it. With more and more students coming to China to learn the language, it is critical to identify and comprehend the challenges they term unique. These barriers will significantly mitigate their success and experiences in a foreign country's educational system.

Students from abroad face numerous obstacles to the language (Jackson, 2015). For instance, Mandarin contains four tones, which makes it highly tonal. This is hard for people who come from non-tonal backgrounds. Furthermore, the different Chinese characters prove highly overwhelming for people new to it as it requires a lot of memorization and practice. Overcoming these barriers, though, is essential for effective

communication among students and increases confidence and motivation for learning. To support international students, restore confidence, motivation, and the ability to fluently converse in Chinese, educational institutions must develop an environment that promotes actively engaging with the language. Berry's acculturation model, which forms the theoretical framework of this study, argues that acquiring a new culture depends on the degree of assimilation, integration, or separation experienced by the individual from the host culture. Given these concerns, it is essential to analyze the barriers faced by African postgraduate students learning the Chinese language at the Zhejiang Normal University College of Education. Suppose these particular problems are identified and understood. In that case, educational bodies can create and implement appropriate measures to improve the learning environment and the expected educational outcomes and increase the overall atmosphere's inclusivity toward all students.

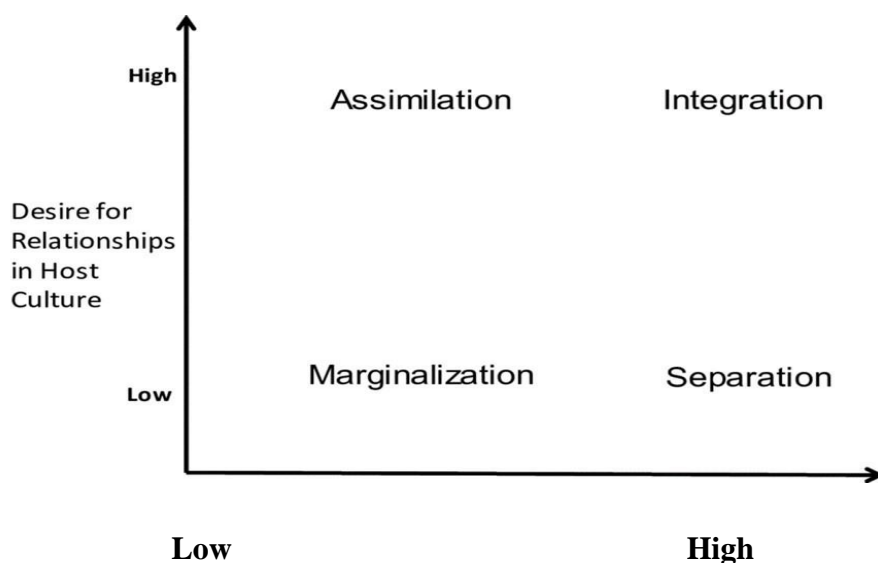
Despite the rapidly growing internationalization of education and the interest in learning the Chinese language, many international students face massive challenges that make it difficult to utilize the language confidently. Such problems are the character complexities and the tonal pronouncing of Chinese languages, cultural barriers to communication and social interactions, and other structural inequities in the education system that do not support learning (Jackson, 2015). Further, the consequences of such problems are linguistic and touch students' psychology, general motivation, and social relations in the context of their new educational environment. Understanding the unique challenges African students encounter while studying Chinese is crucial. Educators and institutions can develop tailored strategies and interventions by getting a clearer picture of these hurdles. This approach could create a more inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere. In turn, it could help boost these students' academic performance and cultural integration, which is so important.

## Research Question

- i. What challenges do African students face when trying to learn Chinese at Zhejiang Normal University?
- ii. What steps can be taken to ease the difficulties that these students experience in their Chinese language studies

## Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1.1 Berry Acculturation Model**



**Desire to Maintain Home Culture**

**Source: Berry, (1997)**

The diagram indicates that when students wish to connect with host cultures, they achieve high assimilation levels, boosting their chances of learning the host nation's language. These individuals pursue local interactions

by deliberately suspending their cultural identities. Long supports this perspective by stating that African students acquire rapid language and cultural understanding through peer interactions. Integration produces beneficial cultural learning experiences because students attempt to maintain their home culture while participating in local communities, yet their success potential remains restricted.

Students who select Berry's "separation" strategy encounter difficulties because it entails preserving their cultural practices without engaging with local populations. In addition, Berry observed that students' experience with their own culture, lack of interest in host country cultural preservation and engagement due to marginalization reduces their chance of learning host nation's culture.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This review combines existing research findings and critically examines the common barriers while highlighting knowledge gaps that require further investigation. By laying this foundation, the chapter emphasizes the need for specific interventions and support systems to improve the educational experiences of African students in China.

### Challenges

#### Tonal Complexity of the Chinese Language

The tonal nature of Chinese language presents a significant challenge for African students to learn Mandarin. Compared to other countries that may have many tones with different meanings, Mandarin has five different tones that may change a single word meaning. For instance, a single syllable like "ma" can mean "mother," "hemp," "horse," "scold," or serve as a question particle as it is entirely determined by the tone used. This complex tonal system presents a significant problem for learners from non-tonal language backgrounds, often leading to miscommunication and frustration as they strive for fluency. Moreover, the difference between the standards surrounding politeness, tone and social context in Mandarin and those in several African languages may result in cross-cultural misunderstandings. More-so, due to lack of cultural understanding regarding language use, African students may unintentionally offend their Chinese peers or instructors. This assertion was supported by Li and Zhang (2023) who discovered this complexity in tonal pronunciation while studying the challenges and aspirations of African students in a Chinese language program at a vocational college, highlighting the importance of this issue in the learning experience.

#### Complexity associated with Chinese writing

African university students face distinct challenge in mastering the Chinese language, particularly its intricate writing system. The complexity nature of Chinese characters, compounded by the tonal features of the language and fundamental linguistic variations, significantly hampers comprehension and effective communication. In concurrence with this view, McDonald (2021) points out that, unlike many African languages that may employ phonetic representation, the Chinese script primarily consists of logographic symbols that signify words or morphemes. Therefore, attaining literacy in Mandarin requires acquaintance with thousands of unique characters, with genuine mastery necessitating knowledge of around three to four thousand characters. This demanding standard can be particularly daunting for African students, who are generally accustomed to alphabetic scripts where a limited number of letters can create a vast array of words.

The fundamental contrast stemming from these writing systems, struggle to memorize and functionally use the characters across all modes of communication can lead to profound frustration and anxiety among students. This challenge is further heightened by the precise and non-negotiable need to follow the correct stroke order in writing. For instance, the character "汉" (Hàn) must be created using a prescribed sequence of strokes to accurately convey the intended meaning. As a result, learners encounter the dual task of memorizing extensive character lists while developing the fine motor skills essential for accurate writing to prevent

miscommunication. This demand for technical precision can be especially challenging for African students who may not have had similar opportunities to cultivate such skills in their native writing systems.

While these challenges are acknowledged, a significant deficit persists in the research dedicated to effective teaching methods and institutional support frameworks designed to aid African students in navigating these specific learning hurdles. Further research is essential to develop strategies to mitigate these challenges, ultimately enriching African students' educational experiences and outcomes as they learn the Chinese language.

### **Limited Exposure to Mandarin**

Another significant challenge encountered by many African students arriving in China is their limited prior exposure to Mandarin, a factor that significantly exacerbates the foundational challenges of adaptation and learning. According to Long's Interaction Model, exposure to a language is crucial, as language acquisition is greatly facilitated through meaningful interaction (Sanako, 2024). For effective language learning, it is crucial for African students to engage with Chinese speakers as it promotes negotiation for meaning and aids in clarifying misunderstandings. However, this lack of exposure has negative effects on academic performance and social integration for these students in China.

The initial experience of cultural shock, feeling overwhelmed by unfamiliar social environments, exacerbated pre-existing language barrier on for many new students new upon arrival.

This inability to engage in social interactions often leads to isolation, hindering the formation of supportive networks essential for successfully adjusting to a new cultural setting (Li & Zhang, 2023). Moreover, this social isolation can lead to detrimental emotional consequences including exacerbated homesickness and eroded engagement as students grapple with cultivating friendship with host-country peers. Furthermore, the linguistic barrier between international and local students compounds the issue, as many local students are keen to improve their English skills. Nevertheless, the difficulty African students face in communicating in Mandarin frequently impedes successful interaction.

Although these issues are well-documented, a substantial deficit in research persists pertaining to viable approaches to enhance educational outcomes and promote cultural adaptation for African students in China.

Further investigation needs to establish tailored support mechanisms that has the potential to augment language acquisition opportunities for these learners and simultaneously foster interpersonal networks, thereby enhancing their overall experience in a new academic and social setting.

### **Challenges in Educational Methods and Curriculum**

Instructional strategies employed in Mandarin teaching hinder the educational process among learners from Africa. These approaches often prioritize rote memorization instead of practical communication skills an approach that can be ineffective for learners who require contextualized learning approaches. Furthermore, the syllabus often fails to adequately meet the unique language requirements confronting learners from abroad, thereby producing deficiencies in knowledge acquisition and overall dissatisfaction with the educational management system. Without a curriculum that considers their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, students may find it difficult to engage with the materials presented to them. Li and Zhang, (2023) support the necessity of prioritizing teaching methodologies, as they highlighted that inadequate pedagogical strategies from instructors can be a barrier for African students learning the Chinese language. This conclusion was drawn after examining the aspirations and obstacles faced by African students enrolled in a vocational college's Chinese language program.

### **Cultural Barriers and Communication Gaps**

Alongside linguistic challenges, cultural factors significantly impact the learning experiences of African

students. Communication styles and cultural nuances can vary significantly between African countries and China, sometimes resulting in misunderstandings even when the language is used correctly. For example, directness, which may be typical in some African cultures, is often perceived differently in Chinese contexts, where maintaining harmony and politeness is highly regarded. These cultural barriers can impede effective communication and strengthen feelings of alienation. Xu and Knijnik, (2022) echoed similar sentiments consistent with the outcomes of the findings from their study on the pedagogical effects of affection on Mandarin learning revealing that many students encountered anxiety, cultural disorientation and difficulty in interpreting local linguistic norms.

### **Psychological Factors and Motivation**

Cognitive and affective influences are another contributing factor to the language acquisition difficulties encountered by African postgraduate students. The experience of 'culture shock' is commonly noted within the international student cohort affecting their confidence and willingness to participate in language practice. A significant number of learners feel anxious while engaging in Mandarin conversation due to fear of making mistakes failing to comprehend. This apprehension can generate a cyclical effect in which the fear of failure discourages active engagement thereby hindering the learning process. Zhao and Liang (2021) asserted cultural adjustment stress is a major impediment to international students learning Chinese affecting their confidence and willingness to participate in language practice. Results of their study regarding adjustment difficulties of African students in China affirm the view that experiences of cultural shock and social isolation exacerbate linguistic obstacles.

### **Theoretical Framework (Berry's Acculturation Model)**

Berry's Acculturation Model presents a conceptual model to comprehend the acculturation process and the resulting impacts on individuals and groups. Formulated by John W. Berry, a Canadian psychologist, this framework outlines four primary adaptation approaches that people can employ while managing cultural adaptation integration, these include assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry et al., 1987).

#### **Integration**

Integration refers to a dual-cultural strategy in which persons maintain their original cultural identity while simultaneously participating in the new culture (McClelland et al., 1995). This approach is often considered as beneficial and influential promoting successful cultural integration and improved psychosocial adjustment (Claire, 2024). Nevertheless, African students may encounter substantial challenges in achieving this integration. For instance, barriers such as language proficiency and cultural misunderstandings can create difficulties in educational environments. Limited proficiency in Chinese may obstruct their ability to fully participate in classroom discussions, leading to academic challenges and declining self-esteem. Furthermore, managing social situations in a culturally distinct environment requires skills that some individuals may not yet have, resulting in feelings of inadequacy or frustration.

#### **Assimilation**

In these cases of accents, less emphasis may be placed upon students retaining their cultural heritage, and they may just about become aware of the customs and values that need to be accommodated in the new culture (Claire, 2024). African students may, at times, be forced to make unbearable decisions centered on leaving behind their cultural identities hard-won with the characteristics of adjustment suggested by the Chinese society. Meanwhile, difficulties integrating into the school system include an expectation to forsake their native customs, like traditional forms of introduction and food stipulations. This can create identity confusion and mourning due to the loss of some values in their culture. The experience may also worsen the sense of isolation when Africans resist complete assimilation, thus struggling to balance their original culture with the society they inhabit.



## Separation

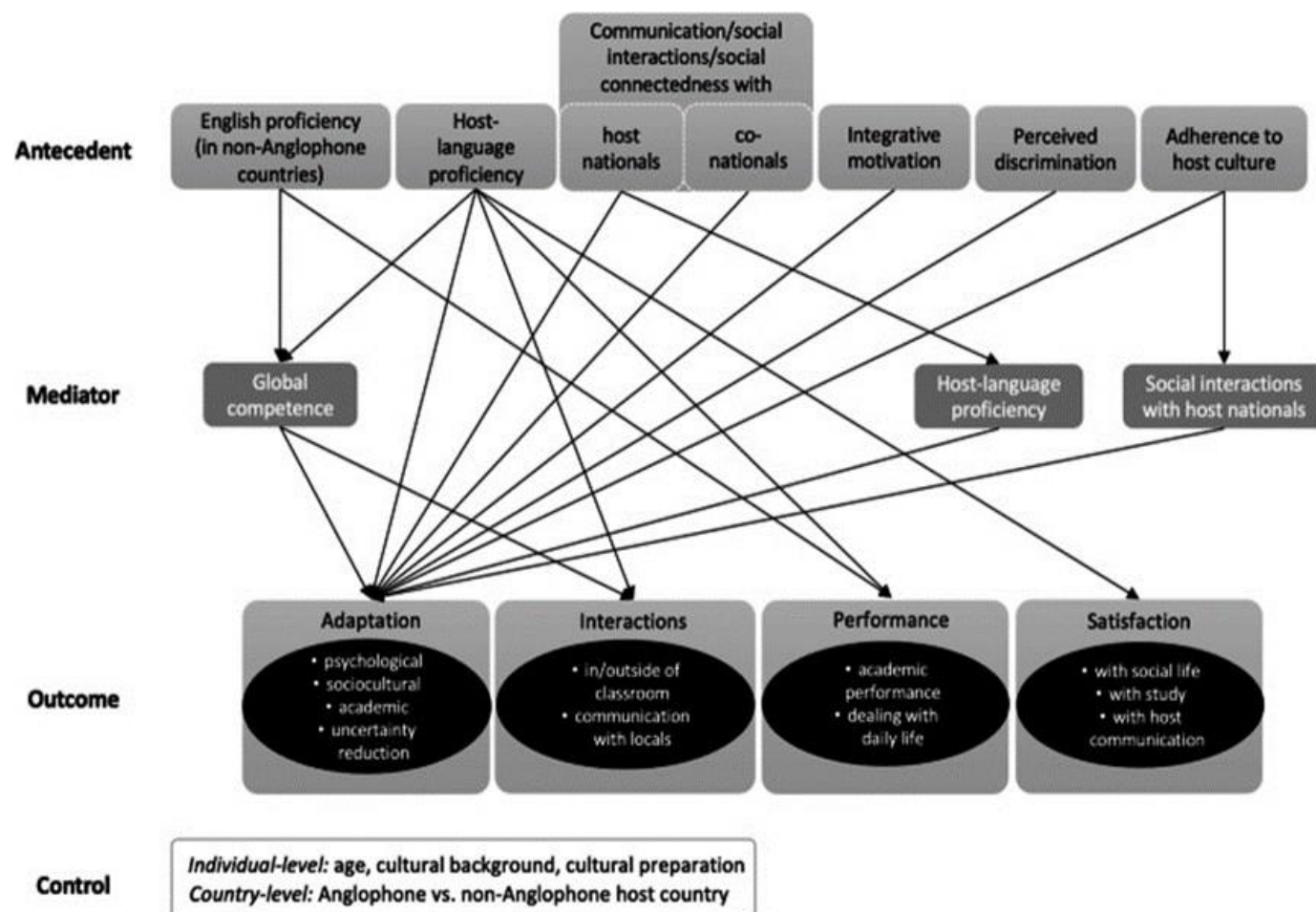
To maintain their culture, individuals actively reject and remove themselves from the dominant one. This would imply their conscious decision to either form African student groups or find societies they can identify based on cultural affinity and reduce interaction with the broader student community. However, this strategy could mean social isolation and limited opportunities to practice language skills with native speakers (Kosic et al., 2004; Clarrie, 2024). The implication here would impede their linguistic development since immersion provides one key opportunity for developing fluency. Isolation would additionally compound their anxiety and cultural disconnect, thus compounding the struggle for assimilation.

## Marginalization

Marginalization occurs when people reject neither the old culture nor the dominant culture; hence, they find themselves seen by others. African students might experience such an attitude where, in a majority of cases, certain discriminations and racism are at stake, and they feel, therefore, never wholly accepted by either of the two cultures. Such marginalization can lead to terrible consequences for their mental health: it may cause anxiety or even depression that is related to grave feelings of alienation and no cultural belonging. In addition, such a challenge combined with discrimination within the classroom or cultural insensitivity from peers can severely hamper their motivation and overall performance.

This model acknowledges that acculturation is a dynamic process that allows the subject to continual changes during a substantive timeframe of the life cycle. Mills uses the Model as a valuable tool to understand the complex interactions present in acculturation and its influence on individuals and groups. As such, this model will provide a helpful lens through which mental health professionals can consider their role in providing culturally sensitive and competent interventions among populations negotiating the acculturation process.

**Figure 2:1 Concept map synthesizing research on language and communication in student adaptation**



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**Source: Wilczewski & Alon (2022)**

The diagram above illustrates the need for the involvement of international students with local nationals in the social setting, both in and outside the classroom. Such interaction is advantageous; it is the foundation for academic and social success. Andrade insists that increased interaction with the host nationals improves the linguistic skill levels of the students, brings about marked improvement in their performance, and ultimately, their satisfaction with their social lives. By practicing the language in real-world situations, the students gain insight and cultural appreciation, thus making it easy to integrate into the academic system. For this reason, the strong desire for social interaction with the local people cannot be ignored, as it yields a depth of learning and more significant support for international students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research is to explore the perspectives of African postgraduate students on the effectiveness and capability of studying Chinese at a Chinese university. It will further include an overview of the challenges faced, such as language and methodological problems, that could impair the whole learning process. Information will be collected through questionnaires and interviews among international students from different African countries, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. After completing the survey, this study obtained qualitative insights and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with some African students. The process permits participants to explain and elaborate on their experiences, feelings, and perceptions at their stages and will add value and depth to the quantitative.

### **Target and sample of the study**

The student population for this study consists of African postgraduate students, including both Master's and PhD students in the College of Education at Zhejiang Normal University, who are supposed to take the Chinese language examinations despite receiving instruction in English for their Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Comparative Education.

A total of 30 postgraduate students were used as participants in the study to ensure an adequate representation of the total population. Because they were relied on as sources of information under study, these students were deliberately chosen as the most appropriate participants when asked to comment heavily.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Interviews and questionnaires were used as data collection instruments because this study was based on qualitative and quantitative research designs. A structured questionnaire was administered to the entire sample to gather data regarding the hardships experienced by African students in English as a foreign language course. After the survey was completed, qualitative data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews involving a select group of African students. This method would allow participants to express their experiences, feelings, and perceptions in their voices and provide richness and depth to the quantitative findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The ensuing analysis of the study findings employed thematic and descriptive statistical analysis, which were the two choices most aligned with the research design and methodology. Thematic analysis was applied in data analysis theme creation and data coding by combining components or fragments of ideas or experiences gathered from various respondents through in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, such as charts and tables, were used to analyze quantitative data from participants.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To reduce any possible source of error, the researcher ensured the surveyed individuals would represent the

population under study. The pilot study warned the researcher about the respondents' literacy and ability to handle the survey questionnaire independently. This was crucial to ensuring no problems with the constructed questions. Ten randomly selected students from the African continent who formed no part of the research sample of the study were given the first questionnaire. The pilot study's purpose was to check whether the respondents had any problems responding to the questions asked.

### Ethical Considerations

The study ensured that respondents voluntarily participated and completed informed consent, with guarantees of privacy and confidentiality.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographic characteristics of respondents

The chapter opens with traits of the respondents' demographics, including gender, age, region of origin, and length of stay in China. These factors are pivotal in understanding the educational experience of the respondents. Following the assessment of demographic characteristics, this chapter considers specific problems with tonal pronunciation, writing systems, and from Pinyin to Chinese characters.

### Gender of the Respondents

**Table 4.1 Gender of the Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	Female	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Source: Research Findings (2025)**

The respondents consisted of 63.3% males and 36.7% females, meaning that the male representation among the African students studying Chinese was significantly higher.

### Respondents Age Range

**Table 4.2 Respondents Age Range**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 35	21	70.0	70.0	70.0
	36 to 50	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Source: Research Findings (2025)**

The socio-demographic data analysis indicated that most respondents (70%) were aged between 18 and 35, leaving 30% relatively older candidates between 36 and 50. Such age distributions tend to suggest that many young adults are learning Chinese. This assertion is backed by Bialystok (2017), who pointed out that young people are likely to accommodate greater cognitive flexibility and are more adjustable to acquire another



language, whereas older people find themselves having difficulty with language acquisition due to cognitive rigidity.

### Respondents Region of Origin

**Table 4.3 Respondents Region of Origin**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Central Africa	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Southern Africa	9	30.0	30.0	40.0
	Eastern Africa	14	46.7	46.7	86.7
	Western Africa	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### Source: Research Findings (2025)

The socio-demographic data portrays a fascinating trend regarding the spread of the students taking Chinese, such that 46.7% of students come from Eastern Africa, followed by 30.0% each in Southern, 13.3% in Western, and 10.0% in Central Africa. This indicates a clear regional preference and marked interest among students in these regions in learning Chinese. As recorded by Hodzi (2020), Eastern Africa is now taking advantages of the current educational exchanges with China. The heightened interest in Chinese is easily traceable to a significant financial engagement or investment from China in Eastern Africa. The budding collaboration suggests the value placed upon learning the Chinese language, which also relates, at a broader scale, to education and career prospects.

### Respondents Duration of Stay in China

**Table 4.4 Respondents Duration of Stay in China**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than a year	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	More than a year	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## Source: Research Findings (2025)

Some students represent a significant proportion of people who have spent less than a year in China; 63.3% have spent less than this in China, while 36.7% have been equally present in China for over a year. This indictment suggests that several might be furthering their Chinese learning course.

## Respondents Period of Studying Mandarin

**Table 4.5 Respondents Period of Studying Mandarin**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than a year	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
More than a year	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

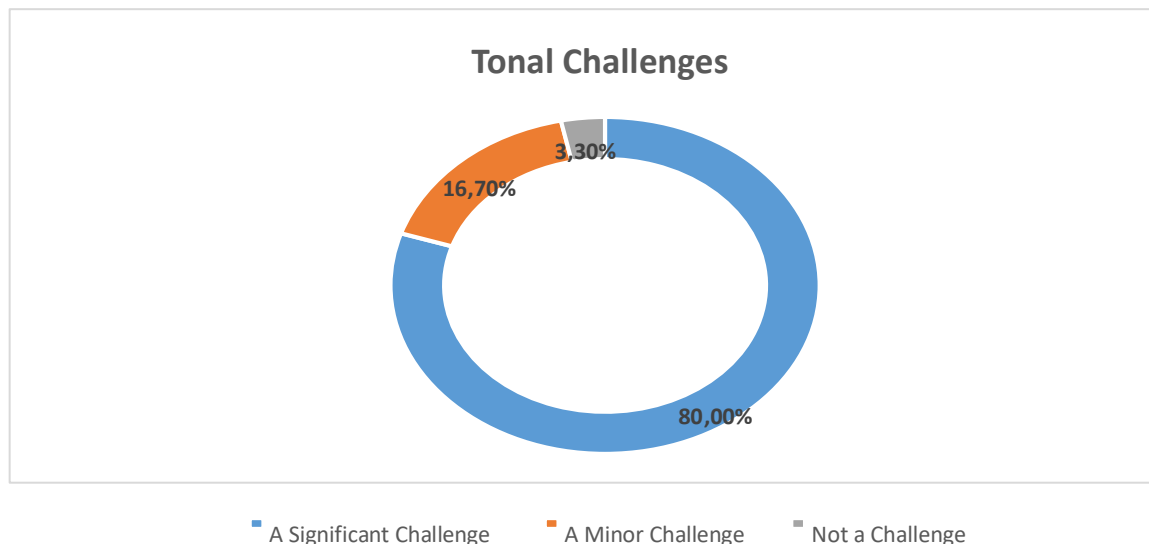
## Source: Research Findings (2025)

The vast majority (73.3%) had studied Mandarin for less than a year, suggesting they are likely mostly at a beginner level of study in the Chinese language.

## Challenges in Learning Chinese

The difficulties encountered include tonal pronunciation, writing system, and translating Chinese Pinyin into characters.

**Figure 4.1 Tonal Challenges**



## Source: Research Findings (2025)

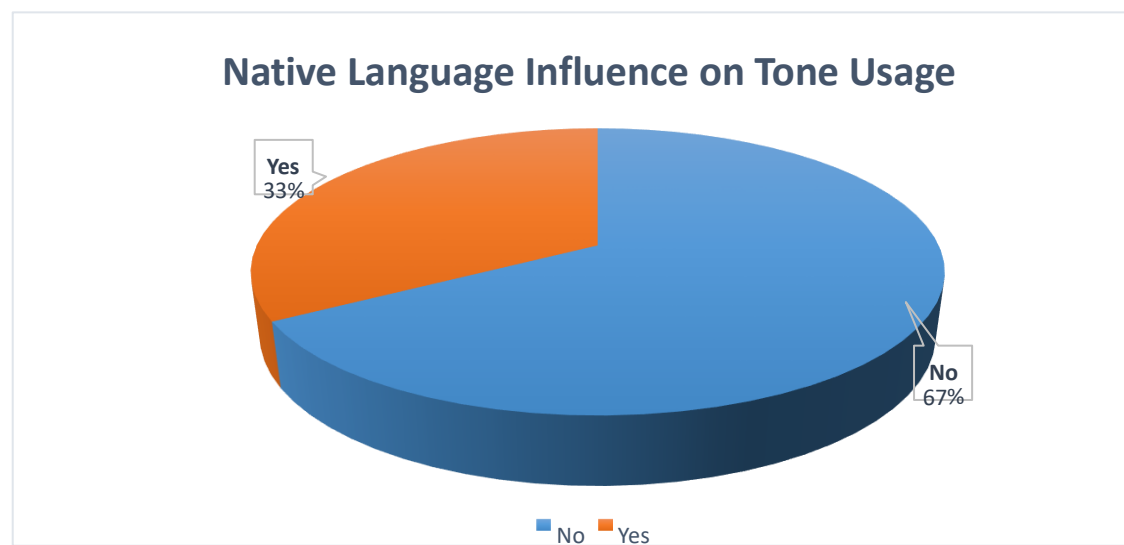
Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents said understanding tonal differences in Mandarin was a big challenge and, hence, a common learner issue. One participant confirmed such sentiments, saying, "*Chinese tones are difficult to pronounce, write, and to understand.*" These responses indicate the intricate nature of the different challenges involved in learning a tonal language such as Mandarin.

As noted by Wang et al. (2019), tonal differences do constitute serious challenges for second-language learners of Mandarin, and some of them live tied to the tone distinctions because, in Mandarin, distinct tones mean entirely different meanings. A new learner's complexity with pronunciation derives mainly from minor tonal variations, with learners sometimes unable to hear these variations. The ability to reproduce and perceive tonal

differences accurately is one pillar for successful communication in Mandarin, but this remains quite a struggle for many.

Another learner mentioned a related challenge by admitting, *"Translating the pinyin to characters is my great challenge."* Liu (2021) highlights the many twists and turns involved in moving from pinyin into Chinese characters, an idea one respondent mentioned. Though it helps learners with pronunciation and phonetics, the leap and conversion from the relatively easy pinyin to the myriad, more complex Chinese characters sometimes overwhelm them. Liu posits that this process requires phonetic knowledge and the cognitive mapping of visual characters. Therefore, language acquisition is a burden for a newcomer.

**Figure 4.2 Native Language Influence on Tone Usage**



**Source: Research Findings (2025)**

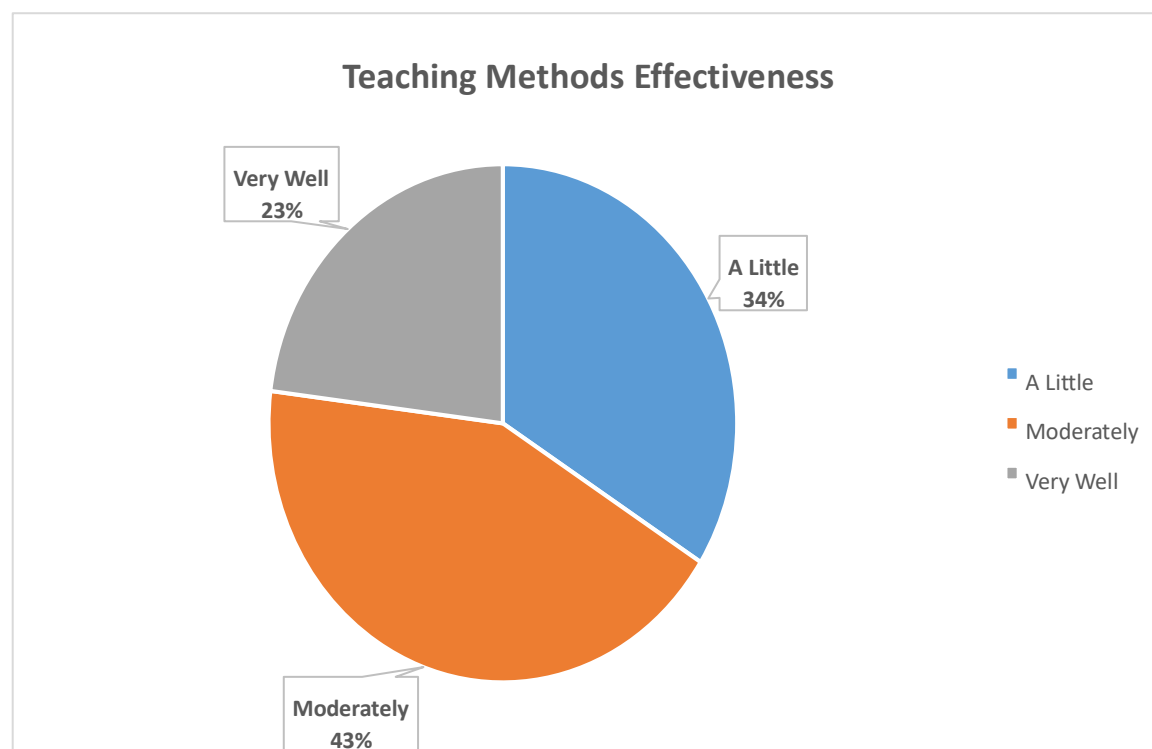
Of those interviewed, 67% reported not having a native language influencing their tonal understanding. As such, this particular finding is paramount. It tosses a new dimension to the challenges these learners face in learning Mandarin, the tone-laden language. The study participant mentioned this problem in the following words: *"For me, it is quite difficult to understand tones since my native language does not use tonal differences. Now, I am working hard to understand them completely."*

Ting and Fuchs (2016) assign the first language's (L1's) variable imperative role in the perception and production of L2 tones. This study has shown that tonal language speakers, such as those conversant with Mandarin, Cantonese, or others, tend to have an easier time acquiring other tonal languages due to their tonal sensitivity. Particularly to this effect, the type of learner originating from L1, where tonal discrimination is nonexistent, fights to develop tonal discrimination for tonal languages such as Mandarin. Because of the existing lack of experience with tone in languages, some tonal variations may be challenging for them to discover and pronounce in a tonal classically well-defined manner. Liu (2018) is also an advocate of native language supremacy in new language learning. He asserted that speakers of non-tonal languages are indeed burdened with much more understanding and learning hurdles simply because they have not been conditioned to relate variations in tone to meaning variations.

### **Mechanisms for Addressing Challenges**

The key findings furnish recommendations based on empirical insight into how to address the challenges that African students face in learning the Chinese language.

**Figure 4.3 Teaching Methods Effectiveness**



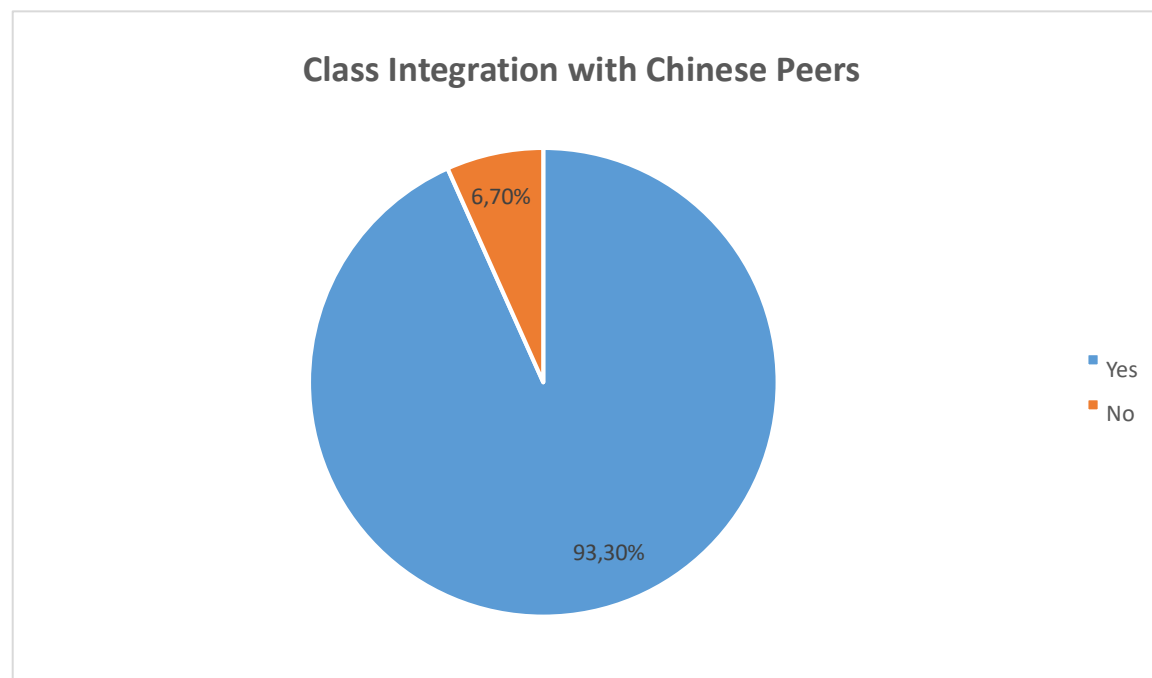
**Source: Research Findings (2025)**

Findings indicated that most students exhibited a moderate grasp of the instructional techniques used, proposing an avenue for improvement in the transmission and practice of these strategies. A strong contributing participant expressed,

*"Tutors of Chinese language should use more of the English language than Chinese, especially for beginners, as this will enable us to understand easily."*

This observation resonates quite well with those of a few language acquisition experts, who, in turn, avoid scaffolding at an immature level of language acquisition. Research has shown that conducting instruction in the learners' native language can essentially assist in a more precise understanding, especially in teaching more complicated concepts (Cummins, 2001). Moreover, the strategic use of English can alleviate challenges soon faced by the beginner learner and simultaneously ease transitions and create a quicker learning process (Swain, 1995). In this regard, teachers can assist novice learners better in tackling the complexities inherent in the Chinese language.

**Figure 4.4 Class Integration with Chinese Peers**



**Source: Research Findings (2025)**

It is important to create a mixed classroom with their Chinese peers, as 93.3% of participants suggested. One participant captured this view: *"We need to have a mixed class with Chinese peers, given the opportunity to work together in groups so that we may have chances to interact with them."* This point of view corresponds with Berry's acculturation model, which strongly advocates for intercultural group interaction to build deeper understanding and promote integration. The institution of diverse classrooms in an assembly where student cooperation and interaction occur with diverse peer cultures becomes another way of enhancing acculturation to their cultural contexts and facilitating adaptation. Acculturation enriches the learners' experience and heightens appreciation for cultural diversity in the educational experience and outcomes.

### **Recommendations for practice**

To support African students in learning Chinese effectively, educational policymakers should consider the following measures.

#### **Enhance Instructional Methods**

To address the notable challenges in tonal acquisition, it is essential to adapt instructional methods, prioritizing the use of English alongside Mandarin for beginners.

#### **Increase Peer Interaction Opportunities**

Facilitating interactions between African students and Chinese peers can significantly enhance language learning through real-life practice.

#### **Develop tonal awareness programs**

Establishing targeted programs to improve tonal awareness and pronunciation is critical given the prominence of tonal challenges.

### **Recommendations for Policy**

Educational policymakers should consider the following measures to support African students learning



Chinese effectively.

### **Curriculum revisions**

Curriculum revisions should seek to interlace bilingual teaching strategies and supporting material that can aid in acquired speech skill development.

### **Funding support initiatives**

By acquiring funds to support immersion programs, institutions may make more efforts to create a congenial environment whereby learners can interact with native speakers.

### **Implications of the study**

The study may offer targeted strategies and support systems for improving African students' learning experiences.

It can enhance the establishment of comprehensive cultural orientation programs that will facilitate the acculturation process for African students.

Moreover, the research can give valuable insights to policymakers and university administrators about the various needs and challenges experienced by African students, which could improve resource allocation in teaching methods.

It will broaden our understanding of cross-cultural adaptation theories and language acquisition models to enrich pedagogical theories on language teaching, integrating multicultural views into teaching sparks ideas for new hypotheses.

### **Future Directions**

Future studies should aspire to develop these dimensions in refining pedagogy while emphasizing knowledge about the influence of native languages on second-language acquisition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The recommendations provided in this chapter are a well of pragmatic stipulations to ameliorate the experiences of African students learning Chinese to enhance them as much as possible. These recommendations aim to improve instruction, student interaction, targeted program development, and inform more effective learning environments. The policy suggestions also provide a framework in support of continuous language acquisition and continued cultural integration. The success of these proposals will allow meaningful improvements in the educational experience of these global citizens engaged in Chinese language studies.

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