

# Benefits and Challenges Faced by Foreign Students of Chinese Language After Graduation

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**Abstract** The rising of China as a global powerhouse has been received by various mixed sentiments over the past two decades with positive and negative reflections shown by the influx of foreign students enrolling in famous Chinese universities studying various majors especially Chinese Language. This paper is therefore going to carry an analysis on the benefits and challenges faced by many of the foreign students of Chinese language after their graduation in their different levels of their degrees acquired with Chinese language as a major or that their studies were taught in Chinese language.

**Keywords** Benefits, Challenges, Chinese Language, Foreign students

## 1. Introduction

Many International graduates of Chinese Language students face a lot of different experiences after graduation. Experiences faced vary from automatically getting a job in translation, teaching or starting a consultant firm dealing with Chinese visitors or investors coming into the graduates' countries of respective origin or residence. Some happen to return to the schools or colleges that sent them to China to study Chinese Language as teachers of Chinese language. Other experiences are a long narration of challenges starting from citizen resistance and denial to foreign influence assumed to be brought about by learning of foreign languages of powerful nations which are deemed to be having hidden agendas some describe as an era of post colonialism and a spreading of imperial tendencies with which China is assumed to be not exceptional. Some face antagonism from organized anti-China sentiments and rhetoric due to mobilization of communities by some governments and civic societies who have a mission of opposing anything dealing with China because of its rising influence in international politics, economy, culture and superiority as a global powerhouse with a potential to replace the Western dominance in world affairs as China's economic and military muscles shows of an imminent new world order. In some African group of countries learning Chinese is one of a greatest opportunity to drive bilateral relations to economic relations with China but this has been received with mixed feelings because all African countries already speak another foreign language by default due to the

adoption of their former colonial masters' language after Independence, therefore learning Chinese is already learning it as a third language. The rising of China is a benefit to most of its neighboring regional countries but some have deep concerns and assume China's rise also brings a lot of challenges and especially in cultural, economic, political and social influence in their countries therefore this paper intends to explore and investigate the benefits and challenges brought about by learning Chinese Language with which many graduate students of Chinese language are caught in the middle of acceptance and denial of their hard earned time of study through their experiences they have faced in their home countries or if they choose to stay in China upon graduating from their respective universities. Lack of experience and incompetence among other reasons have compounded negatively the aspirations of the foreign students of Chinese language. On the other hand some have successfully enjoyed the benefits of learning Chinese language by the vast opportunities created by Chinese government worldwide and by the support of their governments through the look-east policy adopted in recent years by many countries with good relations with the Chinese government. A few have chosen to remain in China after graduation either working or married to a Chinese man or a Chinese woman even by opening a foreign business. This paper will be focused on graduates of bachelor, masters and doctorate degrees with Chinese Language as the language of command during their studies with a special limit to students who graduated in 2015 up to the year 2020. This research will bring an insight of the current status of International graduate students of Chinese Language whether the challenges they face outweighs the benefits of being a graduate of Chinese Language student as well as whether there is any value addition to the bilateral relations of their countries of residence with China. The research

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however leaves space for further scrutiny and further researches in order to expound further findings for the better understanding of Chinese Language's benefits and challenges faced after completing studies.

## 2. Background of Study

Luo Chaoping et al (2014) and Liu Ping et al (2019) asserts that globalization has created the desire to access quality education and better opportunities abroad as well as the need to develop one's capacities and many other factors have caused increased migration of international students and teachers into Chinese universities. Liu Ping et al goes on to say that China recorded over 67 percent increase in higher education enrolment between 2011 and 2017. The authors also alludes to Luo Chaoping's findings that the expansion of globalization and the rapid development of China's economy has been the main factor towards the increase of foreign students coming into China.

In general the term "foreign students" refers to students undertaking all or part of their tertiary education in a country other than their own country. The 3 decade long journey to the rise of China as the world's biggest economic hub has also seen the tremendous rise of its educational sector resulting in the greatest attraction of foreign students to flock into China. According to the UNESCO world report of June 2003, the quality of higher education in modern China has drastically changed reflecting shifts in the political policies implemented by the central government after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 stressed the ideology of professional and technical competence. According to Lewin, Tamar 2008, China has been a top destination for International students recording the most popular country in Asia for International students in 2013. According to Chinese Government figures the number of foreign students wanting to study in China has been rising by approximately 20% annually especially since the reform and opening period began over 195,503 overseas students from 188 countries and regions came to study in the mainland in 2007 even though the number is believed to be over 300 000 students because of many other students studying in private language schools not include by government. Given this statistics it therefore makes China as the world's largest study abroad destination and the second after the United States as the most popular education powerhouse in the world as of 2018.

According to [www.sicas.cn](http://www.sicas.cn) some reports establish that South Korea, Japan, the United States, Vietnam and Thailand were the five biggest source countries and the number of students from European source has been increasing. [China.org.cn](http://China.org.cn) 2006, currently the Chinese government offers over 10 000 scholarships to foreign students this is believed to increase in the next few years. According to [Chinanews.com](http://Chinanews.com) 2015 currently China has around 2000 colleges and universities with quality and recognition world wide counting to be the world's second

highest number of universities in the academic Ranking of World universities' top 500 universities. In 2020 CWTS Leiden Ranking edition, China surpassed the United States with the number of universities including in the ranking for the first time, China 204 and 198 for the United States. According to Jeff Tollefson 2018, 2008 China is said to have published 184 080 papers in recognized international journals. In 2017 China surpassed the United States with the highest number of scientific publications. Finally but not the least China is now the leading destination globally for Anglophone African students.

## 3. Research Methodology

In this chapter the researcher has explored the methods that were used on collecting data and information surrounding the benefits and challenges faced by foreign Chinese language students after their graduation. This information collected is also called data. This is with the aim of authenticating the originality, validity, reliability as well as considering ethical values of the research context that has been applied and discussed. The three main methods which the researcher used includes observation, interview and questionnaire methodologies. Some investigations were carried through on social media platforms such as the Whatsapp, Wechat, Facebook and Youtube Mainstream Media news houses. According to Farrant (1990:60) purports that; "Questionnaires, are a sets of carefully constructed questions designed provide systematic information in a particular subject." It is also prepared set of written questions usually dispatched to people who will supply information. Tuckman (1978:196) also purports that questionnaires and interviews are used in carrying out a research to gather information and convert it into quantifiable data given by respondents. According to Selltitz, (1959), an "observation is a scientific tool to formulate research purpose in a planned systematic way related to general preposition rather than reports of a set of interesting issues and subjects to checks and control validity and reliability in the case of the researcher's use of participant and observatory methods.

### 3.1. Study Questions

This research has the following questions to be addressed:

- ❖ Does a graduate of Chinese language finds it easy or difficult to get a job or start a business?
- ❖ Does a graduate of Chinese Language prefers to return to his/her home country or remain in China after graduation? Give reasons.
- ❖ What is the feeling of the people around you both in China and your country of origin after noticing that you are a graduate of Chinese language?
- ❖ What do you prefer between looking for a job and starting your own business after graduating with a Chinese language degree? Give reasons.

- ❖ Do you ever regret having chosen Chinese language as a major in university even if you are facing some challenges after graduation? Give reasons.

### 3.2. Study Tools

Since this research's scope of study has very limited literature due to its sensitivity the researcher has spared no other tools in order to come up with recommendations that may enhance improvements of the value of learning Chinese language as a second language. The researcher used questionnaires, phone call interviews, and have observed other former foreign Chinese language graduate who reside in China since or after their graduation.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The researcher's sample had a questionnaire that has reached former students of Chinese Language and those whose majors were taught in Chinese from over 20 countries including; Zimbabwe, Malawi Sri Lanka, India, Zambia, South Africa, Georgia, Indonesia, Thailand, Egypt, Russia and China among the long list targeting 50 graduate students of Chinese language since the year 2015 up to the year 2021. with valid responds only coming from 25 people and most of them are former foreign students to China since the year 2015.

## 4. Benefits and Challenges

### 4.1. Benefits of Chinese Language

According to Zhengdong Gan et al (2004), success in learning a second language as considerably more variable. Learning Chinese language and Chinese culture is no different from learning any other foreign language and its culture's difficulties and challenges in acquiring a proficiency level Many have tried to learn it from all corners of the world after seeing its global importance due to the quick rising of China as a global power but the challenges of learning it proved otherwise while some have actually done wonderful and are enjoying its benefits.

According to Karin Fischer 2012,' A college is a place where people meet and have the time and the freedom to make friends across cultures. This observation has proved to be highly true in the sense that many foreign students end up having business partners from different cross cultures and others ending up having gone through intercultural marriages. One of the Southern city of China Guangzhou is an example of how foreign students in China resort to start business in the city in collaboration with Chinese nationals. Guangzhou is practically known as an African city in China because of the influx of Africans married to Chinese locals and a large mixed race that has changed the traditional outlook of a typical Chinese city.

DW 2021 (4 December) says that China's relations with Africa is a win-win situation. The Belt and Road Initiative has brought a life line to many countries especially

under-developed and developing countries not also forgetting the already industrialized ones. Many graduates of Chinese Language in the 20 countries with the biggest number of former Chinese Language students have recorded an immense contribution in many areas of their societies and business. Many of the graduates have found themselves contributing their expertise in the areas dealing with; education, tourism, foreign affairs, customs, judicial and some have managed to start their consultancy companies with the aid of their governments. Some former students of Chinese language are presumably assumed top positions in their countries' governments. Ethiopia is an example of its top leader having graduated in a Chinese university.

**Table 1.** Benefit of learning Chinese language by 2020

Country	Sector	Jobs	Owner	Rating
Egypt	Tourism	50%	50%	05
Fiji	Tourism	70%	30%	09
Georgia	Education	75%	25%	16
Indonesia	Education	70%	30%	08
India	Tourism	50%	50%	02
Jamaica	Tourism	60%	40%	07
Malawi	Mining	70%	30%	10
Nepal	Tourism	50%	50%	04
Nigeria	Mining	30%	70%	01
Pakistan	Medical	75%	25%	15
Philippine	Construction	75%	25%	17
Russia	Tourism	70%	30%	11
S-Africa	Mining	70%	30%	12
S-Korea	Tourism	60%	40%	06
Somalia	Construction	75%	25%	18
Sri-Lanka	Education	70%	30%	13
Sudan	Tourism	70%	30%	14
Thailand	Tourism	75%	25%	19
Zambia	Mining/Edu	80%	20%	20
Zimbabwe	Mining/Edu	50%	50%	03

Opportunities or benefits of Chinese Language learners after completion of studies in the world vary from region to region, country to country and sector to sector as in jib opportunities or starting a self business as the above table can show. Some regions or countries opportunities of jobs after graduation are very high and other countries' opportunities pf starting a self business also are very high such as in Nigeria as shown in the table.

### 4.2. Challenges of Chinese Language

According to Philip G Altbach (1991) he refers foreign study as a multifaceted phenomenon with it's impact on academic institutions in both the 'host' and 'sending' countries on the economies of nations and the individual involved. He further gives an example of one of the challenges faced by the 'sending' countries suffering from what he called 'Brain drain' especially involving foreign

students who come from underdeveloped countries who fails to return to their countries after graduation because of the ‘host’ country’s favourite policies favoring foreign students graduates. Runping Zhu and Richard Krever (2017) observed another challenge of foreign students’ experiences while in China citing media coverage on cultural adaptation as mostly attributed to the unique media environment in Chinese universities where the only television and newspapers readily available to students are state owned and provide only official perspectives on the news. The table below will show extensively the challenges faced by graduates of Chinese Language learners and those whose majors were taught in Chinese after completing their studies. Resistance is among the major setbacks of the people’s acceptance of a Chinese environment, followed by low wages in the jobs created by Chinese firms abroad. A few graduates have managed to open up own businesses.

**Table 2.** Challenges after learning Chinese language 2020

Country	Resistance	Wages	Ownership	Rate
<b>Egypt</b>	Medium	Mid	50%	19
<b>Fiji</b>	High	Low	30%	07
<b>Georgia</b>	Very High	Low	25%	06
<b>Indonesia</b>	High	Low	30%	08
<b>India</b>	Medium	Mid	50%	18
<b>Jamaica</b>	Medium	Low	40%	15
<b>Malawi</b>	High	Low	30%	13
<b>Nepal</b>	Medium	Mid	50%	17
<b>Nigeria</b>	Upper Mid	Mid	70%	20
<b>Pakistan</b>	Very High	Low	25%	05
Philippine	Very High	Low	25%	04
<b>Russia</b>	High	Low	30%	09
<b>S-Africa</b>	High	Low	30%	10
<b>S-Korea</b>	Medium	High	40%	14
<b>Somalia</b>	Very High	Low	25%	03
Sri-Lanka	High	Low	30%	11
<b>Sudan</b>	High	Low	30%	12
<b>Thailand</b>	Very High	Low	25%	02
<b>Zambia</b>	Very High	Low	20%	01
Zimbabwe	Medium	Mid	50%	16

#### 4.3. Ambiguity in Chinese Language Learners

Chinese language has in the past few decades received with mixed feelings resulting in the ambiguity of choices by many current and former students of Chinese language. According to Learning Chinese Class: 2019 the benefits of learning Chinese has a lot of benefits such as, easy for travelling around the world, making friends from all around the world and also finding love from all around the world, but according to the survey undertaken in the 20 countries with some students who participated in the interviews the issue of having learned Chinese is received with mixed and sometimes with uncertainty viewpoints. Others believe

the benefits outweigh the challenges faced after graduation especially if you remain to stay in China where Chinese is spoken by everyone and very exciting when spoken by a foreigner. The researcher has also undertaken a participatory observation method and can agree in some points of departure by various former students of Chinese language. In China when a foreigner speaks Chinese he/she is highly regarded as one of the community and thereby can enjoy the benefits just like the natives. This is contrary when the foreign students return to their countries where Chinese language is deemed to be a colonial snare thereby resulting in the resistance by the communities to quickly adopt to world changes which China poses to be a threat to the western superiority and a win-win scenario by most African countries and all underdeveloped countries. This view is not the same with the view held by most European countries, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand which have generally viewed China as their threat therefore deeming learning Chinese language may largely be taken as the spreading of Chinese influence and therefore must be resisted. This view has been shown in the recent few years where the United States government has forced some closure of many Chinese Confucius Institutes in many universities in the United States and has also influenced its allies to do the same. Even though Chinese language has made diplomatic ties improve between the West and China the threat of Chinese influence has grown up in the Western capitals. The greatest ambiguity lies on the fact brought about by the current status in the world affairs that has experienced the greatest division of the world mainly caused by the rise of China as a world superpower that may easily take over from the United States before the year 2030 as suggested by world economists and political analysts. Traditional English speaking countries with great Chinese economic ties find themselves fearfully ambiguous.

## 5. Improvement of Chinese Exchange Programs

### 5.1. Non-Governmental Cultural Exchange

In most of the 20 countries where surveys took place the Confucius Institutes are situated in the government universities and usually very far from the reach of many young people and adults willing to learn Chinese language for different reasons. This has also influenced who should acquire Chinese Scholarships and who should not. If the Confucius Institute is independently run in foreign countries and close to the reach of people the said resistance will not be overwhelming as shown in this research findings. If there be qualified students of Chinese language let there be open programs that can be supported by both the hosting government systems and the Confucius Institute foreign support in establishing academic institutions run by willing former graduates of Chinese Language. Most of students selected for International cultural tours to China are

organized by the universities hosting the Confucius Institutes hence rejecting the participation of diverse groups of people in the country. Government to government exchange programs are not adequate to fight resistance to Chinese Language in foreign countries.

## 5.2. Basic Difficulties of Learning Chinese by Foreign Students and Their Improvements

According to Khalil Al-Mekhlafi et al (2009) asserts that a large number of foreign students have been in the recent years coming to learn Chinese language in China, however they have faced a lot of difficulties due to the Chinese language's characteristic nature therefore the need to include a lot of mechanism in making it easier to learn Chinese. Wallace E Lambert et al (1963) alludes to Khalil Al-Mekhlafi et al (2009) and asserts that learning a second language efficiently depends on an appropriate pattern of attitudes towards the other cultural group and a particular orientation toward language study.

H Herman Mustafa et al (2015) also points to the issue of attitudinal factors and asserts that attitudinal factors in learning English to which this research also views without opposing that like in Chinese language learning attitudinal factors including, attitude motivation, achievement motivation, interest, perseverance and self esteem makes learning a second language easier.

Tian Mei et al (2018) in their research presents evidence of foreign students' dissatisfaction arising mainly from three aspects of their university environments, linguistics, pedagogical and attitudinal. According to Chalker S and Weiner E (1994), "there is not one single Chinese language, but many different versions or dialects including Wu, Cantonese and Taiwanese. Northern Chinese, also known as Mandarin, is the mother tongue of about 70% of Chinese speakers and is the accepted written language for all Chinese. belonging to two different language families, English and Chinese have many significant differences". Garry J and Rubio C (2001) "This makes learning English a serious challenge for Chinese native speakers. Chinese does not have an alphabet but uses a logographic system for its written language. In logographic systems symbols represent the words themselves - words are not made up of various letters as in alphabetic systems". Because of this fundamental difference, Chinese learners may have great difficulty reading English texts and spelling words correctly. Most aspects of the English phonological system cause difficulties for Chinese learners. Crystal D (1987) and (1995) "Some English phonemes do not exist in Chinese; stress and intonation patterns are different. Unlike English, Chinese is a tone language. This means that it uses the pitch (highness or lowness) of a phoneme sound to distinguish word meaning. In English, changes in pitch are used to emphasize or express emotion, not to give a different word meaning to the sound." The difficulties faced by Chinese students learning English language are almost equally the same because of the great differences between Chinese and the world's most common

language.

## 5.3. Improvement on Competence

This researcher has also found out that most of the graduates of Chinese language learners irrespective of them being One Year language student, Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate students not any one has undergone an intensive internship in China before going back to the country of residence. This lack of internship for Chinese language students has produced very incompetent graduates of Chinese language. It is either a few can speak very well but can not write or can not read fluently and eventually leading up to high incompetence as far as job descriptions are concerned. This calls again for a high selection criteria of foreign students wishing to study Chinese Language so as to keep up with high competence. Besides learning a second language is not an easy task for anyone if they are not in the native land of the spoken language while bringing the whole world to China to learn the language is not real and therefore a suggestion to increase the scholarships of students who wish to learn Chinese to become teachers of the language. Not with-standing Larry A et al's Confucian saying that 'human beings draw close to one another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart', Geoff Thompson (2004-page 2) citing Noam Chomsky who insisted that linguistics should go beyond merely describing syntactic structures, and aim to explain why language is structured in the way it is. Chinese like any other foreign language requires competence to master it so as to produce better results in the field after graduating. The learning of Chinese language by foreign students can be summarily enjoyed and improved by employing every necessary tool and instruments best for equipping second language learners for excellency.

## 5.4. Increase in TCSOL Scholarships

Learning Chinese as a Second Language is but a hill task and requires a lot of sacrifices. "Chinese language teaching" was originally aimed at the cause of teaching Chinese for foreigners in China, which obviously has the color of calling this discipline from the perspective of the Chinese people. (Beijing language University Publishing 2018, 5th Edition)

From year 2015 to the year 2021 the enrollment of one year, bachelor, Masters, TCSOL and Doctorate students in Chinese language has drastically increased with Nigeria, Sudan, Russia and Zimbabwe topping the list on all levels of enrollment followed by regional Asian countries. Even though the United States and some European countries have contributed a lot in the enrollment however this research is short of verifiable data to support this view. Many countries have internal policies pertaining obtaining foreign language acquisition by training teachers starting from universities to vocational colleges (top-bottom) training policy therefore the need to have many graduates of Masters and Doctorate in Chinese Language to cover the space. Zimbabwe is among the list of these nations that believes training starts from top

to bottom so as to create more teachers who will later be deployed to primary schools education sector. Teachers of Chinese as Speakers of Other Language are a critical component to the development of Chinese language world wide. According to the survey many Nigerian graduates of Chinese Language or those who had majors taught in Chinese have remained in China doing private businesses followed by Egyptians and Russians whom many of them have remained and employed in various jobs such as interpretation. Neighbors from India have also remained in China after graduation doing businesses such as restaurants and consultancy. Many Zimbabwean graduates have returned home where many of them are employed in universities and in some Chinese mining companies. Zambia, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malawi and Philippine has seen many of the graduates getting employed in their countries' universities. Nepal, Jamaica, Georgia, South Africa and South Korea has many doing private consultancy between their countries and Chinese businesses coming into their countries. Fiji, Somalia, Pakistan have many of the graduates employed in their Government hospitals and Government to Government investment companies between their countries and the government of China.

**Table 3.** International Chinese Language proficiency

Country	1 Year	B.A	M.A	PhD	TCSOL
Egypt		✓	✓	✓	✓
Fiji		✓	✓		
Georgia	✓	✓	✓		✓
Indonesia	✓		✓		✓
India	✓		✓		✓
Jamaica		✓	✓		
Malawi	✓	✓	✓		✓
Nepal	✓	✓	✓		✓
Nigeria	✓	✓	✓		✓
Pakistan	✓	✓			
Philippine	✓	✓	✓		
Russia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S-Africa		✓	✓		
S-Korea	✓	✓			
Somalia	✓	✓			
Sri-Lanka	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sudan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thailand	✓	✓	✓		✓
Zambia		✓	✓		✓
Zimbabwe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The assumption is that many graduates of Chinese language from the United States, Canada, Australia, Britain and many other Western European countries usually get a green leaf from their countries 'ministries of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs where it is assumed that they will be dealing with their countries' foreign policy issues This is viewed more as political than as economic as is in other

regions with the critical survey done by the researcher. Regardless of Chinese economy becoming a global beckon the acceptance of Chinese language and culture has been received with mixed views due to different perception of the world people towards China.

## 6. Conclusions

Although Chinese language occupies a very critical and vital position in the world affairs of multilateral and bilateral diplomacy as far as trade and economics, politics and governance not forgetting social and mutual communications of world people, the acquisition of the language has brought so much pain in many students and former students of Chinese language due to its complexity and the resistance shown by many people of the world. The resistance has been due to various factors which included; mobilization to an anti-Chinese by some governments and civic organizations with an anti-China sentiment, fear of Chinese's expansion, complications in acquisition of Chinese Language, cultural and character difference, common hatred of Chinese people by the West and ignorance of Chinese culture and Chinese language. The barriers between the West and the East in terms of Culture and Language has widely contributed to the broken bridges between the regions. The introduction of the Chinese "belt and road" initiative has without doubt brought back the connecting bridges to the world by Chinese culture and language, the enrollment of many international students coming to study various disciplines in China with special mentioning of Chinese Language and the promotion of (TCSOL) This research has taken many methodologies to establish facts surrounding the benefits and challenges faced by many graduates of Chinese language for either those who returned to their countries or those who have remained in China after graduation. The cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou has seen many foreign students graduates remaining doing business, work or hired by international co operations. Many of those remaining in China are also connected by marriages by or to a Chinese woman or man and already have raised families around. This research is not infinite but gives room to further criticism and corrections by other future researches made on the same topic. It is from this conclusion that is not limiting further interrogations to the laid facts in this research because of time and place that may change the outlook of these findings and recommendations. This research and its findings are only for academic purposes and nothing else. The survey finally ends with few recommendations that may help to improve the situation of foreign students of Chinese language after their graduation.

Firstly is to the need to advocate more access to Chinese lessons by many foreigners,

Secondly is to facilitate programs that makes it easy for the graduates of Chinese language to get jobs and also to be able to start their own business related to Chinese language

and culture so as to enhance multilateral relations.

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