

# MANDARIN CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN BOTSWANA: UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

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## **Abstract**

*Good relations between Botswana and China have led to many developments in diplomatic relations and in commerce and trade. This has resulted in the presence of Chinese in Botswana and in the need to learn Chinese. The teaching of Mandarin Chinese language outside China has become popular for many years now. Recently in Africa there is significant growth in the number of people interested in learning Mandarin Chinese. The northern part of Africa has made a lot of progress in the area of teaching Chinese language and culture, for instance Egypt and Sudan are seemingly doing well in their establishments of Chinese Studies. However, in southern Africa, developments in Chinese language teaching and learning are much more recent and Botswana like many countries across the world, has also taken the initiative to heed the call and introduce the teaching of Mandarin Chinese at the University of Botswana. Some of the primary and secondary schools were also not left out in embracing this initiative, particularly private schools. Globalisation and internationalisation process contributed towards the University of Botswana launching the Confucius Institute in 2009 and later on, establishing a Chinese Studies Programme in 2011. This research entailed a case study of the University of Botswana and focused on discussing the teaching of Mandarin Chinese and Chinese language instructors. A qualitative inquiry strategy was engaged and individual interviews were used to collect data. Data analysis was done manually. The teaching of Mandarin Chinese language is relatively new in Southern Africa including Botswana. There has been little research in this area, as such, this paper seeks to contribute to related research along the area of teaching Mandarin Chinese in Southern Africa, particularly in Botswana.*

## **Keywords**

Mandarin Chinese; teaching; University of Botswana; Confucius Institute; Chinese Studies Programme

## **Introduction**

The nature of Botswana-China relationships has been studied by Youngman (2013; 2017). The academic engagement has also been presented by Youngman (2014). While there are challenges in these relationships according to Youngman (2017), the necessity to maintain relationship with China are becoming an inevitability. This is happening in a context of globalisation where big powers and their languages use their languages and economic strength to influence the order of the world. Indeed “Globalisation has influenced the demand for the acquisition of Mandarin” (Nel 2016:43). Kamwendo (2011:110) gives a rough definition of globalisation as “the accelerated movement of goods, services, capital, people and ideas across national borders”. He further states that with globalization, it is very critical

to understand other cultures and languages. Understanding other cultures and languages gives birth to new opportunities that otherwise with the absence of appreciating different cultures from different countries, would not be available (Raletsatsi et al.,2018). Taking exposure to Chinese language and culture as an example, there are new opportunities such as; locals in different countries getting jobs as Chinese language instructors, translators, tour guides, business partnerships with the Chinese and many more. It is essential to have diverse skills in this era where the rate of unemployment is a concern to most countries including Botswana where “the economy is faced with high levels of unemployment amidst a saturated job market in government and limited opportunities in the private sector” (Ntshole, 2015). Similar sentiments were also shared in the Midweek Sun of 5 November 2018. The paper reported that unemployment of the youth in Botswana is on the rise.

It can be argued that China is inevitably influential to almost all countries in the world because of its current booming economy. For this reason, most countries want to associate with China in one way or the other. David Shambaugh (2011:1) resonates with this argument as he states that “Every day and everywhere, China figures prominently in global attention”. It is clearly evident that in recent years, the world’s thirst to learn Chinese language has increased dramatically. Kamwendo (2011:113-114) has remarked that “No dialogue on globalization would be complete without reference to language”. It makes sense as to why many countries in the world today are flocking to introduce the teaching of Mandarin in schools and tertiary institutions. Botswana is no exception in this movement as witnessed by the introduction of Mandarin lessons through the Confucius Institute (hereafter, CIUB) in July 2009, and the establishment of Chinese Studies Programme (hereafter, CSP) at the University of Botswana (hereafter, UB) within a short period of two years, that is, in August 2011. “UB has to seek ways of promoting its global relevance and competitiveness through its language curriculum...” (Kamwendo 2011:109).

UB established Mandarin Chinese through internationalisation process “which is part of the implementation of the University’s Policy on Internationalization that was rolled out in 2006” (Youngman, 2014; Kamwendo, 2011:107). According to (Zezeza,2005:3) internationalisation involves “the unregulated mobility of students and faculty, formalized inter-institutional exchanges and collaborations, and the curricular incorporation of foreign subjects, themes, topics or languages”. On the other hand, Knight (2004:71) notes that “internationalisation is the preparation of graduates to be internationally knowledgeable and interculturally skilled so that they can live and work in more culturally diverse communities at home and abroad”. There is no doubt that the current society we live in, that is forever changing and developing fast can pose a challenge to graduates who are not ‘internationally knowledgeable’ and ‘interculturally skilled’ and hence the need to learn and understand foreign languages and cultures.

The teaching of Mandarin Chinese language is relatively new in the context of the Botswana Education sector (Youngman, 2014). As a result, there has been little research concerning this area, therefore, this paper seeks to contribute to related research along the area of teaching Mandarin Chinese in Botswana. Teaching in any field can never lack challenges, therefore this paper concerns itself with the current situation in teaching Mandarin Chinese in Botswana and at the same time identifies opportunities and challenges encountered during the teaching of Mandarin Chinese specifically at UB.

### **Teaching of Mandarin Chinese language**

Training of locals to be Chinese language instructors

A qualification of Master of Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter, MTCSOL) was established in order to cultivate the international and domestic talents who use Chinese language as a second language or as a foreign language for teaching purposes. (See CI Headquarters/Hanban website: <http://english.hanban.org>). CI Headquarters/Hanban (hereafter, Hanban) webpage further provides detailed information on MTCSOL:

Recipient of MTCSOL degree should have solid cultural background of Chinese language which can be used as a second language or as a skill for foreign language teaching, a higher level of foreign language understanding and intercultural communicative capability. On May 31, 2007, the State Council Academic Degree Committee Office released "the Notification about MTCSOL Experimental Education Work and Candidates Recommendation for Nationwide MTCSOL Advisory Committee" and approved 24 postgraduate cultivation institutions ... for the MTCSOL experimental education work.

The MTCSOL experimental education work proved to be a successful exercise as currently there are many more Universities offering MTCSOL degrees in addition to the 24 initially approved postgraduate cultivation institutions. This has indeed opened great opportunities for foreigners to be trained as Chinese language instructors since there are a lot of scholarships readily available for those interested in studying MTCSOL. Furthermore, in countries where there is either a Confucius Institute or Classroom, MTCSOL graduates usually benefit from a placement arrangement by Hanban where local teachers' salaries are paid by China for half a decade.

#### The teaching of the Four Basic Language Skills

As a norm, the four basic language skills are usually emphasised in teaching any language, that is, listening, speaking, reading and writing. "Listening is a fundamental source of learning." (Wen, 2008: 131). In learning a language, the most critical thing is to be able to reproduce what you hear. As Wen (2008:131) rightly points out "Listening and speaking are intertwined in the mode of interpersonal communication . . . the development of the listening skill precedes and empowers the speaking skill. Speaking derives from listening, and in turn, enhances the ability of comprehension." It is undoubtedly impossible to learn how to speak a particular language without prior exposure to it. For instance, for children to be able to utter their first word they need to have heard it first from people around them. Demirezen (1988:136) concurs that "babies obtain native language habits via varied babblings which resemble the appropriate words repeated by a person or object near him."

Chinese language is a tonal language that requires a good mastery of the four tones used in the Chinese phonetic system. It is crucial to motivate and encourage learners to learn pronunciation aiming for precision and accuracy at the early stages because "the level of fluency of pronunciation is vital to speech processing and comprehension." Wen (2008:132). Wen continues to indicate that:

Helping learners build a strong foundation in pronunciation at the beginning level fundamentally benefits them in the long run. Methods to train learners' pronunciation may combine listening and speaking, with listening as the focus. First comes accuracy in listening, and then correct pronunciation. (p. 133)

Over the years of our teaching of Mandarin Chinese language as CSP lecturers in the University of Botswana and also adding our own personal experiences of learning the language, it clearly shows that although Chinese and Setswana language are different languages, however they have many similar aspects. For this reason, Batswana who are learning Chinese language are at an advantage when it comes to the pronunciation of Chinese words. For instance, some Setswana words may appear similar but differentiated by tones. The word ‘mabele’ has two meanings and each meaning depends on the tone one uses, it can either mean sorghum or breasts. Similarly, there are some Chinese words that sound the same as Setswana words, for example, ‘mae’(eggs) in Setswana is pronounced the same way as ‘mǎi’(买) in Chinese which means to buy. Demirezen (1988: 135) emphasises that “second language learning is strongly tied up with first language acquisition. Obviously, native language growth must pave the way for foreign language growth”

It is important to develop the skill of reading for one to function meaningfully in a modern society (Everson 2008). Everson further states that reading is different from speech since it cannot be acquired through normal interaction with others but rather, should be learned through teaching and guidance. It is common for people with the background of languages using the alphabetic writing system including Batswana, to find it difficult to read Chinese characters. Everson (2008) asserts that:

Native English speakers cannot apply their ability to read in alphabetic systems to their study of Chinese characters in the same way as they would when learning Spanish, French, or German. Because these languages employ alphabetic writing systems, many of the principles students already know for reading alphabets in English can apply in learning to read in these second languages. (p.100)

As a result, pinyin which uses the alphabetic system is usually used at the beginner’s level to help students to know how to pronounce and read Chinese characters. According to Liu (2015):

In order to understand the phonetic annotations assigned to Chinese characters, and to help learners to read characters aloud as well as to make it easy to consult a dictionary, the Chinese government invited specialists to develop the “Hanyu Pinyin Fang’an 《汉语拼音方案》”(Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet) and started to promote the system in 1958. The “Hanyu Pinyin 汉语拼音” system uses the Latin alphabet that is used internationally and attaches four simple marks to represent tones... However, “汉语拼音” is not the writing system of the Chinese language. The Chinese still communicate in writing using Chinese characters. (p.38)

Everson (2008) adds that pinyin is a very important tool to use in classrooms when teaching Chinese phonology and vocabulary.

The writing of Chinese characters on the other hand also proves to be challenging for learners from languages using the alphabetic writing system. According to Olmanson and Liu (2017), even though learning any language requires a lot of effort, learning a character based

language like Chinese can come across as challenging for learners accustomed to alphabetic writing systems like English. Since Batswana just like English speakers use the alphabetic writing system, the introduction of characters comes as a new and unusual area to them and in most cases, they regard characters as drawings as opposed to writing. Liu (2015) writes:

Chinese characters are the oldest kind of script that is still in use in the world today. They use a symbolic writing system to record words or morphemes. The ideographs do not actually represent the sounds. Hence, we usually cannot identify accurately the pronunciation of a character from its shape. This is the biggest difference between Chinese characters and alphabetic writing. (p. 38)

According to (Chen *et al.*,2008) the role of Chinese characters is that their meaning is directly attached to their shapes and the semantic radicals are the main performers of this role.

Everson (2008) points out that, it is essential to bear in mind that native Chinese learners have spent a long time practicing the writing of Chinese, therefore it would be unrealistic to expect students learning Chinese to be able to grasp the Chinese writing speedily. Everson's observation is that, since most students struggle to write Chinese characters, most teachers opt for a strategy in which some of the learned characters are to be written by memory while some are just left at the level of recognition. Everson further suggests that as teachers gain experience in teaching, they should assess their content material for teaching characters from time to time in order to identify what can be realistically accomplished by the students within the limited time they have.

### **Methodology**

With efforts to show what is currently on the ground with the teaching of Chinese Mandarin in Botswana particularly at the University of Botswana, a qualitative inquiry strategy was used. Purposive sampling, that is, homogeneous sampling was employed to identify the participants for the interviews. These participants were seven instructors (of Chinese origin) for Mandarin Chinese language at CIUB. Although the two lecturers from CSP (Local instructors and also the authors of this paper) did not literally take part in the interviews, however, they also responded to the research questions in order to provide an insight into what is on the ground at CSP.

### **Research questions**

The main research question is "How is Mandarin Chinese taught at the University of Botswana with reference to Chinese Studies Programme and Confucius Institute?"

The sub-questions are:

1. How long has the Instructor been teaching Mandarin Chinese in Botswana?
2. What is the instructor's strategy in teaching Mandarin Chinese to Batswana?
3. Which language skills (speaking/listening/reading/writing) does the instructor focus on in teaching Mandarin Chinese?

### **Data Collection**

Since seven Mandarin Chinese instructors at CIUB were interviewed, the following coding Mandarin Chinese Instructor one to seven (MCI 1-7) was used for easier reference, the position in numbers were adopted in accordance with the order that they were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in English and the participants were interviewed through semi-structured individual interviews which took about 10 to 20 minutes each. There was

only one instructor (MCI 6) who could not express herself in English and her interview was entirely carried out in Chinese language and translated into English at a later stage. Only instructors with more than three months teaching Mandarin Chinese at CIUB were interviewed, this was done to ensure that instructors have experience in teaching Mandarin Chinese to Batswana. The interviews were recorded following permission from the participants.

#### Duration of teaching Mandarin Chinese in Botswana

The participants were asked how long they have been teaching Mandarin Chinese in Botswana and these are some of their responses:

MCI 1: *It's 4 years, 2 years as volunteer teacher, which from 2011 to 2013, and this time I came here in 2017 until now, is almost 4 years because this year August it should be 4 years.*

MCI 3: *In Botswana, from last year September, so I think it's already 8 months.*

MCI 4: *I think I have taught a 4 and half years in Botswana.*

MCI 7: *Since I have been here, it have been 4 months.*

#### Teaching strategy

When asked about the teaching strategies they employ when teaching Mandarin Chinese, some of the participants gave the following responses:

MCI 1: *Normally I prefer to give them example myself, I don't like using power point much time because for example if I want to show you how to pronounce like the initial level like "e" and "i" if you just let the student listen to the video, listen to the audio, they won't have much imagine how is the shape of your mouth, so I will just to give them the example to show you show them, this is the first one. And the second one I think very important to show them yourself is the character, you show how do you write the character one stroke by one stroke.*

MCI 2: *In phonetics part like the pronunciation practicing, I try to make an analogy between their mother language which is Setswana with the target language like Mandarin...*

MCI 5: *Usually I incorporate culture teaching into language teaching. Sometimes I will tell my students when we learn a new word, I will tell them the information about the Chinese history and the economic and the society.*

#### Dominant language skills in teaching

When responding to the question on which skill they focus on when teaching Mandarin Chinese, some of the instructors said:

MCI 1: *I can say from different countries different situations, for Botswana especially for CIUB students, the most I focus on is oral and the listening because most of them are adults who knock off from the work come to study. I think the most important for them is to know how to communicate with the Chinese people and you may find that many people even in CSP many students graduated but their speaking is still poor, very poor, so I just focus on speaking and listening*

MCI 2: *Honestly I prefer the first 3 , speaking, listening, reading but I do not say I exclude writing but for our main objective here in teaching, we focus more on speaking, listening and reading, that is because of the background of our students. Most of them they start from zero, so most of them focus on career development and business construction, so like they do not have that much demand in learning Chinese characters.*

MCI 4: *Actually I focus on the speaking and the listening because most of our students are public, are from public, so generally when I ask them why do you want to learn Chinese, they*

*say maybe I want to do business with Chinese people or so I think if you want do business with Chinese people so the most important, I think is listening and speaking. So when I am teaching Chinese in the class I focus on the speaking and the listening.*

MCI 6: 这个我觉得还是听说能力, 我会注重听说能力因为其实语言的, 它最主要的功能也就是听说嘛。跟人交流需要听需要说嘛主要是这个, 其实你像那个写字这方面也会简单地介绍一些简单的字教他们会写但是主要的还是认读和听说。 (*I think speaking and listening, I would emphasise on speaking and listening because as a matter of fact the main function of a language is speaking and listening. When communicating with other people we mainly need to hear and to speak. Actually, when it comes to writing characters, I give a simple introduction of writing some easy characters, teaching them how to write them but the main focus would be recognition of characters, speaking and listening.*).

### **Data analysis**

#### **Duration of teaching Mandarin in Botswana**

The Chinese instructors who were interviewed varied in terms of the length of their teaching experience in Botswana. Some said they taught in CIUB for only three months, some for more than a year and some up to four or five years. With regard to us the two Chinese language lecturers at CSP, we both have more than two years' experience in teaching Mandarin Chinese at the University of Botswana.

Zhang et al (2010:94) justify that teachers are an important factor in the whole process of teaching Mandarin Chinese. Zhang et al further elaborate that a teacher with experience can come in handy in situations where there is shortage of teaching materials by adapting existing materials or even creating their own materials to ensure quality teaching and curriculum coverage.

#### **Teaching strategy**

The excerpts under data collection indicate that although the instructors had some similarities in their approaches to teaching Mandarin Chinese but it was also noticeable that they employed diverse teaching strategies. The instructors shared the view that teaching of new vocabulary, explaining grammatical points and class exercises were crucial in ensuring that the learners were taught successfully. The unique strategies they utilized on their individual capacity included; using oneself to show students how to pronounce Chinese certain sounds, the usage of analogies between Setswana language and Mandarin Chinese, use of power point presentations, the traditional teaching style of writing characters on the blackboard, incorporation of culture into language teaching and so on.

With us the CSP lecturers, we take advantage of the information technology platforms provided by the University such as Moodle and Blackboard to engage with the students outside the classroom environment through the sharing of notes, audios, videos and other study materials. Just like some of the instructors at CIUB, they also use power point presentations as teaching aids in the classroom. Wang (2007) suggests that teachers need to appreciate and tolerate differences between language learners and maximise the learners' potential by varying teaching strategies to cater for learners' preferences according to their different learning styles.

#### **Dominant language skills in teaching**

Sadiku (2015) emphasises that the four necessities in language that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking play a very important role in any language learning quest. Sadiku further states that these four language skills are separate yet bound together with an

inseparable bond. Indeed, the four basic language skills tend to overlap in the process of learning language. However, instructors of Mandarin Chinese usually have different preferences when it comes to which skill to emphasise more on during teaching. As shown in the excerpts under data collection, it is quite clear that most of the Mandarin Chinese Instructors focused more on speaking and listening skills because their students mainly aim to be competent in speaking Chinese for purposes of easier communication with the Chinese community. Although the instructors said they mainly focused on speaking and listening skills, but it does not necessarily mean that they totally neglect the teaching of the other two skills, that is, reading and writing. In terms of the dominant language skills in teaching, it is apparent that just like our CIUB counterparts, we at CSP also focus on speaking and listening skills but not forsaking reading and writing altogether as these two skills are also taken care of through assigning work to the students, getting submissions and giving feedback to the students to monitor progress.

### **Challenges in teaching Mandarin Chinese**

The interviewed Chinese language instructors identified some challenges in both teaching and learning.

#### **Teaching**

The issue of English as a medium of teaching and learning in Botswana (Kamwendo, 2011) poses yet another challenge to the Chinese instructors as some of them are not fluent in English. For instance one instructor said “...*But and sometimes we have some communication difficulty for at first it is difficult for me to understand my students, yeah, but now it is better, i can listen to them what they say so you need to be more patience, be more patient,*” and another instructor said: “其实英语这个问题是我最大的问题因为我来这儿通过汉办的选拔其实我是武术专业.....我这还是个例外因为是个武术老师，因为武术它是个肢体语言嘛，要模仿呀，这个语言要求不高。”(*Actually my biggest problem is English because I was selected by Hanban to come here as a Martial Arts instructor...I am an exception here because I am a martial arts instructor, because martial arts is a body language, need to imitate, there is no high language requirement.*).

English may be the first language for most of the students, but it is a foreign language for the native Chinese language teachers (Zhu, 2015). Zhu (2015:938) further adds that “Teaching their first language, Chinese, by using their foreign language, English, as the medium of instruction is not easy”

On the contrary, the aforementioned challenges are not common in CSP since English is an official language in Botswana. However, we are concerned about the shortage of qualified Mandarin Chinese instructors which results in heavy teaching loads for us as we are the only full time Chinese language lecturers in CSP.

#### **Learning**

Most of the interviewed instructors indicated that learners arrive late for class because the majority of them belong to a working class, for example they said: “... *firstly I think is the students because most of our students are from public, so they have work daytime and so generally some of them will be late for the class.*”. Furthermore, the instructors expressed that the learners mostly complain of tiredness as they attend Chinese lessons after working hours and there is also lack of motivation amongst the students, for instance they said: “...*in Botswana in general, let’s just take CIUB students as example, just that they don’t involve*



*themselves much as I expect to learning Chinese. ...probably because they are working they don't have much time to put their efforts into learning language”.*

Still concerning lack of motivation some said: *“I feel like my students you know they are different from full time students in Chinese Studies Programme, is like they are, it's not their duty like it's not their duty to follow up a strict discipline, right? It's not like, they are not, they study for their own interest, and they are not studying for a degree, right? The certificate itself might not benefit them anything or perform maybe let's say some kind of whatever, the short term programme but in general sense like they are, Chinese Studies more like how to say interest club for them, so it is common to see that my students have some you know problem in homework, they are in absence so like sometimes they even entirely disappear from the class, right for the whole session, then they like appear up again in final exam, and you will be surprised when you find that they passed the exam, so mind blow, isn't it?”*

According to Zhu (2015), due to lack of platforms outside the classroom for non-background learners of Chinese in which Chinese is more appropriate to use than English or the learners' own languages, learners are not motivated to learn Chinese, which is major challenge for Chinese language teachers. In addition to these challenges, most of the Chinese instructors if not all indicated that Chinese Character writing appeared to be a problem for their learners because learners usually take character writing secondary to speaking and listening skills in terms of their interest. For example one of the instructors said: *“The second one, I think is learning Chinese characters is really really difficult for them or they didn't or I can say they didn't pay much attention as much attention to the character to the other things, for example, they are just focus on saying hey learning a language I just need to myself to speak but I don't need to write so much Chinese character as long as I can recognize some that is fine for me I don't need to force myself to write and even some older people will say, easy teacher, I am older, I am much older than you, I am the same age as your grandma.”*

As CSP lecturers, we observed that truancy by some students is the main challenge because in most cases due to repeated cases of absenteeism, students end up failing the Chinese Mandarin course or making less progress in terms of language proficiency. Ramberg et al (2019:186) note that “unsurprisingly, truancy is negatively associated with school performance”. In CSP, our students have more time of learning Mandarin Chinese since they have at least six hours of learning per week, therefore they are given assignments that include reading and writing of Chinese characters as compulsory work. This helps us to involve students more in Chinese character writing and reading which usually result in students changing their attitude towards character writing and recognition.

### **Possible solutions to challenges**

Amidst all the challenges, the Chinese instructors seemed to be positive that these challenges can be dealt with in a constructive manner for the benefit of both the University and the learners. The Chinese instructors had the following to say about possible solutions to the challenges:

*MCI 1: I use the balance because for me is just tell the student, for example, special students use the special way, this is what I always say, for the elder people I may just low down the criteria for student, for example, for us or the teenager or university students for my class, you have to memorise in front of me one by one then you can go but for the older people you come to me, you read fluently then you can go and I will offer them more time, for example, if you come for anytime come to my class during the daytime, you are welcomed, that is what or*

*I can do for you right now, otherwise I really can't find other things to do, and besides I always give them some materials like from the you tube, watch the movie or the Chinese song or any other thing I can find to them but if they will read or not I have no idea, I just try my best, yes.*

*MCI 2: Ah, it's a little bit hard question, let me think for a moment... If I may carry another suggestion, that would be regularly making a summary or like a reflection over your personal experience. For example, after I am done with the class today, I am not just forget everything about it, I try to revisit this class, I try to categorize from part to part how it had been managed. Like if we use a table or a scale in terms of the objective or achievements of this class, then you assess yourself, or okay, you might also alternatively you may also invite your colleagues or some experts who observing your class, right? And then you request them give you a feedback about like how I achieved in class corresponding or with regard to the objectives that I said I have in the beginning. ...yah I'm not sure if I probably answered those questions.*

*MCI 3: I try to make the classes more interesting, for example, because teaching a language is not only a language, it is also culture. And even in these textbooks they have designed many culture content, so I usually when we for example in this lesson is talking about the Beijing opera, so our students don't know what Beijing opera is, so I spend some time and make some videos and play some videos to make them know what Beijing opera is and usually in Beijing opera, behind it there are historic stories and it can express the way how Chinese people thinking and their ideas. And in some lessons, there is content about the chopsticks and maybe we can get some videos on chopsticks and even make a competition about how to use the chopsticks to make the classes lively and more attractive to them. But I think the more important thing is to make them practice, practice more, to do more exercises and in this process to make them master how to use the word and how to use the grammar point.*

*MCI 4: The first one I think is like the most of them are public, they are tired and they say I am tired in the class, so I am trying to make my class interesting. And for example, playing games or teach them some Chinese songs and so on. Second one I think if you are a college student, I will strict to you I mean for the characters, it means when you learn I will push you to learn the Chinese characters. But if you are public because the public they just need grasp the speaking and the listening, so I think in the class if you don't want to learn Chinese characters okay I think is fine., so it is the second question. The third one is they have no time, they don't want do the homework but I will push them, for example, I will ask them to send their homework to me through whatsapp. And the second method is I will give them time to do their homework or practice in the class.*

*MCI 5: Sometimes I will give the students they are always late for class some small punishment but they are always complain that they are tired, I will tell them some fun stories to cheer them up. Usually I will test them after a new class and it is dictation, read the text, role play.*

*MCI 6: 这个那我觉得在课堂上我会用一些最简单的英语单词来给他们解释，学生们也能理解。你比如有一些，学生问我，上次上什么课的就是上中文课，但是学生问我一个这是什么意思然后我就想如果用英语解释的话我可能不知道该怎么解释，后来我想到一个非常简单的英语单词，我说 it's same,一说是一下子就明白了。就因为用了简*

单单词给他们解释，学生就明白了) (*For this I think during class I will use the simplest English words to explain to them, and students can also understand. For example, last time when we had class, there were some students who asked me a question, a student asked for an explanation, then I thought to myself if I use English to explain, I may not know how to explain, I later thought of a very very simple English word "It's same" and students understood immediately. Just because I used a simple word to explain to them, students understood*)

MCI 7: *You need to be patient and try to know more about your students and know them and make friends with them. And I think these guys like it more easy and forming interesting class and also learn something. So just make that easy because they are already very tired from the work so don't make them more tired because sometimes learn the text try to understand the grammar is very difficult, so they will feel very tired and so that time you will try to not be very (不要太严格) too strict, try to maybe sing a song, maybe play some games, yeah, make the Chinese class funny.*

As it is clear from the preceding excerpts, the instructors had various suggestions on how to overcome the challenges they encounter when teaching Mandarin Chinese. However, the most popular suggestion was making the class more interesting by playing games, singing songs, sharing funny stories etc. for the purposes of relaxing the learners' minds after a long day of work. According to (Zhu, 2015), since native Chinese language teachers cannot take advantage of learners' integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, therefore, they try to engage other interesting activities to motivate their learners. Zhu further adds that, as a way of eliminating boredom in Chinese lessons, native Chinese language teachers used different tools like games, colouring, popular music etc. reflecting the learners' preferences.

It is also important to note that, some of the instructors found it challenging to respond to the final question because it is evident that whatever the case may be, they have to find a balance between achieving teaching objectives and student retention. Student numbers are essential since CIUB Mandarin Chinese courses are offered on part-time basis. The following excerpt from MCI 2 attests to that "*so like if you apply the same discipline like or let's say requirement you know as the full time students, it is not applicable, it is not sensible, they won't take it at all, they won't buy it cos if you like push them too hard, they are going to disappear, right? You are going to see that sharp dropping in the next session's registration, right? Which is nobody want to see, that is the difference between you know your Chinese Studies Programme and our CIUB students. Like for us we are more sort of like a market thing like, we want to attract you know more, as much students as possible, right? It's not like, how to say compulsory study, right? You have to try to keep their attention, their interest, you have to remain there and interested so that you keep up with level to level*".

On our part as CSP lecturers, we normally make class participation to form part of the students' performance as a measure to curb truancy. Students are strictly required to take responsibility for their studies by fully attending all given lectures. Truancy is not tolerated at all costs. We also encourage more of our students to consider pursuing MTCSOL upon the completion of their Bachelor degree in order to increase the number of qualified local teachers in Botswana.

### **Opportunities for Chinese Mandarin language instructors** Chinese Teaching Workshops

Every year CIUB organises Chinese Teaching Workshops and their scheduling is decided upon by the CIUB Director in consultation with Hanban. These workshops were first introduced at the University of Botswana in 2015. This platform provides teachers with an opportunity to exchange ideas on teaching as well as share their teaching experiences. As noted by Krashen (1982), it is important to rely on insights and observations of experienced language teachers to enhance their teaching skills. Krashen (1982: 3-4) further states that “While results of research are regularly presented in professional journals, teachers' insights are not easily accessed and shared. Language teaching organizations often arrange meetings so that experienced teachers can share their techniques and insights with others”.

#### Yearly Overseas Chinese Teachers' Training Programs

The headquarters of Confucius Institute/Hanban established an Overseas Chinese Teachers' Training Program in December 2017. The purpose of this training is to assist overseas Chinese language teachers in Confucius Institutes, Universities, Secondary and Primary schools travel to China for training in the area of Chinese language and culture. The training sessions are arranged all year long and usually last from a week to four weeks. To qualify for these training sessions one should be healthy, below the age of 60 and working as an overseas Chinese language teacher in a recognized institution from their own country. (See CI Headquarters/Hanban website: <http://kzxylocalteacher.hanban.org/myDoip/homeIndex.html> )

#### Conclusion

In Botswana the teaching of Mandarin Chinese language which started in Gaborone at the University of Botswana has now spread its wings to other major towns such Palapye, Francistown and Maun. It goes without saying that there is a demand for learning Mandarin Chinese language in Botswana. Currently there are more schools considering to incorporate Chinese language into their curriculum, for instance Kidz Academy International School in Kanye. (See website: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2019-02/22/c\\_137842316.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2019-02/22/c_137842316.htm)). A lot of young Batswana view learning Mandarin Chinese language as a life time opportunity in terms of diversifying their skills in the already congested and saturated Botswana job market. (See website: <https://yourbotswana.com/2019/01/06/young-population-in-botswana-enthusiastic-about-learning-chinese-for-dream-jobs/>)

The research has highlighted several challenges that are encountered in teaching and learning Mandarin Chinese such as the learners' lack of motivation, writing characters, English as a medium of instruction, truancy, and shortage of qualified instructors amongst others. The instructors also suggested a few possible solutions to the challenges and the most outstanding suggestion from CIUB Mandarin Instructors was engaging various fun activities in class in order to capture the learners' interest. We as the CSP lecturers on the other hand suggested that in order to keep truancy under control, students' participation in class should form part of their continuous assessment. We further suggested the need to encourage more students in CSP to study MTCSOL for their Post Graduate Studies. On a brighter note, lately CSP students also seem to be eager to pursue MTCSOL as they are motivated by us the only two local Chinese language lecturers in their programme since we undertook the same course.

Based on the data analysis of this paper, it is quite clear that, a lot has to be done in terms of coming up with solutions to the raised challenges. It is also essential to address these challenges at the earliest opportunity in order to pave way for the successful teaching of Mandarin Chinese at the University of Botswana and the country at large. It is important to note that, this paper forms part of the few emerging papers in the area of Mandarin Chinese

language teaching within the borders of Botswana. As a result, rather than dealing with the problems or challenges from the roots it dwells more on sensitising researchers on what is currently on the ground at the University of Botswana, thereby provoking more research in this area.

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