



Language in the Labor Market: Evidence from Chinese Immigrant-Owned Enterprises in Congo Brazzaville

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ABSTRACT

This study uses data from Centre of Research and Prospective Studies (CREP) to analyze the determinants of French language proficiency and investigates how the language barrier influences economic activities of Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises in Congo Brazzaville.

The first part presents an ordered logit analysis of the determinants of Chinese entrepreneurs speaking and reading fluency. The results show that an increase in educational attainment is associated with a higher level of french spoken and read proficiency. Language ability is also associated with those who have been living in Congo for a longer time period and those who migrated at a younger age. In the second part, the effect of language on the migrant's economic activities is analyzed, it is shown that language barrier is a critical handicap not only between customers and Chinese entrepreneurs but also to Congolese employee collaborator.

Keywords: Language proficiency; labor market; economic activities; chinese immigrant-owned enterprises.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The societal and economic integration of immigrants relies heavily on their opportunity and ability to acquire host country-specific human capital [1]. The most important part of this human capital is the proficiency in being able to communicate in the destination language.

Researchers have shown a growing interest in the determinants of immigrants' second-language proficiency [2,3]. One reason for this interest, is that the second-language skills of immigrants play a key role in their position in the labor market.

According to [4], the immigrant entrepreneurs best adapted and integrated in the host country's society will have greater probabilities of being more competitive and that is achieved by improving skills in the host country's language or human resources management. Proficiency in the country of destination language can make immigrants more efficient as consumers, as investors and as producers in destination specific human capital (workers, entrepreneurs, traders, etc) enabling them to have a steeper improvement in their economic well being and in the success of their adjustment [2,5]. They can for example communicate with a wider range of merchants, customers or their native workers, understand and sign contracts, read advertising and articles about products that are locally available, obtain information about housing, employment opportunities and unemployment benefits, understand civic and legal rights in the new society. They can in effect pay a lower real price than immigrants lacking fluency and thereby attain a higher level of consumption (utility) from their given expenditures and for producers maximize their profit.

Only, many immigrants cannot communicate in the dominant language of their country of destination. This is the case of Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises in Congo Brazzaville where integration with the local population has proven difficult. They do not know French, this may be because they have only recently arrived in Congo and hence have not had time to learn the dominant language. Alternatively, it may be because the Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises simply have not been prepared to or have not been presented with suitable opportunities to learn the language of the destination country. And although they are learning, few local Congolese can converse

fluently in Mandarin. The majority of Congolese are mother-tongue speakers, French and to a lesser extent lingala are the main languages of business.

Two questions are addressed in this study. First, what are the determinants of French language fluency among immigrant-owned enterprises in Congo Brazzaville? Second, what is the impact of language fluency on economics activities?

If in developed countries Chinese immigrant perform in host country language as consumer in order to have better job, maximize their utility or satisfaction, in developing countries such as Congo, the situation is not the same. They are producer, they learn French to maximize profits or minimize cost per unit, maximize "efficiency," market share, rate of growth or some other objective constrained by some "acceptable level of profits.

This study analyzes the determinants of French fluency for Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises, and investigates how the language barrier influences their economic activities.

The paper is set out as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature. Section 3 describes the data and methods; Section 4 provides results, Section 5 analyze the link between language and economic activities and Section 6 is the conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An important aspect of integration into a host country is the acquisition of the host country's language. Besides its role in social and cultural integration, the importance for economic and labour market integration is without doubt.

Destination language ability of the migrant workers is an important part of human capital. The determinants of immigrants' language proficiency and factors that determined the earnings of immigrants, as well as the relationship between language skills and their earnings attract the attention of many researchers in the economic literature. This literature review examines the studies on the determinants of language proficiency as well as the studies on the effect of proficiency on earnings. Some studies consider both issues at the same time.

2.1 Literature on the Determinants of Immigrants' Language Proficiency

[6,7] found the ethnic neighbors had a negative impact on the immigrants' educational level. [8] also concluded that family social networking and language concentration were important determinants of the acquisition of immigrants' English language.

Language proficiency is an important part of human capital [9] which is expected to increase earnings by directly raising productivity or by acting as a signal to the employer of the individual's potential productivity and ability.

[10] suggested that immigrants were unlikely to be able to assimilate into the local culture and learn the destination language if they lived in a place where most immigrants came from the same country. This finding was verified using the 1900 and 1990 U.S. Census data. Those immigrants who were fluent in English preferred to live in places that barely had people who spoke the same mother tongue as theirs.

A similar conclusion was reached by [2]. They used 1990 U.S. Census data to study adult male immigrants who were from non-English speaking countries. They found that immigrants' English language abilities were reduced when the same original language groups lived together. Furthermore, the higher the degree of linguistic concentration, the worse the English language fluency was.

From that literature, it can be concluded that language proficiency is positively related to education attainment, duration of residence and negatively related to the minority language concentration and age at immigration.

2.2 Literature on the Effect of Language Proficiency on Immigrants' Labour Market Performance

Language skills are an essential tool in the labour market. What is the relation between English language proficiency and its impacts on labour market performance, advantages and failures, several studies, for instance, [11-17] have analysed this issue. [2,9,18] conducted a number of empirical studies on the relationship between migrants' language skills and their earnings in host countries. They argue that

language proficiency has a positive result on earnings.

Dominant language proficiency also lowers the transaction and information costs of job search for the individual, and it increases the ability to negotiate the terms of employment and the possibility of accessing better paid jobs [19,5].

[6] found that Immigrants who entered the country before the 1980s typically found that their initial wage disadvantage (relative to natives) narrowed by around 15 percentage points during their first two decades in the United States. In contrast, the immigrants who entered the country after the 1980s have a negligible rate of wage convergence. Part of the slowdown in wage convergence reflects a measurable reduction in the actual rate of human capital accumulation. In particular, there has been a concurrent decline in the rate at which the newer immigrant cohorts are "picking up" English language skills. The study isolates one factor that explains part of these trends: The rate of increase in English language proficiency is significantly slower for larger national origin groups.

[1] showed that the earnings of immigrants increase rapidly after they arrive in the host country, since the accumulation of local human capital and the experience gained in the destination country are valued more than the experience obtained in the origin country.

[20] also studied on the determinants of immigrants' performance in the labour market of the host country. They estimated that immigrants who can carry on a conversation in the official language in the United States and Canada receive 12 percent higher earnings than those who are not fluent in the destination language. Thus, the authors concluded that good destination language ability has a positive influence on the immigrants' success in the labour market, regardless of the existence of the different in immigration policies between the United States and Canada.

[21] also found that English language skills have a significant positive impact on earnings of immigrants who migrated to the United States as children. However, narrowing the earnings gap with the natives through learning English may not be as effective for the adult immigrants due to the relatively lower acquisition efficiency.

[16] explored earning gaps between fluent and non-fluent ethnic male and female minorities as well as the determinants of English language fluency in Britain. The findings show that the average earnings of both ethnic groups of minority in Britain are significantly affected by lack of fluency. There is an economic cost to English language deficiency in jobs and occupations. In a study on labour market opportunities of Hispanic and East Asian immigrant men, [22] suggested that deficiency in English is costly both in earning and occupational mobility. She found that Hispanics have a higher cost for English language deficiency than Asians at every skill level. In another study conducted in England and Wales, [17] showed that lack of proficiency in English works as an obstacle to the employment market. If people are employed, they are employed at a level below than their qualifications and experience.

Considering language as a human capital, [23] argued that English language proficiency works as determination of earnings and plays an effective role in earnings of foreign born ethnic groups. In addition, language deficiency impedes the opportunities for getting jobs that fully recognize one's qualifications.

[24] used 2006 Canadian census data to study why the employment rate of immigrants in the Montreal's labor market was lower than that in the labour market of Toronto. They found that the main reason for the low employment rate of immigrants in Montreal was the lack of knowledge of French and economic incentive for learning French. Moreover, if the incentive for knowing French and the number of immigrants who know French were the same as their counterparts in Toronto who know English, as well as the reward for learning English, then the employment rate gap of immigrants between Toronto and Montreal would shrink.

To summarize the previous studies, it can be said that there exists a strong relationship between destination language proficiency and the performance of immigrants in the labour market. Immigrants' earnings increase with the improvement of language proficiency.

While for developed countries there are a rather substantial number of studies on language proficiency, the number of international studies for developing countries especially in African countries is limited.

African countries also are typically since the end of nineteen, the destination countries of Chinese immigrants. Given the legacy of conquest and colonial rule, however, in many developing countries the dominant language is not the home language or mother tongue of the indigenous population.

Congo is an example of a developing country in which the majority of the population speaks French language which is the language of business or politics.

There have been no studies which investigate french Proficiency of chinese immigrant-owned enterprises in Congo though it could be one of the most burning topics in the research field. Moreover, although language skills are widely believed to have significant economic currency in the labor market, no research has stated on the importance of French language Proficiency and its impact on economic activities of immigrants in Congo. Our study seeks to fill this research gap by analyzing data from CREP.

3. DATA AND METHODS

The data used for this study are drawn from the Centre of Research and Prospective Studies (CREP) survey which was conducted in January 2014 among 300 Chinese immigrants entrepreneur in Brazzaville. The survey was carried out in collaboration with the Chinese expert teaching Chinese to Brazzaville.

Sample contains the detailed information on residential location, migration, labor market participation, education, health, household's economic situation (income, assets), language skills, religion and ethnicity that is necessary to perform the analysis.

Talking about Chinese immigrants, [25] identified three types of Chinese migrants to Africa: temporary labor migrants linked to public building works and large infrastructure development projects undertaken by large Chinese enterprises; small-time entrepreneurs and transit migrants.

The second group of migrants is small-time entrepreneurs, traders, and small investors or what [26] referred to as 'new entrepreneurial migration' where the emphasis is placed on 'migrant' rather than on 'entrepreneur'. These migrants were not necessarily entrepreneurs in China, but upon migrating to Africa (and other

parts of the globe) they establish their own businesses, commonly in retail or wholesale trade of Chinese-made goods, rather than entering the wage labor market. Reasons for this include lack of fluency in local languages, low capital required for start-up, as well as linkages to Chinese manufacturers. We are interesting in the second group of immigrant.

The population represented in the sample is all Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who met the following criteria: 1) Older than 22 and younger than 65; 2) Came to Brazzaville in latter ten years; 3) Came from China and 4) Had a home or business address in the City of Brazzaville and/or surrounding area.

They were informed about the study through a letter sent directly to them from Centre of research and prospective studies on December, 2013 and January, 2014. They were also informed that the research was completely independent of the Government China or Congo and that their participation was voluntary.

A migrant is defined as a household member who is working outside the country and has left his/her country of origin for at least one month and entrepreneur as a person who has a registered business and employs at least one person.

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted in Chinese with members of these groups from January to February 2014, either at the subjects' residences or their places of business. The interview survey was taken to the enterprise owners by an interviewer fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin who on average spent thirty to sixty minutes interviewing the subjects and writing down the respondents' answers on the survey itself. This was necessary for two or three key reasons. The majority of the traders interviewed spoke either no French or only the minimum necessary to run their business in a French-speaking environment. Initially most traders were, moreover, instantly suspicious of anyone asking them about their business or background. It required an extremely deft introduction by the Chinese teacher to allay their concerns and explain the nature of the survey. Above all, this meant convincing them that the Chinese government was not involved in this study (in which case most would not have participated) and that it was an opportunity for 'their voices to be heard'. This emphasis proved

vital in facilitating the interviews and winning their trust.

The interview schedule consisted of both closed and open-ended questions, many of which were based on the Interactive model and they yielded both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 The Determinants of French Language Proficiency

This study estimates ordinal logistic regression models for each language dimension that regress French proficiency on a vector of socioeconomic variables related to the acquisition of French proficiency, using SPSS. The vector includes age at arrival, years since migration, educational attainment, family member's proficiency, living popular area, settlement intentions in Brazzaville, Association membership and Regional origin.

This study generates a conceptual equation with the hypothesized signs for the French language proficiency. Following empirical specification will be estimated.

FRENCH PROFICIENCY= f{Age at migration (-), Years since migration (+), Educational attainment (+), family member's proficiency (+), living popular area (+), settlement intentions in Brazzaville (+), Association membership (+) , Regional origin, (+)}

3.2 Dependent Variables

This study examines French proficiency by looking at speaking and reading skills. Although theoretically, no hypotheses are formulated about differential effects on speaking and reading proficiency, it is interesting to explore both language dimensions empirically, and there is some evidence in the literature for differential effects [3].

The proficiency in speaking French were rated by the interviewer on a three -point scale, with answer categories (1=cannot; 2= speak just a little; 3= speak and understand very well)

Respondents were asked if they could read French newspapers, letters, contract or folders. Answer categories were: 1. no, not at all; 2. no, difficult; 3. yes, fairly well; 4. yes, very well

3.3 Independent Variables in the Model

Following the literature, age of migration (measured in years) has a negative effect on language proficiency. The underlying explanation is that someone who migrates at later age will have more problems in learning the language, because it is easier to learn at younger age.

The Length of stay in Brazzaville should have a positive impact at a decreasing rate. It is measured with several dummy variables representing the non-linear increase with time. Moreover, the individual's educational attainment and having acquired some formal education in china is expected to be positively correlated with his French speaking ability. Migrants with the lowest education level tend to have more problems in speaking French. This is in accordance with the hypothesis that personal ability plays a role in acquiring language skills.

Having French speaking adult family members may affect other adult family members' language skills. We expect a positive impact. [2] viewed a family member's proficiency as an externality to other members' proficiency and found evidence of language learning between adults but not between adults and children. This suggests that French speaking adult family members act as teachers for other adult family members.

Living in popular area in Brazzaville, not in enclaves is expected to impact french language acquisition positively. Empirical studies in the migration literature have shown that migration enclaves (networks) negatively affect the language proficiency of migrants. Furthermore, belonging to an association and planning to stay in Brazzaville more permanently should have a positive impact.

Settlement intentions are measured as the respondent's future expectations of staying in Brazzaville. Dummy variables are included, distinguishing those who intend to return to the home country, those who intend to stay in Brazzaville, and those who don't know.

This study adds dummy variables for the regional origin. Respondents were asked about their last place of living before migrating to the Congo. Based on this question, we distinguish between those who are from Wenzhou (in Zhejiang Province is a place renowned for its entrepreneurs) and others provinces. Wenzhou dialect is a little linguistically similar to French

language: There are a lot of French words which have the same way to utter with Wenzhou dialect but the meaning is not the same. Some words are reported in Table 1. So Wenzhou natives have some assets to speak French

4. ORDINAL REGRESSION RESULTS

4.1 Determinants of Spoken and Writing English Proficiency

Since the variables measuring spoken and reading English proficiency are ordinal. This study fitted two ordinal logistic regression models using SPSS. Variables in regression are defined in Table 2.

Factors includes Regional origin, Educational attainment, family member's proficiency, living popular area, Plans to stay in Brazzaville, Association membership.

The covariates in the model are Age at time of migration and Length of stay in Brazzaville. Talking about education, 87 interviewees had completed primary education (6 years), 81 secondary education (chu zhong), 123 secondary education (gao zhong) and 9 tertiary (university).

It is important to bear in mind that in china, general secondary schools include a 3-year junior secondary school (chu zhong) and a 3-year senior secondary school (gao zhong).

Overall the logit model are well fitted; i.e the variables included are individually and collectively good predictors of both spoken and read French language proficiency. Because the results are similar, we will discuss them together.

The results of the ordinal logistic regressions are shown in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6. For each of the dependent variables in the model, a positive regression coefficient means that a one unit increase in the value of the relevant variable is expected to raise a respondent French proficiency. We tested for interactions among all of the factors and covariates in the two regression model; the only significant interactions were those between age, Length of stay in Brazzaville and high level of education as predictors of read and spoken French ability.

Age at migration is a significant predictor of reading and spoken proficiency in French. [27] has summarized the ways in which early age at migration improves language acquisition. New

language acquisition becomes more difficult with age and immigrants who leave their native lands at older ages are likely to have strong attachments to their original languages and cultures that make it difficult to acquire a new language.

Length of time (Duration of residence), measured by years since migration, is the best predictor of whether an individual speaks and read French, regardless of age of entry to the country. It reflects about the institution country labour market, cultural adjustment factors, the development of networks for labor market contacts and investments in the human capital skills that lead to labor market success in the destination country” [2].

As immigrants stay longer in the Congo, their French language proficiency was shown to improve and their French language proficiency will be further enhanced with additional educational attainment.

Pre-migration education is positively associated with Language proficiency. Thus, entrepreneurs who had obtained higher qualifications before migrating to the Congo have significantly better skills in speaking and reading French. The association between pre-migration education and language proficiency is more pronounced for speaking than for reading.

Table 1. Wenzhou dialect and French similarities

Word in French	Word in wenzhou language (pronunciation)	Character	Meaning in Wenzhou language
sel	sel	生	Give birth
peu	peu	姓	name
tes	tes	打	Hit
Les	les	李	plum
qui	qui	开	open
non	non	农	agriculture
Su(savoir)	su	酸	Sour taste

Table 2. Variables and factors used in regression analysis

Variable	Abbreviation	Coding categories
Dependent variable		
French proficiency		
- Speaking	SPEAKF	1=cannot; 2= speak just a little; 3= well ; 4= very well
- reading	READF	1= not at all; 2= with difficulties; 3= fairly well; 4= very well
Independent variables		
- Regional origin	REGIONRIG	1=Zhejiang; 0= otherwise
- Educational attainment	EDUC	1= Primary; 2= junior Secondary ; 3 =senior Secondary ; 4=Tertiary
family member's proficiency	FAMEMPROF	1=have family member; 0= otherwise
living popular area	LIVPOPEREA	1= <i>living popular area</i> ; 0= <i>otherwise</i>
Plans to stay in Brazzaville	PLANSTAY	1= intend to stay in brazzaville ; 0=otherwise
Association membership	ASSOMEMB	1= membership ; 0=otherwise
Covariates		
- Age at migration	YEAR	Coded as age in years since entry into the Congo
- Length of stay in Brazzaville	LENGHTSTAY	1=0-3 years ; 2= 4-6 years; 3 =7-9 years ; 4=10 years

Table 3. Model fitting information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept only	529,017			
Final	422,584	106,433	10	.000

Link function: Logit

Table 4. Parameter estimates

		Estimate	Std. error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Threshold	[speakf = 1,00]	3,619	1,433	6,373	1	,012	,809	6,428
	[speakf = 2,00]	7,095	1,498	22,416	1	,000	4,158	10,032
	[speakf = 3,00]	10,109	1,703	35,244	1	,000	6,771	13,446
Location	year	,040	,013	9,680	1	,002	,015	,065
	lenghtstay	,423	,154	7,514	1	,006	,120	,725
	[livpoperea=,00]	-,451	,264	2,932	1	,087	-,968	,065
	[livpoperea=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[educ=1,00]	,324	1,222	,070	1	,791	-2,071	2,720
	[educ=2,00]	1,655	1,231	1,808	1	,179	-,757	4,068
	[educ=3,00]	4,852	1,376	12,427	1	,000	2,154	7,550
	[educ=4,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[planstay=,00]	-,271	,259	1,089	1	,297	-,779	,238
	[planstay=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[famempref=,00]	,542	,260	4,352	1	,037	,033	1,052
	[famempref=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[assomemb=,00]	-,120	,254	,224	1	,636	-,617	,377
	[assomemb=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[regionrig=,00]	,595	,276	4,639	1	,031	,054	1,136
[regionrig=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.	

Link function: Logit; a. parameter is set to zero because it is redundant

Table 5. Model fitting information

Model	-2 Log likelihood	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	520,807			
Final	414,757	106,050	10	.000

5. IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ON THE MIGRANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

As the use of languages is playing a more and more important role in economic activities with the globalization of the world economy, there is growing interest in the relationship between language and development of economic activities.

Knowledge of a language can be seen as a skill. To learn one or more other languages is an investment in human capital that brings economic benefits.

The contents of this section are based on literature review and the responses to interviews with Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises.

Any type of trade is based on communication, which can only occur when two individuals share a common language. As a result, revenues from trade increase with the probability of meeting others who speak the same language. [10] juxtaposed the expected revenue gains from learning another language against the costs of

language acquisition and showed analytically that the net benefits decrease when the proportion of own -language speakers increases.

For immigrants, the ability to speak the language of their host country enables them to communicate with the majority of the population, thereby lowering information barriers, making better profits and, consequently, achieving economic success in the new country. Upon arrival, immigrants' language skills are often limited. Thus, learning host country language is perceived to be a key mechanism for ensuring positive integration. A low level of proficiency in the state language adversely affects migrants' ability to access social services in the new country.

According to [28], language is one of the main issues when it comes to negotiating with foreign business parties. He mentions that knowing the foreign language can lead to more successful negotiations. The Andritz personal, who agree that language affects the negotiation process and the design of the contract, supports this statement. Not speaking the foreign

Table 6. Parameter estimates

		Estimate	Std. error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Threshold	[readf = 1,00]	4,641	1,463	10,066	1	,002	1,774	7,508
	[readf = 2,00]	7,961	1,535	26,881	1	,000	4,952	10,970
	[readf = 3,00]	10,258	1,660	38,177	1	,000	7,004	13,512
Location	year	,059	,013	19,960	1	,000	,033	,085
	lengthstay	,510	,161	10,109	1	,001	,196	,825
	[livpoperea=,00]	-,463	,270	2,934	1	,087	-,992	,067
	[livpoperea=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[educ=1,00]	,190	1,232	,024	1	,877	-2,224	2,604
	[educ=2,00]	1,491	1,240	1,446	1	,229	-,939	3,921
	[educ=3,00]	4,082	1,368	8,907	1	,003	1,401	6,763
	[educ=4,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[planstay=,00]	-,415	,267	2,417	1	,120	-,939	,108
	[planstay=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[famempref=,00]	,642	,266	5,809	1	,016	,120	1,164
	[famempref=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[assomemb=,00]	,193	,261	,548	1	,459	-,318	,705
	[assomemb=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[regionrig=,00]	,448	,283	2,507	1	,113	-,107	1,002
	[regionrig=1,00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.

language can lead to need of a translator and a more time demanding cooperation. On the other hand, to talk the foreign language can be a decisive competitive advantage. Language can also affect the process of building a relationship with the foreign company.

Language convergence is one of the key issues in the dynamic development of languages. All languages have an important common purpose, that is, they are a tool for communication. Suppose there is a situation in a group of n people where each person speaks a different language but everyone has the desire to communicate with the others. In order to ensure communication, there are two possible extreme arrangements: first, everyone learns the n-1 other languages within the group; second, everyone chooses to learn a common second language. There is no doubt that, from both the welfare of the individual or of the society as a whole, the second arrangement is more effective and easier to achieve than the first. Therefore, under economic driving forces, an initial diversity of languages develops a trend towards a common language, the lingua franca [29]. From the economic point of view of maximizing the efficiency of communications, a common language reduces costs, especially transaction costs. In person-to-person exchanges, different groups of individuals can choose the language to use as their common vehicle for communication,

and different lingua franca can exist simultaneously at different places. Some of Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises (10%) learned French in other African countries before coming in Congo Brazzaville; (30%) learned some French words just in Brazzaville the others (60%) don't even speak French.

They were interviewed about their economic activities and difficulties about French language in Brazzaville; how this language affects their activities.

The largest number of interviewees operated in 'retail trade' and 'accommodation and food services'. One of the major findings is the extent to which these businesses rely on the Chinese community; this is related to French language difficulties. 98% of Chinese owned enterprises interviewed are satisfied with their migration to Congo Brazzaville, 72% of them feel frustrated, lonely and unhappy. French language difficulties are a common cause of frustration and discontent.

This echoes the findings of other research, which highlights the importance of host country language in doing business in destination country.

From interviews we can see the effect of language on economic activities by analyzing two points:

- Language and business environment of immigrant
- language and local population.

5.1 Language and Business Environment of Immigrant

For all Chinese immigrants difficulties to speak French were identified as a top barrier.

Because of language difficulties, 30% of Chinese small businesses are still failing to take advantage due to a lack of understanding French. Many Chinese immigrants (33%) close down the businesses.

One entrepreneur states: "I lack knowledge of local laws and business policies. I think the government should publish their policies in different languages, for example, Chinese. In order to run a successful business I need to obey these local laws and policies. If I can't understand them, how can I follow them? It is the same problem with contract. How could I sign it if I don't understand French? Once a contract is signed, there is no flexibility in the terms unless both parties agree to renegotiate. We use French in all our negotiations and text. For example the enterprise that my friends purchased, the owner sends all the text to his lawyer. And the text comes back with notes, they just read through very quickly and sign the contract, so in the reality I don't think they understood what they were sign. They just read the contract very briefly and just sign because they wanted to have the order. I think one of the reasons why they failed is a lack of understanding of local language and culture."

Li xiong rong has a report about Wang wei, owner of a toy store at Poto poto, peace Avenue. Wang doesn't speak much French and when Department of Consumer Affairs inspectors came around, fines started piling up while wang's Chinese got tangled up with the city's legalese.

"Towards the end of april 2012, an agent from Brazzaville Department of Consumer Affairs issued two citations," Wang Wei said. "One citation was a 100\$ fine for unregistered merchandise, and another citation was for the toy guns. The agent at that time did not say how much the total amount would be for the fines. The next day, the second citation ticket was mailed to the store."

Wang who does not speak french, paid a \$100 fine, thinking that doing so would take care of the two citations. That only covered one citation, however and the other citation remained unresolved. Later on, she received a court appearance notice and disregarded it. Two months later, she received a \$5,000 fine.

Things didn't end so badly for Wang. The problem had been resolved, after reaching out to his friend Aijia (Wang Congolese friend who studied in China) who worked as a middleman for Wang, the Community Board and the Department of Consumer Affairs. After explaining that the language barrier caused confusion which led to Wang's failure to appear in court, her fine was reduced to \$500. Aijia is also going around reminding other business owners to speak up when they need his help.

Ninety-six percent of (96%) of Chinese entrepreneurs often expressed frustration in dealing with some host institutions (e.g. local banks, tax services...). They mentioned the difficulties in expressing themselves or understanding what the owner of the place which you rent want. And noted that communication skills encompass more than one's ability to speak a language. In business, it is important to make a good first impression and this includes interpersonal skills and confidence that are related to but go beyond, language ability.

Mr. Cheng noted the language barrier immigrants encounter when they come to the Congo Brazzaville. This language barrier, combined with cultural differences, lead to social isolation, he said. "Learning French will help immigrants gain information and communicate with others. Learn French—otherwise the market is small," said Mr. Cheng.

French is very important, with the establishment of our shops in Brazzaville, we need it. One question arise here: Why did Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises choose to make business in Congo if some don't even speak French?

Chinese entrepreneurs said: "profits come from taking business risks: not speaking French and doing business in Congo means taking a risk. But we face risks every day.

When you start a business, you automatically assume risk; you intend to make money, but you also know that you can lose money. Not starting a business at all is the only sure way to avoid the

risk. Successful entrepreneurs, however, take control over how much risk they are willing to accept and then develop plans to control the remaining risks. "What methods do Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises use to control this risk? Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs tend to start businesses within their ethnic enclave.

5.2 Language and Local Population

Chinese traders (60%) affirmed that they had good relationships with their Congolese employees, the latter sometimes complained of complications. One female Congolese shopkeeper stated, "While working with the Chinese traders we have a language barrier; the communication is based on simple words in broken French. There is culture difference and the working conditions are difficult, because I don't understand what they want exactly."

APILA Borman, one of the managers at China Multiplex, says most Chinese immigrants speak very little or no French at all. This makes Chinese shop owners vulnerable in the sense that they do not have direct communication with their clients and have to leave negotiations in the hands of their shop assistants (local employee). Chinese shop assistants also manage the stock, help communicate with the drivers of delivery trucks and ensure that the shop owners get what they want.

According to Borman, Chinese shop owners have very little control over what goes on in their store because of the language barrier. Shop owners do not approach customers, do not market their goods using sales tactics or even interact with customers. They do however step in when it is time to pay for the purchase.

Borman says the language barrier between Chinese shop owners and Congolese customers has resulted in multicultural business negotiation. Shop assistants and neighbouring shop assistants are sometimes required to step in to translate and help shop owners to make a sale. This situation reduces the eventual profits of the enterprise.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Interest in the language proficiency of immigrants is rapidly growing. Despite this growing interest, however, previous research has mainly concentrated on the language proficiency of family and labor immigrants in developed countries. In this study, I have examined the

language acquisition of a population less-well researched in the literature: I have analyzed the determinants of proficiency in French for Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises in Congo Brazzaville, and on how language relates to their labor market performance particularly to the development of economic activities.

If in developed countries Chinese immigrants perform in host country language as consumer in order to have better job, maximize their utility or satisfaction, in developing countries such as Congo, they are producer, they learn French to maximize profits or minimize cost per unit, maximize "efficiency," market share, rate of growth or some other objective constrained by some "acceptable level of profits.

The data were retrieved from the Centre of Research and Prospective Studies (CREP) survey which was conducted in January 2014 among 300 Chinese immigrant-owned enterprises in Brazzaville. It was done for both men and women. The survey was carried out in collaboration with the Chinese expert teaching Chinese to Brazzaville.

The findings indicate that, the variables years of schooling, years since immigration and age at immigration have significant impacts on the language proficiency. Specifically, the more education the immigrants obtained, the higher the language fluency. And the proficiency is improved with the duration of residence. Moreover, immigrants who migrated at an old age tend to have low language proficiency compared to those who landed in the host country when they were young.

For the effect of language on the migrant's economic activities, it is shown that language proficiency considerably improves economic activities profit. The language barrier is a critical handicap not only between customers and Chinese entrepreneurs but also to Congolese employee collaborator.

Chinese entrepreneurs in Congo Brazzaville have been confronted with both the language barrier and cultural differences at some point, leading not only to misunderstandings, but also to a negative impact on business deals.

Important limitation of this study concerned the interviews: They were very time on summing and the sample was too small to be representative.

7. RECOMMENDATION

All in all, the results are important to enable policy makers to devise strategies and immigration policies that promote and guarantee economic and social stability. It would be advisable to provide language courses for immigrants upon arrival. Because a business where the owner can communicate with the most customers possible and can comprehend the local laws and authorities is what's best for the local community.

Congolese authorities have to tackle the language barrier by producing bilingual documents to enable Chinese entrepreneurs to have a better understanding of Congolese laws and culture.

Greater emphasis should be placed on building human capital and overcoming language and cultural barriers to facilitate the transfer of business knowledge and technology to a wider array of the Congolese population.

The immigrants should be invited to present their language, religion and lifestyle, dresses, foods and drinks, music, dances, readings and be invited to do so in host country schools, community associations.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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