

Chinese Government Policies and Initiatives on the International Popularization of Chinese: An Economics of Language Perspective

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Abstract The goal of this chapter is twofold: (1) to introduce the Chinese government's current policies and initiatives for the international popularization of the Chinese language, and (2) to reflect upon the adequacy of the policies and initiatives from the perspective of economics of language. Taking the widely discussed 3-T Issue (i.e., shortages of qualified teachers, appropriate teaching methods, and suitable teaching materials) as an example for analysis, the authors argue that conceptualizing and conducting the international popularization of Chinese as a government-led public welfare project, as implicitly assumed in current policies and initiatives, is unlikely to address the issue effectively. Chinese policy makers should consider alternative models and approaches to better facilitate the internationalization of the Chinese language.

Keywords Chinese government policies and initiatives • International popularization of Chinese • Economics of language perspective • Internationalization of the Chinese language • Language popularization strategies • The 3-T issue • International spread of Chinese • International education of Chinese • Language and economics • Educational resources/materials development • Government programs

1 Introduction

Over the past three decades, China's increasing global influence has generated world-wide interest in Chinese language teaching and learning. It is estimated by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (a.k.a. Hanban/汉办), a

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government-sponsored public institution for the international popularization of Chinese language and culture, that there are over 100 million learners of Chinese around the world (Sustained “Chinese Heat” 2014). In response to this unprecedented global need, the Chinese government has implemented since the early 2000s a set of new policies and initiatives to facilitate the internationalization of the Chinese language. These policies and initiatives reflect a major shift of focus in China’s language popularization strategies: from “inviting in” (i.e., focusing on teaching Chinese to international students in China) to “going abroad” (i.e., assisting overseas learners to study and use Chinese) (Jin 2006; Wu 2010; Xu 2006, 2007; Zhang 2005).

Today, as we review the impact of this strategic shift in policy focus, it can be said that much has been achieved. Of particular note is the fast development of the Confucius Institute network around the world. By the end of 2013, over 1,000 Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in 120 countries/regions have been established. The Chinese government has sponsored a range of initiatives in this process. For example, according to Hanban’s (2012) annual report, in 2012 alone it spent \$396 million on the Confucius Institute network, provided funding to send 11,000 teachers and volunteer instructors to teach Chinese in 132 countries or regions, and sponsored or organized teacher professional development programs for 11,527 in-service instructors abroad and 6,629 overseas instructors in China. In spite of the large-scale investment over the years, however, the international popularization of Chinese remains much constrained by a number of factors, the most notable being a shortage of qualified teachers, appropriate teaching methods, and suitable teaching materials (hence the 3-T issue) (e.g., Hanban 2013; Li and Tucker 2013; Starr 2009; Wan 2009; Xu and Zheng 2011).

Over the past decade, issues like those mentioned above have typically been discussed within the realm of teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language, with topics such as how to better prepare teachers, improve instructional methods, and develop suitable teaching materials (Wang 2010). While these discussions have undoubtedly alleviated the severity of the issues within the framework of existing policies, it is also helpful to reflect upon the policies and the related initiatives from multiple perspectives beyond teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that have constrained the international popularization of Chinese. Theories in the field known as economics of language (or economics and language) can offer one such perspective, as the field “uses economic theory, principles and methods to study language and speech acts, considered as widespread social and economic phenomena” (Zhang and Grenier 2013, p. 219). Although this theoretical perspective has been applied to research on language policy and planning (for a recent review, see Zhang and Grenier 2013), discussions on the international popularization of Chinese within this theoretical framework have been limited (e.g., Lu and Wang 2011; Lu and Zheng 2014; Wang 2010). This chapter thus aims to introduce and review the Chinese government’s policies and initiatives for the international popularization of Chinese from an economics of language perspective.

In the following, we first provide definitions of the various terms used in the literature on the international popularization of Chinese. Then, we introduce the theoretical framework of economics of language and discuss its application to research on the international popularization of national languages. Lastly, we introduce the Chinese government's policies and initiatives for globalizing the Chinese language, which provides the basis for our discussion of its limitations from the economics of language perspective.

2 Terms and Definitions

Several related terms have appeared in the literature on China's international popularization of its national language. These terms include: "international popularization of Chinese" (汉语国际推广), "international spread of Chinese" (汉语国际传播), "international education of Chinese" (国际汉语教育 or 汉语国际教育), "international teaching and learning of Chinese" (国际汉语教学). These terms, along with the traditional label describing an academic field, "teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language" (对外汉语教学), have not always been used consistently in the literature. Hence, although these terms are related to each other, it is important to define and distinguish them in order to avoid confusion (Cui 2010; Wu 2010).

In this chapter, we primarily follow the definitions proposed by Wu (2010). To start, the term *international popularization of Chinese* (汉语国际推广) refers to actions taken by China to globally promote the teaching, learning, and use of the Chinese language. This term is thus appropriate for discussing the Chinese government's policies and initiatives. *International spread of Chinese* (汉语国际传播), on the other hand, is a term that can both reflect the phenomenon of the globalization of the Chinese language and be used as a label for the field of research on the phenomenon. Finally, *international teaching and learning of Chinese* (国际汉语教学) serves as the label for the interdisciplinary field of international teaching and research on the Chinese language. While there has been some controversy over whether it is better to replace this term with *international education of Chinese* (国际汉语教育, or 汉语国际教育), the two terms are considered interchangeable here. Finally, having its roots in linguistics and applied linguistics, *international teaching and learning of Chinese* (国际汉语教学) mainly consists of research on the *international spread of Chinese* (汉语国际传播) and research on *teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language* (对外汉语教学). In this sense, *international teaching and learning of Chinese* (国际汉语教学) is a development of the field traditionally known as *teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language* (对外汉语教学).¹

¹ Cui (2010), however, defines these two terms mainly based on a geographical judgment. He uses the term *teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language* (对外汉语教学) to refer to the activities involved in the teaching and learning of Chinese in China, and reserves the term *international education of Chinese* (汉语国际教育) to mean the teaching and learning activities outside China.

3 Language and Economics

Language is closely related to economic activities. On one hand, virtually all economic activities need to be conducted with language as the medium for communication. On the other hand, language-related industries (e.g., language education, cultural industry) are by themselves important components of national and global economic systems. The notion that language bears economic characteristics, such as value, utility, and cost and benefit, was first proposed by Marschak (1965) more than six decades ago. Over time, the field commonly known as *economics of language* has been informed by human capital theory and education economics (Ning 2006; Zhang and Grenier 2013). Language skills are considered a kind of human capital, and language learning a kind of economic investment for obtaining such human capital (Grenier 1982; Vaillancourt 1980). Hence, individual's decisions on foreign/second language learning can be analyzed from an economic perspective. Beyond the level of individuals, language planning and policy at the national level can be and have been understood from the same perspective as well (e.g., Grin 1999; Grin et al. 2011). Commenting specifically on the effort by governments around the world to facilitate the international spread of their national languages, Ning (2006) argued that such effort can bring considerable political, economic, and cultural benefits to nations, thereby contributing to national development.

An economic analysis of the policies and initiatives for the international popularization of national languages entails an understanding of their economic properties. According to Mankiw (2008, p. 226), the various goods in our economy can be classified based on two criteria: excludability (i.e., whether a person can be prevented from using the goods) and rivalry (i.e., whether one person's use of the goods diminishes another person's use of them). The interaction of the two criteria leads to four categories: (a) public goods that are non-excludable and non-rival, such as national defense and uncongested non-toll roads; (b) private goods that are both excludable and rival, such as personal computers and congested toll roads; (c) common resources that are non-excludable but rival, such as clean air and congested non-toll roads; and (d) natural monopolies that are excludable but non-rival, such as cable TV and uncongested toll roads. Of the four categories, common resources and natural monopolies are typically known as quasi-public goods, which are either non-excludable or non-rival. Because of the unique economic characteristics of the various goods mentioned above, their provision can and should be made through different channels (e.g., governments, non-profit organizations, and enterprises) to ensure efficiency in supply. For example, national defense as a typical kind of public goods should be the responsibility of governments, whereas private goods, such as ice cream and personal clothing, are usually provided by enterprises. Quasi-public goods, such as municipal water and public school education, however, are commonly supplied by non-profit organizations and/or governments.

With the above understanding, the international popularization of national languages falls into the category of public goods (Ning 2006; Wang 2010). This is

because one nation's effort in globalizing its national language cannot prevent other nations from making similar efforts (therefore non-excludable), nor can it diminish these other nations' efforts in this regard (therefore non-rival). As such, the international popularization of national language(s) should typically be the responsibility of the national government. However, the products and services provided for achieving this goal are mostly quasi-public goods (e.g., teachers, proficiency tests) and/or private goods (e.g., audio-visual materials for language learning, specialized language teaching programs, books), which can and should be provided by non-profit organizations and/or enterprises (Lu and Wang 2011; Lu and Zheng 2014).

The above discussions on the relationship between language and economics, and on the notion of public, quasi-public, and private goods and their provision will serve as the theoretical basis for reviewing the current policies and initiatives of the Chinese government for the international popularization of Chinese. These policies and initiatives are introduced below.

4 International Popularization of Chinese: Current Policies and Initiatives

4.1 Relevant Government Institutions

Before the establishment of the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (国家对外汉语领导小组办公室), later renamed the Office of Chinese Language Council International (国家汉语推广领导小组办公室) or Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters (汉办/孔子学院总部), the governmental institution responsible for planning the teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign/second language was the Department of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language and Expert Coordination Affairs (对外汉语教学与专家工作处). Hanban was founded in 1987 as a government sponsored non-profit public institution (affiliated with the Ministry of Education). Since then, it has taken over the task of promoting the teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign/second language both at home and abroad. Meanwhile, several other government institutions also share similar responsibilities, albeit with more specialized focus. For example, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (国务院侨务办公室, founded in 1949) focuses mainly on the teaching and learning of Chinese as a heritage language in overseas Chinese communities, while the Ministry of Culture organizes activities and sponsors events to promote Chinese culture, of which language is a core component. The China Scholarship Council (国家留学基金管理委员会), founded in 1996 and affiliated with the Ministry of Education, is responsible for managing governmental scholarships to fund international students who study in China. Among the above-mentioned institutions, Hanban plays the most pivotal role in the international popularization of Chinese today.

4.2 *A Shift in Policy Focus*

The field of teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language started in 1950 (for a chronology of milestone developments in the field, see Chapter 1, “[Historical Overview of Chinese Language Education for Speakers of Other Languages in China and the United States](#),” in this book and also works by scholars studying the history of CFL, such as Cheng 2005; Lu and Zhao 2011; Zhang 2013). Since its inception, this field has been characterized by an international perspective, as there have been international students coming to China, as well as Chinese instructors teaching abroad. However, up to the early 2000s, the focus of the relevant policies had been on establishing and developing the academic field of teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language that primarily caters to international students coming to study in China.

A shift in policy focus from domestic to international Chinese teaching and learning occurred in the early 2000s and was later reinforced by a series of policy documents and initiatives. In 2003, Hanban submitted to the State Council a proposal entitled *A Plan for Developing Teaching Chinese as a Foreign/Second Language: 2003–2007* (《对外汉语教学事业2003年至2007年发展规划》). The proposal was approved in 2004. It called for “leapfrog developments in teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language and in the international popularization of Chinese by integrating all resources and by adopting innovative measures” (Zhang 2005, p. 46). This document became the foundation of the international popularization of Chinese in the new century (Xu 2007; Zhang 2005). At the core of this proposal is the *Chinese Bridge Project* (汉语桥工程), which at that time consisted of a range of government-sponsored programs, including establishing the Confucius Institute network, developing an online resource database for teaching and learning Chinese, developing instructional materials and multimedia courseware, cultivating qualified Chinese language teachers at home and abroad, establishing national centers for teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language, fine-tuning Chinese proficiency tests, organizing World Chinese Conferences and “Chinese Bridge” Chinese proficiency competitions, establishing the Chinese Bridge Foundation, and providing Chinese books and other instructional resources to overseas libraries. The *Chinese Bridge Project* has evolved over the years, and its various programs today are primarily organized and offered through the Confucius Institute network.

Following the 2003 proposal, several additional official documents have provided renewed policy support for the international popularization of Chinese (Zhang 2013). In 2006, the General Office of the State Council (国务院办公厅) issued a document jointly prepared by the Ministry of Education and 11 other ministries and commissions entitled *Suggestions for Enhancing the Work in the International Popularization of Chinese* (《关于加强汉语国际推广工作的若干意见》). Following the requirement of this policy document, Hanban started in the same year to work with a selection of institutions of higher education to establish National Bases for International Popularization of Chinese (汉语国际推广基地).

In 2010, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council jointly issued a document entitled *An Outline of the Medium-and-Long-Term Plan for National Educational Reform and Development (2010–2020)* (《国

家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要(2010–2020年)》), which reaffirms government support for the work on the international popularization of the Chinese language and underscores the need for improving the quality of the services provided by the Confucius Institute network. In the same year, the Ministry of Education and the State Language and Letters Committee (国家语言文字委员会) jointly issued a document entitled *An Outline of the Medium-and-Long-Term Plan for National Language and Letters Reform and Development (2010–2020)* (《国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要(2010–2020年)》), which highlighted the importance of taking an active role in popularizing Chinese language and culture around the world in order to show an international image of contemporary China characterized by peace and development, as well as to enhance the world's understanding of and trust in China.

More recently, Hanban (2013) publicized a document entitled *A Plan for Developing the Confucius Institute Network (2012–2020)* (《孔子学院发展规划(2012–2020年)》). As stated in this document, Hanban expects the Confucius Institute network to meet the needs of China's public diplomacy and humanitarian exchange. This includes serving as a comprehensive platform for intercultural communication, contributing to the internationalization of Chinese language and culture, and nurturing friendly relationships between China and the world. The plan also sets goals for future development. By 2015, Hanban plans to establish 500 Confucius Institutes and 1,000 Confucius Classrooms with 1.5 million students, to recruit and prepare 50,000 qualified full-time and part-time instructors, and to develop technology-assisted Confucius Institutes (e.g., online, radio, and TV-based). By 2020, Hanban aims to have completed the construction of a system for international popularization of Chinese, which includes the global presence of Confucius Institutes/Classrooms, the implementation of unified quality standards for teaching, testing, and teacher education, the need-based supply of qualified teachers and instructional materials, and the improvement and refinement of collaboration mechanisms between China and other nations, as well as between government and non-government institutions. As the document reveals, Hanban hopes the Chinese language will become one of the most widely studied and used languages around the world in the foreseeable future of 2020.

4.3 Current Initiatives

The policies outlined in the above-mentioned documents have materialized in the form of government-sponsored initiatives, which are briefly summarized below:

4.3.1 Confucius Institute Network

This is a non-profit educational organization sponsored and supervised by Hanban. It is China's key platform for the international popularization of Chinese. The network operates via two models: Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms.

Confucius Institutes/Classrooms are typically collaborative entities between Hanban, a host school in the target country/region, and a partner school in China. Confucius Institutes are typically hosted in institutions of higher education, and they provide a broad range of educational services (e.g., language teaching, teacher training, consultation services, administering Chinese proficiency tests, and conducting language and cultural exchange). Confucius Classrooms, on the other hand, are mainly hosted in primary and secondary schools with a major focus on facilitating Chinese language and culture education at the K-12 level. While Confucius Classrooms can operate independently, sometimes several Confucius Classrooms are managed by one Confucius Institute in the same region. By the end of 2013, there were 440 Confucius Institutes and 646 Confucius Classrooms in 120 countries/regions.² In 2012, the Confucius Institute network reported to have offered 34,000 classes with an enrollment of 655,000 students; moreover, about 16,000 cultural events were organized, which attracted 9.46 million participants (Hanban 2012).

4.3.2 Educational Resources/Materials Development

Sponsoring the development of educational resources and materials is a major step taken by Hanban to address the shortage of appropriate teaching materials. Efforts to this end include creating online resource databases and publishing standards and guidelines (detailed below).

- Confucius Institute Online (<http://www.chinesecio.com>): This is a comprehensive online platform for learners to study and experience Chinese language and culture, for teachers to obtain instructional resources, and for interested users to search for information about China, Chinese society, and Chinese culture. In 2012, the platform was available in 46 languages with 596,000 registered users from 124 countries/regions, and it scored a total of 94 million visits (Hanban2012).
- *Guidelines for Chinese Language Teaching Materials Development* (国际汉语教材编写指南) is an online resource aimed at providing materials and tools for teachers and textbook compilers to develop their own teaching materials. A trial version of the online resource was launched on April 5, 2014 (<http://www.clt-guides.com/main.jsp>).
- *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* (《国际汉语教学通用课程大纲》) was published in 2008 and is available in 45 languages. This international curriculum serves as a reference for conducting overseas Chinese language teaching. The curriculum was revised and updated in 2013.
- *International Standards for Chinese Language Teachers* (《国际汉语教师标准》) was first published in 2007. These standards describe the necessary knowledge, competencies, and qualifications of instructors for international Chinese teaching. In 2012, a revised version of the standards was published and has since been implemented.

²Information obtained from Hanban's official website. Retrieved June 19, 2014, from http://www.hanban.edu.cn/confuciusinstitutes/node_10961.htm.

4.3.3 Teacher Education and Training

In response to the call for a large number of qualified instructors equipped with appropriate teaching methods, Hanban has sponsored a wide range of programs in teacher education and training. The major programs are listed below in Table 1.

4.3.4 Volunteer Teachers Programs

Hanban sponsors two volunteer teacher programs. The first one, Volunteer Chinese Teacher Program, recruits and funds qualified volunteer instructors from China to teach Chinese abroad. According to Hanban (2012), 3,981 volunteer teachers were assigned to teach in 90 countries/regions in 2012 through this program. The second one, Overseas Volunteer Chinese Teacher Program, aims to recruit qualified foreign citizens and overseas Chinese people to teach in target countries/regions.

4.3.5 Chinese Proficiency Tests

Hanban has sponsored the development of four standardized Chinese proficiency tests. These tests include: (a) the New HSK Test (新汉语水平考试), which is a test of general proficiency for adult learners of Chinese; (b) Youth Chinese Test (中小学生汉语考试), which is a proficiency test specifically developed for young learners; (c) HSK Speaking Test (汉语水平口语考试), which is a test for assessing Chinese speaking skill, and (d) Business Chinese Test (商务汉语考试), which is a test assessing professional use of Chinese. In 2012, these four tests attracted about 334,000 test takers, and there were 640 test sites in 101 countries (Hanban 2012).

4.3.6 China Research Programs

Hanban sponsors two programs to facilitate academic collaboration and exchange in humanities and social sciences between China and the world.

- Confucius China Studies Program (孔子新汉学计划). Launched in 2012, this program consists of six subprograms, including the Joint Research Ph.D. Fellowship, Ph.D. in China Fellowship, Understanding China Fellowship, Young Leaders Fellowship, International Conference Grant, and Publication Grant.
- Scholar's Visit to China Program (外国汉学研究者访华计划). This program provides funding for overseas senior sinologists to visit China for research (for up to 3 months).

Table 1 Major programs for teacher education/training

Programs	Descriptions
Joint Training Program for Localizing Chinese Teachers Abroad (外国本土化汉语教师培养项目)	This program aims to facilitate the localization of Chinese language teachers in target countries/regions through joint training programs between Chinese and overseas universities. The joint training programs provide funding to overseas Chinese majors (juniors and/or seniors), enabling them to study and complete their degrees in China. As of 2010, there were six joint training programs with collaborating universities in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. ^a
M.A. in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (MATCSOL) (汉语国际教育硕士专业学位)	First launched in 2007, this M.A. program is designed specifically for the international teaching of Chinese. As of 2013, there were 82 institutions of higher education in China offering this program, and 3,000 graduates were expected to receive the degree that year (Zhang 2013).
Advanced Study and Training Program for Overseas Chinese Teachers (外国汉语教师来华研修项目)	This program funds overseas inservice teachers to receive short-term (typically 1–4 weeks) professional development on teaching Chinese in China. The content of the training can be adapted to instructors' needs.
Expert Training Abroad Program (汉语教学专家组赴国外培训项目)	This program funds domain experts from China to travel abroad to provide professional development training to local Chinese teachers.
Government-sponsored Teacher Program (国家公派汉语教师项目)	This program is designed to recruit in-service teachers from primary, secondary, and tertiary schools in China to teach Chinese abroad. According to Hanban (2012), there were 4,001 instructors assigned to teach in 128 countries/regions through this program in 2012.
Head Teacher Position (核心教师)	This program provides funding to hire long-term instructors for eligible Confucius Institutes (i.e., with a minimum of 2 years of operation and with at least 200 registered students).
Development of National Bases	Hanban has sponsored the establishment and development of two types of bases. The first type refers to National Bases for the International Popularization of Chinese (汉语国际推广基地). These bases are affiliated with universities and focus on developing and disseminating resources and experiences. Since 2006, 19 such national bases have been established. The second type refers to the Elementary and Secondary School Bases for the International Popularization of Chinese (汉语国际推广中小学基地). Bases of this kind are affiliated with primary and/or secondary schools, and are responsible for supporting overseas partner schools in offering Chinese classes, establishing Confucius Classrooms abroad, conducting teacher/volunteer training, serving as internship sites for MATCSOL students, and organizing summer camps for international students. Currently, there are 107 bases of this kind. ^b

^aInformation obtained from Hanban's official website. Retrieved from http://www.hanban.org/teachers/article/2010-06/09/content_140268.htm

^bInformation obtained from Hanban's official website. Retrieved from http://www.hanban.org/teachers/node_7462.htm

4.3.7 Confucius Institute Scholarship Programs (孔子学院奖学金)

Launched in 2009, this scholarship mechanism aims to fund overseas learners of Chinese to study language and/or to pursue degrees in China. It provides funding for five types of learning programs: (a) M.A. in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (MTSCOL), (b) One-year language and culture study plus MTSCOL, (c) B.A. in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (BTCSOL), (d) One-year language and culture study, and (e) One-semester language and culture study. According to Hanban's annual report, in 2012 these scholarship programs funded 6,417 international students, among whom 3,632 were newly recruited from 116 countries/regions; moreover, 824 students were funded to study in the MTSCOL program.

4.3.8 “Chinese Bridge” Chinese Proficiency Competitions and Summer Camps (“汉语桥”中文比赛及夏令营)

Hanban sponsors three separate Chinese proficiency contests for overseas college students (first launched in 2002), for overseas secondary school students (first launched in 2008), and for all people learning Chinese as a foreign/second language around the world (first launched in 2014). In addition, Hanban has also been organizing summer camps for middle school students since 2007.

4.3.9 Chinese Bridge for Foreign Schools Program (“汉语桥”外国中小学 校长访华之旅)

This program is designed to invite overseas educators to a week-long trip to China from schools that either offer Chinese classes or are interested in doing so. The goal is to facilitate the invitees' understanding of the Chinese educational system as well as to promote cooperation between Chinese and overseas schools. According to Hanban (2012), 13,501 government officials, university presidents, school principals, teachers, and students were invited to visit China and/or participate in the Chinese Bridge summer camps through this program in 2012.

5 A Perspective from the Economics of Language

Two points can be made based on the above summaries of policies and initiatives. First, the international popularization of Chinese is a national policy of China that can be expected to last and continue to develop in the future. Second, since its inception the international popularization of Chinese has been conducted mainly as a public welfare project with collaborators being almost exclusively government institutions (e.g., Ministry of Education), a government-sponsored non-profit public

institution (Hanban), and government-funded public educational institutions. In fact, Hanban has become the primary (and to a certain extent the exclusive) planner and sponsor of the international popularization of Chinese, as shown by the wide range of initiatives under its supervision. From an economics of language perspective, because many services and products offered in the process of the international popularization of Chinese are quasi-public goods (e.g., teachers, overseas language teaching, and language testing), to a certain extent it makes sense for Hanban and other government-sponsored institutions to serve as important providers of such goods and services.

This does not mean, however, that government investment and sponsorship should be the only (and monopolistic) channel for providing quasi-public goods for the international popularization of Chinese. Moreover, the supply of private goods – such as audio-visual learning products, supplementary teaching, and learning materials – does not and should not have to be the responsibility of the government and government-sponsored institutions. Rather, enterprises are encouraged to play an important role as well. Because the needs of overseas learners and teachers are highly individualized and localized, relying on a government-sponsored platform as the only channel for providing language teaching and learning services/products is unlikely to satisfy such diverse needs. In fact, when it comes to the widely discussed 3-T issue, the problem of the existing demand-and-supply chain of Chinese language teaching and learning services/products becomes apparent.

It is necessary to distinguish the 3 Ts from the 3-T Issue. As Wang (2010) described, academic research and discussions of the 3 Ts (e.g., knowledge and competency structure of qualified teachers, theories and principles for compiling textbooks, and development of teaching approaches) have been at the core of the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign/second language since its inception. Before the shift of policy focus, the 3 Ts were not an issue because the government and government-sponsored institutions were able to meet the needs of the 3 Ts for teaching international students in China. Moreover, with the fast increase in the number of international students coming to China during the past decade ([China Association for International Education, n.d.](#)), Chinese language teaching and learning services/products in the form of private goods offered by enterprises have also emerged (Lu and Wang 2011). In other words, there have been multiple supply channels that work complementarily to meet the increasingly diverse learning needs of international students in China. The supply of language teaching and learning services/products is efficient for the domestic market.

The same cannot be said for the overseas market, however. The 3 Ts became a serious issue shortly after the shift of policy focus because of the relatively low efficacy of the monopolistic government-sponsored platform for supplying teachers, teaching methods, and teaching materials. The efficacy issue is manifested in both quantity and quality. The quantity issue is related to the large number of overseas learners. On the demand end, an earlier estimation of Hanban predicted that there would be a shortage of four million instructors of Chinese by the end of 2010 ([China Educational Newspaper 2009](#)). On the supply end, in 2012, Hanban-sponsored programs supplied 11,000 teachers and volunteers and trained 17,756 overseas teachers. Provided that Hanban is able to realize the goal of training and

preparing 50,000 instructors each year (Hanban 2013), it would still take an unimaginably long period of time to strike a balance between demand and supply for the overseas market. Obviously, relying on Hanban-sponsored programs alone cannot efficiently solve the quantity issue in the foreseeable future. The quality issue, on the other hand, essentially reflects the gap between the highly diverse learning needs among overseas learners and the incapability on the part of government-led institutions to meet such needs. For example, despite the fact that there were already over 3,300 published textbooks in 2010,³ a shortage of suitable textbooks for local learners has been a persistent topic of concern in many studies and reports (e.g., Du and Wang 2008; Hanban 2013; Xu and Zheng 2011; Yang 2009).

From an economics of language perspective, the quantity and quality aspects of the 3-T Issue indicate the inadequacy of the current demand-and-supply chain of quasi-public and private goods regarding the international popularization of Chinese. As Wang (2010) argued, this inadequacy is closely related to the inherent flaws in the current mechanism/institution design and resource allocation method(s) for the international popularization of Chinese. Mechanism/institution design concerns the rules of cooperation and competition among economic units. In the context of the international popularization of Chinese, it involves the rules regarding the cooperation/competition among providers of public, quasi-public, and private goods. Resource allocation methods, on the other hand, concern the provision of the products of international popularization of Chinese, namely, by whom and through what kind of channels. In theory, government should offer public goods. The providers of quasi-public goods can be government and non-profit organizations, and private goods are primarily supplied by enterprises. The three parties should work together to keep a balance between the supply and demand of goods in an efficient manner. For example, in case the government-led institutions are not able to train enough instructors to meet the local needs in overseas countries/regions due to limited resources, non-government organizations can help improve both efficiency and effectiveness of teacher training. If there is an undersupply of localized teaching materials, enterprises can work with non-government organizations to conduct surveys to learn about what is needed and to then develop appropriate materials efficiently.

The reality, however, is that Hanban plays an almost exclusive role in the supply of quasi-public and private goods in the overseas market. This kind of mechanism/institution design and resource allocation method, which highlights the role of government-led effort, is partly due to the multiple identities of Hanban. For example, on one hand, Hanban, while claiming to be a non-profit public institution, is affiliated with the Ministry of Education, and hence can be seen as representing the Chinese government; at the same time, Hanban is also in charge of profit-making enterprises providing services/products for teaching and learning Chinese (Lu and Wang 2011). Hanban is a developer, executor, and evaluator of the policies and initiatives of the international popularization of Chinese.

³Information obtained from the *Wenhuibao* newspaper (2012, December 24). Retrieved June 19, 2014, from <http://big5.chinanews.com.cn:89/gate/big5/www.sh.chinanews.com/PageUrl/20101224924527.html>

Hanban's multiple identities (i.e., semi-governmental, non-profit, profit-making, policy maker, policy executor, and policy evaluator) allow it to become an exclusive planner and sponsor of the supply of Chinese teaching and learning services/products, which, in turn, has prevented potential contributors (e.g., other non-government and non-profit organizations, independent enterprises) from providing services/products to meet the needs of the overseas learner population. The result is low efficiency in providing quasi-public and private goods for teaching/learning Chinese in the overseas market. Clearly, the 3-T Issue is a manifestation of the consequence of the monopolistic role that Hanban plays in the international popularization of Chinese. Because the current policies and initiatives all implicitly assume (and prescribe) such a role played by Hanban, unless there are major modifications at the policy level, it is likely that the 3-T Issue will continue to exist in the foreseeable future.

According to the current policies and initiative, the international popularization of Chinese has mainly been conducted following a model of a government-led public welfare project. Our discussions point to the issue of effectiveness associated with this model in the context of the global teaching and learning of Chinese. In fact, some researchers have argued for an alternative model that combines market-oriented industrialization and government-led non-industrialization approaches and have discussed the practicality of such a model (Lu and Wang 2011, 2014; Lu and Zheng 2014; Wang 2010). Concerning policy making, researchers have called for the necessity of (a) delineating the roles and responsibilities of government, non-profit organizations, and enterprises, as well as establishing a collaborative relationship between the three parties; and (b) developing policy mechanisms to allow and encourage contributions by non-profit organizations and enterprises. It is worth mentioning that Hanban (2013) recently announced a series of measures to further facilitate the international popularization of Chinese, one of which is

to fully mobilize stakeholders from society, and to involve all interested domestic and overseas organizations to participate in and support the development of the Confucius Institute network through mechanisms such as offering tax incentive and providing funding. (Guangming Daily 2013, February 28, p. 7)

The impact and effectiveness of such measures will need to be evaluated after their actual implementation.

6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we first summarized the current policies and initiatives taken by the Chinese government to facilitate the international popularization of the Chinese language. Adopting an economics of language perspective, we then analyzed the 3-T Issue that has constrained the scale and quality of providing teaching and learning services/products to overseas learners of Chinese. We argue that the current model of international popularization of Chinese that relies almost exclusively on

government investment and sponsorship is not able to efficiently meet the needs of Chinese teaching and learning abroad in both quantity and quality, and that it is necessary for China's policy makers to encourage the collaborative involvement of multiple parties (e.g., government, non-profit organizations, and enterprises) in facilitating the international spread of Chinese.

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