



CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION OF KENYA

肯尼亚中文教师协会

WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter- May Edition

✦ CLTAK TEACHERS



Michele Muthoni

My name is Michele Muthoni Mutema, and my fascination with the Chinese language and culture began in 2018—an unforgettable year that marked the beginning of a transformative journey. From the moment I was introduced to the intricate beauty of the Chinese language and the depth of its cultural traditions, I felt a profound connection that has only deepened with time. What started as curiosity soon blossomed into a lifelong passion.





One of the defining moments in this journey was my participation in the prestigious 2022 Chinese Bridge Competition, where I was humbled and honored to secure 3rd place. This achievement was not just a personal triumph; it was a powerful affirmation of my commitment to mastering the language and embracing the culture. It motivated me to push further, to learn more, and to share this enthusiasm with others.

Shortly after this achievement, I was fortunate to join the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi. My time there allowed me to immerse myself more deeply in Chinese studies in a professional and academic environment. It was a space where my knowledge expanded and my appreciation for the intricacies of Chinese language and cultural practices matured significantly.

This foundation laid the path for my role at Kitengela International Schools, where I had the pleasure of teaching Chinese language and culture. It has been deeply fulfilling to see my students embrace the language with such eagerness and enthusiasm. Their success in winning the 2024 Annual Chinese Spelling Bee competition stands as a proud testament to their hard work and our shared dedication. Watching them grow in confidence and cultural understanding has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my teaching journey.



Beyond academics, my engagement with Chinese culture has taken a more artistic form through my love for Peking Opera. This traditional art form has captivated me with its expressive beauty, symbolism, and historical richness. I've had the unique opportunity to perform Peking Opera at various Chinese cultural events and festivals, which has allowed me to connect with the culture on an even more intimate and expressive level.

Another unforgettable chapter of my journey was participating in the 2018 summer camp in China, which gave me the chance to explore the dynamic cities of Beijing and Tianjin. Walking through ancient historical sites, experiencing local traditions firsthand, and witnessing the modern vibrancy of China left an indelible impression on me. Those immersive experiences breathed life into everything I had learned in the classroom and inspired me to pursue this path with even greater passion.

Looking ahead, I remain deeply committed to continuing this journey of learning, teaching, and cultural exchange. My goal is not only to refine my own understanding of the Chinese language and traditions but also to serve as a bridge—connecting others to the richness, diversity, and profound beauty of Chinese culture. I am excited about the future and look forward to embracing every opportunity that allows me to grow and contribute meaningfully to this vibrant intercultural dialogue.

UPCOMING CLTAK MEETING

CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF KENYA
肯尼亚中文教师协会

ONLINE MEETING

SATURDAY 10 MAY

6:00 - 7:30 A.M

INSTAGRAM: @CLTAKTEACHERS



BRIDGET GATHU MUGENDI

FROM NAKURU TO 你好! – MY PASSION-FUELED JOURNEY INTO CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

As a teenager, I was coasting through life, hoping success would land in my lap. But life had other plans—and so did my father, a disciplined and disciplinarian yet supportive high school principal and math teacher. Ironically, math was my weakest subject. After my KCSE results, I knew it was time to break free from comfort and make choices that my future self would be proud of.

I joined Kenyatta University's School of Education under the Department of Literature, Linguistics, and Foreign Languages. It sounded impressive, but I still found myself uninspired—until I stumbled upon a diary entry from high school: "I want to become the best version of myself. I want to have the best things in life!" That reignited a fire within me. I told my dad I wanted to learn a foreign language. His response? "Go find a school."

Challenge accepted.

Within a day, I was in French class and passed the DELF exam in just three weeks. Though I had to pause formal French lessons due to my busy academic schedule, my passion stayed alive. Soon, an opportunity to learn Japanese emerged through a visiting lecturer. I signed up for all four levels and fell in love with the language. I even told my dad I wanted to go to Japan—his response was simple: "No one leaves my house without a degree."

FACEBOOK: CHINESE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



The following semester, I discovered the Confucius Institute and enrolled in evening Mandarin classes. The complexity of tones and characters felt like singing, dancing, and doing math all at once—but I was hooked. I practiced relentlessly, even teaching my friends what I'd learned on campus walks.

Despite early struggles, including a disappointing C grade in my first Chinese exam, I pushed forward with discipline and support from my ever-encouraging mother.

Soon, I was performing Chinese music and dance at university events like the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. When the 2018 Summer Camp applications opened, I lacked an HSK 2 certificate, but a kind teacher urged me to apply anyway. I did—and after a memorable interview and performance, I was among 14 students chosen to travel to China.

In Shandong, I studied hard and passed both HSK 3 and HSK Intermediate exams. Upon returning, I did my teaching practice in Nakuru, where students wanted me to return just to teach them poetry. But my heart was set on teaching Chinese. A brief stint as a translator left me yearning for something more fulfilling.

After graduation, I won a scholarship to study Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages in China. It wasn't easy—many classmates were advanced Korean speakers. I struggled at first, but after a tough-love pep talk from my mother, I committed to early-morning study sessions. My performance soared. I passed HSK 4 in China and later HSK 5 in Kenya, even as COVID interrupted my study abroad.

Back in Kenya, I took on various roles, including in logistics and translation, but ultimately found joy in teaching. Today, I proudly teach Mandarin at Crawford International School and am pursuing a Master's in Linguistics, focusing on how Kenyan high school students learn Chinese. I'm endlessly grateful to my parents, the Confucius Institute, my language teachers, and my husband Mugendi for their unwavering support.

Would I do it all again—with the stress, long nights, and steep learning curve? Absolutely. From a girl bored by English grammar to a woman teaching Chinese with passion—I've learned the value of dreaming boldly and working relentlessly.