

Chinese Teachers as Chinese Classroom Researchers

Rob Neal
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Obstacles to development of Chinese in English schools

- ▶ Wider malaise in language learning – e.g. 52% of pupils taking no language at all at GCSE in 2013 (CfBT, 2014)
- ▶ Unhelpful characterization of Chinese as ‘a mysterious and impenetrable code’ in large swathes of mainstream media (Duff et al., 2013: 3)

More obstacles

- ▶ Continued focus on European languages (British Council, 2013)
- ▶ A lack of qualified and experienced teachers of Chinese (Ofsted, 2008; British Council, 2013)
- ▶ A dearth of research into the teaching and learning of Chinese (Zhang & Li, 2010)
- ▶ Risk that faddish Chinese will go the way of Arabic, Japanese, Russian

It’s action but is it research?

- ▶ Can only provide ‘provisional specifications’ (Stenhouse, 1975) it might be profitable to explore
- ▶ Up to other teachers to weigh up the extent to which situated research findings are relevant to their own teaching context (Ellis, 2012)
- ▶ ‘There can be no ‘one best method’, however much research evidence supports it, which applies at all times and in all situations with every type of learner’ (Mitchell and Myles, 2004)

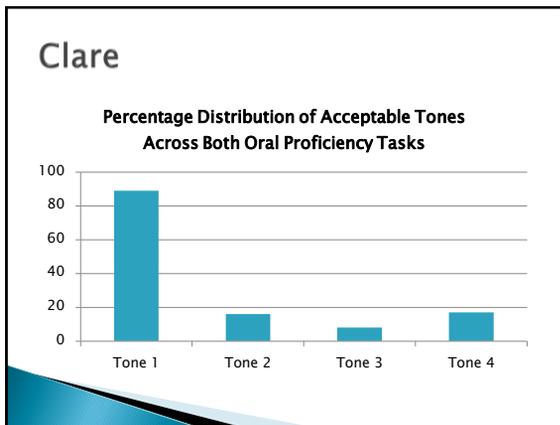
Multiple case studies

- ▶ Each learner conceptualised as a separate ‘unit of analysis’ (Merriam, 2009: 41) rather than conceptualising the group of learners as being the case
- ▶ My sampling is not representative of the class and so my findings do not apply to the whole class

Moving From Accent toward Intelligibility

Adapted from Grant (2014: 13)

Moving From	Moving Toward
Accent seen as inherently a problem	Accent accepted as part of normal variation
Accent reduction or eradication	Intelligibility enhancement
Native speaker emulation	Intelligibility-based goals
Scattergun pedagogy: when teaching pronunciation, give everything equal importance	Selective pedagogy: focus mainly on problems likely to interfere with intelligibility
100% responsibility for intelligibility on the L2 speaker	Listener awareness and listener training

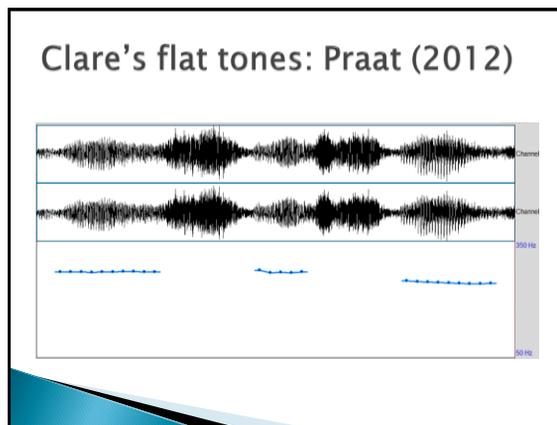


Clare

- ▶ Interviewer: Do you find the flat tone [Tone 1] easier?
- ▶ Clare: Yeah I think when I'm reading something I'd say it in the flat tone unless I definitely know which tone it is so I probably say that more often than the other tones.

Clare

- ▶ Clare: I usually focus on getting the word just because I forget about it sometimes.
- ▶ Interviewer: Is that different from Spanish or French?
- ▶ Clare: Yeah cos they don't really have tones as much so yeah.
- ▶ Interviewer: So is Chinese harder than French and Spanish or not?
- ▶ Clare: I think so yeah, there's more to think about when you're saying it.

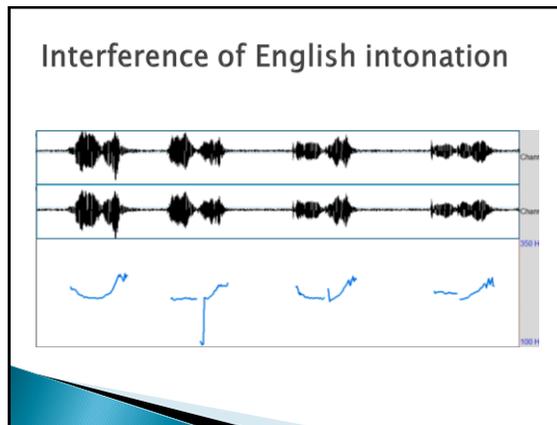
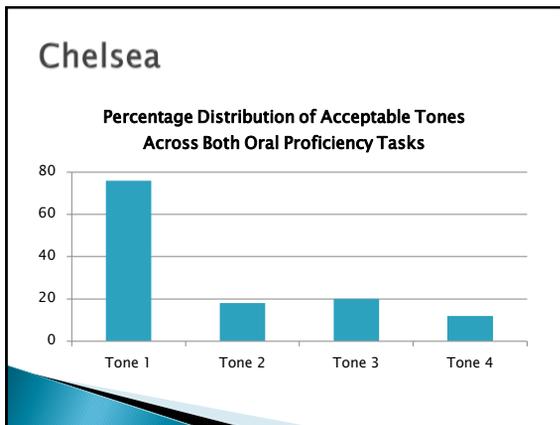


Clare

- ▶ Clare's overall tonal accuracy rating = 33%
- ▶ Clare's overall intelligibility rating = 82%

Clare

- ▶ Examples of tones being sole cause of interference with intelligibility = 4
- ▶ 条跳 2, 4
- ▶ 酷苦 4, 3
- ▶ 文温 2, 1
- ▶ 鸡计 1, 4
- ▶ Examples of initials and finals also causing interference with intelligibility = 25
- ▶ 我没有宠物 / 我没有中文



- ### Chelsea
- ▶ Chelsea's overall tonal accuracy rating - 32%
 - ▶ Chelsea's overall intelligibility rating - 85%

- ### Chelsea
- ▶ Examples of tones being the sole cause of interference with intelligibility - 17
 - ▶ 甘雨 (Tone 1, Tone 3) - 鞞榆 (Tone 4, Tone 2)
 - ▶ Frequent input in the classroom not enough once incorrect version had become fossilized
 - ▶ Examples of initials and finals also causing interference with intelligibility = 24

- ### Research findings
- ▶ Often messy, complex
 - ▶ Need to be honest, do justice to the complexity of the questions we're asking
 - ▶ Start a conversation with other Mandarin teachers
 - ▶ Share research findings with students and teachers

References

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