Chinese Teacher Training Centre

2012 Annual Forum
Program

Foundations of Speaking L2 Chinese:
A Theory and Practice Workshop

19-21 October 2012,
University of Melbourne
WORKSHOP PROGRAM

FRIDAY 19TH OCTOBER

5.00pm  Keynote Address:  Teaching the Sounds of Chinese: Goals and Challenges  
Dr Hana Triskova, Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences  
Author of The Structure of the Mandarin Syllable: Why, When and How to Teach it.  
Venue: Old Arts Lecture Theatre C, The University of Melbourne (Bldg 149, Map Ref G-14; Floor 1 Room 124)  
This is a Public Lecture, open to all  

6.00pm  Response – Jane Orton CTTC, The University of Melbourne  
Questions from the floor  

7.00pm  Forum Dinner (Workshop presenters & participants)  
Venue: The Private Dining Room, Union House (Entry via west door, North Court, Bldg 130, Map Ref. E-15)

SATURDAY 20TH OCTOBER,  MELBOURNE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, FRANK TATE ROOM, LEVEL 9

9.00am  Opening Remarks, Jane Orton, CTTC, University of Melbourne  

9.15am  Aiming at a Shifting Target – the development of tonal skills, Robert Sanders – University of Auckland  

10.15am  Discussion  

11.00am  Morning Tea  

11.15am  Movement as a Foundation of Speaking, Jane Orton, CTTC, University of Melbourne  

12.00pm  Discussion  

12.45pm  Lunch  

1.30pm  Listening in Learning to Speak Chinese, Isabel Tasker, University of New England  

2.15pm  Discussion  

3.00pm  Break  

3.15pm  Pinyin as a Resource for Teaching Units of Sound and Wording, Edward McDonald, University of New South Wales  

4.00pm  Discussion  

4.45pm  Wrap Up, Jane Orton, CTTC, University of Melbourne

SUNDAY 21ST OCTOBER,  MELBOURNE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, FRANK TATE ROOM, LEVEL 9

9.00am  Identifying and Correcting Error in Learners’ Speech, Jing Chen, University of Melbourne  

9.45am  Discussion  

10.30am  Morning Tea  

11.00am  Structured conclusion, Hana Triskova and all participants  

11.45am  Wrap up, Jane Orton, CTTC

* Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Frank Tate Room, Level 9 is Building 262, Map reference U-17
Presentations

Presenter: Hana Třísková, PhD  
Affiliation: Oriental Institute, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic  
Title: Teaching the Sounds of Standard Chinese: Goals and Challenges  
Keywords: Standard Chinese, pronunciation, teaching, methodology

Abstract

Three major factors are involved in teaching the pronunciation of Standard Chinese to Western learners: firstly, the objective properties of the sound structure must be ascertained; secondly, the teaching-learning challenges which these create must be identified; and thirdly, teaching-learning practices which successfully target these challenges must be created. This paper will address these factors. The principal facts of the Standard Chinese sound system are presented first and each discussed with respect to the demands they make on learners.

The points addressed are that 1. Chinese is a tone language and this is a quite new phonological experience for speakers of non-tone languages; 2. Chinese has a restricted inventory of syllables, which results in learners having to deal with a large homophony; 3. words are generally short, with no morphology, making perception difficult; 4. the language contains many sounds and sound combinations specific to it; thus learners need to master a number of new sounds receptively and productively at the very beginning of oral skill development; 5. there may be drastic changes of citation tones in fluent speech as well as many tonally neutralized syllables, which create a wide range of variation in tonal patterns to be mastered; 6. there is a complicated interplay between tone and stress with segmental reduction of unstressed syllables, their shortening, and suppression or “exaggeration” of tone contours; 7. there is a fine interplay between tone and intonation that is not easily distinguished and controlled.

The second part of the paper suggests ways to cope with these challenges in teaching. At the metalinguistic level the following aspects are dealt with: 1. the syllable structure and its functional components need to be introduced, as the phonemes change their phonetic shape considerably according to their function within the syllable; 2. consonants need to be classified according to their place and manner of articulation in order to explain both their phonological and articulatory properties; 3. while introducing the finals, a new form of classification reflecting their inner phonological structure is proposed; 4. some changes of the traditional teaching of third tone are presented; 5. the properties of Standard Chinese as a stress-timed language are set out; techniques for teaching students how to reduce tones and master the essential role of clitics (了, 着, 过, 的 etc.) and cliticoids (我, 你, 是, 有, 太, 把 etc.) for correct speech rhythm are outlined; 6. work on the interplay of tones and intonation is introduced; 7. the disyllabic or trisyllabic “minimodules” composed of the most frequently used words are presented as a useful instrument for training in producing tones, stress and sentence intonation.

Hana Třísková teaches Chinese Phonetics at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, where she has been a research fellow since 1983. Her research interests centre on the phonology and phonetics of Standard Chinese (SC), especially sentence prosody, as well as methodology of teaching SC pronunciation. In the past decade she has taken part in numerous inter-academic exchanges in China, including at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Phonetic Laboratory of the Institute of Linguistics, Beijing Language and Culture University and Nankai University. She is currently working with Cao Wen from BLCU on a monograph on the SC sound system, as well as on papers concerning aspirated consonants in SC and the segmental structure of the SC syllable.


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Abstract:
The meaning and significance of tone can be viewed from a variety of angles: perception vs. production, as one component of an isolated syllable, as components of syllables in words, or as components of syllables in phrases that are embedded on top of intonational swells. ‘Getting it right’, then, demands different degrees of preciseness depending on the size of the speech unit in question, so what is required of tone at one level is not what is required at a different level. ‘Getting it right’ also requires consistency of production, a key attribute in confirming both the authenticity of the heavily accented Mandarin tones and intonation produced by older, less-educated dialect speakers, thus differentiating it from the strikingly foreign sounding quality of the tones and intonation produced by many non-native Chinese speakers. In this recognition of the authenticity of accented Mandarin by native Chinese speakers, ‘getting it right’ must allow for variance in the idealised target production. Whereas northern Mandarin is a stress-timed language that generates large numbers of unstressed (neutral tone) syllables in certain intonational positions, southern dialects, on the other hand, are syllable-timed instead. It is not surprising, therefore, that syllable-timed Mandarin is spoken widely in the South.

One such example is Taiwan Mandarin, where it has been documented that even underlying neutral tone morphemes like –zhe and –le in fact are pronounced with a common, low-falling tonal contour rather than being realised as short blips whose pitch height are determined by the tone of the preceding syllable, as is the case in Standard Mandarin. The teaching and learning of tone, therefore, must be planned in an informed way with a long-term perspective that places the period of learning in the home country classroom in the broader context of how much time it realistically takes to be able to swim comfortably in the ocean of native speakers, armed with a sufficient set of skills to thrive on their own once they have left the nest. In so doing, teachers must be very clear in their own minds about the nature of tone at different speech units of the language, how native speakers and non-native learners differ in their perception and production of tone and intonation and they must also be cognisant of what is realistic to achieve and when. In the process of discussing the issues raised above, this presentation will identify key acoustic features for teachers and students to focus on in the articulation and perception of tone and intonation as one moves from syllables to words to phrases, and will propose a standard for what it means to ‘get it right’ at each level. Appropriate exercises for targeting each standard will also be provided, with consideration of realistic time frames for ‘getting it right’ at each of these levels.
Abstract

There is a very particular relationship between the kinesic and vocalic in spoken language: in normal behaviour, a speaker’s speech and body motions are precisely and rhythmically synchronized (Condon and Ogston, 1966: 338). Because patterns of vocalic stress fall on key lexical items arranged in grammatical patterns, intrapersonal synchrony reveals the integration of a speaker’s semantic, syntactic, vocalic and kinesic expression; and the discovery that a listener’s body is also in synchrony with the speaker makes apparent the significant role of speech rhythm in the psychological integration of participants in social interaction. Based on these findings, Guberina created a system of physical strategies for educating the hearing impaired, which led to the creation of second language teaching practice in which student exercises in the kinesic domain linked to gradually more complex target language rhythm patterns became a powerful new route to developing the vocalic modification required of learners by their new language (Vuletic, 1966; Guberina 1970; Renard 1975; Adams, 1979; Menot 1986). Current research continues to show that for developing both reception and production of target language prosody and sounds, movement can be highly effective and the practice has flourished in the teaching of European languages. Little of this, however, has entered the field of Chinese language teaching, despite its potential to assist in meeting the very considerable phonological challenges Chinese presents for learners from European language backgrounds. This paper will present the principles of kinesic-vocalic integration in language teaching and discuss efforts to transfer these to the teaching of Chinese. A choice of graduated texts which meet the criteria elaborated will be presented and participants invited to collaborate on their preparation as suitable material for teaching L2 spoken Chinese with movement.

References


Jane Orton j.orton@unimelb.edu.au
**Presenter:** Isabel Tasker, PhD

**Affiliation:** Lecturer in Chinese and Convenor of Chinese, University of New England, Armidale NSW

**Title:** Sounding Chinese: listening in learning to speak Chinese

**Keywords:** Teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages (TCSL), Chinese pronunciation, Chinese speaking skills, listening in learning Chinese

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**Abstract**

When we begin to learn a new language, we each draw on the personal concepts of speech which we have developed based upon the languages that we already know. However, those concepts are not necessarily helpful in understanding and learning to produce speech in a new target language. Therefore, part of the work of teaching pronunciation and speaking skills lies in assisting learners to become aware of these differences and to form new concepts related specifically to the new target language (Fraser, 2006).

How can we teachers of Chinese in Australia help learners to develop personally meaningful and relevant ways of conceptualising and talking about their pronunciation of Chinese? How could we use such an approach to improve learners’ pronunciation and speaking skills, and thus raise the level of comprehensibility of their spoken Chinese?

This presentation will consider a range of ways in which listening can be used as a source of learning about the sound system of Modern Standard Chinese (Mandarin). For learners, listening to spoken Mandarin is a valuable source of knowledge about sound patterns and suprasegmentals in context, and about the way that intonational patterns, pausing and phrasing contribute to comprehension of the flow of speech and to the development of fluency. Additionally, learners can benefit from practising critical listening skills for monitoring their own pronunciation. For teachers, developing methods for listening analytically to learner speech in Chinese can assist in identifying the issues that might be affecting comprehensibility, and allow provision of constructive feedback in terms that make sense to the learner.

The presentation will include suggestions for practical implementation of these ideas. Various types and sources of listening materials will be explored, and ways they could be utilised or adapted to enhance speaking skills will be discussed.

**Reference:**


**Isabel Tasker** is the Convenor of Chinese at the University of New England. She has over three decades of experience teaching Mandarin in Australia and Europe in a variety of modes and contexts: full- and part-time, adult and community education, university campus-based, and by distance education and online. Her work has involved her in a wide range of curriculum development, assessment, evaluation and teacher-training initiatives. In 2008 she was awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation for outstanding contributions to student learning (in the area of Mandarin teaching).

Isabel’s research is situated in the areas of Chinese pedagogy, applied linguistics, distance education and self-directed learning. Her doctoral thesis analysed the social, affective and conceptual aspects of adult learners’ experiences of long-term Chinese language learning. Another research interest is in Chinese curriculum development appropriate to new learning environments. Her recent publications include:


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Abstract

The historical origins of *Hanyu Pinyin* lie in the *Latinxua* or "Latinisation" systems of the 1930s, first trialled with illiterates in Chinese-speaking parts of the Soviet Union, and then in Communist-controlled parts of China. These trials showed that romanisation could indeed work as an independent writing system for Chinese, as long as the written register was reasonably close enough to the spoken vernacular, and not a "transcription" of texts written in characters (Chen 1999). This experience suggests that pinyin could be positively utilised for the teaching of spoken Chinese, as long as it was seen as a "spelling system" not as a "transcription": in other words, governed by conventions that specify graph to sound correspondences, as well as indicating larger units such as words and phrases. Drawing on an "elaborated" form of pinyin used to teach character literacy to heritage students at the University of Auckland in 2010-2011 (McDonald 2010), I will discuss how pinyin supplemented with punctuation conventions to indicate unstressed syllables and certain kinds of grammatical combinations can indeed function as an autonomous writing system, and hence free up the teaching of spoken Chinese from dependence on the character script, with positive implications for speed and efficiency of learning.

References:


Abstract

Learners’ spoken Chinese is a complex matter, presenting teachers with short, often very fast utterances in which there may be a set of interrelated errors in tone, phoneme, pitch, intonation, rhythm or stress which are perceptible but difficult to identify and difficult to correct.

While both L1 and L2 speaker Chinese teachers experience these difficulties, they often do so differently. L1 teachers are usually more sensitive to any deviation in a student’s utterance, but may be at a loss to recognize exactly where the error lies, especially in the area of tonal error. By contrast, L2 teachers tend to have a better understanding of learners’ tonal difficulties, but their sensitivity to errors embedded in a whole flow of sound may be inadequate due to their own limited tonal mastery.

This presentation will develop the above propositions and as a workshop activity, participants will view four short video clips, identify the learner’s errors and note and assess the efficacy of the teacher’s efforts to help the learner improve. The purpose is to investigate more closely the specific challenges for teachers in the matter of error identification, compare any differences between L1 and L2 speakers that emerge, and explore possible paths for development in teaching spoken Chinese.

Jing Chen was born and educated in Shanghai, graduating in 2008 from Tongji University, where she majored in Information Management and Information Systems. In 2010 she entered the Master of Teaching (Secondary) at the University of Melbourne, preparing to teach Modern Languages (Chinese) and Business Studies. In addition to experience teaching classroom learners and Chinese background learners in government and independent schools, Jing has taught Chinese to Background and L1 students at the weekend Chinese Culture School (Xinjingshan). In 2012 Jing completed her Master of Teaching by undertaking the Specialist Certificate in Chinese Language Teaching and a writing project on intercultural awareness in Chinese teaching. Jing is an active member of the Chinese Language Teachers Association of Victoria and Webmaster of the Association’s website. She is also a member of the CTTC Intercultural Communication and Languages Education (ICALE) research group.

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