

The Influence of Yantai Dialect Tones on The Acquisition of English Intonation

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Research Background
Research Questions

Experiment
Results and Discussion

Conclusion

Outline

➤ **Difference**

- Chinese: a tone language;
- English: a stress/intonation language.

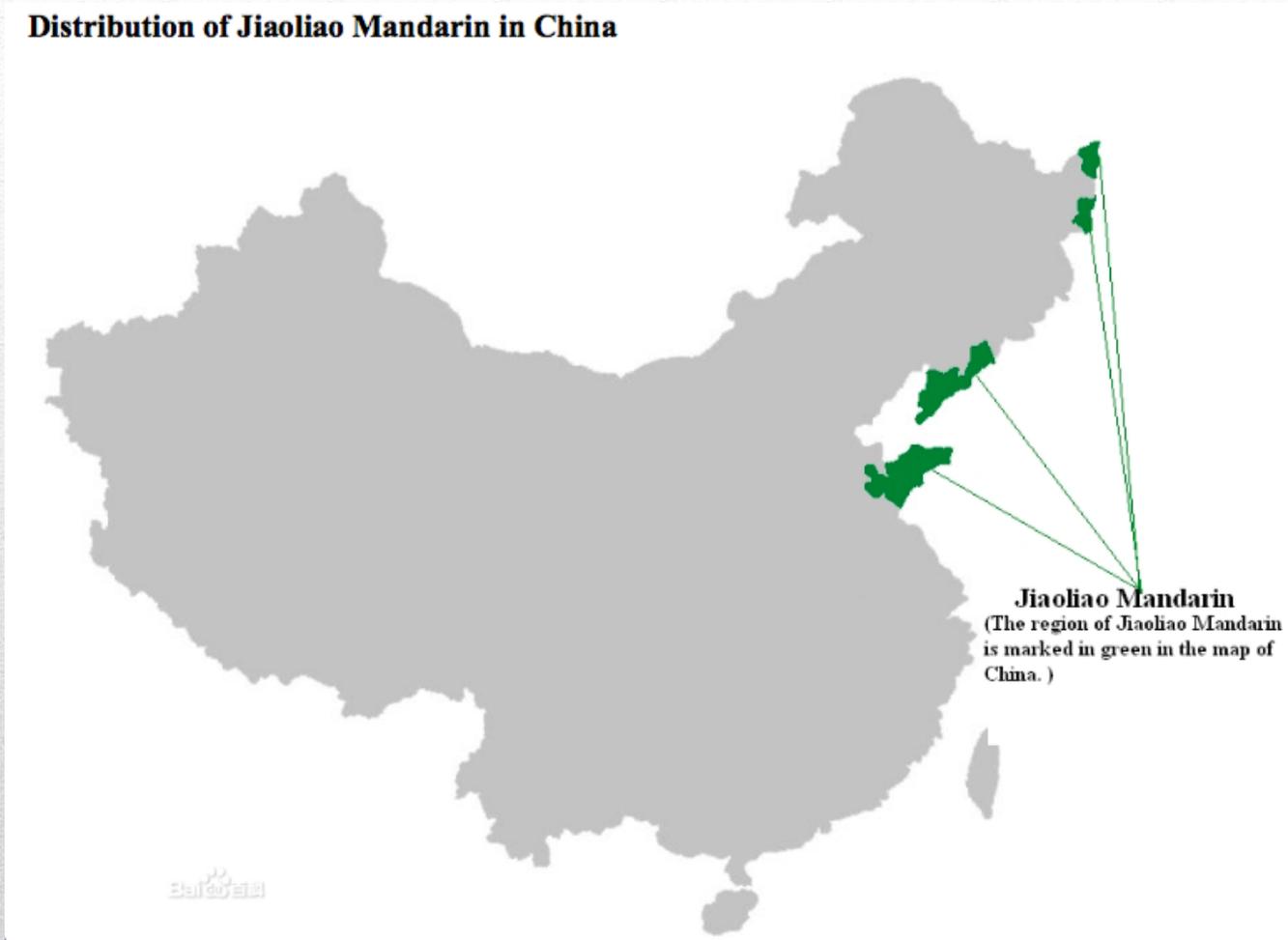
➤ **Similarity**

- Pitch: Both tone and intonation make use of pitch and so some interference is expected when tone language speakers (e.g. Chinese speakers) learn to produce intonation in a second language like English.

Research Background

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (1)

Distribution of Jiaoliao Mandarin in China



Research Background

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (1)

- Located in northeastern Shandong Peninsula, the Yantai dialect region, nowadays, chiefly covers the city Yantai, especially the Zhifu, Fushan, and Muping districts, belonging to Donglai dialect region, one of the regions in the eastern part of the dialect region of the province (Qian Zengyi, 2001: 5).

Research Background

Distribution of Mandarin Languages in China

官话在中国大陆的分布



- Dongbei Mandarin
- Beijing Mandarin
- Jilu Mandarin
- Jiaoliao Mandarin
- Middle Mandarin
- Lanyin Mandarin
- Jianghuai Mandarin
- Southwest Mandarin
- Shandong Dialects

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (1)

Distribution of Shandong Dialects and the Distribution of Yantai Dialect



Research Background

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (2)

- Tones of Yantai dialect have unique features, which remarkably differ from Northern Chinese dialects in China.
- There are only three tones in Yantai dialect, namely, a level tone, a falling-rising tone and a falling tone.
- Research and studies on the tone system of the dialect have been carried out dating back to the 1960s in China, such as Qian Zhengyi (1959, 1982), Cheng Hongxin and Chen Jiashan (1988), Jiang Baomao and Xu Weijiang (1990), Ding Xinshan (1995) and Zhang Shifang (2000), etc.
- Values of tones: the level tone—31; the falling-rising tone—214; the falling tone—53

Research Background

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (3)

- It is the tendency that in the dialect the falling tones are used more frequently, which is clearly shown in the values for those citation tones.
- Another important and remarkable feature of tones in Yantai dialect is the tone sandhi pattern.
 - Disyllabic tone sandhi
 - 31a→35/ __ 31
 - 31b→55/ __ 31
 - 55 →31/ __ 55
 - 214→35/ __ 31 (i)
 - 55/ __ 214 (ii)
- Chen, Matthew Y. (陈渊泉) 2001. *Tone Sandhi Patterns Across Chinese Dialects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.99

Research Background

I. Introduction to Yantai Dialect (3)

- Trisyllabic tone sandhi
 - Longer concatenations of tones are affected by a totally different set of rules. Out of all the possibilities, there are only three rules:
 - T.T.31→31.35.31
 - T.T.214→55.55.214
 - T.T.55 →33.21.55
- Chen, Matthew Y. (陈渊泉) 2001. *Tone Sandhi Patterns Across Chinese Dialects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.100

Research Background

II. English

- Intonation refers to the pitch in Colloquial English.
- Halliday (1967), using information theory, proposed that tonality, tonicity and tone are referred to as three basic concepts in the tone system of English. Specifically, the three concepts have laid special emphasis on different perspectives, i.e., tonality pays more attention to the components of intonation units and their boundaries while tonicity concerns mainly the focus of information in the internal part of an intonation unit. In addition, tone pays more attention to the intonation patterns within the unit.

Research Background

- Is there possibly any interference between Chinese (a tone language) and English (an intonation language)?
- If so, based on the example of Yantai dialect (Shandong Province), how does the tone of the dialect in question exert influence upon the acquisition of English intonation?
- If there is any finding, how can Yantai dialect speakers avoid the influence of the dialect tone system and acquire standard English intonation?

Research Questions

➤ **Participants**

- Four participants:
- Gender: 2 males and 2 females
- Age: from 27 to 30 years old.
- Native Yantai dialect speakers and they have been to the local universities in Yantai.
- Their parents: native speakers
- Have lived in Yantai for at least 25 years.
- Their exposure to the dialect is very thorough.
- Educational levels: all of them have passed CET 4.

EXPERIMENT

➤ Reading Materials

- Ten English sentences covering:
 - Declarative statements;
 - Interrogative sentences (specifically, the general question, the special question and the alternative question);
 - Imperative sentence.
 - These ten sentences also involve not only simple sentences but complex sentences as well, which is expected also to influence the intonation.
- Copy the sentences from a spoken English material spoken by an English native speaker

➤ *Praat*

EXPERIMENT

➤ Results & Discussion

- **Similarity**

1. The Rising Tone in General Questions:

- The four participants performed very well on the general questions, i.e., the Sentence 2, 3, 4, and 8.
- The pitch pictures of those sentences have reflected the fact that the rising tone in general questions are performed in a much more native-like way than other sentence patterns (see [Sentence 2](#)).

EXPERIMENT

➤ Results & Discussion

- **Similarity**

2. The four participants pronounced the imperative sentence and the special questions in roughly the same way as the native speakers, so these sentence types do not present much of a problem (see [Sentence 6](#) and [Sentence 8](#)).

EXPERIMENT

➤ Results & Discussion

- **Similarity**

3. The participants did relatively well on the simple and short general questions, which share roughly the same pitch contours with the native speakers demonstrated in the pitch picture (see [Sentence 5](#) and [Sentence 7](#)).

EXPERIMENT

➤ Results & Discussion

• Difference

1. It is somewhat surprising that all the participants did rather poorly on the declarative sentences (see [Sentence 1](#)).
 - They uttered those declarative sentences with an obvious falling tone in the end of the sentences, similar to the native speaker.
 - Despite this, they ignored the fact that in an English declarative sentence there are other kinds of tones besides falling ones. The prehead, the head, and the nucleus of a declarative sentence may also employ a rising tone or other kinds of tones when uttering.

EXPERIMENT

➤ Results & Discussion

- **Difference**

2. All the four participants were inclined to use a falling tone to replace the tones where the rising one was needed. They performed very poorly in their utterance of the alternative sentence, of which the tones were more complex (see [Sentence 9](#)).
3. In terms of the simple and compound sentences, the four participants did a better job in uttering the simple sentence than they did on the compound ones (see [Sentence 7](#) & [Sentence 10](#)).

EXPERIMENT

➤ Is there possibly any interference between Chinese (a tone language) and English (an intonation language)?

✓ Yes.

Conclusion

- If so, based on the example of Yantai dialect (Shandong Province), how does the tone of the dialect in question influence the acquisition of English intonation?
- ✓ The tone of Yantai dialect may exert less impact on the rising tone of the general question and the imperative sentence in English. The speakers of the dialect in question acquire the intonation of the simple sentence in a relatively native-like way.
- ✓ The falling tone of Yantai dialect may block the speakers' way to access the native-like performance, especially in their utterance of the alternative sentence and the declarative sentence in English.
- ✓ The tones of the simple sentence in English tend to be more easily acquired than the compound ones.

Conclusion

- How can Yantai dialect speakers avoid the influence of the dialect tone system and acquire standard English intonation?
- ✓ Yantai dialect speakers may probably pay much attention to avoid the falling tone, especially when pronouncing declarative sentences and the alternative sentence types.

Conclusion



THE END
