

Mapping development and challenges of teaching Mandarin Chinese in England

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Abstract

Mandarin is a fast-growing language in England in the last decade. Although the development of the language is still at its initial stage, the establishment as one of the mainstream foreign languages promotes the learning of Mandarin, in particular in secondary schools. This paper is part of a wider research project about motivational strategies in Mandarin classrooms in England and presents the education policy in England since the 1990s, including changes of foreign language policies in the last three decades. It aims to provide a concrete foundation for the discussion of how the language policies have an impact on the development of teaching Mandarin Chinese in England. It also addresses the challenges of teaching Mandarin Chinese in the context of foreign language classrooms. Lastly, it concludes with suggestions for the future development of Mandarin Chinese in the next decade in England.

Keywords: England National Curriculum, Modern Foreign Language (MFL), Mandarin as a foreign language, language policy

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0 IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The educational value of learning a foreign language lies in its ability to enable learners to gain experiences that extend beyond their mother tongue. Hawkins (1981) states that foreign language learning ‘*contributes to an understanding of the polyglot world, and emancipate the learner from parochialism.*’(p.32) It is no doubt that learning a foreign language is beneficial for an individual as it can awaken linguistic awareness and broaden the horizons of learners, to attain a wider acceptance of others. Furthermore, foreign languages have the unique potential to break down barriers between people and countries and promote a sense of universalism (Lawes, 2007). Despite the recognised benefits of learning a foreign language, there appears to be an insurmountable gap in teaching foreign languages in secondary schools in England. It is not learning a foreign language that is difficult, rather learning it in the classroom and during adolescence. Scholars, teachers, and politicians have been looking to overcome this challenge of foreign language learning for almost a century to no apparent avail (Dobson, 2018).

The United Kingdom (UK) is composed of four islands, namely England, Wales, Scotland and North Ireland. The four islands have different policies on foreign language learning. For instance, in addition to learning a foreign language, Wales and North Ireland promote the learning of Welsh and Gaelic respectively, and in Scotland, pupils are required to learn two foreign languages instead of at least one in England. In this article, the foreign language policies in the past few decades were reviewed, so as to provide a concrete foundation for the discussion of Mandarin pedagogy in foreign language classrooms. As part of a wider research project about motivational strategies in Mandarin classrooms in England as well as the complexity of the language policies amongst the islands, the discussion of this article focuses on Mandarin teaching and learning in secondary schools in England.

Foreign language learning in England is very much a product of the education system of its time, and as a result, is also equally rooted in the ideas

of the time. In 1963, the Newsom Report described that foreign languages were taught primarily to the students with top abilities in grammar schools¹ and half of the secondary modern schools². In the early 1970s, comprehensive schools³ which admitted pupils of all abilities were a contemporary phenomenon in most areas of England. Many language teachers were used to teaching the most able pupils, therefore they found teaching foreign languages in comprehensive schools a daunting task. The learners' differences in ability were also of a much wider range and so too was their willingness to learn. In 1973, the UK became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC). Within the education sector is the concern of the language competence in the country, as it might prevent the country from gaining the full benefits as EEC membership (Lawes, 2007). Within this economic context of Britain in the 1970s, the 'Ruskin Speech' by the Prime Minister James Callaghan in Oxford given in 1976 has set off a new direction in the UK's education policy. Policymakers and wider society began to view foreign language teaching and learning as a 'useful' activity. Proficiency in a foreign language

1 The term grammar school was first used in the 14th century for a type of school founded to provide free or subsidised education for children, usually boys, in a particular locality. By the 19th century, many grammar schools had deteriorated and were reformed by the Grammar School Act (1840). By 1990, only about seven per cent of local authorities had retained any grammar schools. No new grammar schools have been created and the total is now 166. Selection for grammar schools was traditionally based on the eleven plus examination (Lawton & Gordon, 2004, p.109).

2 The Hadow Report on *The Education of the Adolescent* (1926) recommended the division of secondary education into two types: the grammar school, for the most intellectually able pupils, and the secondary modern school, which would cater for most adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. The curriculum to be offered in the latter was to concentrate initially on offering good broad education, but in the later years of schooling, a more practical bias was to be introduced into the curriculum. The White Paper on Education Reconstruction in 1943, which set the pattern for tripartite, recommended three types of school – grammar, technical, and modern – corresponding to supposed psychological categories of pupils (Lawton & Gordon, 2004, p.222).

3 The 1944 Education Act legislated for secondary education for all, but did not specify any one type of secondary school organisation. Circular 144/1947 set out various forms of organisation and defined a comprehensive school as 'one which is intended to cater for the secondary education of all children in a given area'. After many local education authority experiments with tripartite systems (grammar, technical and secondary modern schools) in the 1950s and 1960s, the comprehensive alternative rapidly gained in popularity during the 1970s. The 1976 Education Act attempted to make comprehensive schools the only kind of permitted secondary school but was repealed by the 1979 Act, after the election of the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher. Nevertheless, by 1988 comprehensive schools were catering for 86 per cent of pupils in England (Lawton & Gordon, 2004, p.51).

gradually became perceived as a *skill* that is to be made accessible to *every pupil* (Dobson, 2018).

In England, Modern Foreign Language (MFL) was one of the foundation subjects compulsory for every pupil until the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level (Year 11) in 1991. The first National Curriculum (DES, 1991) stated that pupils in the Key Stage 3 (Year 4 to Year 6) and Key Stage 4 (Year 7 to Year 9) are required to study one or more modern foreign language as a foundation subject. Yet, modern foreign language only referred to languages specified as official languages of the institutions of the European Community namely, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Spanish, etc. Approximately 90% of all pupils taking MFL studied one of these three main languages, which are French, Spanish and German. Non-EU languages are regarded as *community languages* that can only be taught as an additional language under the condition that pupils are studying one or more of the *modern foreign languages*. In other words, the study of other non-European languages, for instance, Chinese⁴, Japanese and Russian was not encouraged by the specifications of the 1991 National Curriculum.

In 2013, a critical change in MFL policy occurred, when the National Curriculum stated that '*Teaching may be of any modern foreign language and should build on the foundations of language learning laid at key stage 2, whether pupils continue with the same language or take up a new one*' (DfE, 2013, p.2). MFL in schools now includes major European or world languages, such as Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Urdu. '*Schools may choose which languages they teach*' (*ibid*) and bear no restrictions for the choice of the students. Therefore, there is neither the notion of a *modern foreign language* nor *community language* anymore, as all languages are classified as mainstream languages under the new MFL National Curriculum. The autonomy

4 In the curriculum of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) in England, Mandarin Chinese instead of Putonghua is used as it is the common terminology to represent the subject.

of schools to choose which languages to teach has provided space for the rise in demand for Mandarin learning in schools in England.

1 ESTABLISHMENT OF MANDARIN CHINESE LEARNING IN ENGLAND

Mandarin learning in England has shifted from an enrichment course to being part of the formal MFL curriculum. In 2007, The National Centre for Languages (CILT) released its first report on the teaching and learning of Mandarin in the UK, which described the initial development of the teaching of the language in the country. It reported that among the 400 randomly sampled schools in England, 7-8% of state secondary schools were providing some degree of Mandarin teaching. 40% of the schools offering Mandarin were outside of curriculum time. Nearly 80% of respondents were keen to develop Mandarin further in their schools within the next few years. Over the next six years, Mandarin learning has developed rapidly in the United Kingdom. In 2014, Alcantara Communication published *The teaching of Chinese in the UK*, which mapped the development of the language throughout the years and served as a guideline for the future development of Mandarin teaching in British schools. There were more than 13% of maintained secondary schools and 46% of independent schools offering Mandarin Chinese (Tinsley & Board, 2014). This brought the total up to more than 600 secondary schools offering Mandarin across England (Carruthers, 2012). The inclusion of Mandarin as an MFL contributed to the rapid development of the language in secondary schools.

Increase in GCSE (Year 11) uptake is also observed since Mandarin has raised its status from enrichment language to becoming one of the mainstream languages. In a recent British Council Report, Tinsley and Doležal (2018) stated that there has been a decline in numbers taking French and/or German, while Spanish and Mandarin has increased rapidly over the past few years. In 2011, there was only 58,700 entries of Spanish but in 2018, the number of uptake increased to

88,000, having 49.9% increment. The increasing trend of studying Spanish reached a plateau in the last five years whereas there is a constant gradual increase of the uptake of GCSE in Mandarin Chinese (DfE, 2018). The following Table 1 shows the number of students taking GCSE MFL between 2014 to 2018.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Changes
French	166,167	158,730	146,349	133,536	117,010	↓26.6%
German	60,362	55,839	52,328	46,510	42,300	↓29.9%
Spanish	89,949	89,920	94,067	92,652	88,000	↓2.2%
Mandarin	3,369	3,785	4,033	4,163	4,061	↑20.5%

Table 1 The uptake of GCSE MFL from 2011 to 2017

Investment from the UK government and private initiatives have contributed to the development of Mandarin teaching. The UK government, in collaboration with the British Council and University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IoE), launched the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) in 2016. Since then, the number of MEP schools has been increasing rapidly across England. As of September 2019, 75 schools are delivering the programme. Students in the MEP program receive four hours of Mandarin lessons each week. More than 1000 students will be participating in Mandarin intensive courses in China in 2019/2020 academic year. By 2020, 5000 secondary school students are expected to be proficient in Mandarin (Institute of Education, Confucius Institute for Schools, 2017). Therefore, the positive impact of MEP is prominent.

In addition, the Swire Chinese Language Foundation, a private initiative, offered long-term funding to operate Mandarin learning centres. The initiative is significant to the development of Mandarin teaching. In 2017/2018, the Foundation supported approximately 7,000 pupils across 101 schools to learn Mandarin in the UK (Swire Chinese Language Foundation, 2019). The Language Trends in 2018 shows that there are 32% of independent schools and 8% of state schools offering Chinese as a GCSE option, and there has been a steady increase in the number of

schools offering Mandarin Chinese every year.

The importance of Mandarin learning is also advocated at the societal level. In the recent *Languages For The Future* report by the British Council (Tinsley & Board, 2017), Mandarin ranked second to Spanish in terms of importance of a language to learn. The top five most important languages to learn are Spanish, Mandarin, French, Arabic and German. The indicators considered both economic and non-market factors, including future trade priorities, the public's language interest, and levels of English proficiency in other countries. The report provides a reference of what language to teach in the post-Brexit period. The report states '*The UK is at a turning point. It is preparing to leave the European Union (EU), a process which will fundamentally change not only its relationship with the countries of the EU, but also with the rest of the world*' (Tinsley & Board, 2017, p.4). In summary, the UK is currently a fertile context for the development of Mandarin Chinese learning.

2 MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE (MFL) IN NATIONAL CURRICULUM

In England, the National Curriculum Programme of Studies (NCPoS) aimed to provide a guiding reference to schools and language teachers on the purpose and objectives of the subject, as well as the attainment level of the students. The first National Curriculum was introduced in 1991 by the government according to the Education Act in 1988. Since 1991, the NCPoS has been revised four times, in 1995, 1999, 2007 and 2013. In 1991 and 1995, the NCPoS stated the theme as Learning and using the target language, which is aligned with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): the exclusive use of target language, the use of target language to communicate, and the promotion of pair/group work. CLT was then recommended to be the suggested teaching methodology in MFL in England. Yet, due to the changes of the NCPoS throughout the years, the teaching methodology of MFL classrooms might have undergone changes and as a result,

CLT has been redefined in response to the NCPoS. There are two main changes of the NCPoS throughout the years which are relevant to the teaching and learning of Mandarin in England.

2.1 Decentralisation of the MFL policy

The NCPoS has been criticised for being prescriptive and has restricted the autonomy of teachers (Mitchell, 2003), this can be traced back to the first NCPoS in 1991 (See Table 2). The NCPoS in 1991 consists of two parts. The theme of part I is *Learning and Using the Target Language*, which states six sub-themes of language learning, such as communicating in the target language and developing cultural awareness. Part II is *Area of Experience*, which presents seven areas of MFL lesson topics such as *Everyday Activities*, and *Personal and Social Life*. The document details the objectives of the subjects in different skills and the classroom practices that teachers can implement. In other words, language teachers were informed what to teach, how to teach, and restricted to make decisions in their teaching with limited autonomy.

	1991	1995
Main theme	Learning and using the target language	Learning and using the target language
Sub-themes	1. Communicating in the target language (i.e. speaking and writing)	1. Communicating in the target language
	2. Understanding and responding (i.e. listening and reading)	2. Language skills
	3. Developing language learning skills and awareness of language	3. Language-learning skills and knowledge of language
	4. Developing cultural awareness	4. Cultural awareness
	5. Developing the ability to work with others	
	6. Developing the ability to learn independently	

	1991	1995
Teaching Content	Area of experience i) Everyday activities ii) Personal and social life iii) The world around us iv) The world of education, training and work v) The world of communication vi) The international world vii) The world of imagination and creativity	Area of experience i) Everyday activities ii) Personal and social life iii) The world around us iv) The world of work v) The international world
	i) Everyday Activities - home life - daily routines - shopping - food and drink - going out - leisure activities and sports - youth culture - school life - school holidays	i) Everyday activities - the language of the classroom - home life and school - food, health and fitness

Table 2 Comparing the National Curriculum Programme of Studies (NCPoS) in 1990 and 1995

The NCPoS in 1995 followed a similar structure to the previous one, with a reduced content as it was criticised with far too much content for limited lesson time (Mitchell, 2003). The NCPoS in 1990 and 1995 were comparatively comprehensive and exhaustive, providing teachers with the themes that can be taught in MFL lessons. However, the NCPoS in 1999 was abridged into two pages, neither suggesting the attainment level of students nor teaching content.

In 2007 NCPoS, the document yet again detailed how MFL was suggested to be taught in schools. For instance, the *key concepts* explained the terminology involved, the *key processes* elaborated the language learning process to help learners make progress. In addition, the *curriculum opportunities* stated the suggested teaching methodology. It is important to note that in the most recent NCPoS in 2013, there was a tendency of decentralisation of MFL policy which represents a substantial contrast from earlier iterations (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019). The two-page document presented two themes *i) Grammar and vocabulary* and *ii)*

Linguistic competence, which briefly described some guidelines according to the two themes. Most importantly, there were not any levels of attainment involved nor suggested content. In other words, teachers got to decide what to teach, how to teach, and what were the proficiency levels of the students. On one hand, the over-prescribed NCPoS in 1990 and 1995 provided limited room for MFL teachers to design and deliver language lessons. On the other hand, the decentralization of the MFL policy in the NCPoS in 2013 might result in anecdotal or idiosyncratic teaching in classroom (Wingate, 2018). This has a direct impact on the teaching Mandarin in England at its initial development stage.

2.2 Re-interpretation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In the NCPoS in 1991 and 1995, there was a dominance of communicative competence of learners and a promotion of exclusive use of the target language in MFL. For instance, in NCPoS in 1991, one of the objectives is ‘*the development of pupils’ ability to communicate in writing*’. In NCPoS in 1995, the first part of the document is about ‘*Learning and using the target language*’. Thus, it builds up the consent that CLT is the proposed teaching methodology of MFL teaching in England. Yet, in 1999, the NCPoS clearly encouraged optimizing learners’ involvement in meaningful target language use. On the other hand, it also referred to the need for metalinguistic understanding and explicit grammar study (Mitchell, 2003). This initiated the discussion on the balance between the extent to use the target language and teaching grammar explicitly. This dilemma still remains unresolved in the UK (Norman, 1998; Pachler, Barnes & Field, 2009). Macaro (2008) addressed that the exclusive use of target language has made MFL teachers feel ‘guilty’. These language teachers found it almost impossible to ensure that the level of the target language input could be understandable by all students.

The NCPoS in 2013 focused on explicit grammar teaching, with one of its only two themes as *Grammar and vocabulary*. The document has no mention of ‘use of target language’. Another theme is *Linguistic competence*, focusing much

on accuracy of language. For instance, *‘transcribe words and short sentences that they hear with increasing accuracy’*, *‘express and develop ideas clearly and with increasing accuracy, both orally and in writing’* (DfE, 2013). There was a clear shift from the communicative approach to emphasizing grammar learning. Cooke (2014) interviewed seven MFL teachers and reported that the communicative approach was adopted in a superficial way among the MFL teachers. Their practices are mostly *‘weak communicative practice’*. Therefore, the implementation of CLT by Mandarin teachers in their classroom practices was under the effect of NCPoS 2013.

To sum up, the National Curriculum Programmes of Study (NCPoS) determines the content of what will be taught and sets attainment targets for learning. Yet, in the NCPoS in 2013, the departure of prescribed teaching content of MFL from the government did not provide as much guidance compared to that in the 1990s. It can be argued that schools and teachers have the autonomy to make decisions on the teaching methodology they adopt in the classrooms, and the freedom to determine the students’ language attainment level. Since the 2000s, the re-emphasis on grammar and the accuracy of MFL has shifted away from the implicit grammar teaching of CLT, and the debate on *‘whether grammar should be taught explicitly’* still remains unanswered. As Littlewood (2014, p.349) stated,

‘CLT now serves not so much as a label for a specific approach but as an umbrella term to describe all approaches that aim to develop communicative competence in personally meaningful way’.

It is important to note that the orientation of National Curriculum in European languages has had an important influence on Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, how Mandarin teachers’ practices in response to the NCPoS, in particular, how CLT is translated in their classrooms is of paramount importance. In addition, the notion that culture is a significant component of language learning is not being mentioned in the NCPoS 2013, and has shown a decrease in attention paid in terms of developing cultural awareness of learners. It is under such teaching

context that Mandarin Chinese is expanding rapidly, and how the policies have impact on the development of the language is under-researched.

3. CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MANDARIN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

3.1 Low continuation rate in MFL in England

In general, students in the UK have a low continuation rate and have relatively low competence in foreign language learning. The Nuffield Foundation (2000) reported that nine out of ten pupils discontinued learning languages at the age of 16. In 2012 the European Commission's survey on language competencies across Europe found that only 9% of 15-years-olds in the UK were competent beyond a basic level in their first foreign language. This was compared to 42% of their peers in other European countries (European Commission, 2012). In addition, the most recent report by the British Council's *Language For the Future* (2017) published that only 37% of British adults (18-34 year olds) were capable of holding a basic conversation while travelling abroad. The lack of competence in foreign language skills among British learners seems to be a noteworthy problem. Attempts to explain this phenomenon have taken many forms.

From a global perspective, English is regarded by many as a lingua franca, hence it is argued that the wide use of the language globally inhibits the incentives of pupils to learn a foreign language when everyone yearns to speak English to them (Csizér & Lukac, 2010). From a social standpoint, the negative publicity in the media regarding the poor foreign language performance in the UK, coupled with the misconception that foreign languages are for 'linguists' only, further discourage pupils' motivation (Lanvers & Coleman, 2017). In terms of policy, the cancelation of the '*Languages for All*' policy in 2004 seems to have contributed to the decline of the uptake of GCSE MFL (Coleman, 2009; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007).

In 2004, the compulsory policy to learn a foreign language in Key Stage 4 (KS4) has been abolished. This means that in state schools in England, pupils are required to study MFL from Year 3 to Year 9 (i.e. KS2 and KS3) but not during GCSE (Year 10 and Year 11) or A-level (Year 12 to Year 13). This decision is widely viewed as a contributing factor to the substantial decrease in the number of students studying a language up to GCSE since then. MFL has always been regarded as a difficult subject compared to other subjects, and is comparably harder to achieve good grades (Mori, 2014). Thus, when given a choice it may explain why MFL has appeared a less popular subject choice to students and schools. In 2017, only 47% of pupils sat for an MFL at GCSE compared to 76% in 2002 before the abolition of the compulsory policy. In 2011, the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) (DfE, 2016), which attempts to promote five core subject areas including a foreign language at GCSE, did cease the decline of foreign language take-up at GCSE and has maintained the uptake of pupils at an average of 48% from 2013 to 2017 (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018). However, overall the low continuation percentage of MFL at GCSE level is still a problem faced by England schools and this is the context in which Mandarin has been introduced.

3.2 Slow progression rate of Mandarin Chinese learning

Mandarin is a tonal language, having four tones with the change of tone resulting in a difference in meaning. In Mandarin, the pronunciation of a character is represented by the *pinyin* system, which is the Romanisation of the Chinese phonetic system and is represented by the English alphabet. One of the distinctive features of Chinese characters is the lack of grapheme-phoneme correspondence of Chinese characters. That means, the written form of a Chinese character does not precisely represent the pronunciation of the character, and learners are required to acquire the three elements separately.

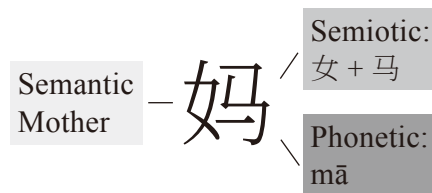


Figure 1 The three elements of Chinese characters

For example, to teach the word ‘teacher’, the French teacher would say ‘*professeur*’ [pʁɔfɛsœʁ]. However, in Mandarin, the absence of grapheme-phoneme correspondence means pronunciation of a character cannot be represented by the form of the character, thus, learners would have to first learn that the romanisation of Mandarin ‘lǎoshī’ means teacher, followed by matching ‘lǎoshī’ with the characters ‘老师’ and then linking ‘老师’ with the meaning and concept of teacher. These extra steps in the learning process not only dramatically increase the time needed to teach the language, but also demand considerable capacity and effort from the learners.

The slow rate of progress in Mandarin learning also leads to a decline in learner’s motivation (CILT, 2007; Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Orton, 2016). Most students who chose to learn European languages at GCSE could reach a language proficiency that is sufficient to read newspaper articles. However, learners who completed Mandarin Chinese at GCSE level could only manage to master what is equivalent to Year 1 or Year 2 in Chinese lessons in China. This is mainly due to the orthographic differences between students’ first languages (e.g. English and Chinese). Thus, encountering difficulties and the lack of accomplishment in Mandarin are deemed to be the reasons for students to lose their motivation in learning Mandarin (Orton, 2016). Without sustaining their motivation, the desire to learn Mandarin in many learners wanes, resulting in high drop-out rates of Mandarin learners in secondary schools (CILT, 2007).

3.3 Motivation and Mandarin learning

Dörnyei and Ottó (1998, p.65) define motivation in language learning as

'the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out'. Motivation is regarded to be the impetus to continue the language learning process. Large number of cases have proven that learners with sufficient motivation can achieve considerable knowledge of a language regardless of their language aptitude (Ellis, 2013; Gardner 2001). In the last few decades, motivation research has provided insights into how students behave and the reasoning behind their behaviours. Yet, little is known about the motivation of students in England learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language. Research in MFL has shown that pupils' motivation decreases over the course of their language learning journey (Macaro, 2008). The decline in language motivation has been attributed to multiple factors, including teachers' practices, inadequate contact with the target language community, practical use in daily life, and family support (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Shum, Gao, Tsung & Ki, 2011). Research suggests that if teachers can take into account these factors when adopting motivational strategies, students' motivation in learning Mandarin Chinese will likely be enhanced (Brophy, 2004). Hence, if language education aims to prepare graduates with sound Mandarin Chinese proficiency, it is of paramount importance to understand ways to implement motivational strategies in order to sustain the motivation of language learners.

Wang (2009) examined pupils' motivation, attitudes, and teachers' perception on pupils' motivation in learning Mandarin in England. However, the study initially aimed to report Mandarin development in UK secondary schools but was unable to analyse pupils' motivation in depth. Gardner's instrumental and integrative motivation were used as the theoretical framework. It revealed that English pupils' motivation for learning Mandarin is a mixture of both orientations. Instrumental motivation, such as the notion that Mandarin will be useful for future employment, and integrative motivation, such as the level of interest in the

language, were identified. The findings are relatively general and apply to all other languages without taking the unique attributes of Mandarin into account. Tinsley and Board (2014) also reported similar findings that Mandarin learners have a clear idea of the growing economic importance of China, and they perceive that being able to speak Mandarin would be useful to them in the future. However, it should also be noted that the principal motivating factor identified in this research which kept the pupils engaged with the language was not the idea that ‘Chinese is important for my future career’, but rather the day-to-day experiences of learning Chinese with classmates and teachers (Mori, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). Thus, there is much value in exploring what the motivations of learners are in terms of learning Mandarin beyond the beginning level proficiency.

There are a few studies regarding motivational strategies implemented in Mandarin in foreign language classrooms. Cai and Zhu (2012) examined the impact of an online community project on the motivation of students who learned Chinese as a foreign language. The study also investigated students’ perceptions of motivating and demotivating features of the project. Guided by L2 motivational self-system framework, the research reported that motivating features mostly focused on the alternative learning resources and tools provided to them through the online learning community. Not only the study confirmed that learners’ experience of L2 learning is of a fluid and dynamic nature, but also implied that language teachers can employ a wide range of strategies to stimulate and enhance students’ motivation by influencing students’ learning experiences. It is also suggested that activities which allow students to receive feedback from their peers in the same class as well as from other advanced learners beyond the classroom environment enhanced the motivation of students.

Wen (2011) found that the more the students felt that learning Chinese was personally meaningful and fun, the more they engaged in the learning process. For non-native Mandarin Chinese speakers, even though the task of learning the language is indeed demanding, and continuation requires sustained efforts and self-

regulatory learning strategies but classrooms where they are provided opportunities to speak Mandarin Chinese with classmates and have fun in learning sustained their motivation. The element of ‘fun’ could include challenging tasks under the learners’ control or practicing language skills via communicative activities. Thus, the learners would continue their learning because of the positive learning experience and sustained their motivation.

3.4 Effective Mandarin Chinese teaching strategies are needed

Extensive research has provided us with sound evidence of the link between the usage of motivational strategies and students’ motivation in an English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Alison & Halliwell 2002; Brophy, 2004; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998). These studies have indicated that the frequency of implemented strategies directly influenced students’ motivation. (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). Given that these or other similar studies were conducted in the context of EFL classrooms, the degree to which such claims are applicable to British learners participating in Mandarin learning is unknown. More importantly, if research aims at promoting the greatest motivational gain in students’ language learning, studies that justify the actual motivational power of a particular strategy within a specific teaching and learning environment should be conducted (Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). Therefore, teachers can gain a more complete understanding of the specific optimal conditions required for implementing a particular motivational strategy to enhance students’ motivation in foreign language classrooms.

It is obvious that the possession of effective teaching strategies has become a crucial element for learning Mandarin as a foreign language in England. Tinsley and Board (2014) reported that Mandarin learners admit that although they still regard Mandarin as a difficult language, the goals they were asked to achieve were no more demanding than those for other subjects, and it gave them a sense of achievement to be learning something which many regarded as impenetrable.

Thus, if effective methods are applied, the difficulty of Mandarin can become an advantage of the language. Moreover, even though pupils feel that it is essential to master both the character and the sound system, they also recognise that many aspects of Chinese were comparatively simpler than French or Spanish, for instance grammar (*ibid*). Hence, not only are effective teaching strategies significant, the teaching strategies that are specific to Mandarin learning are also essential.

3.5 The call for England specific Mandarin teaching strategies

In response to the growing interest in Mandarin within the UK, University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IoE) Confucius Institute has developed a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Mandarin since 2011, which has become one of the main providers of Mandarin teacher training in England. The programme aims to offer a permanent UK-based teaching force. In addition, the British Council developed a programme training Chinese Language Assistant (CLA) programme, which train CLAs, also known as Hanban teachers to complement the work of local Chinese teachers. Yet, Xiang (2019) found that the Hanban teachers who are trained in China expressed that they have limited pedagogical knowledge in reference to the UK school context. Therefore, not only is the need for more locally trained Mandarin teachers becoming a pressing issue, the knowledge of teaching Mandarin in England to inform the practitioners is also significant.

Diamantidaki, Pan & Carruthers (2018) organised a survey to understand the challenges encountered by the UCL IoE PGCE Mandarin students from the first cohort of 2011 to the year 2015. One of the main challenges PGCE students faced was the lack of research in Mandarin to inform their practice and to nurture critical thinking. The inadequacy of Mandarin-focused input is mainly due to limited research in the United Kingdom. Most of the studies that do exist merely provide an overview of the subject development, such as evaluating teacher training, teaching materials or statistics of pupils' uptake (see Wang, 2009; Wang

& Higgins, 2008; Zhang & Li, 2010; Zhu & Li, 2014). Scant research is relevant to Mandarin pedagogy, in which most of the available research concerns learners' difficulties with particular aspects, for example, tones (Hu, 2010) and intercultural competence of learners (Álvarez & Qian, 2013; Jin, 2014). These few empirical studies in teachers' practice and pupils' motivation have very limited impact on improving the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of the language.

Besides, most available research into Mandarin as a foreign language was conducted either in the United States or Australia (for review, see Xing, 2006). Most of the studies also revolved around higher education contexts or adult learners, with little attention paid to secondary school pupils. In addition, different policies across these countries have made the transferability of the findings to the English context impossible, as they are all unique and distinct. Though Mandarin is being taught very much the same way as European languages in schools in England, findings from European language research may not provide an appropriate and accurate insight into Mandarin teaching and learning. This is due in large part to the nature of the languages – European languages are alphabetical while Mandarin is a character-based language. This defining attribute of Mandarin has further isolated itself from the available mainstream and efficient MFL pedagogies. To address the lack of research surrounding Mandarin Chinese pedagogy, Diamantidaki et al (2018) published *Mandarin Chinese Teacher Education*, which is the first book that includes a collection of research conducted in Mandarin classrooms in England. It aims to support teachers and promote solutions to the issues arising from teaching and learning Mandarin in the UK, all the while generating discussions and research in the field. Yet, research into how Mandarin as a foreign language could be effectively taught in England is still an area of critical demand.

4 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS

The present paper analysed the National Curriculum and development of

Mandarin teaching in the last few decades in England. It is important to note the above-mentioned reports and statistics do not include composition of learners, such as proportion of heritage learners and non-heritage learners. However, the government and private initiatives in England have targeted to promote Mandarin learning of non-native Chinese young learners. It is reasonable to draw the conclusion that teaching Mandarin as a foreign language at secondary schools in England has gone beyond a trial period. Mandarin has become one of the mainstream languages of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) in England, therefore, this section aims to suggest three future development trends of Mandarin teaching in the next decade.

Firstly, in examination of teaching approaches in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) and Mandarin classrooms, the decentralisation of MFL policy as well as the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach imply teachers' autonomy to decide what to teach and how to teach in a foreign language classroom. In addition, as Mandarin is one of the mainstream languages, it is expected that the language adopt the same specification and assessment as other foreign languages. To what extent the MFL policy has an impact on the Mandarin teaching at secondary school classrooms is worth to be explored further. Secondly, research into how Mandarin as a foreign language could be effectively taught to non-native Chinese young learners is urgently needed. Due to the distinctive features of Mandarin, it is assumed that specific teaching pedagogy is implemented to teach the language, and how to sustain motivation of Mandarin learners due to slow progression rate of Mandarin learning. Finally, the development of research-informed curriculum design and pedagogy in Mandarin classrooms in English is suggested to be prompted. Although teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is different from that of Mandarin, drawing upon research in the field can provide insights to conduct research in teaching Mandarin as a foreign language. In particular, to explore and understand how young non-native speakers best learn Mandarin Chinese in a classroom setting. To conclude, this paper provides

an overview of the teaching and learning development of Mandarin in England in the past few decades and hoped to initiate discussions and research amongst practitioners and researchers on how non-native young learners best learn the language in England, and maybe in the wider contexts.

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英國漢語教學的發展趨勢和挑戰

林善敏

摘要

過去十年，英國越來越多人學習中文（Mandarin Chinese），應考中等教育普通證書（GCSE）的學生於 2014-2018 期間更增加了百分之二十。儘管中文作為外語學習及其相關研究仍然處於發展階段，但作為常規外語課程的其中一種語言，與其他歐洲外語如法文、德文及西班牙文擁有相同重要性。中文作為一門外語學習受到政府、家長及學校的推崇。本文旨在整理及分析英格蘭過去三十年的外語教學政策，從而淺論中文在此教育政策下的定位及發展方向。同時亦歸納現時中學生學習中文為外語的困難，期望為未來的有關研究提出建議。

關鍵詞：英國國家課程 外語學習 對外漢語 語言政策