



# ***Section 1***



# ***Phonological Features***

- **Vowels & consonants**
- **Suprasegmental features**



## *Vowels and consonants Chinese learners have difficulty pronouncing:*

- /i:/
- /e/, /æ/
- /a/, /a:/, /ʌ/
- /f/, /v/, /w/



/i: /

- Some Chinese fail to notice that [i:] is a long vowel, so the sound is not pronounced long enough.
- They confuse /i:/ with /i/.
- They replace /i/ in English with a sound in Chinese that is close, yet different.

eat – it   seat – sit   feet – fit



/e/, /æ/

- Some Chinese learners find it difficult to distinguish /e/ and /æ/.
- They tend to pronounce a sound similar to /ai/
- When they pronounce /ai/, they are not gliding enough.

men – man -- mine

said – sad -- side



/a/, /a:/, /ʌ/

- Chinese learners often mix up the three.
- They tend to use /a/ in Chinese instead.

dark – duck

hut -- heart



/f/, /v/, /w/

- To Chinese learners, /f/ is relatively easy but /v/ is much more difficult as there is no equivalent in Chinese.
- They often replace /v/ with /w/.

TV van



## *Adding /ə/*

Some Chinese learners tend to add a /ə/ at the end of a word.

bag      /bæg/      \* /bægə/

customs /cʌstəmz/      \* /cʌst'əməz/

customers

(Chen Wenkai, 2002)





# *Suprasegmental features: Intonation*

- ❖ *Level tone*
- ❖ *Rising tone*
- ❖ *Falling tone*
- ❖ *Falling-rising / rising-falling tone*
- ❖ *Monotone*



# Yuen Ren Chao & the Tone Contour System

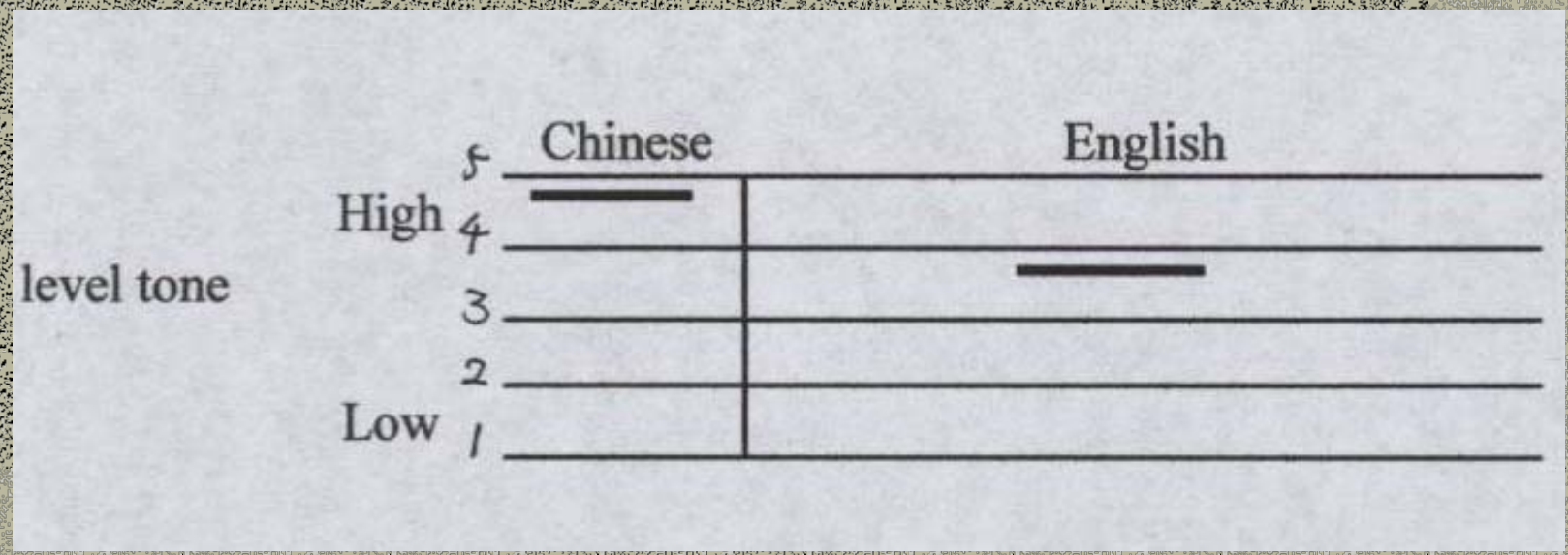
- Dr. Chao devised a method to calculate the average values of tones by subdividing sound frequency into 5 segments.
- His system has been widely adopted in the analysis of Chinese.
- It is used here to illustrate the differences in the intonation of Chinese speakers.



# *Intonation – level tone*

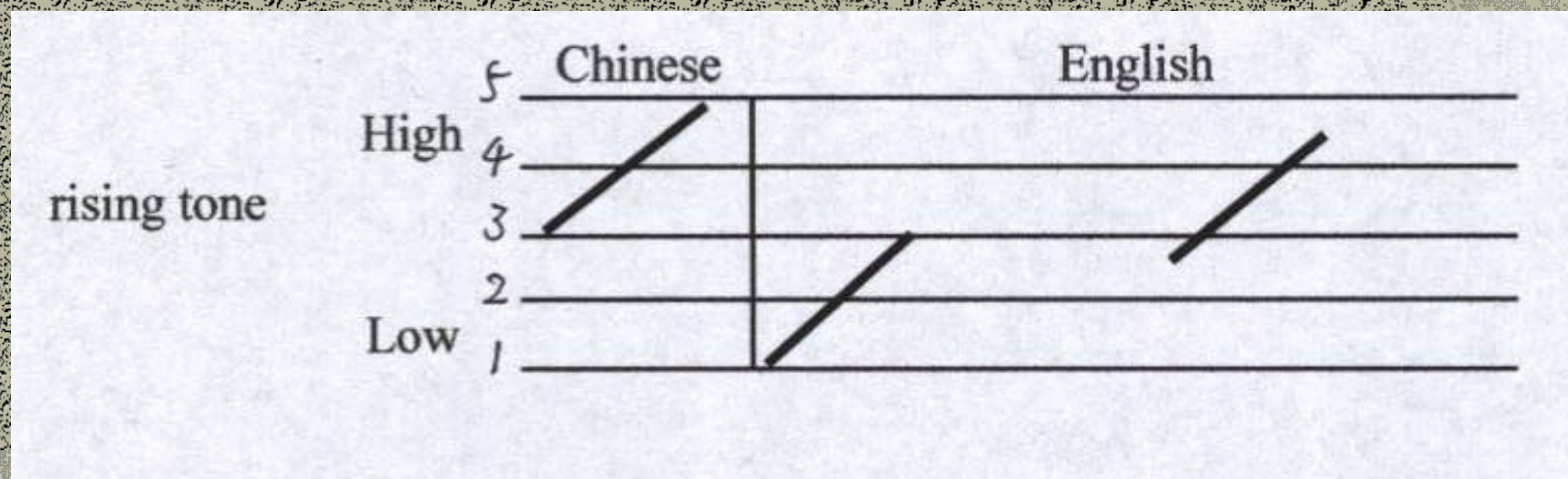
Many Chinese learners use high level tone when reading a whole paragraph so that they sound highly emotional, when, in fact, they are quite calm.

(He Shanfen, 2002)



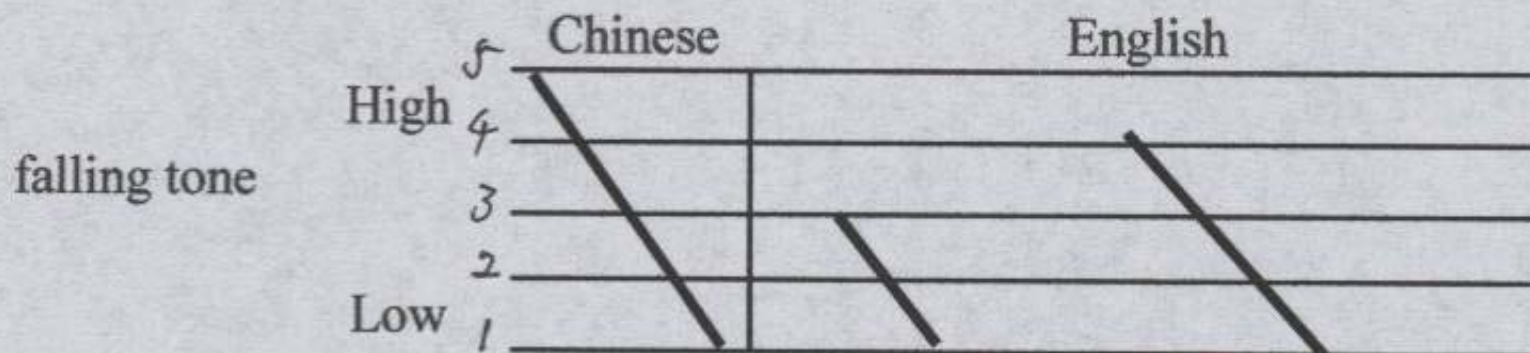
# *Intonation – rising tone*

Some Chinese learners, due to the influence of their native tongue, use a rising tone that is higher than what a native speaker would do, making them sound emotional.



# *Intonation – falling tone*

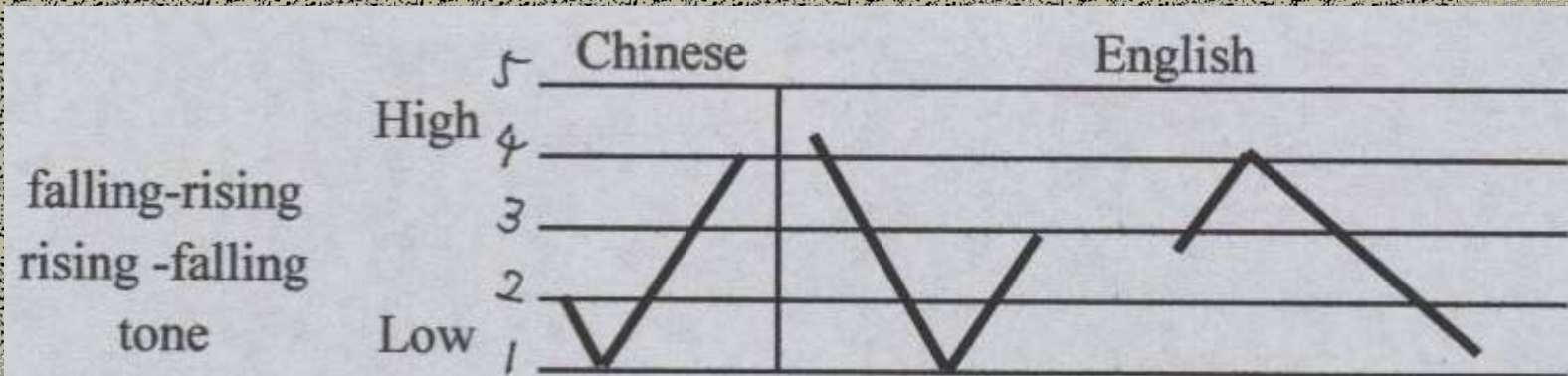
Some Chinese students like to use high falling tone at the end of a sentence regardless of the speaker's mood, needs or appropriateness.





## *Intonation – falling-rising, rising-falling tone*

Some Chinese learners, due to the influence of Chinese, use a tone that does not drop much, but rise very high, sending a wrong message that they are trying to argue or persuade someone when they are simply presenting some facts.





# *Monotone*

Due to negative transfer, many Chinese learners speak or read in a flat monotone even when they should show strong feelings or attitudes.

\* This is a fantastic place.

\* I'm sorry to hear that.

So they sound bored or indifferent to native speaker.