

ChAT Online - Chinese with Audio Technologies

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Abstract

The Project

The EU funded ChAT project is aimed at learners of Mandarin Chinese who want to improve their spoken ability efficiently online.

Based on high-frequency phrases, it is an innovative, engaging, web-based programme, focusing on the twin problems of tones and word formation.

ChAT adopts a learner- and Western-focused approach to the learning of Chinese in which, according to the US Foreign Service Institute, it takes almost five times as long to reach a 'basic conversational and written ability' as it does in a European language.

ChAT aims to supplement existing learning materials by addressing the two key problems of tones and word formation in a structured and enjoyable manner.

Tones

Where English has only vowels and consonants, Chinese also has four tones, and Westerners often have great difficulty distinguishing and producing them. ChAT's innovative Tonal Assessment System helps overcome that problem.

Word Formation

There are 10,000 syllables in English, but only 400 in Chinese (1,277 including tones)! That means that one Chinese syllable can mean many things. The characters therefore help to keep the meanings of these similar sounds apart. But there are no handy spaces between Chinese characters to show where the words are. ChAT technology solves this problem at the touch of a button.

Benefits

- Innovative, web-based language learning tool
- Immediate graphic and scoring feedback on tonal performance
- Audio and video controls implemented using HTML5
- Listen to situational dialogues and watch synchronised transcript in English, Pinyin or Chinese characters
- Break a phrase up into words
- Slow-down the audio (without tonal distortion) so as to follow the melody of the tones
- Role-play enabled
- High quality video recordings demonstrate Chinese sounds
- Insightful cultural and linguistic tips
- Save time – learn more efficiently
- A dictionary, grammar, phrase book and video player just a mouse-click away
- Insights into how Chinese works