

# GE2122: THE CANTONESE LANGUAGE IN USE: LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR AND CULTURE

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2024/25

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

The Cantonese Language in Use: Language, Grammar and Culture

### Subject Code

GE - Gateway Education

### Course Number

2122

### Academic Unit

Linguistics and Translation (LT)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

A1, A2 - Associate Degree  
B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### GE Area (Primary)

Area 1 - Arts and Humanities

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course studies Cantonese as a living language system in active use. Focus will be on language phenomena which lead to significant cultural and sociolinguistic issues and dialectal variations demonstrated by Cantonese with other dialects/languages. Moreover, students will be exposed to the techniques of how Cantonese grammar can be analyzed in a logical and systematic way, and a brief introduction will be given to the sound and writing systems of Cantonese, particularly the ways how Cantonese words are transcribed and Cantonese characters can be written in the local context. The essential concepts acquired in the course will eventually be applied to compare Cantonese with Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese and English, and discussion will be on how relevant linguistic differences affect the learning of these languages. Since the course aims to enhance students' sensitivity toward languages and stimulate their self-directed learning, group discussion/presentation, assignments and term paper writing will be required.

### Course Aims

This course aims to provide students with a basic understanding of Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong and its neighbours, namely Guangdong, Guangxi and Macau, through examining various issues in Cantonese grammar and Cantonese culture reflected in real life situations. It aims to enhance students' ability to apply and discover techniques required to analyze Cantonese as a language system used by a speech community. Emphases are put on the following respects.

- a. From a cultural perspective, the course aims to cultivate students' sensitivity toward languages in general, through examining the use of Cantonese in society, with emphases put on the following respects: acquisition of the ability to (i) describe the cultural phenomena in Hong Kong; and (ii) discover linguistic variations and innovations from a social and dialectal perspective.
- b. From a historical perspective, the course enhances students' ability to describe (i) the history and distribution of Cantonese in the map of dialects/languages spoken in China; and (ii) the sound and writing systems of Cantonese, from early Cantonese to modern Cantonese.
- c. From a grammatical perspective, the course puts emphasis on the acquisition of basic knowledge of (i) the word formation in Cantonese and relevant lexical properties; (ii) rules forming structural units in Cantonese and how phrases and sentences are formed; and (iii) the rich repertoire of verbal particles and sentence-final particles in Cantonese, and how these particles contribute to sentence meaning.
- d. From a contrastive perspective, it aims to engage students in a critical discussion about how Cantonese is distinct from Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese and English regarding the two perspectives above, and in what ways these differences influence their language learning.

The ultimate aim of the course is to foster in students the capacity for self-directed learning towards specific language and cultural phenomena in Cantonese, and to raise their sensitivity towards languages, be it their own languages and/or other languages/dialects. Moreover, by applying a general grammatical framework to analyze language, it aims to stimulate students to think anew about their own languages and/or dialects, and to discover and formulate language-related rules through the critical thinking skills acquired from the course.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 DEC-A2 DEC-A3 app.)			
1	Describe the history and distribution of Cantonese in the map of dialects/languages spoken in China.		x	x	
2	Discover and describe language-related cultural phenomena in Hong Kong.		x	x	
3	Analyze Cantonese grammar in terms of its word formation, word classes, sentence structures and meaning.		x	x	x
4	Describe the sound and writing systems of Cantonese.		x	x	x

5	Compare Cantonese with Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese and English in terms of their writing and sound systems and their grammatical properties.		x	x	x
6	Describe Cantonese from both social and dialectal perspectives, to critically examine how social factors and dialectal factors affect the use of Cantonese in Hong Kong and mainland China.		x	x	x

**A1: Attitude**

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

**A2: Ability**

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

**A3: Accomplishments**

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

**Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)**

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Students will gain knowledge about the Cantonese language and relevant linguistic concepts.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
2	Reading	Assigned readings on discussion topics.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	One compulsory reading will be assigned per week, which will be the topic for group discussion (and presentations).
3	Group participation	Students will participate in group discussion and presentations to learn and develop their sensitivity toward the use of Cantonese in the local context. Each group is expected to do a 12-minute presentation on topics related to the use of Cantonese with materials discovered in their living and learning communities.	2, 4, 5, 6	Group discussion will be conducted in class, and around 1 lecture hour will be allocated for that. After 20-minute group discussion, each group will take turn to have a 5-minute presentation, to present the results obtained from the group discussion.

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)	
1	Participation and Group Presentation assessed in the form of group discussion and group presentation. Materials will be taken from the lectures and assigned readings as well as from students' own discovery from extracurricular materials and the local living environment.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	30	10% (participation) + 20% (group presentation)
2	1 final quiz on Cantonese grammar, focusing on assessing the analytic and critical thinking skills of students.	3, 4, 5	30	
3	1 short paper (2,500 words) on a topic of the student's own choice. The paper should demonstrate his/her understanding of essential concepts covered in the course and his/her sensitivity towards distinct language and cultural phenomena in Cantonese. Topics can be a language-related cultural study of Cantonese and other issues related to the use of Cantonese, a study related to a specific phenomenon in Cantonese grammar, a contrastive study between Cantonese and Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese or between Cantonese and English.	2, 4, 5, 6	40	

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)**

**Assessment Task**

1. Participation (group discussion and presentation)

**Criterion**

Demonstrate language sensitivity and analytical ability, and performance in group presentations and group discussion will be evaluated.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Excellent ability to analyze data and excellent language sensitivity; strong evidence of critical and analytical ability, and original thinking in formulating hypotheses; superior grasp of concepts related to the topics under discussion; zealous participation.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Good language sensitivity; Evidence of critical and analytical ability; evidence of ability to formulate hypotheses; good grasp of concepts related to the topics under discussion; active participation.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Evidence of satisfactory grasp of concepts related to the topics under discussion; satisfactory participation.

**Marginal (D)**

Ability to follow the concepts related to the topics under discussion in spite of some difficulty; satisfactory participation.

**Failure (F)**

Little or no evidence of familiarity with the concepts related to the topics under discussion; insufficient participation.

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**Assessment Task**

2. Final quiz

**Criterion**

Demonstrate understanding of topics covered in the lecture and tutorials. Show the capacity to do basic analysis on issues related to Cantonese grammar.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Evidence of excellent knowledge in relevant topics; strong evidence of logical thinking.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Evidence of adequate knowledge in relevant topics.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Evidence of the ability to understand the relevant topics.

**Marginal (D)**

Ability to apply knowledge in the assignments in spite of difficulty.

**Failure (F)**

Very limited knowledge of the topics in question.

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**Assessment Task**

3. Paper writing

**Criterion**

Demonstrate through writing the ability to discuss and appreciate issues related to the selected topic, and knowledge.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Evidence of extensive knowledge in the topic; excellent literature review, organization and presentation; excellent analyses with original and logical thinking, adequate citations and references with consistent style (APA or MLA).

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Evidence of adequate knowledge in the topic; good literature review, organization and presentation; good and logical analyses; relevant citations and references with consistent style.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Evidence of satisfactory knowledge in the topic; satisfactory literature review, organization and presentation; satisfactory analyses; citations and references with inconsistent styles.

**Marginal (D)**

Ability to apply knowledge in the topic in spite of difficulty; barely adequate in handling literature review, organization and presentation; analyses with inaccuracy; no citations or references.

**Failure (F)**

Very limited knowledge of the topic and insufficient ability to handle literature review, organization and presentation; totally incorrect analyses; no citations or references.

## Part III Other Information

### Keyword Syllabus

(1) History of Cantonese; (2) Cantonese in the family of languages and dialects in China; (3) Dialects and languages; (4) The emergence of code-mixing, taboos & euphemisms, jargon, idioms; (5) Trendy expressions in Cantonese and relevant cultural and sociolinguistic implications (6) Word formation processes and word classes in Cantonese and Modern Standard Chinese; (7) Cantonese grammar; Formation of phrases and structural rules in Cantonese; (8) What constitutes a sentence and sentence formation in Cantonese; (9) Cantonese interjections, verbal and sentence-final particles, and their meanings; (10) Cantonese, Putonghua and English; (11) Cantonese dialectal characters; Cantonese Romanization system; (12) contrastive study between Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese and Cantonese; and (13) contrastive study between English and Cantonese.

### Reading List

#### Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Matthews, Stephen and Virginia Yip. 1994. <i>Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar</i> . London: Routledge.

#### Additional Readings

Title	
1	Yue-Hashimoto, Anne. 1993. <i>Collection des Cahiers de Linguistique d'Asie Orientale 1: Comparative Chinese Dialectal Grammar -- Handbook for Investigators</i> . Paris: Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l'Asie Orientale, pp. 69-88.
2	Bolton, Kingsley and John Bacon-Shone. 2008. "Bilingualism and multilingualism in the HKSAR: Language surveys and Hong Kong's changing linguistic profile." In Kingsley Bolton and Han Yang (eds.) <i>Language and Society in Hong Kong</i> . Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open University Press, pp. 25-51.
3	Li, David. 2000. "Cantonese-English code-switching in Hong Kong: a Y2K review." <i>World Englishes Volume 19 Issue 3</i> , pp.305-322.
4	Huffaker, DA and Calvert, SL. 2005. "Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs." <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i> 10(2).

5	Report team of “China Language Life Situation Report” . 2007. “The Gaming Language in Macau.” In Language Situation in China: 2006 (Volume I). Beijing: the Commercial Press, pp.292-305.
6	Matthews, Stephen and Virginia Yip. 1994. Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar. London: Routledge, Chapter 2 and 3.
7	Matthews, Stephen and Virginia Yip. 1994. Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar. London: Routledge, Chapter 4, 6-10, 17.
8	Tang, Sze Wing. 1998. “On the ‘inverted’ double object construction.” Studies in Cantonese Linguistics 1. Hong Kong: The Linguistic Society of Hong Kong, pp. 35-54.
9	Matthews, Stephen and Virginia Yip. 1994. Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar. London: Routledge, Chapter 11-15, 18.
10	Chan, M. 2002 “Chinese gender-related use of sentence-final particles in Cantonese.” In M. Hellinger, H. Bussman (Eds.), Gender Across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men, vol. 2, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 57-72.
11	Luke, K. K. 1990. Utterance Particles in Cantonese Conversation. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, Chapter 3-5
12	Lee, Hun-tak, Thomas, Casear Lun, K. K. Lun, P Tung and K H Cheung (eds) 2002 Guide to LSHK Cantonese Romanization of Chinese Characters. Revised edition. Linguistic Society of Hong Kong. (a list of Chinese characters in Jyutping system)
13	Cheung K. H. and Bauer, S. Robert. 2002. “The representation of Cantonese with Chinese characters.” Journal of Chinese linguistics Monograph series 18. Berkeley, CA: Project on Linguistic Analysis, University of California, Chapter 1-3.
14	Bauer, Robert S. 1998. “Hong Kong Cantonese Tone Contours.” Studies in Cantonese Linguistics 1. Hong Kong: The Linguistic Society of Hong Kong, pp. 1-34.
15	Bauer, S. Robert, Cheung K. H. and Cheung P. M. 2003 “Variation and merger of the rising tones in Hong Kong Cantonese.” In Language Variation and Change (2003)15, pp. 211-225.
16	Setter, Jane, Cathy S.P. Wong and Brian H.S. Chan. 2010. Hong Kong English. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Chapter 4 and 5.
17	Comrie, Bernard, and Norval Smith. 1977. “Lingua descriptive studies: questionnaire.” Lingua 42, pp.1-72.

## Annex (for GE courses only)

**A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:**

Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)

**PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning**

2, 3, 5, 6

**PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology**

2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills**

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**PILO 4: Interpret information and numerical data**

1, 3, 4, 5, 6

**PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text**

2, 6

**PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills**

2, 6

**PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team**

2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues**

2, 5, 6

**PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions**

2, 6

**PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation**

2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.**

**Selected Assessment Task**

Group presentation