City University of Hong Kong

Information on a Gateway Education Course  
offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation 
with effect from Semester A in 2014/2015

Part I

Course Title: The Cantonese Language in Use: Language, Grammar and Culture
Course Code: GE2122
Course Duration: One semester

Proposed Area: (Please insert “1” for the single primary area, and “2” for the secondary area if applicable. Students will only earn credit units from the primary area.)

1 Arts and Humanities
2 Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations
2 Science and Technology

No. of Credit Units: 3
Level: B2/A2

Medium of Instruction: English
Medium of Assessment: English

Prerequisites: (Course Code and Title)  NIL
Precursors: (Course Code and Title)  NIL
Equivalent Courses: (Course Code and Title)  NIL
Exclusive Courses: (Course Code and Title)  NIL

Part II

1. 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

Note: Cantonese examples are supplemented by Cantonese Romanization.
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.

2. 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.

(1) 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.
(2) 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.
(3) 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.
(4) 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.
3. **Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>CILOs</th>
<th>Weighting (if applicable)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Describe the history and distribution of Cantonese in the map of dialects/languages spoken in China.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Discover and describe language-related cultural phenomena in Hong Kong.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Analyze Cantonese grammar in terms of its word formation, word classes, sentence structures and meaning.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Describe the sound and writing systems of Cantonese.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Compare Cantonese with Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese and English in terms of their writing and sound systems and their grammatical properties.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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4. **Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**

(designed to facilitate students’ achievement of the CILOs - Some TLAs may address more than one CILO.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLA</th>
<th>CILO No.</th>
<th>Hours/week (if applicable)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures with group discussion: Lectures are for presenting concepts, and a group discussion component is for students to present their viewpoints.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.</td>
<td>3-hour lecture with a group discussion component per week from Week 1 to Week 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assigned readings on discussion topics.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.</td>
<td>One compulsory reading will be assigned per week, which will be the topic for group discussion (and presentations).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group discussion and presentations are to stimulate students to learn and cultivate their sensitivity toward the language used in their living and learning communities. Around 1/3 of the lecture hours are used for group discussion. Each group is expected to do a 5-minute presentation on results of their discussion. The topics of discussion will be from materials covered in the previous lectures and the assigned readings.</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5. **Assessment Tasks/Activities**
(designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs –Some assessment tasks/activities may address more than one CILO.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>CILO No.</th>
<th>Weighting (if applicable)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation assessed in the form of group discussion and presentations. Materials will be taken from the lectures and assigned readings.</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 short assignment on Cantonese grammar, focusing on assessing the analytic and critical thinking skills of students.</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
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6. **Grading of Student Achievement:** Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grading criteria in relation to CILOs</th>
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| A+           | **Participation (group discussion and presentation):** 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
| A            | **Take home assignment(s):** Evidence of excellent knowledge in relevant topics; strong evidence of logical thinking
| A-           | **Paper writing:** 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). |
| B+           | **Participation (group discussion and presentation):** Good language sensitivity; Evidence of critical and analytical ability; evidence of ability to formulate hypotheses; good grasp of concepts
<p>| B            |                         |
| B-           |                         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Take home assignment(s)</th>
<th>Paper writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Participation (group discussion and presentation): Evidence of satisfactory grasp of concepts related to the topics under discussion; satisfactory participation.</td>
<td>Evidence of the ability to understand the relevant topics</td>
<td>Evidence of satisfactory knowledge in the topic; satisfactory literature review, organization and presentation; satisfactory analyses; citations and references with inconsistent styles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Participation (group discussion and presentation): Ability to follow the concepts related to the topics under discussion in spite of some difficulty; satisfactory participation.</td>
<td>Ability to apply knowledge in the assignments in spite of difficulty</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Participation (group discussion and presentation): Little or no evidence of familiarity with the concepts related to the topics under discussion; insufficient participation.</td>
<td>Very limited knowledge of the topics in question</td>
<td>Very limited knowledge of the topic and insufficient ability to handle literature review, organization and presentation; totally incorrect analyses; no citations or references.</td>
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Part III

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.

Recommended Reading:
Text(s):
Note:
- **Items in the following list are indicative and tentative.** Final decision regarding the readings will be made by individual instructors of particular sections. Details will be provided to students in Week 1 of the course.
- A more complete list is included in the *Tentative weekly schedule.*

(A) **Textbook: Chapters are taken from the following textbook as required readings.**

(B) **Tentative weekly schedule:**
Below is the **tentative** weekly schedule with the course content and pedagogy to be used to achieve CILOs.

**Week 1: History and distribution of Cantonese**
A brief introduction will be given to the history of Cantonese, and its position as the lingua franca of Hong Kong and its neighbours, namely Guangzhou, Guangxi and Macau. Moreover, within Guangzhou and other related areas, how Cantonese is related to other dialects and languages, and the relation of Cantonese with Putonghua.

**Required Reading:**
**Week 2: Language-related cultural phenomena in Hong Kong (I)**
This week focuses on the code-mixing feature in Hong Kong, and discussion will be focused on why and how such a feature emerges, and what cultural and sociolinguistic implications it reflects?

**Required Readings:**

**Supplemental References (for students’ reference only):**

**Week 3-4: Language-related cultural phenomena in Hong Kong (II)**
These two weeks focus on taboos, euphemisms, jargon, and idioms found in Cantonese. Discussion will be on the cultural and sociolinguistic implications behind the use of these expressions. Moreover, a brief introduction will be given to the trendy expressions used in Hong Kong Cantonese, and importantly, what impacts will the linguistic changes reflected by these expressions have on the development of Cantonese in general?

**Required Readings:**

**Week 5: Cantonese word formation and word classes**
An introduction will be given to how words are formed in Cantonese and the relevant word formation processes involved. Further elaboration will be made on different word classes in Cantonese, and how words shift from one class to another in the process of conversion. Comparison will be made with Modern Standard Chinese and English, in terms of both morphological changes and word classes.

**Required Readings:**

**Week 6: Cantonese grammar (Structures)**
This week focuses on grammar and structure of Cantonese. Structural properties of
Cantonese, which are distinct from Modern Standard Chinese and English, will be introduced, and various grammatical transformations and derivations will be explained.

Required Readings:

Supplemental References (for students’ reference only):

Week 7: Cantonese grammar (Meaning)
In Week 7, focus will be on the meaning perspective of Cantonese. Special emphasis will be drawn to verbal particles, as Cantonese has a rich repertoire of particles, including both verbal particles and sentence-final particles, making it distinct from other languages. With an introduction of relevant concepts, a brief introduction will be given to various meaning aspects which are significant in Cantonese, and particularly, what makes Cantonese different from English and Modern Standard Chinese in these respects.

Required Readings:

Supplemental References (for students’ reference only):

Week 8: Cantonese Romanization
This week introduces students to various Romanization systems used to represent words in Cantonese, which include the Yale system, the Jyutping system and the KK system. Comparison will be made among these systems, and their strengths and weaknesses compared.

Required References:
Lee, Hun-tak, Thomas, Casear Lun, K. K. Lun, P Tung and K H Cheung (eds) 2002

**Week 9: How to write in Cantonese – characters**
This week focuses on the question whether Cantonese can be written solely in characters, like Chinese? Emphases will be drawn to those Cantonese dialectal characters which have no corresponding characters in Chinese, and discusses the issue in what ways these characters can be represented and standardized?

**Required Readings:**

**Week 10: The sound system and patterns of Cantonese (IPA)**
This week discusses the sound system of Cantonese, and examines the issue of how Cantonese can be transcribed in IPA. Comparison will be made among Cantonese, Putonghua and English in terms of their sound systems.

**Required Readings:**

**Supplemental References (for students’ reference only):**

**Week 11-12: How Cantonese affects your English and your Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese**
Based on the concepts introduced in the previous weeks, a more in-depth comparison will be made between Cantonese and Putonghua/Modern Standard Chinese, and between Cantonese and English, from the perspectives of grammar, meaning, sound and writing systems. A related issues will then be how the differences identified will affect one learning English and Putonghua.

**Required Readings:**
**Week 13: Dialectal variation/Fieldwork**
This week focuses on the comparison between Cantonese in Hong Kong/Guangzhou and other varieties of Cantonese in the vicinity. An informant from one of the dialectal regions will be invited to class and his dialect investigated by students making use of field work methodology.

**Required Readings:**