

# LT5425: CONTRASTIVE STUDIES OF THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH, MANDARIN, AND CANTONESE

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2026/27

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Contrastive Studies of the Sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese

### Subject Code

LT - Linguistics and Translation

### Course Number

5425

### Academic Unit

Linguistics and Translation (LT)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

The course introduces and compares (i) the phonetic properties of (a) sound segments, including consonant, vowel, and diphthong, and (b) suprasegmentals, including stress and tone, and (ii) the phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. Students are also taught (i) transcription of the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and (ii) the correspondence between the IPA symbols and the Romanized or pinyin letters in representing the sounds of the three languages. Students participate in the learning activities, including (a) oral and listening practice of the sounds in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (b) IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages, (c) identification of the similarities and differences between the sounds and sound systems of the three languages, and (d) comparison of the consonant-rhyme matrices and syllable types of the three languages.

The course offers the students a comprehensive phonetic and phonological knowledge of the sounds and sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. Equipped with the analytical skills acquired in the course, students will be able to carry out phonetic and phonological analysis of the sounds and sound systems of other Chinese dialects and foreign languages.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

| CILOs |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Weighting (if app.) | DEC-A1 | DEC-A2 | DEC-A3 |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1     | Describe and explain the phonetic characteristics of the sounds and the phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.                                                                                                                  |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 2     | Compare and identify the similarities and differences in segments and suprasegmentals in the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.                                                                                                                                         |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 3     | Describe and explain (i) the underlying principles of the IPA and pinyin systems and the correspondence between the two systems of representing speech sounds, and (ii) the narrow (phonetic) and broad (phonemic) IPA transcription of the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. |                     | 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    | Weekly lectures                  | Students are informed of (i) the phonetic properties of (a) sound segments, including consonant, vowel, and diphthong, and (b) suprasegmentals, including stress and tone, (ii) the phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (iii) the principle that underlies the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and the articulatory properties embodied in each of the IPA symbols, (iv) the correspondence between the IPA symbols and the Romanized or pinyin letters, and (v) the similarities and differences in the sounds and sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. | 1, 2, 3                    |
| 2    | In-class practice and discussion | Students participate in (i) discussion of questions and points with reference to the contents presented in class, (ii) oral and listening practices of the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (iii) practices of IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages, and (iv) comparisons of the sound segments and suprasegmentals in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1, 2, 3                    |

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

|   | ATs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | CILO No. | Weighting (%) | Remarks ("-" for nil entry)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Allow Use of GenAI? |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Written assignments:<br>Three written assignments with short questions about (i) the sounds and sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (ii) the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of the three languages, and (iii) comparisons of the phonetic and phonological characteristics of the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and suprasegmentals in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. | 1, 2, 3  | 30            | Students may use GenAI tools to brainstorm, gather information, solve problems, format references, and edit language. Students are required (i) to give acknowledgment on all the contents derived from GenAI tools that are incorporated into their assignments and (ii) keep a journal of their GenAI conversations. Students are prohibited to present in their assignments the texts generated or translated by GenAI tools as their own original work. | Yes                 |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |         |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2 | Essay paper:<br>One essay paper of 2000-3000 words to compare the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese with another language or dialect.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1, 2, 3 | 30 | Students may use GenAI tools to brainstorm, gather information, solve problems, format references, and edit language. Students are required (i) to give acknowledgment on all the contents derived from GenAI tools that are incorporated into their essay paper and (ii) keep a journal of their GenAI conversations. Students are prohibited to present in their assignments the texts generated or translated by GenAI tools as their own original work. | Yes |
| 3 | Final test:<br>Final test (2 hours) on (i) the phonetic properties of the sounds and the phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (ii) the similarities and differences in phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and (iii) the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to represent the sounds of the three languages. | 1, 2, 3 | 40 | This is a summative assessment task.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No  |

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

Written assignments.

Three written assignments with short questions about (i) the sounds and sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (ii) the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of the three languages, and (iii) comparisons of the phonetic and phonological characteristics of the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and suprasegmentals in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

**Criterion**

(i) Comparison of the phonetic properties of the sounds and phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and (ii) demonstration of knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

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

Excellent performance in comparison of the phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and demonstration of full knowledge of the IPA and excellent skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

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

Good performance in comparison of the phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and demonstration of good knowledge of the IPA and skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

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

Fairly good performance in comparison of the phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and demonstration of fairly good knowledge of the IPA and skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

**Marginal (D)**

Passable performance in comparison of the phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and demonstration of limited knowledge of the IPA and skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

**Failure (F)**

Poor performance in comparison of the phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and demonstration of poor knowledge of the IPA and skills for IPA transcription of the sounds of the three languages.

**Assessment Task**

Essay paper.

One essay paper of 2000-3000 words to compare the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese with another language or dialect.

**Criterion**

Demonstrating through writing the ability in comparing and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

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

Excellent ability in presenting and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

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

Good ability in presenting and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

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

Fairly good ability in presenting and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

**Marginal (D)**

Limited ability in presenting and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

**Failure (F)**

Lacking ability in presenting and discussing the sounds and sound systems between English/Mandarin/Cantonese and another language or dialect.

**Assessment Task**

Final test.

Final test (2 hours) on (i) the phonetic properties of the sounds and the phonological structures and patterns of the sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, (ii) the similarities and differences in phonetics and phonology of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and (iii) the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to represent the sounds of the three languages.

**Criterion**

Application of (i) the phonetic and phonological concepts and analytical skills of comparison of the sounds and sound systems of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese and (ii) the knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of the three languages.

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

Excellent competence in application of the phonetic and phonological concepts, analytical skills of comparison, and knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

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

Good competence in application of the phonetic and phonological concepts, analytical skills of comparison, and knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

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

Fairly good competence in application of the phonetic and phonological concepts, analytical skills of comparison, and knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

**Marginal (D)**

Limited competence in application of the phonetic and phonological concepts, analytical skills of comparison, and knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

**Failure (F)**

Lacking competence in application of the phonetic and phonological concepts, analytical skills of comparison, and knowledge of the IPA symbols for transcribing the sounds of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

**Part III Other Information****Keyword Syllabus**

Consonant, vowel, diphthong, stress, tone, syllable, sound system, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Romanized/pinyin letters, English, Mandarin, Cantonese

**Reading List****Compulsory Readings**

| Title |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Ladefoged, Peter and Keith Johnson (2015). A Course in Phonetics, 7th ed. Cengage Learning.                                                                       |
| 2     | Roach, Peter (2009). English Phonetics and Phonology, 4th ed. Cambridge University Press.                                                                         |
| 3     | Chao, Yuen Ren (1948). Mandarin Primer. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.                                                                               |
| 4     | Lee, Wai-Sum and Eric Zee (2003). Standard Chinese (Beijing Mandarin). Journal of the International Phonetic Association, 33(1), 109-112.                         |
| 5     | Chao, Yuen Ren (1947). Cantonese Primer. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.                                                                              |
| 6     | Zee, Eric (1991). Cantonese (Hong Kong Cantonese). Journal of the International Phonetic Association, 21(1), 46-48.                                               |
| 7     | IPA (1999). Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A Guide to the Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. |

### Additional Readings

| Title |                                                                                                              |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Gimson, A.C. (1989). An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English, 4th ed. London, Hodder Arnold.         |
| 2     | Lorenz, Frank (2025). English Phonetics and Phonology: An Introduction. Cambridge University Press.          |
| 3     | Lin, Yen-Hwei (2007). The Sounds of Chinese. Cambridge University Press.                                     |
| 4     | Duanmu, San (2007). The Phonology of Standard Chinese, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press.                      |
| 5     | Hashimoto, Oi-Kam Yue (1972). Studies in Yue Dialects 1: Phonology of Cantonese. Cambridge University Press. |
| 6     | Bauer, Robert S. and Paul K. Benedict (1997). Modern Cantonese Phonology. Mouton de Gruyter.                 |
| 7     | Yuan, Jiahua, ed. (2001). Hanyu Fangyan Gaiyao, 2nd ed. Yuwen Chubanshe. (In Chinese)                        |