

Fall 2026

HUMA2031 The Cantonese Language

[Ca] [C]

[3-0-0:3]

Instructor: Yuk Man Carine YIU

Email: yyiu@ust.hk

Office: Rm. 3339, Academic Building (Lift 3)

Office hours: Tue: 16:00-18:00 & Thur: 9:30-10:30

Course description

This course introduces students to basic linguistic concepts pertinent to sounds and grammar with illustrations from Cantonese. The phonological and grammatical characteristics of the Cantonese language will be highlighted. It will study the history of the Cantonese language and examine the on-going changes that have come to define the variety of Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong as a separate dialect from those spoken in its neighboring areas. **[This is not a language enhancement course and lectures will not be recorded!!]**

Intended learning outcomes (ILOs)

- Identify and articulate the structure of the Cantonese language, especially the variety spoken in Hong Kong, with the learnt concepts
- Analyze the structure of the Cantonese language, and by extension other languages, with the learnt skills and analytic tools
- Articulate the linguistic features observed in the variety of Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong which are different from those found in varieties spoken in the neighboring areas

Mapping of course ILOs to assessment tasks

Assessed task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-class closed book pop-up quizzes	ILO.1, 2 and 3	The quizzes are administered in-class unexpectedly to ensure presence and engagement, a measure that helps to achieve the ILOs. They also evaluate students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed during the lectures.
Final examination	ILO 1, 2 and 3	The final examination

		evaluates students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed during the lectures.
--	--	--

Assessment and grading

Students will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve.

Planned assessment tasks

1. In-class closed book pop-up quizzes (**No Make-up!!**): 50%
There will be **AT LEAST 5** in-class closed book pop-up quizzes, starting after the add-drop period, and the scores of the **BEST 5** quizzes will be counted. The aim of the quizzes is to test students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed during the lectures. Therefore, class attendance and note-taking are necessary.
2. Final examination: 50%
The aim of the final examination is to test students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed during the lectures.

Final grade descriptors

Grades	Short description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive and precise understanding of the subject matter. Shows the ability to describe and analyze data with the basic concepts discussed and beyond, without fault
B	Good performance	Displays a solid and accurate understanding of the subject matter. Shows the ability to describe and analyze data with the basic concepts discussed with a high degree of accuracy.
C	Satisfactory performance	Has a good grasp of the subject matter. Exhibits the ability to describe and analyze data with the basic concepts satisfactorily.
D	Marginal pass	Shows a basic understanding of the subject matter and the ability to describe

		and analyze data with the basic concepts albeit with occasional mistakes.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and the lack of ability to describe and analyze data with the basic concepts.

Course AI policy

Generative AI is not allowed in the in-class closed book pop-up quizzes and the final examination.

Communication and feedback

Marks and feedback will be made available within two weeks of submission.

Academic integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Major topics to be covered (tentative)

Part I: Introduction (Week 1)

1. Cantonese as spoken in Hong Kong

Part II: Phonology (Week 2 – Week 7)

1. Initials
2. Finals
3. Tones
4. On-going sound changes

Part III: Chinese morphology (Week 8)

1. Morpheme and word
2. Word-formation processes

Part IV: Syntax (Week 9 – Week 12)

1. Word classes
2. Noun phrase
3. Verb phrase
4. Sentence elements
5. Ambiguity

Part V: Topics in sociolinguistics (Week 13)

Textbooks

- Bauer S. Robert and Paul K. Benedict. 1997. *Modern Cantonese Phonology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. [PL 1739. B38 1997] (Library 3-hour reserve) and online access
- Cheung Hung-nin Samuel 張洪年. 2007. *A Grammar of Cantonese as Spoken in Hong Kong* 香港粵語語法的研究(增訂版). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press. [PL 1740. H72 C46 2007] (Library 3-hour reserve) and online access
- Matthews Stephen and Virginia Yip. 1994/2011. *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London: Routledge. [PL1733.M38 1994/PL1733.M38 2011] (Library 3-hour reserve) and online access]

Other references

- Hu Yushu 胡裕樹. 1995. *Xiandai Hanyu* 現代漢語. Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe. [PL1071.X525 1995] (Library 3-hour reserve)
- Li Xinkui 李新魁. 1994. *Guangdong de fangyan* 廣東的方言. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe. [PL1731.L54 1994] (Library 3-hour reserve)
- Li Xinkui et al. 李新魁等. 1995. *Guangzhou fangyan yanjiu* 廣州方言研究. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe. [PL1731.K825 1995] (Library 3-hour reserve)
- Tang Sze-Wing 鄧思穎. 2015. *Lectures on Cantonese Grammar* 粵語語法講義. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press. [PL1734.T36 2015] (Library 3-hour reserve)