Cantonese X Hong Kong: Live the Exchange, Speak the City (with Chinese Language Backgrounds)

Name of Course Coordinator: Polung LI

Email of Course Coordinator: lcpolung@ust.hk

Office Hours: Available by appointment. Students should contact their section instructor directly.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a practical introduction to spoken Cantonese, designed to equip students with the essential communication skills for life in Hong Kong. Through immersive activities and real-world scenarios—from ordering food and navigating transport to bargaining in markets and using local slang—learners will build confidence in listening, speaking, and cultural understanding. By focusing on tones, everyday phrases, and cultural norms, the course helps students connect with the local community and participate more meaningfully in daily life.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify and practice the six core Cantonese tones to form intelligible words and phrases.
- Introduce oneself and use basic polite language (e.g., greetings, thanks) in simple, rehearsed contexts related to personal and school life.
- Order food and drinks confidently in a café setting using essential phrases (e.g., "我要___", "有冇___?") and gestures ("呢个").
- Distinguish between and correctly apply key polite terms ("唔该" for requests, "多谢" for thanks) according to Hong Kong's service culture.
- Ask for and understand basic directions to navigate public transport (e.g., MTR, minibus) using phrases like "喺边?" and "点去___?".
- Apply essential local transport etiquette and phrases (e.g., "前面有落!" on minibuses, standing right on escalators).
- Employ a structured sequence of bargaining phrases (e.g., "平啲得唔得?", "最平几多?", "唔要啦!") to negotiate prices in informal market settings.

- Recognize common shopping contexts where bargaining is appropriate (e.g., street markets) versus inappropriate (e.g., chain stores).
- Understand and use common Cantonese slang and viral phrases (e.g., "食花生", "佛系") to engage with contemporary local humor and digital culture.

- Create simple, original dialogues that integrate colloquial Cantonese expressions to describe everyday scenarios or reactions.

COURSE SCHEDULE & CONTENTS

Session	Title	Intended Learning Outcomes	Key Activities	Extended Learning
1	Nei Hou! 你好嗎?	Introduce self, use tones, order food, polite phrases	Tone drills, self-intro, food ordering, quiz	Film a 30-second self-introduction
2	M̀h'gōi! 唔该!	Order food, pronounce dishes, understand dining norms	Café role-play, tone toss, cultural reading	Order one item in Cantonese at a local eatery
3	Dim Gaai? 点解?	Ask for directions, use transport phrases, MTR/minibus etiquette	Direction drills, transport scenarios, quiz	Use one Cantonese phrase on public transport
4	Gei Chin Ah? 几钱呀?	Bargain, identify tourist traps, use market terms	Price guessing, haggling role-play, market vocab	Haggle for one item at a local market
5	Yau Med Yeh Sīk? 有乜嘢食?	Use slang, understand memes, role-play with humor	Meme matching, slang dialogues, skit creation	Find and explain a Cantonese meme/TikTok

NOTE: Three Experiential Outings

Beyond its five classroom sessions, this course integrates three mandatory experiential outings that use Hong Kong's lively cultural environment as an immersive language lab. These activities are designed as hands-on challenges, pushing students to apply their Cantonese in real, often unstructured, local situations. A prime example is the "No Mandarin Menu Challenge!," a dim sum mission where student groups, assisted by a local buddy, must order

six dishes using only Cantonese—without menus or Mandarin. This task tests spontaneous speaking skills, polite forms, and cultural navigation under pressure. Students document their experience through video and reflective writing, connecting practice with deeper understanding.

These outings directly align with the course's Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). They assess students' ability to perform basic communicative tasks (ILO3), apply grammar in real-time speech (ILO4), recognize differences between Cantonese and Mandarin (ILO5), and engage analytically with local culture (ILO2). Through this experiential model, language learning moves decisively from theory into practical, lived competence.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

The curriculum employs a variety of communicative and task-based language teaching methods, emphasizing real-world application, cultural immersion, and interactive practice.

a. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

- **Example**: Session 1 includes pair discussions and jigsaw reading to promote interaction. Activity 4 ("Match My Plate") requires learners to use template dialogues to introduce themselves and find partners with shared interests.
- **Purpose**: Encourages authentic language use in social contexts.

b. Task-Based Learning (TBL)

- **Example**: In Session 2, learners role-play ordering food in a café using props like menu cards and play money. The "Cha Chaan Teng Rush!" activity simulates real dining scenarios.
- **Purpose**: Learners complete meaningful tasks using target language, enhancing fluency and confidence.

c. Tonal Awareness and Drills

- **Example**: Session 1 includes a "Tones Bootcamp" with minimal pair drills and a "Tone Detective" game where learners identify tones using finger signals.
- **Purpose**: Helps learners distinguish and produce the six Cantonese tones, which are critical for meaning.

d. Cultural Integration

- **Example**: Session 2 includes a cultural deep dive on dining norms (e.g., not sticking chopsticks upright) and the use of *m̀h'gōi* vs. *dōjeh*. Session 4 covers haggling culture and market-specific vocabulary.
- **Purpose**: Language is taught within cultural context to improve pragmatic competence.

e. Gamification and Role-Play

- **Example**: Activities like "Tone Toss & Order" (Session 2) and "Sneaker Street Showdown" (Session 4) turn learning into engaging, competitive games.
- **Purpose**: Increases motivation and makes practice fun and memorable.

f. Differentiated and Collaborative Learning

- **Example**: Jigsaw reading tasks (e.g., Session 1 and 2) require students to share information in small groups. Role-plays and skits (Session 5) encourage collaboration and creativity.
- **Purpose**: Supports peer learning and accommodates different learning styles.

g. Authentic Material and Real-World Tasks

- **Example**: Extended practices like filming a self-intro, ordering food, or haggling at a market connect classroom learning to real-life use.
- **Purpose**: Bridges the gap between learning and application, reinforcing retention.

This resource effectively blends language instruction with cultural immersion, using interactive, task-based, and gamified approaches to make learning Cantonese engaging and practical. Each session builds toward real-world communicative competence, supported by extended activities that encourage learners to use Cantonese outside the classroom.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

a. Commitment to Academic Honesty

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) holds academic honesty and integrity as fundamental principles underpinning all scholarly activities. All students are required to observe and uphold the highest standards of integrity in every aspect of their academic work throughout their program of study.

As members of the University community, students share the responsibility for preserving HKUST's academic reputation. Any violation of the regulations governing academic integrity will result in disciplinary sanctions.

For comprehensive details, please consult the official HKUST Academic Registry webpage on academic integrity.

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Students are expressly required to comply with the University's academic integrity policy and the HKUST Academic Honor Code. The University maintains a zero-tolerance stance toward all forms of academic misconduct.

Plagiarism, a serious form of academic misconduct, is strictly prohibited. This includes copying the work of others and submitting identical work in more than one course without prior authorization. All source materials must be fully and accurately acknowledged.

Assignments found to contain plagiarized content will be reported to the corresponding Department for further disciplinary action.

To uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism, students must:

- Employ proper academic techniques such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing ideas from sources, accompanied by appropriate citation.
- Refrain from directly copying text, ideas, or other expressions from any source—including other students, videos, or publications—without clear and correct attribution.

The instructor will review these policies and delineate the specific penalties for academic dishonesty in this course. Students are strongly advised to consult with the instructor regarding any questions or concerns about these requirements.