HUMA2031 The Cantonese Language

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Study of the Cantonese language, with emphasis on phonology and grammar. The course examines historical and socio-linguistic issues pertinent to the development of Cantonese in the context of Hong Kong. [This is not a language enhancement course!!]

Course description

This course provides students with a general introduction to the structure of the Cantonese language. 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.

Intended learning outcomes

- Identify and articulate the structure of the Cantonese language from a linguistic perspective
- Analyze the structure of the Cantonese language, and by extension other languages, with the learned skills and analytic tools
- Identify and analyze the linguistic features observed in the Hong Kong variety of Cantonese and account for the uniqueness of these features which come to define the variety of Cantonese spoken in Hong as different from those varieties spoken in the neighboring areas

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: Morphology (Week 8)
1. Morpheme and word
Part IV: Syntax (Week 9 – Week 12)
1. Word classes
2. Noun phrase
3. Verb phrase
4. Aspect
5. Modality
6. Sentence elements
7. Ambiguity

Part V: Topics in sociolinguistics (Week 13)

Assessment

Pop quizzes (short-answer questions) No Make-up!! 20%
Homework assignments (1 practical exercise and 1 mini-project due on 30 Nov) 30%
Final (a 2-hour final exam: transcription, MC questions, short-answer and long-answer questions) 50%

Textbooks


Other references