

# Cantonese X Hong Kong: Live the Exchange, Speak the City (without Chinese Language Backgrounds)

**Name of Course Coordinator:** Polung LI

**Email of Course Coordinator:** [lcpolung@ust.hk](mailto:lcpolung@ust.hk)

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

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a foundational introduction to spoken Cantonese for complete beginners. Designed for non-Chinese speakers, it focuses on practical communication for daily life in Hong Kong. The curriculum is built around three core themes: building a basic self-introduction with proper tones, ordering food using polite phrases and gestures, and navigating public transport by asking for directions and understanding local etiquette. Through interactive games, role-plays, and cultural insights, students gain the confidence to handle essential social and transactional situations. The emphasis is on immediate, usable language skills, transforming learners from observers into active participants in Hong Kong's vibrant culture.

## INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Discuss the global cultural significance of Cantonese by identifying key facts about its speakers, heritage, and media influence.
- Recognize and distinguish between the six Cantonese tones through targeted listening drills and interactive exercises.
- Introduce oneself and exchange basic personal information (name, origin, studies, and hobbies) using fundamental, memorized phrases.
- Order food and drinks in casual settings using a core set of polite request phrases, numbers, and gestures (e.g., pointing).
- Recall and explain unique aspects of Hong Kong's food culture and common dining taboos (e.g., the composition of a pineapple bun, chopstick etiquette).
- Role-play simple food-ordering scenarios, integrating polite language, gestures, and responses to common vendor questions.
- Ask for and understand basic directions using essential phrases for locating stations, stating destinations, and requesting stops.
- Navigate Hong Kong's major transport systems (MTR, minibus, taxi) by applying key cultural rules and etiquette (e.g., escalator standing, taxi colors, minibus payment).

- Solve common travel problems (e.g., missed stops, fare questions) through guided role-plays that combine spoken phrases with clarifying gestures.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND CONTENTS

Session	Title & Focus	Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	Extended Activity	Learning
1 & 2	"Nei Hou! 你好嗎?" Cantonese Crash Course	1. Discuss cultural significance. 2. Distinguish 6-9 tones. 3. Introduce oneself. 4. Apply practical vocabulary.	"5-Second Challenge": Film a self-introduction.	
3	"Mh'gōi! 唔該!" Food Ordering	1. Order food using 5 key phrases. 2. Recognize HK food culture. 3. Apply tones with gestures. 4. Role-play scenarios. 5. Test knowledge.	"Food Selfie": Take a photo with a HK dish captioned "Nī go!"	
4 & 5	Surviving HK Transport	1. Navigate transport with 5 phrases. 2. Decode transport culture. 3. Apply reinforcing gestures. 4. Solve real scenarios. 5. Demonstrate knowledge.	"Transport Diary": Photo using HK transport captioned "Mh'gōi!"	

### NOTE: Three Experiential Outings

Beyond its five classroom sessions, this course integrates three mandatory experiential outings designed to move language learning from the classroom into the vibrant heart of Hong Kong. These practical challenges are engineered to push students to apply their foundational Cantonese in authentic, high-stakes social situations. The assignments mandate teamwork with local student buddies to ensure guidance and cultural mediation.

A prime example is the "No English Menu Challenge!" at a local dim sum teahouse. Here, student groups must order three specific dishes using only Cantonese, without the safety net of pointing at an English menu. This task crystallizes the module's core philosophy: forcing learners to rely on rehearsed vocabulary and polite phrases like "m̀h'gōi" under the real-world pressure of a busy restaurant. The experience is documented through a short video and a personal reflection, bridging active performance with analytical learning.

Collectively, these outings are directly aligned with key course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). They assess students' ability to perform basic communicative tasks in daily contexts

(ILO3), apply memorized phrases and vocabulary in spontaneous interaction (ILO4), and engage directly with local cultural practices (ILO2). The ultimate goal is to foster not just linguistic competence, but also the confidence and cultural insight necessary for meaningful participation in Hong Kong life.

## **PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES**

The course employs a communicative, student-centered, and task-based pedagogical approach, prioritizing active participation and real-life application over rote memorization.

**a. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** The primary goal is functional competence. Every session is built around achieving tangible communicative tasks, such as introducing oneself (Session 1), ordering food (Session 3), and asking for directions (Session 4). For example, Session 3's "Survival Cantonese" teaches only five essential phrases ("Nī go," "Mh'gōi," etc.) and immediately has learners use them in a scripted dialogue with a street vendor, emphasizing meaning over perfect grammatical accuracy.

**b. Task-Based Learning (TBL):** Learning is driven by activities that mimic real-world challenges. In Session 4, the "Cantonese Scavenger Hunt" and "Transportation Survivor Challenge" are elaborate tasks where students must use all target phrases to navigate a simulated environment, making the learning process experiential and memorable.

**c. Multimodal & Kinesthetic Learning:** The course consistently combines auditory, visual, and physical modalities to enhance retention, particularly for the challenging tonal system. This is exemplified in the "Tones Bootcamp" (Session 1), which uses a detailed table (visual), teacher demonstration (auditory), and the "Tone Detective" game (kinesthetic/auditory) where students hold up fingers to identify tones. Similarly, Session 3's "Magic Words Mirror" activity pairs each phrase ("Mh'gōi," "Nī go") with a specific gesture (👉, 👈), embedding muscle memory with language.

**d. Gamification:** Games are used extensively to lower anxiety and boost engagement. Examples include the "True or False? Speak & Win!" game in Session 3, where students must clap or stomp in response to cultural statements, and the "Menu Lottery" where students invent and "order" silly dishes, making practice fun and less daunting.

**e. Cultural Immersion:** Language is taught as an inseparable part of culture. Each session integrates cultural nuggets, from the history of Cantonese cinema (Session 1) and pineapple bun trivia (Session 3) to MTR escalator etiquette and taxi roof color codes (Session 4). This

approach ensures learners gain not just linguistic ability but also cultural competency for navigating Hong Kong.

In summary, this course effectively blends practical language targets with immersive, interactive, and culturally rich pedagogy to equip beginners with the confidence and skills to engage with Hong Kong.

## **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.

### **b. Policy on Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism**

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.