Designing an Online Cantonese Learning Platform for English Speaking Students

Sharing Sessions on PD Initiatives in In-Depth Use of LMSs and/or Handling Students with Diverse (7 June 2016)

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About my project

• My project is an extension of my TDG project: “An Online Self-access Cantonese learning platform for Putonghua speakers”.
• Expected completion date: 31 August, 2016.
Contents of in this platform

• A course on Cantonese sounds and tones
• Quizzes and drills
• Dialogues using common vocabulary
• Mini-dictionary, searchable from Putonghua and English
• Audio files
Why Cantonese? Why now?

• Full-fledged language spoken by 90% of the population in Hong Kong
• Better communication with locals
• Advantage in future career
• Interesting research target
• Endangered language under the powerful influence of Mandarin
Why South Asian students?

• Diverse background
• With/without basic proficiency in colloquial Cantonese
• Low literacy in written Chinese
• “ngo⁵ dei⁶ ge³ uk¹ kei²” <=> “ngo⁵ mun⁴ dik¹ gaa¹”
• English can be used as a medium
• The target users can be extended to any other English-speaking learners
Rationale of my project

• 90% of the population speak Cantonese
• Online self-learning aids will be beneficial to non-local students who study at EdUHK and will work in Hong Kong.
• Upon completion, it can be used beyond the EdUHK campus.
About the project leader

- Knowledge of Putonghua and English.
- Experience in Cantonese learning
- Experience in publishing Cantonese textbooks
- Research-informed teaching strategies
- Project team including a linguist who specializes in Cantonese
Foreigners speaking Cantonese: What’s so special about it?
Things that have been done

We recruited student helpers and RAs to help us:

- Identify some 6000 Cantonese entries
- Translate each entry into English
- Classify Cantonese entries based on situations and functions
- Write dialogues using basic vocabulary
- Write Course contents in English
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample of Cantonese entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhōngguó 中国</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhōngguó rén 中国人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhōnghuá 中华</td>
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<td>Zhōnghuán 中环</td>
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<td>zhōngjiān 中间</td>
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<td>zhòngjiàng 中奖</td>
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<td>zhōnglèi 种类</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zhōngliánbàn 中联办</td>
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<tr>
<td>zhòngliàng 重量</td>
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<td>zhōngnián 中年</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhōngqǐnjie 中秋节</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quizzes and Drills: Based on contrastive research

- Putonghua (Mandarin) and Cantonese are both Chinese dialects.
- They share a lot of etymologically-related vocabulary.
- Learning tips will be included in the course contents.
Comparison of Vowels

Putonghua

- -ian
- -ao

Cantonese

- -in
- -aau
- -ou

面包 miàn bāo (bread)

min⁶ bou¹ or min⁶ baau¹?
Tone learning

Numerals denoting tones
粵語的 20 個聲母

粵語的聲母可按發音部位分和特點分成 7 大類。

雖然粵拼和漢語拼音相類似，但當中有的語音符號（例如：「h」、「j」等）所代表的是不同的發音，而粵語有些聲母（例如：/ng-/ 和 /gw- kw-/）又是普通話所無。學習起粵語來，需要多加注意才成。

The 20 Initials of Cantonese

Cantonese initials can be categorized into 7 sets, according to how the sounds are made.

While Jyutping & Hanyu Pinyin are similar, some letters (such as ‘h’ & ‘j’) are pronounced differently. What’s more, there are some Cantonese initials (such as /ng- / & /gw- kw-/) that are not found in Putonghua. When we learn Cantonese, we need to pay attention to these differences.
• Many of the contents are still in construction.
• We will try our best to complete this platform by August.
• Thank you for the funding!