

Tony's Blog: October 17, 2008

Contributed by Taospark
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Dai6 gaa1 hou2 '𠵼}(hello everyone). For those new students that have just started reading, fun1 jing4 a1 (welcome!!!).

Well the new classes are in full swing!! We have a full schedule this Saturday as follows:

Cantonese 101 with Tony, 102 with Kit a.k.a Kim, 103 with Kam,

Intermediate with Hung, Toisan with David and ESL with Tony.

Kit/Kim's class is at 30 Mott street. The rest are at IS 131 at 100 Hester street. See. below for full schedule.

What Romanisation system do you guys use? Yale? Sidney Lau? Wade-Giles? Pin-Yin?

Unfortunately, there is very little consistency in our program, and in Cantonese in general, as to how to write the Cantonese words using English letters. I know that this has created a lot of confusion in our students. Here, for example, are several ways you may see, to write the word "I" or "me" Ngo, Ngoh, Ngor, Nor, Ngaw, Gnaw, Naw, Nhoh...

Many of our instructors use their own independent systems which unfortunately vary quite a bit from instructor to instructor. Students taking multiple classes can get very confused, especially at beginner levels. The problem gets even worse when students buy books or go online to research words, as many of the books and websites also use different systems. After a while, the students will get used to, and even be amused by the multiple ways to romanise Cantonese, as I have. It can, again, be very frustrating at beginner levels. In my classes I have been doing what many of the other instructors have been doing...trying to write out the words phonetically as best I can. Again, the biggest problem with this method is lack of consistency from instructor to instructor.

Several months ago I began using the "Jyutping" system in my Chinese Menu Reading and Writing class. This is the system which is usually taught along with the "SIX TONE" system as recommended by the Linguistics Society of Hong Kong. The system was developed in 1993 so is relatively new. Most current books sold in the US on learning Cantonese were written prior to 1993, so they use the "Yale" system, (developed by Yale University) which was the most popular in the US, up until now. Most of the websites I go to use the "Jyutping" system, and I firmly believe that this will become the dominant system of writing Cantonese, just as Pinyin is for writing Mandarin.

I teach it in my Reading/Writing class to assist my students researching the Chinese characters online. Kam decided to use it in her new 103 class, and in an attempt towards unification and consistency, I have started teaching it in both of my 101 classes as well. I will also, from henceforth, use the "Jyutping" system for these email updates and also for any lessons that I may post with them. I apologize in advance for any confusion that this may cause, as the system is based on the International Phonetic Alphabet and can be somewhat challenging for English speakers at first. Given some time, it should present very little problem, and in the long run will be very beneficial over all, as I believe any unification in this program will have to come from the students.

For more information on the "Jyutping" system please go to this website.
<http://www.cantonese.sheik.co.uk/essays/jyutping.htm>

I have also included two beginner lessons utilizing "Jyutping" with this update.

For more info on the SIX TONE system go here:

<http://www.cantonese.sheik.co.uk/essays/tones.htm>

For Info on the Linguistics Society of Hong Kong go here:

<http://www.lshk.org/index.php>

And for information on the International Phonetic Alphabet go here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPA_chart_for_English

Remember all of the classes are FREE (any donation appreciated) and any of the classes may be attended at any time. So come on down if you have time. Don't forget to practice your Cantonese and Chinese characters every day.

For those new people who need it, I've posted the current schedule below. Feel free to email or call me with questions, comments, trivia or babble. Hope to see you all in class.

Zoi3 gin3 •◁
Tony