

## Cantonese handout#4

### Measure words

In Chinese, nouns are usually not inflected for number; where it is desired to indicate these aspects, a noun is preceded by both a number and a word sometimes referred to as a classifier, a counter, or most commonly a “*measure word*.”

In English we say, “an ounce of gold,” “a pair of shoes,” “a loaf of bread,” etc.:

there is a similar counterpart in Chinese, except that in Chinese every ordinary Chinese noun has its own measure word. Measures are usually bound to numbers to form qualifying nouns. In most cases the measure need not be translated into English. The number+measure combination can stand alone as a noun.

1. Ngo5 jau5 jat1 **go3** zung1.                    I have a clock
2. Keoi5 dou1 jau5 jat1 **go3**.                    He also has one.
3. Keoi5 jiu3 loeng5 **bun2** syu1.                    He wants two books
4. Nei5 dou1 jiu3 loeng5 **bun2** maa3?            Do you also want a couple?

Below is a list of the more common measure words and the type of words they are attached to:

- go3.....used for persons, round things, handheld things and many other things
- gaan1.....used for buildings, houses, rooms, schools, stores, etc.
- fan6.....(copy) for newspapers, magazines, gifts
- zaan2.....for lamps or lights
- zoeng1.....for tables, chairs, paper, flat thingsetc.
- zek3.....for ships, boats, hands, feet, domestic animals, forks, spoons, etc.
- zi1.....for pens, pencils, brushes, cans of soda
- gun3.....(a can) for canned items such as soda
- man1.....for paper dollars
- mei6.....for dish of food
- ting2.....(kind), for sickness, for business
- tiu4.....for streets, roads, keys, neckties, ropes, fish etc.
- wai6.....for persons (polite form)
- di1.....indicating that the noun following is plural
- dip6.....for dish of food
- dou6.....for doors, gates, windows
- gin6.....(task, undertaking) used for si6 gon 3(affair), je5 (thing) upper body clothing
- tou3.....for films, and clothing
- baa2.....for things with handles such as knives, forks, umbrellas, etc.
- baau1.....for packages and parcels
- bou6.....used for machines ie: computers, mobile phones and cars
- gaa3.....used for objects with a wooden framework or wheels ie: cars
- hap6.....Means "a box" or "case". Used for small, boxlike objects (but not boxes!).
- faai3.....(a piece or portion) used for cake, bread, land
- dung3/6.....for stories of a building
- zo6.....for bridges, large buildings and other immense objects
- deoi3.....for things that come in pairs. ie: chopsticks, shoes, socks, etc.
- cang4.....for layers; laminated; repeated; floor; story (of a building); layer

