

Pedagogy Workshop

Effective and Meaningful Use of Pop Culture in Cantonese Heritage Language Teaching

Creating fun and relevant materials to engage Cantonese heritage language (HL) learners is one of the challenges in Cantonese HL teaching. To varying extents, cultural activities such as Cantopop and Hong Kong movies are part of many HL speakers' experience while growing up in Cantonese-speaking households. Pop culture also provides authentic linguistic content. How can we leverage it to create a rewarding experience for both HL learners and teachers? This workshop brings together five experienced instructors and/or scholars to address this question from relatively different perspectives to deliver four presentations. While all four have an applied and a theoretical or research component, the first two presentations provide the stage for constructing HL learners and teachers as active agents whereas the last two illustrate how pop culture is used in actual teaching with details about the lesson planning process. The workshop concludes with a 30-minute small-group discussion in which participants engage in activities and build a community. A certificate of attendance will be provided upon request.

Presentation #1: Cantonese HL learners and teachers as active agents in and out of classrooms

Genevieve Leung (University of San Francisco) &
Ming-Hsuan Wu (Adelphi University)

In this presentation we build on more than a decade of work within the Chinese American communities in the east and west coasts. We contextualize the "Chinese" heritage language education within historical moments, particularly measures that render the linguistic diversity of the Chinese American communities invisible in the official classroom space. Drawing upon our own research on language learning and identity among Chinese American students, we argue for the importance of creating moments and spaces for multiple varieties of Chinese to co-exist in the Chinese diaspora communities. Specifically, we discuss the ways in which Cantonese HL learners and teachers can be constructed as (and have always been) active agents in and out of classrooms rather than passive receivers viewed through a deficit lens towards imagined "native" Cantonese speakerhood. We draw on translanguaging and linguistic landscape as a pedagogical tool to validate students' and teachers' lived experiences in Cantonese.

Presentation #2: The role of content creation in the construction of heritage learners' identity

Zoe Lam (University of British Columbia)

In this presentation I argue that heritage learners can exert their agency in proclaiming their identity as heritage speakers by becoming content creators. Traditionally, language learning resources on the internet are produced by typical native speakers, and language learners are perceived as passive consumers of online content. I will illustrate how language educators can change this norm by sharing pedagogical practices in the Cantonese Language Program of the University of British Columbia. First, by creating Cantonese content circulated on online video-sharing platforms, heritage learners actively contribute to shaping the discourse about the diaspora community. They have carved a virtual space to present who they are to the rest of the Cantonese-speaking world. Second, videos produced by heritage learners can enrich the diversity of Cantonese content in cyberspace, hence educating other Cantonese speakers about the lifestyle of overseas Cantonese communities. Third, video assignments can push heritage learners to extend their domain of heritage language use from private spaces (namely their family at home) to the internet, which is a public space. By expressing their unique identity in their heritage language, heritage learners are (re-)claiming their membership in the Cantonese community.

**Presentation #3: Cantonese language curriculum design beyond the basic level:
A critical approach to students of diverse backgrounds**

Raymond Pai (University of British Columbia)

In this presentation, I draw data from a new intermediate Cantonese Course for academic and specific purposes at a Canadian university language program. The course consists of 28 Intermediate to advanced level students of Cantonese with diverse language backgrounds. Students rank their preferences in course delivery mode, content topics, along with their own inputs and suggestions for this new course during and after completion of the course. Additional data is drawn from other previous courses at intermediate and advanced levels in the said language program to explore student learning preference and effectiveness. Based on the data and the instructor experience of curriculum designs at the intermediate and advanced level Cantonese courses, I argue that an emphasis on critical thinking skills and critical language awareness (CLA) (Pennycook 2001) are keys to effective and meaningful learning for students of various backgrounds (heritage, literacy-skilled, native) within the same classroom at these levels. Students and teachers of heritage language could utilize CLA as an instructional model, to identify problematics of power; interrogate their own positionalities, subjugations, agencies, and desires; and strive to transform the status quo in an effort to disrupt current realities and enact social change (Cushing-Leubner, 2019). CLA can be illustrated through topics on social issues and popular culture, the two central themes of the intermediate and advanced level Cantonese courses in this case. In addition to the CLA framework, I will demonstrate through student sample work which shows how CLA can help promote students' understanding of social justice and heritage language education as language rights through their digital literacy skills and content creation as learning outcomes.

Presentation #4: Learning Cantonese in a Relaxing Way through Pop Culture

Sik Lee Dennig (Cantonese Alliance of North America)

In this presentation, I demonstrate how to use materials from Cantonese pop culture to create a relaxing yet rich environment for Cantonese HL speakers to connect with their heritage culture and to expand their communicative potential. Culturally, these speakers have been exposed to Cantonese pop culture to varying degrees. Linguistically, our research indicates that they are creative language learners, and many have much in common with native speakers (Dennig & Leung, 2012; Dennig, Leung & Uchikoshi, 2014). Our job as instructors is to build upon that foundation as well as the speakers' cultural experience. That is the goal of my course "Cantonese Through Films," which I have taught at Stanford University for years. I will use that course to illustrate the process of assessing students' needs and knowledge, defining objectives, designing lessons, and providing opportunities for students to create their own content. Examples will also be drawn from my website 佢佢佢佢學粵語 "Learning Cantonese in a Relaxing Way" (<https://cantonesealliance.org/>) and from very talented content creators who are themselves Cantonese HL speakers.