



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Hong Kong written Chinese

Hong Kong written Chinese (Chinese: 香港中文 or 港式中文; pinyin: *Xiānggǎng zhōngwén* or *Gǎngshì zhōngwén*; Jyutping: *Hoeng¹ gong² zung¹ man⁴* or *Gong² sik¹ zung¹ man⁴*) is a local variety of written Chinese used in formal written communication in Hong Kong.^[1] The common Hongkongese name for this form of Chinese is 書面語 **Sue Min Yu**, "written language", in contrast to 口語 Hau Yu, "spoken language", i.e. Cantonese.^[2] While, like other varieties of Standard Chinese, it is largely based on Mandarin it differs from the mainland's national variety of Standard Chinese (Putonghua) in several aspects, for example that it is written in traditional characters, that its phonology is based on Cantonese, and that its lexicon has English and Cantonese influences.^[3] Thus it must not be confused with written Cantonese which, even in Hong Kong, enjoys much less prestige as a literary language than Sue Min Yu. The language situation in Hong Kong still reflects the pre-20th century situation of Chinese diglossia where the spoken and literary language differed and the latter was read aloud in the phonology of the respective regional variety instead of a national one.

History

With the establishment of Modern Standard Chinese in the Republic of China teaching materials began to be exported into the British Crown Colonies Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya. The victory of the Communists over the nationalist Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War, the retreat of the Republican government to the island of Taiwan, and the subsequent diplomatic isolation of the People's Republic of China under the One-China policy led to a diversification of the Standard Chinese language, so that there are four varieties of more strongly standardized Chinese today: Putonghua in Mainland China, Guoyu on Taiwan, and Huayu in Singapore and Malaysia. Hong Kong on the other hand was a British colony until 1997 and for most of the colonial era English had been the only official language. Chinese was only recognized as a co-official language in 1974 after recurring riots as well as scholarly activism. And although legal texts were translated from English into Chinese in the late 1970s the English versions alone continued to be the ultimately valid ones. This meant that there was not much historical effort on the British side to standardize Chinese in Hong Kong. This lack of political intervention facilitated the formation what was coined *Hong Kong style Chinese* (港式中文 *Gǎngshì zhōngwén*, translated as *Hong Kong written Chinese* by Shi, 2006^[1]) by linguist Shao Jingmin in 1996 in order to distinguish it from Putonghua.

Development of registers

Hong Kong written Chinese, if taken to mean all forms of Chinese writing employed in Hong Kong, has different registers depending on the context in which it is used. The high register, i.e. Sue Min Yu, used in government, schools, and formal settings, is the closest to Standard Chinese. Yet lower registers, used in more informal settings, also developed through an intermixture with written Cantonese. The rising popularity and prestige of the Cantonese language with the boom of the Hong

Kong entertainment industry (especially cinema and music) in the 1980s was an important factor in the establishment of written Cantonese as a language used in subtitles, magazines, comic books, and popular fiction. In more formal settings, written Cantonese also appears in court protocols.

After 1997

Chinese, without specification of the variety, became a fully recognized official language of Hong Kong (besides English) with the handover to China in 1997. Since then Hong Kong written Chinese, or rather the high register Sue Min Yu, has been used on a local government level, while Putonghua is used in communications with the central government. In recent years the national government has promoted the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong as part of a process of political centralization while growing economic dependence on the mainland and migration into Hong Kong have increased the need for locals to learn the national standard.^[4] These and other political issues have led to tensions between mainlanders and locals trying to preserve the political and linguistic autonomy of Hong Kong.^[5]

Phonology

Whereas the grammar of Sue Min Yu is largely based on the Mandarin dialect, its phonology is based on Cantonese. Yet one distinguishes between colloquial and literary readings of Chinese characters. The latter are based on traditional rime dictionaries and employed when reading out loud texts in Classical or modern written Chinese. Thus students in Hong Kong schools get corrected by their teachers when reading aloud Sue Min Yu texts in the colloquial pronunciation.^[2] Some regular differences between colloquial and literary readings in Cantonese are:

1. The Late Middle Chinese (LMC) initial */fh-/ corresponds to colloquial /p-/ and /pʰ-/ , but to literary /f-/ , e.g. 婦 LMC */fhuǎ/, coll. /pʰouH/, and lit. /fuH/, '(married) woman'.
2. The LMC syllables /ŋiC_{nasal}/ and /ŋjeC_{nasal}/ correspond to colloquial /ŋɛC_{nasal}/ and /ŋa:C_{nasal}/ respectively, but to literary /jɛC_{nasal}/ and /jiC_{nasal}/, e.g. 吟 LMC /ŋīm/, coll. /ŋɛm-L/, and lit. /jɛm-L/ 'to recite; to groan'; 研 LMC /ŋjên/, coll. /ŋa:n-L/, and lit. /jin-L/ 'research'.
3. The colloquial rimes /-ɛ:C/ and /-ɛ:u/ correspond to literary rimes /-ɪC/ and /-i:u/ respectively, e.g. 名 coll. /mɛ:ŋ-L/ versus lit. /mɪŋ-L/, 'name'.
4. The colloquial rime /-ɐ̃/ corresponds to literary /-ɔ̃/ when going back to LMC */-ai/, whereas it corresponds to literary /-i:/ when going back to LMC */-i/.
5. The colloquial rime /-œ:/ corresponds to literary /-ɔ:/.
6. LMC syllables with voiced/breathy obstruent initials and rising-tone rimes correspond to colloquial readings with aspirate initials and low-rising-tone rimes, but to literary readings with tenuis initials and low-even-tone rimes, e.g. 棒 LMC /phǎŋ/, coll. /pʰa:ŋH/, and lit. /pa:ŋ/. Here the colloquial variant preserves the phonetic realization of the LMC tone more authentically. The literary reading imitates the correspondence of LMC syllables with voiced obstruent initials and rising-tone rimes

with Mandarin syllables with falling-tone rimes (the Cantonese mid- and lower-even tone rimes correspond to Mandarin falling-tone rimes).

Lexicon

Lexical differences between Sue Min Yu, Putonghua, and Guoyu

Some lexical differences between the varieties of Standard Chinese in the mainland (Putonghua), Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Guoyu):

Mainland	Hong Kong	Taiwan	English
出租汽车 <i>chūzū qìchē</i> ^[na 1]	的士 <i>dik¹ si⁶⁻²</i> ^[na 2]	計程車 <i>jìchéngchē</i> ^[na 3]	"taxi"
移动电话 <i>yídòng diànhuà</i>	流動電話 <i>lau⁴ dung⁶ din⁶ waa⁶⁻²</i>	行動電話 <i>xíngdòng diànhuà</i> ^[na 4]	"mobile phone"
服务器 <i>fúwùqì</i>	伺服器 <i>sí⁶ fuk⁶ heí⁶</i>	伺服器 <i>sífúqì</i> ^[na 5]	"server"
初一 <i>chūyī</i>	中一 <i>zung¹ jat¹</i> ^[na 6]	初一 <i>chūyī</i> / 國一 <i>guóyī</i>	"7th grade"

Notes

- 1. lit. *rental car*, meaning exactly that in Guoyu.
- 2. loan from eng. *taxi*, as Singaporean and Malaysian Standard Chinese (Huayu) 德士 *déshì*.
- 3. lit. *calculate-mileage-car*.
- 4. All three forms ultimately calqued from eng. *mobile phone*.
- 5. All three forms lit. mean *serving tool*.
- 6. lit. *middle one*, also in Huayu.

Semantic differences between Putonghua and Sue Min Yu

Some lexemes appear both in Hong Kong written Chinese and Putonghua, but may differ in their semantic range and value:

Word	Meaning in Mainland	Meaning in Hong Kong
认真 <i>rènzhēn</i> / 認真 <i>jīng⁶ zan¹</i>	seriously, earnestly	truly, really
机会 <i>jīhuì</i> / 機會 <i>gei¹ wui⁶</i>	opportunity (for gaining advantages or benefits)	opportunity (for anything)
懂 <i>dǒng</i> / 懂 <i>dung²</i>	to understand	to understand; to know ^{[nb 1]}

Notes

- 1. Also in Huayu.

Comparison with written Cantonese

Other than in its phonology, Sue Min Yu mostly differs almost as much from written Cantonese as Putonghua or Guoyu do. Some examples:

Putonghua / Guoyu	Sue Min Yu	written Cantonese	English
他 <i>tā</i>	他 <i>ta¹</i>	佢 <i>keoi⁵</i>	"he/she/it"
我們 <i>wǒmen</i>	我們 <i>ngo⁵ mun⁴</i>	我哋 <i>ngo⁵ dei⁶</i>	"we"
我的 <i>wǒde</i>	我的 <i>ngo⁵ dik¹</i>	我嘅 <i>ngo⁵ ge³</i>	"my"
什么 / 什麼 <i>shénme</i>	什麼 <i>sam⁶ mo¹</i>	乜 <i>mat¹</i>	"what?"
哪里 / 哪裡 <i>nǎlǐ</i>	哪裡 <i>naa⁵ leo⁵</i>	邊度 <i>bin¹ dou⁶</i>	"where?"
无 / 無 <i>wú</i>	無 <i>mou⁴</i>	冇 <i>mou⁵</i>	"to not exist; to not have"

References

1. Shi, Dingxu (2006-10-12). "Hong Kong written Chinese: Language change induced by language contact" (<http://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/japc.16.2.09shi>). *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*. **16** (2): 299–318. doi:10.1075/japc.16.2.09shi (<https://doi.org/10.1075%2Fjapc.16.2.09shi>). ISSN 0957-6851 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0957-6851>). S2CID 143191355 (<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:143191355>).

2. Lee, Siu-lun (2023). *The Learning and Teaching of Cantonese as a Second Language*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge. ISBN 9781000889895.

3. Bauer, Robert S.; 包睿舜 (2018-03-26). "Cantonese as written language in Hong Kong" (<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/glochi-2018-0006/html>). *Global Chinese*. **4** (1): 103–142. doi:10.1515/glochi-2018-0006 (<https://doi.org/10.1515%2Fglochi-2018-0006>). ISSN 2199-4382 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/2199-4382>).

4. Kihara, Takeshi; Cheung, Frances (2022-12-13). "Hong Kong under pressure to use standard Chinese language" (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Hong-Kong-under-pressure-to-use-standard-Chinese-language>). *Nikkei Asia*. Retrieved 2023-06-28.

5. "More than 100 HK restaurants refuse to serve customers from China" (<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1873089/more-than-100-hk-restaurants-refuse-to-serve-customers-from-china>). *Bangkok Post*. 2020-03-06. Retrieved 2023-06-28.
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hong_Kong_written_Chinese&oldid=1180463981"

■