

UOW College Hong Kong / Community College of City University
Student English Enhancement Unit (SEE U)
Daily English Practice

Week 10

#149 Being toneful in speaking Cantonese

Skills/ Objectives: Reading, Listening and Writing Skills

PART 1: Before you read...

Preparatory questions

- Are you a Cantonese speaker?
- Did you realize how difficult it is for a non-native Cantonese speaker to master tones in Cantonese?

Vocabulary

- supplant – (verb) to replace
- devious – (adj) dishonest but carefully thought out
- begrudgingly – behaving in a way that you are unhappy, usually because you are jealous
- enunciation (noun) – pronunciation of a word
- diabolical (adj) – extremely bad
- faustian pact (noun) – an agreement by which a person trades something of high spiritual value for some worldly material benefits.
- flummox (verb) – to greatly confuse a person such that he/she does not know what to do.
- plop (verb) – to put something down heavily without taking care

PART 2: Article for Reading

Let us read the interesting article posted by Rosalyn Shih at the following website. It tells you what a nightmare it is for non-Cantonese speakers to learn Cantonese tones:

<https://chinachannel.org/2018/03/06/nine-tones-hell/>

The answers to relevant question in the preceding set PART 2 of exercises (Cantonese Sound System) are as follows:

Qt1: How many tones are in common use in modern Cantonese?

Ans: There are six distinctive tones in modern Cantonese

Qt2: How does a tonal language like Cantonese work?

Ans: A tonal language is one in which the pitch of a syllable tells its identity. Therefore, the same sound pronounced with different tones can have different characters and different meanings.

