

Cantonese

廣府話/广州话/廣州話

粵語/粤语

Spoken in: Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand and other countries where Cantonese migrants have settled.

Region: in China: central Guangdong province (the Pearl River Delta , including Hong Kong and Macau); eastern Guangxi Autonomous Region; parts of Hainan province

Total Speakers: 66 millions

Genetic classification: Sino- Tibetan Chinese Yue

Official language of: Hong Kong, Macau

Cantonese is one of the major dialect groups or languages of the Chinese language or language family. It is mainly spoken in the south-eastern part of Mainland China (46 millions), Hong Kong (5 millions), Macau (500,000), by the Chinese minorities in Southeast Asia and by many overseas Chinese of Cantonese origin worldwide. Its name is derived from *Canton*, the former French romanisation used as the colonial English name for Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province. It is a tonal language.

As one of the Chinese languages, Cantonese belongs to the Sino Tibetan language family, which also includes Tibetan and Lolo Burmese and Karen. Cantonese is more closely related to Min and Hakka than it is to Mandarin and Wu. Given all the dialects that exist within Cantonese, the language is sometimes referred to as a group of Cantonese dialects, and not just Cantonese.

The basis of the Chinese writing system is characters that are pictographic in nature, unlike the writing systems of other languages that have characters based on sounds or syllables. The characters do not directly symbolize the spoken language. Because it is ideographic, speakers of all Chinese languages or dialects can read and understand Chinese writing and literature.

Although used extensively by native speakers on many occasions, Cantonese is not the medium of education even in Guangdong. Nor is it the language used on official occasions in the Peoples' Republic of China, where Mandarin is official language. In Hong Kong, however, it is the medium of instruction in many schools.

Currently SSWAHS Health Care Interpreter Service employs 5.5 FTE Cantonese interpreters and 15 sessional interpreters.

There is no Cantonese alphabet so we chose some popular Chinese Characters:

These Chinese symbols are often used on jewellery, tattoos and ornaments.

Peace	平	Strength, power	力
Harmony, tranquillity	安	Evil, wicked	邪
Loyalty, faithfulness	忠	good luck	福
Harmony	和	Love, affection	愛
Beautiful, pretty	美	God, deity	神
Believe, trust, faith	信	Endure, suffer	忍
Infinity	淼	Universe, infinite time	宙
Passion	情	Eternity, forever	永