

LESSON NOTES

All About #13

Cantonese Phrases You Won't Learn in Class

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top 5 Phrases Your Teacher Will Never Teach You

The focus of this lesson is to teach you some very common Cantonese expressions that you might not learn from a Cantonese teacher:

1. 哇!
waa3
"Wow," or "yikes," or "jeez"
2. 癡線!
ci1 sin3
"nerves in the head stuck together"
3. 好正!
hou2 zeng3!
"Awesome!"
4. 平啲啦!
peng4 di1 laa1
"Can you make it a little cheaper?"
5. 頂唔順!
ding2 m4 seon6
"to be unable to bear"

These are high frequency Cantonese phrases and expressions that you can use all the time.

哇 (*waa3*)

We use 哇 (*waa3*) as an interjection. Depending on the circumstance and tone of voice, 哇 (*waa3*) can express anything from irritation, to surprise, to disapproval. We generally use it for matters that have a more negative slant, though depending on the context and tone of voice, it can also be an expression of pleasure.

癡線 (*ci1 sin3*)

癡線 (*ci1 sin3*) literally means "nerves in the head stuck together." When a person is displeased with another's actions or words, 癡線 (*ci1 sin3*) is a cutting retort: similar to the English, "You're crazy!" We usually utter it on its own and direct it at someone as an insult.

好正 (*hou2 zeng3*)

好正 (*hou2 zeng3*) means "awesome" or "great." We can use it to describe people, places, things, etc. Anything that one feels is great will often give occasion to let out a 好正 (*hou2 zeng3*).

平啲啦 (*peng4 di1 laa1*)

平啲啦 (*peng4 di1 laa1*) means "Can you make it a little cheaper?" This phrase is a must for any shopper. Often in China, just uttering this simple phrase will give you an immediate discount of at least ten percent off the quoted price.

頂唔順 (*ding2 m4 seon6*)

You can use 頂唔順 (*ding2 m4 seon6*) as a complaint when you just can't take it anymore. It literally means "to be unable to bear," and can be used to vent one's frustration with a person or situation. One can also use it when one cannot physically bear something; for instance, you could use it to tell a masseuse that they are using too much force, and you can't take it.

For Example:

1. 哇，你做乜咁瘦！
waa1 , nei5 zou6 mat1 gam2 sau3!
"Jeesh! How can you be so slow?"
2. 癡線！
ci1 sin3
"(You're) crazy!"
3. 你啲廣東話好正！
nei5 di1 gwong2 dung1 waa2 hou2 zeng3!
"Your Cantonese is awesome!"

4. 平啲啦！
peng4 di1 laa1!
"Can (you) make it a little cheaper?"

5. 太凍，我頂唔順。
taai3 dung3 , ngo5 ding2 m4 seon6.
"It's too cold; I can't stand it."