CantoneseClass101.com

LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp #2
Talking Nationality in Cantonese

CONTENTS

#2

TRADITIONAL CHINESE

1. 你好。我叫藍蔚。我係中國人。

2. 你好。我叫Matthew。 我係美國人。

JYUTPING

1. nei5 hou2, ngo5 giu3 laam4 wai3. ngo5 hai6 zung1 gwok3 jan4.

2. nei5 hou2, ngo5 giu3 Matthew. ngo5 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4.

ENGLISH

1. Hello. I'm Laam Wai. I am Chinese.

2. Hello. I'm Matthew. I am American.

VOCABULARY

Traditional	Romanization	English	Class
美國	mei5 gwok3	America	noun
中國	zung1 gwok3	China	noun
人	jan4	people	noun
叫	giu3	to be called; call	verb
係	hai6	to be	verb
你好	nei5 hou2	hello	phrase

SAMPLE SENTENCES

你有冇去過美國？ *nei5 jau5 mou5 heoi3 gwo3 mei5 gwok3?* Have you been to America?	北京係中國首都。 *baak1 ging1 hai6 zung1 gwok3 sau2 dou1.* Beijing is the capital of China.
我從中國嚟。 I come from China.	我哋都係中國人。 *ngo5 dei6 dou1 hai6 zung1 gwok3 jan4。* We are all Chinese.
我要叫外賣。 *Ngo5 jiu3 giu3 ngoi6 maai6.* I am calling for take-out.	我叫Nicole。 *ngo5 giu3 Nicole。* I'm (called) Nicole.
你叫咩名？ *nei5 giu3 me1 meng2 ?* What's your name?	佢係女仔。 *keoi5 hai6 neoi5 zai2。* She is a girl.

人們在說你好。
jan4 mun4 zoi6 syut3 nei5 hou2。

The people are saying, "Hello."

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is Talking about Your Ethnicity
我係美国人。
ngo5 hei6 mei5 gwok3 jan4.
"I am American."

To express the idea of nationality in Cantonese, simply add the word 人 *jan4* ("person") to the end of the name of a country.

For Example:

1. 美國
    mei5 gwok3
    "America"

2. 美國人
    mei5 gwok3 jan4
    "American"

In Chinese, some country names consist of a descriptive character or phonetic character followed by the character for "country" or "nation" (國, *gwok3*). This is the case as in our example for America above. Other country names which follow this pattern are:

1. 英國
    jing1 gwok3
    "England"

2. 中國
    zung1 gwok3
    "China"

3. 德國
    dak1 gwok3
    "Germany"

4. 法國
    faat3 gwok3
    "France"

Unfortunately, the names of many other countries are harder to memorize, since they have come into Chinese through a process of transliteration. There is often no rhyme nor reason to generating these names, although many use a subset of particular Chinese characters that are used more or less exclusively in phonetic loan words.

1. 加拿大
    gaa1 naa4 daai6
    "Canada"

2. 墨西哥

   mak6 sai1 go1

   "Mexico"

3. 意大利

   ji3 daai6 lei6

   "Italy"

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Hong Kong People

Introducing yourself in Cantonese differs somewhat from introducing yourself in English. In English, people from Hong Kong refer to themselves as "Hong Kongers", just as people from New York refer to themselves as "New Yorkers." In Cantonese, the system for describing where people are from is to put the character for person (人) after the name of the place from where they come. People in Hong Kong thus refer to themselves as 香港人 *(hoeng1 gong2 jan4)*, while people in Guangzhou refer to themselves as a 廣州人 gwong2 zau1 jan4.