

LESSON NOTES

Beginner S1 #19

Turn Down the Volume in Hong Kong

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE

1. 細聲啲。
2. 咩話?
3. 我話...
4. 聽唔到啊。
5. 電視細聲啲!

JYUTPING

1. Sai3 seng1 di1.
2. Me1 waa2?
3. Ngo5 waa6...
4. Teng1 m4 dou2 aa3.
5. Din6 si6 sai3 seng1 di1!

ENGLISH

1. A: Turn down the volume.
2. B: What?

CONT'D OVER

3. A: I said....
4. B: I can't hear you.
5. A: Turn down the volume of the TV!

VOCABULARY

Traditional	Romanization	English	Class
話	waa2	to say	verb
大聲	daa3seng1	high (volume)	adjective
細聲	sai3 seng1	low (volume)	adjective
電視	din6si6	television	noun
音響	jam1hoeng2	stereo	noun
收音機	sau1jam1gei1	radio	noun
聽	teng1	to listen to, to hear	verb
音樂	jam1ngok6	music	noun

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>"Seafood" 廣東話點講? <i>"Seafood" gwong2 dung1 waa2 dim2 gong2 ?</i></p> <p>How do you say "seafood" in Cantonese?</p>	<p>大聲講嘢冇禮貌。 <i>Daai6seng1 gong2 je5 mou5 lai5maau6.</i></p> <p>It's impolite to speak loudly.</p>
<p>佢好細聲。 <i>Keoi5 hou2 sai3 seng1</i></p> <p>She speaks softly.</p>	<p>家人在一起看電視。 <i>Gaa1 jan4 zoi6 jat1 hei2 hon3 din6si6.</i></p> <p>The family is watching television.</p>

呢套音響好高級。 <i>Ni1 tou3 jam1hoeng2 hou2 gou1kap1.</i> This stereo is really classy.	我鍾意聽收音機。 <i>Ngo5 zung1ji3 teng1 sau1jam1gei1.</i> I like listening to the radio.
女人在聽音樂。 <i>Neoi5jan2 zoi6 teng1 jam1ngok6.</i> The woman is listening to music.	女人在聽音樂。 <i>Neoi5jan2 zoi6 teng1 jam1ngok6.</i> The woman is listening to music.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of this Lesson is on Trying and Failing

我聽唔到啊！

"I cannot hear!"

Have you ever tried to do something but failed? Our grammar focus in this lesson is learning how to communicate this idea in Cantonese. To do it, we want to use the phrase 唔到 (*m4 dou2*) which loosely translates as "not to be able" and more literally means "not to arrive." While this can be used as a standalone verb phrase in other contexts, to suggest the notion of trying and failing to accomplish something we need to put it in front of another verb. For instance, 睇唔到 (*tai2 m4 dou*) means that someone has tried and failed to see something.

Take a look at the following example sentences, which pair this with a number of different verbs:

- 唔該大聲啲，我聽唔到。
M4 goi1 daai6 seng1 di1, ngo5 teng1 m4 dou2.
 "Please turn it up a bit. I cannot hear it."
- 唔該攤俾我，我睇唔到。
M4 goi1 lo2 bei2 ngo5, ngo5 tai2 m4 dou2.
 "Please give it to me. I cannot see."

3. 我架車壞咗。我今日去唔到。

Ngo5 gaa3 ce1 wuaai6 zo2. ngo5 gaam1 jat6 heoi3 m4 dou2.

"My car broke down. I cannot go there today."

One thing to be careful about is that 到 (*dou2*) actually has two tones. In addition to the second tone *dou2* that we hear in this lesson, the character is sometimes pronounced with the third tone (*dou3*) where it means "to arrive." There are a very small subset of verbs like 估 (*gu2*) where native Cantonese speakers will switch to the third tone even in the context of this grammar point. The sentence 估唔到你識廣東話 (*gu2 m4 dou3 nei5 sik1 gwong2 dung1 waa2*) thus means "I wouldn't have guessed that you speak Cantonese" even though 到 is being pronounced in the third tone.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Living by the Rules in Hong Kong

Hong Kong people pay a lot of attention to civility and there are many rules which people are supposed to follow that govern what is considered acceptable public behavior. Among these, there is absolutely no smoking permitted in public places, people are expected to stand on the right side of escalators and let those in a rush pass on the left, and there is no eating or drinking on the subway or in any bus stations. Hong Kong people also tend to stay quiet when eating, standing in lines or taking buses and subways.