

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation #5

Challenging Sounds in Jyutping

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is to Master the Challenging Sounds of *Jyutping* Tricky Consonant Sounds

1. [z] - the difference between the *Jyutping* -z and the English "-z," is that the Cantonese sound is made with your tongue touching the back of your upper teeth. This results in a more [dz] sound.
2. [c] - sometimes mixed up with the [z] sound, the "-c" is aspirated whereas the "-z" is not. "Aspirated" means that you let air out when producing this sound.
3. [j] - the same as the English [j] in the word "yes."
 4. [ng] - Actually, the sound is also in English, but it simply never falls at the beginning of the word. If you say the word "sing" slowly (notice how the back of your tongue touches the back of your mouth at the end of the word), and draw out the [ng] sound at the end and hold it, that's the [ng] in Cantonese as an initial.

This is a good time to point out one of the sound changes that is underway in modern Hong Kong Cantonese. The [ng] initial sound is being dropped in young people's casual speech. If you listen closely, you may find that your Cantonese friends seem to say 我 (o) when having informal conversations. It appears that this sound change will likely become complete in the coming decades. This will mean that the word initial [ng] will no longer exist in Cantonese. However, it is still worth practicing this sound! Dropping the [ng] is not yet considered standard speech by many people and has even been negatively labeled as "lazy speech."

Tricky Vowel Sounds

1. [œ] - It's like the "ur" in "fur." You don't need to roll your tongue; just round your lips. When you make the [œ] sound, your lips are round like you're about to whistle.
2. [œng] - a nasal version of [œ], simply add [ng] to the end.
3. [y] - The [y] sound is quite a nasal sound. You can make it by pronouncing an "-i" and then rounding the mouth

Tricky Glottal Stop

The ending sounds [p], [t], and [k] are the same as those in English, only silent. You can do that by pronouncing them very lightly.

Pronunciation Tip

You can listen to all the sounds of Cantonese and see their corresponding *Jyutping* Romanization at www.cantonese-class101.com. There is a *Jyutping* chart to aid you in perfecting the pronunciations.