

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

Ultimate Cantonese Pronunciation Guide S1 #2

Top 5 Cantonese Mistakes to Avoid

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Hi everyone.

Welcome to The Ultimate Cantonese Pronunciation Guide.

In this lesson, you'll learn the top 5 Cantonese pronunciation mistakes to avoid.

These are common mistakes that students of Cantonese tend to make. So pay close attention and make sure that you don't make these same mistakes too.

Are you ready? Then let's get started!

USING THE WRONG TONES

Number 1: Using the wrong tones

Most learners are not familiar with tonal languages like Cantonese. The meaning of a word can change if the pitch is changed, even if the pronunciation is the same. For people who do not speak a tonal language, some tones may sound nearly identical to them. This problem of perception is perhaps the most difficult part of learning a tonal language like Cantonese.

Our lessons use a romanization system called "Jyutping", which is comprised of 2 components: pronunciation, followed by a tone number.

For example:

巴 (baa1)

把 (baa2)

罷 (baa6)

As you can see, changing the pitch pattern, otherwise known as the 'tone', can have a huge impact on

meaning.

We'll have a look at all of the tones in Cantonese in lesson 8.

CONFUSING J IN JYUTPING

Number 2: Mixing up J and Y in the Jyutping system

The Jyutping romanization system is new to absolute beginners, and one of the most confusing aspects is the J consonant. Although it's represented as a J, it actually sounds like an English Y sound. So whenever you see the letter J in Jyutping, remember that it's pronounced as a Y sound.

有 (jau5)

二 (ji3)

元 (jyun4)

We'll cover this consonant sound in lesson 4.

RELEASING FINAL P, T, K STOPS

Number 3: Pronouncing the final -p, -t, -k

Some Cantonese words end in a -p, -t, or -k. Most English speakers pronounce the final -p, -t, and -k like in English, releasing a strong burst of air.

This is incorrect. The final p, t, and k are **unreleased** in Cantonese. This means that you must **not** release a burst of air when pronouncing this sound. It's as though you're cutting the sound off.

Listen to (host name)...

得

(dak1)

達 (daat6)

十 (sap6)

We'll take an in-depth look at final stops in lesson 7.

MISPRONOUNCING C AND Z

Number 4: Mispronouncing the c- and z- consonants

The Cantonese C sounds a bit like a TS sound, like in 'tsunami'. But unlike with the traditional TS sound in English, try to emphasize the T more than the S in Cantonese. Pronouncing it quickly may sometimes help with pronouncing the Cantonese C properly. Lastly, you want to release a burst of turbulent air when you're pronouncing this sound.

The Cantonese Z is identical to the Cantonese C, except that you **do not** produce a burst of air. It sounds somewhere between a 'strong' TS or DZ sound. Compare the sounds and listen to the differences.

煎 (zin1)

周 (zau1)

照 (ziu3)

千 (cin1)

抽 (cau1)

俏 (ciu1)

We'll talk more about these 2 consonants in future lessons.

CONFUSING N AND L

Number 5: Confusing the n and l sounds in Cantonese.

Learning a new language is stressful, especially when people start pronouncing words differently from what you expect or from what you've learned.

Don't be surprised when you hear Cantonese speakers pronouncing the Cantonese N as an L sound.

你 (nei5) vs 你 (lei5)

年 (nin4) vs 年 (lin4)

腦 (nou5) vs 腦 (lou5)

A similar case exists for the NG sound in Cantonese, except that this sound is sometimes omitted altogether. Listen to (host name)...

我 (ngo5) vs 我 (o5)

危 (ngai4) vs 危 (ai4)

This phenomenon is known as "lazy tongue", and it's becoming more and more common in Hong Kong, particularly with the younger generation. This manner of speaking however, is generally frowned upon. Stick with the Cantonese that you've learned. You'll still be able to communicate with everyone, even the younger crowd, so don't concern yourself with it too much.

Now you know the top 5 Cantonese pronunciation mistakes to avoid.

Try to be careful so that you don't make these same mistakes. Still feel a bit worried? Don't be, because over the rest of this series, we'll cover all of these topics in depth.

In the next lesson, we'll start learning vowel sounds in

Cantonese.

Which of these five mistakes is the hardest to avoid? Have you learned any tricks to deal with them? Let us know in the comments.

Stick with us and you'll overcome these quickly!

See you in the next Ultimate Cantonese Pronunciation Guide lesson!