

Cantonese as a Foreign Language (CFL) curriculum design based on learner needs in North America

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The University of British Columbia (UBC) begins offering Beginning Level Cantonese Courses in the 2015-2016 school year for the first time as part of its new Cantonese Program, which is also a first in Canada in history. The establishment of such Cantonese program is viewed as a "resistance" to the trends of the decreasing number of post-secondary level Cantonese course offerings available and students enrollment in North America (The Economist 2015). For the purpose of curriculum design and future of the program, a student needs analysis is conducted using a number of research methods for triangulation purpose on the data collected (Lee 2005; Li & Richards 1995). A survey is conducted on the 440 Cantonese students on their language attitudes (Flowerdew & Miller 1998; Tinker & Li 2007) towards Cantonese, English and their other native languages and feedback on the courses offered, individual interviews on student motivations and response to the course design, and data from student course evaluations at the conclusion of the courses. The preliminary results of the ongoing study show that there are common grounds as well as distinct differences between the needs of learning material choices to the student needs is crucial. The challenges of Cantonese curriculum design, pedagogical issues, and student placements due to diverse language background in North America are also discussed. As a case study it is hope that this can provide data and insights on student language attitudes of the Cantonese as a Foreign Language (CFL) in the North American context, as well as resources on curriculum development for the future of CFL teaching.

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