



Cantonese II

Week 8



Attributive adjectives

These modify the noun. All such adjectives come before the noun they modify:

peng4	ge sāam 平嘅衫	cheap clothes
gwaai1 ge3 sai3 lou6 zai2	ái 乖嘅細路仔	good, obedient children
co3 ge3 kyut3 ding6	錯嘅決定	a wrong decision

The particle **ge** 嘅, which we have already seen in possessive constructions (Unit 5), serves here to link the adjective and noun. The adjective can be modified by **hóu** 好 ‘very’, **jeui** 最 ‘most’, etc.:

hou2 kan4 lik6 ge3 hok6 saang1	siang 好勤力嘅學生	hard-working students
zeoi3 nin4 hing1 ge3 bok3 si6	最年輕嘅博士	the youngest PhD
gam3 daai6 ge3 jing2 hoeng2	咁大嘅影響	such a big influence

Predicative adjectives

These are used to state that something has a certain property. The verb **hai6** 係 ‘to be’ is not used (see Unit 7), but instead the adverb **hóu** 好 is usually included:

ngo5 hou2 hoi1 sam1	我好開心	I’m happy.
di1 tong1 hou2 haam4	m 啲湯好鹹	The soup is salty.

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Adjecti

keoi5 gin6 saam1 hou2 leng3

gam1 jat6 hou2 sap1

hóu leng 佢件衫好靚

今日好濕

Her dress is beautiful.

It's humid today.

hóu 好 by itself can mean 'good' or 'very', but when used in this way, it does not really mean 'very' but is merely part of the syntax of predicative adjectives.

Modifying adjectives

Other modifiers such as **gēi** 幾 'quite' and **gam** 咁 'so' can appear in place of **hóu** 好, for example:

gei1 piu3 gei2 peng4

5 go3 sau2 tai4 din6 nou5 gam3 gwai3

daan6 gou1 taai3 tim4

cyun4 zeoi3 gan2 jiu3

sing2 gau3 saai3 coeng4

Dī gēipiu gēi pèhng 啲機票幾平

Léih go sáutàih dihnlóuh gam gwai

你個手提電腦咁貴

Go daahn-gōu taai tìhm 個蛋糕太甜

Ōnchyùhn jeui gányiu 安全最緊要

Tìuh síng gau (saai) chéuhng 條繩夠晒長

The air tickets are quite cheap.

Your laptop computer is so expensive.

The cake is too sweet.

Safety is most important.

The string is (more than) long enough.

Reduplicated adjectives

Another strategy to modify the meaning of an adjective is reduplication together with the suffix **-dēi** 㗎:

dīn 癲 crazy → **dīn-dīn-dēi** 癲癲㗎

fú 苦 bitter → **fú-fú-dēi** 苦苦㗎

sau 瘦 thin → **sau-sáu-dēi** 瘦瘦㗎

tim4 甜 sweet → **Tim4 tim2 dei2** 甜甜㗎

nyun5 暖 warm → **Nyun5 nyun5 dei2** 暖暖㗎

mun6 悶 bored/boring → **Mun6 mun2 dei2** 悶悶㗎

rather crazy

rather bitter

rather thin

rather sweet

rather warm

rather bored (or: boring)

Note the change to a high rising tone on the repeated syllable (see Unit 3): this happens in all cases except where the original tone is high level (as in **dīn-dīn-dēi** 癲癲㗎 ‘rather crazy’) or already high rising (as in **fú-fú-dēi** 苦苦㗎 ‘rather bitter’). These forms are used to qualify the force of an adjective:

di1 zung1 joek6 fu2 fu2 dei2

dēi 啲中藥苦苦㗎

Chinese medicine is rather bitter.

tiu4 gai1 sap1 sap1 dei2

條街濕濕㗎

The street is a bit wet.

tou3 hei3 mun6 mun2 dei2

éi 套戲悶悶㗎

The film was fairly boring.

ngo5 gok3 dak1 mun6 mun2 dei2

nún-dēi 我覺得悶悶㗎

I feel rather bored.

Exercise 9.2

Add an appropriate attributive adjective to modify the following:

Example: ngo5 go4 go1 hai2 jat1 gaan1 hou2 jau5 meng2 ge3 gung1 si1 zou6 je5

我哥哥喺一間好有名嘅公司做嘢

My (elder) brother works for a famous company

1 keoi5 uk1 kei2 jau5 go3 佢屋企有個_____

haak3 teng1 客廳

At home there is a ... living room.

2 deoi3 min6 jau5 gaan1 對面有間_____

caan1 teng1 餐廳

Across the street there is a ... restaurant.

3 ngo5 zeoi3 gan6 tai2 zo2 **bún** 我最近睇咗

本_____ syū 書

I have recently read a ... book.

Exercise 9.3

Substitute a modifier (e.g. **géi** 幾, **gam** 咁, **taai** 太, **gau saai** 夠晒) for **hóu** 好:

mun5 zuk1
lek1
Gui6 叻
dak1 ji3
套戲 tou3 hei3 long6 maan6
tau4 faat3...dyun2
gaa1 si1家俦 peng4
gaau3 sau6...ceot1 meng2
laan5
soeng2... leng3

We are satisfied.

She's smart (capable).

They're tired.

The children are cute.

The film is romantic.

Her hair is very short.

The furniture is cheap.

The professor is famous.

The student is lazy.

The photos are pretty.

Exercise 9.4

Form reduplicated adjectives to express the meaning based on the adjective provided, remembering the change of tone:

Example: The baby is chubby (**fèih** 肥) → **Go bìhbī fèih-féi-déi** 個**BB**肥肥嘍

- 1 This dish (dip6 sung1 碟餸) is a bit hot (laat6 辣).
- 2 The soup (tong1 啲湯) is rather sour (syun1 酸).
- 3 Your clothes (saam1 啲衫) are a bit wet (sāp 濕).
- 4 The weather (tin1 hei3 天氣) is rather cold (dung3 凍).
- 5 Her face (faai3 min6 塊面) is rather round (jyun4 圓).
- 6 Her eyes (deoi3 ngaan5 隻眼) are a little red (hung4 紅).
- 7 His office (baan6 gung1 sat1 個辦公室) is rather messy (lyun6 亂).
- 8 The button (lap1 lau2 粒鈕) is rather loose (sung1 鬆).
- 9 Your glasses (fu3 ngaan5 geng2 副眼鏡) are rather fuzzy (mung4 朦).
- 10 Your husband (lou5 gung1 老公) is a bit drunk (zeoi3 醉).

Adverbs of time

Given that verbs do not indicate tense in Cantonese, adverbs are especially important in specifying when events take place:

keoi5 ji4 gaa1 zung6 hai2 ji1 jyun2 佢而家仲喺醫院
She's still in hospital (now).

keoi5 go2 zan6 si4 zung6 hai2 ji1 jyun2 佢嗰陣時仲喺醫院
She was still in hospital (then).

ngo5 zik1 hak1 heoi3 jing1 gwok3 taam3 nei5 我即刻去英國探你
I'm going to visit you in England (right away).

ngo5 dai6 ji6 si4 heoi3 jing1 gwok3 taam3 nei5 我第二時去英國探你
I'll visit you in England (in the future).

In English, the tense of the verb indicates when things take place, and the adverb can easily be omitted, while in Cantonese only the adverb indicates the time. Common adverbs include:

Present:	ji4 gaa1 而家	now	gam1 jat6 今日	today
Recent past:	tau4 sin1 頭先	just now	ngāam-ngāam 啱啱	just
Past:	ji5 cin4 以前	before	bun2 loi4 本來	originally
	soeng6 ci3 上次	last time	go2 zan6 si4 嗰陣時	then
	Kam4/cam4 jat6 琴日	yesterday	cin4 jat6 前日	the day before yesterday

Future:

zik1 hak1

即刻

haa6 ci3

下次

ting1 jat6

聽日

right away

next time

tomorrow

dai6 (ji6) si4

第(二)時

dou3 si4

到時

hau6 jat6

後日

in the future

when the time
comes

the day after
tomorrow

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Adverbs
of time,
frequency
and duration

These adverbs may come:

(a) before the verb:

ngo5 dei6 ji4 gaa1 ceot1 heoi3

keoi5 ngaam1 ngaam1 zau2 zo2

我哋而家出去

佢啱啱走咗

We're going out now.

He just left.

(b) before the subject:

bun2 loi4 ngo5 soeng2 duk6 ji1 fo1

本來我想讀醫科

tau4 sin1 keoi5 m4 gei3 dak1 daai3 so2 si4

頭先佢唔記得帶鎖匙

Originally I wanted to study medicine.

Just now he forgot his keys.

Adverbs of frequency and duration

Useful adverbs to describe the frequency of an action include:

Sing4/ seng4 jat6 成日	always	jat1 ci3 一次	once
do1 sou3 多數	mostly	léuhng chi 兩次	twice
jau5 (zan6) si4 有(陣)時	sometimes	sāam chi 三次	three times
yāt sih-si4 一小時	occasionally	géi chi 幾次	several times
ping4 si4 平時	normally	tung1 soeng4 通常	usually

mui5 每 'each' can be used to form adverbial phrases:

múih go yuht 每個月	every month	múih go sīngkèih 每個星期	every week
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Note that several common time expressions of one syllable do not take a classifier and can form reduplicated adverbs:

mui5 ci3 每次 or chi-chi 次次	every time
mui5 jat6 每日 or yaht-yaht 日日	every day
mui5 nin4 每年 or lihn-lihn 年年	every year
mui5 ziu1 每朝 or jīu-jīu 朝朝	every morning
mui5 maan5 每晚 or máahn-máahn 晚晚	every evening

Translate the following into Cantonese using the adverbs we just learnt.

1. I was in Prague 【bou3 laai1 gaak3】 (yesterday)

ngo5 cam4 jat6 hai2 bou3 laai1 gaak3 我尋日喺布拉格

2. She arrived at the university (just now)

Keoi5 ngaam1 ngaam1 dou3 zo2 daai6 hok6 佢啱啱到咗大學

3. I have met him (before)

ngo5 zi1 cin4/ ji5 cin4 gin3 gwo3 keoi5 我之前/以前見過佢

4. They won the first prize (last time)

keoi5 dei6 soeng6 ci3 jeng4 zo2 dai6 jat1 ming4 佢哋上次贏咗第一名

5. We were still small 【sai3 go3 細個】 (then)

ngo5 dei6 go2 zan6 zung6 sai3 go3 我地嗰陣仲細個

6. I used to be a nurse 【wu6 si6 護士】 (originally)

ngo5 bun2 loi4 hai6 go3 wu6 si6 我本來係個護士

7. We will contact 【lyun4 lok3 聯絡】 you (next time)

ngo5 dei6 haa2 ci3 wui5 lyun4 lok3 nei5 我地下次會聯絡你

8. He got angry 【nau1 嬲】 (immediately)

keoi5 zik1 hak1 nau1 zo2 佢即刻嬲咗

9. I will treat you a meal 【ceng2 sik6 faan6 請吃飯】 (in the future)

ngo5 dai6 si4 ceng2 nei5 sik6 faan6 我第時請你食飯

10. We used to live in America 【mei5 gwok3】 (before)

ngo5 ji5 cin4 zyu6 hai2 mei5 gwok3 我以前住喺美國

11. I planned to go to Taiwan (originally)

ngo5 bun2 loi4 daa2 syun3 heoi3 toi4 waan1 我本來打算去台灣

12. I will go to Hong Kong (next time)

ngo5 haa6 ci3 wui5 heoi3 hoeng1 gong2 我下次會去香港

13. My father arrived home (just now)

ngo5 baa4 baa1 ngaam1 ngaam1 faan1 zo2 uk1 kei2 我爸爸啱啱返咗屋企

14. I liked swimming (then)

ngo5 go2 zan6 zung1 ji3 jau4 seoi2 我嗰陣鍾意游水

Ask: How often do you _____ ?

Answer with with frequency we just learnt

Verbs of frequency and duration

Verbs to describe the frequency of an action include:

6 成日	always	jat1 ci3 一次	once
多數	mostly	léuhng chi 兩次	twice
an6) si4 有(陣)時	sometimes	sāam chi 三次	three times
jat1 si4 si4 一小時	occasionally	géi chi 幾次	several times
平時	normally	tung1 soeng4 通常	usually

'each' can be used to form adverbial phrases:

o yuht	every month	múih go sīngkèih	every week
		每個星期	

several common time expressions of one syllable do not take a class- can form reduplicated adverbs:

3 每次 or chi-chi 次次	every time
at6 每日 or yaht-yaht 日日	every day
in4 每年 or lih-n-lih-n 年年	every year
1 每朝 or jīu-jīu 朝朝	every morning
每晚 or máahn-máahn 晚晚	every evening

1. lǎoi hàng 旅行 (travel)
2. tiu mǎu 跳舞 (dance)
3. jǐng sǒng 影相 (taking photographs)
4. sǒng mǒng 上網 (surf on the Internet)
5. cǒng kēi 唱K (sing Karaoke)

1. dǎa bō 打波 (play ball games)
2. tàn gǐt tā 彈結他 (play guitar)
3. tái hǐ 睇戲 (watch movies)
4. dǎa gēi 打機 (play video game)
5. tái sū 睇書 (read books)

Jau4 seoi2
游水
swimming

Zou6 gym
做gym

Go to the gym

Gin6 san1
健身

Go to the gym

Zyu2 je5 sik6
煮嘢食
Cooking

Haang4 saan1
行山
Hiking

Caai2 daan1 ce1
踩單車
Cycling

Teng1 jam1 ngok6
聽音樂
Listen to music

UNIT 12

Comparison

Gwo3 過 and di 啲

In this unit, we look at ways of making simple comparisons. In colloquial Cantonese, there are two basic kinds of comparison:

- (a) Where two things are explicitly being compared, **gwo** 過 is used to mean ‘more (adjective) than (noun)’. The word order is similar to the English (and quite unlike that in Mandarin):

Jenny sai3 gwo3 ngo5

Jenny 細過我

Jenny is younger than me.

baat3 lau2 hou2 gwo3 ji6 lau2

八樓好過二樓

The eighth floor is better than the second floor.

ni1 deoi3 gwai3 gwo3 go2 deoi3

呢對貴過嗰對

This pair is more expensive than that one.

Note that **gwo** 過 is also a verb meaning ‘cross’ or ‘pass’, so it is natural that it comes to mean ‘surpass’ in comparisons.

- (b) If the object of comparison is not expressed (i.e. there is no ‘than ...’), **di** 啲 is used instead:

Jenny sai3 di1 Jenny 細啲

Jenny is younger.

baat3 lau2 hou2 di1 八樓好啲

The eighth floor is better.

go2 deoi3 gwai3 di1 嗰對貴啲

That pair is more expensive.

di 啲 literally means ‘a little’ but here serves largely to indicate a difference between the two items with respect to some property.

Modifying comparisons

Both kinds of comparison can be modified by adverbs of degree such as **hóu dō** 好多 'much' and **síu-síu** 少少 'a little', as follows:

- (a) In comparisons with **gwo** 過, the adverb of degree is simply added at the end of the construction:

nei5 lek1 gwo3 keoi5 hou2 do1

你叻過佢好多

You're much smarter than him.

keoi5 gou1 gwo3 nei5 siu2 siu2

佢高過你少少

She's a little taller than you.

ngo5 daai6 gwo3 keoi5 jat1 nin4

我入過佢一十

I'm a year older than her.

- (b) In comparisons where **dī** 啲 would normally be used, a degree word such as **hóu dō** 好多 'a lot' replaces **dī** 啲:

Lī go leng dī

呢個靚啲

→ Lī go leng hóu dō

呢個靚好多

This one is much nicer.

Lī go gwai dī

呢個貴啲

→ Lī go gwai síu-síu

呢個貴少少

This one is a little more expensive.

ni1 go3 cung5 di1

呢個重啲

→ ni1 go3 cung5 gei2 pui5

呢個重幾倍

This one is several times heavier.

The reason for this is that **dī** 啲 literally means 'a bit', so that combining it with an adverb like **hóu dō** 好多 'a lot' would be a contradiction in terms. This shows that **dī** 啲 as in **leng dī** 靚啲 is not really equivalent to the suffix **-er** in English 'prettier'.

zung6 仲 'even' can be applied to both the **gwo** 過 and **di** 啲 constructions but comes *before* the adjective:

gam1 ci3 zung6 hou2 gwo3 soeng6 ci3 i

今次仲好過上次

This time is even better than last time.

gam2 joeng2 zung6 hou2 di1 i)

咁樣仲好(啲)

This way is even better.

(**di** 啲 can be omitted here since the presence of **juhng** 仲 implies that a comparison is being made.)

Translate the following into Cantonese

1. It's warmer today (nyun5 暖)

gam1 jat6 nyun5 di1 今日暖啲

2. She is happier now

keoi5 ji4 gaa1 hoi1 sam1 di1 佢而家開心啲

3. My friend is older than me

ngo5 pang4 jau5 daai6 gwo3 ngo5 我朋友大過我

4. She is much taller than before

keoi5 gou1 gwo3 ji5 cin4 hou2 do1 佢高過以前好多

5. It's slower this time

gam1 ci3 maan6 di1 今次慢啲

6. This restaurant is cheaper than that one

ni1 gaan1 caan1 teng1 peng4 gwo3 go2 gaan2 呢間餐廳平過嗰間

7. Cycling is better than walking (haang4 lou6 行路)

caai2 daan1 ce1 hou2 gwo3 haang4 lou6 踩單車好過行路

8. Your idea is better (zyu2 ji3 主意)

nei5 ge3 zyu2 ji3 hou2 di1 你嘅主意好啲

Make the following comparisons more explicit using the adverb given in brackets:

1. This year is (much) colder [dung3凍] than last year
2. It's (much) warmer [nyun5 暖] today
3. Your hair is (a little) shorter [dyun2短] now
4. Hong Kong is (several times) more expensive than here
5. I'm (even) more tired [gui6 疲] than she is
6. Eating rice is (even) cheaper than eating noodles
7. She is (5cm lei4 mai5厘米) taller than me
8. My elder brother is (20 pounds bong6磅) heavier than me

Tell us:

What you planned to do last year but couldn't do.

What activities do you like to do? How often you do them?

Compare yourself with your family member/ friend

邊個	Who	Bin1 go6
咩 / 乜嘢	what	Me1 / Mat1 je5
邊度	Where	Bin1 dou6
點解	Why	Dim2 gai2
幾時	When	Gei2 si4
點 (樣)	How	Dim2 (yoeng2)
幾多	How many/ much	Gei2 do1