



Cantonese II

Week 9



Tell us:

What you planned to do last year (gau6 nin2) but couldn't do.

羅馬尼亞 lo4 maa5 nei4 aa3

本來想去音樂會 bun2 loi4 soeng2 heoi3 jam1 ngok6 wui2

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

每日

差唔多 caa1 m4 do1

Compare yourself with your family member/ friend

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

11

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

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.)

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

UNIT 16

Verbs of giving

bei2 畀

給

bei 畀 is an important verb used both on its own as a verb meaning 'give' and together with other verbs of giving. The verb **bei** 畀 takes two objects, the direct object (representing what is given) followed by the indirect object (representing the person to whom something is given):

keoi5 bei2 zo2 jat1 baak3 man1 ngo5 佢畀咗一百蚊我

(lit. she gave one hundred dollars me)

She gave me a hundred dollars.

ngo5 bei2 zo2 tiu4 so2 si4 ngo5 taai3 taai2 我畀咗條鎖匙我太太

I gave my wife the key.

bei2 gan1 coi3 ngo5 aa1 畀斤菜我咁

Give me a catty of vegetables, please.

nei5 bei2 di1 min2 keoi5 laa1 你畀啲面佢啦!

Show her some respect!

Note that the order of the two objects here is the reverse of that in English as well as that in Mandarin.

With other verbs of giving such as **gei3** 寄 'send' and **waan4** 還 'return', **bei2** 畀 'to' is used to introduce the indirect object:

ngo5 pang4 jau5 gei3 zo2 zoeng1 kaat1 bei2 ngo5 我朋友寄咗張卡畀我

My friend sent me a card.

ngo5 ji5 ging1 waan4 zo2 cin2 bei2 nei5 我已經還咗錢畀你

I've already returned the money to you.

keoi5 lou5 gung1 lau4 zo2 gaan1 uk1 bei2 keoi5 佢老公留咗間屋畀佢

Her husband left her the house.

Note here the verb **sung3** 送 which is used in this pattern to mean 'give' in the sense of giving presents:

di1 tung4 si6 sung3 zo2 di1 faa1 bei2 keoi5 啲同事送咗啲花畀佢

Her colleagues gave her some flowers.

keoi5 nin4 nin4 sung3 saang1 jat6 lai5 mat6 bei2 ngo5 go3 zai2

佢年年送生日禮物畀我個仔

She gives my son a birthday present every year.

ni1 zek3 gaai3 zi2 sung3 bei2 nei5 ge3 ! 呢隻戒子送畀你嘅!

This ring is (a present) for you!

A third verb may be added to the construction to indicate the purpose for which the object will be used:

keoi5 wui5 gei3 di1 man4 gin2 bei2 nei5 cim1 meng2

佢會寄啲文件畀你簽名

She will send the documents for you to sign.

go3 hok6 saang1 lo2 zo2 pin1 man4 zoeng1 bei2 ngo5 tai2

個學生攞咗篇文章畀我睇

The student brought an article for me to read.

keoi5 jiu3 zyu2 faan6 bei2 uk1 kei5 jan4 sik6

佢要煮飯畀屋企人食

She has to cook for her family (to eat).

Béi 畀 and permission

béi 畀 can also indicate permission (allowing, letting someone do something):

lou5 si1 bei2 ngo5 dei6 zou2 di1 zau2

老師畀我哋早啲走

The teacher let us leave early.

ngo5 bei2 nei5 jung6 ngo5 bou6 din6 nou5

我畀你用我個電腦

óuh

I'll let you use my computer.

m4 hou2 bei2 jan4 zi1 aa3

唔好畀人知呀

Don't let anyone know.

Translate the following into Cantonese

1. I have to pay (money)
2. You need to return some books.
3. I want to give a present (lai5 mat6 禮物) to my mom.
4. I gave my book to my friend to read.
5. I have to submit (gaau1交) homework (gung1 fo3功課) to the teacher
6. The teacher gave a lot of homework to us.
7. I will return some documents (man4 gin2 文件) to you
8. Grandma always gives presents to me
9. It is not allowed to eat (sik6 je5 食嘢) in the library (tou4 syu1 gun2圖書館)
10. Kids are not allowed to drink alcohol (jam2 zau2 飲酒) .

Experiential gwo 過

The ‘experiential’ meaning of **gwo** 過 corresponds to one of the meanings of the present perfect in English – that something has happened at least once. Given a human subject, this is essentially the concept of experience, hence the grammatical term ‘experiential’ to describe this function. Typical cases are:

nei5 jau5 mou4 sik6 gwo3 gong2 sik1 sai1 caan1 aa3? 你有冇食過港式西餐呀?
Have you eaten Hong Kong-style western food?

nei5 heoi3 gwo3 taai3 hung1 gun2 mei6 aa3? 你去過太空館未呀?
Have you been to the Space Museum?

Adverbs which call for **gwo** 過 include cang4 ging1 曾經 ‘once’ and mei6 未 ‘not yet’:

keoi5 cang4 ging1 oi3 gwo3 ngo5 She once loved me.
佢曾經愛過我

ngo5 mei6 jam2 gwo3 ni1 zek3 zau2 I’ve not drunk this wine before.
我未飲過呢隻酒

zo2 咗 **versus** gwo3 過

jó 咗 and **gwo** 過 may appear similar in meaning, both corresponding to the present perfect forms of the verb in English. Indeed there will be cases when either makes sense:

ngo5 tai2 **zo2** saam1 go3 ji1 sang1

我睇咗三個醫生

I've (just) seen three doctors.

ngo5 tai2 **gwo3** saam1 go3 ji1 sang1

我睇過三個醫生

I've seen three doctors
(before).

keoi5 se2 zo2 jat1 pin1 man4

佢寫咗一篇文

He's (just) written an article.

keoi5 se2 gwo3 jat1 pin1 man4

佢寫過一篇文

He's written an article
(before).

ngo5 wan2 zo2 nei5 gei2 ci3

我搵咗你幾次

I've looked for you several
times (recently).

ngo5 wan2 gwo3 nei5 gei2 ci3

我搵過你幾次

I've looked for you several
times (before).

In such cases, **jó** 咗 puts a focus on the result or current relevance of the action, while **gwo** 過 makes it of less immediate relevance:

ngo5 maai5 zo2 ni1 zek3 paai4 zi2 我買咗呢隻牌子

I've bought this brand (and still have it).

ngo5 maai5 gwo3 ni1 zek3 paai4 zi2 我買過呢隻牌子

I've bought this brand (before, in the past).

keoi5 heoi3 zo2 gei1 coeng4 佢去咗機場

He's gone to the airport (and is still there or on his way).

keoi5 heoi3 gwo3 gei1 coeng4 佢去過機場

He's been to the airport (but is no longer there).

Questions with meih 未

Statements with either **jó** 咗 or **gwo** 過 can be turned into yes/no questions by adding **meih** 未 (see also Unit 23).

nei5 sik1 zo2 dang1 mei6 aa3

你熄咗燈未呀?

Have you turned the light(s) off?

nei5 si3 gwo3 ni1 zung2 hoeng1 seoi2 mei6 aa3

你試過呢種香水未呀?

Have you tried this perfume before?

Such questions are answered by the verb + **jó** 咗 or **gwo** 過 (for a positive answer) or by **meih** 未 alone (for a negative answer):

A: nei5 cung1 zo2 loeng4 mei6 aa3

你沖咗涼未呀?

Have you taken a bath yet?

B: cung1 zo2 laa3/ mei6 aa3

沖咗喇/未呀

Yes/no.

A: nei5 si3 gwo3 ni1 di1 mei6 aa3

你試過呢啲未呀?

Have you ever tried these?

B: si3 gwo3 laa3/ mei6 aa3 a

試過喇/未(試過)呀

Yes/no.

Negating 咗 and gwo 過

Because it suggests completion of an action, 咗 is not compatible with negation. The negative counterpart of 咗 is 冇 (have not) or meih 未 (not yet):

He (has) promised me.	佢應承咗我	keoi5 jing1 sing4 zo2 ngo5
He didn't promise me.	佢冇應承我	keoi5 mou4 jing1 sing4 ngo5
We've had our dinner.	我哋食咗飯	ngo5 dei6 sik6 zo2 faan6
We haven't had dinner yet.	我哋未食飯	ngo5 dei6 mei6 sik6 faan6

Unlike 咗, gwo 過 can be negated either with móuh 冇 or meih 未:

I have not received your money.	我冇收過你嘅錢	ngo5 mou4 sau1 gwo3 nei5 gei3 cin2
She has not yet had an operation.	佢未做過手術	keoi5 mei6 zou6 gwo3 sau2 seot6

Translate the following into Cantonese using zo2 or gwo3.

1. I've met (gin3 見) his family (uk1 kei5 jan4 屋企人) before
2. I've just washed my hair (sai2 tau4 洗頭) 。
3. He had breakfast (zou2 caan1 早餐) this morning (ziu1 朝)
4. I've heard (teng1 聽) this song (sau2 go1 首歌) before
5. I've been to Hong Kong once
6. She's won the first prize
7. He hasn't bought (maai5 買) a new car (san1 ce1 新車) before
8. I just sold (賣) the car

Exercise 18.3

Negate the following sentences (refer to Unit 14 if necessary):

Example: keoi5 dei6 git3 zo2 fan1 佢哋結咗婚 They've gotten married. →
keoi5 dei6 mou4 git3 fan1 佢哋冇結婚 (They have not gotten married.)
keoi5 dei6 mei6 git3 fan1 佢哋未結婚 (They're not married yet.)

1 di1 hok6 saang1 zau2 zo2
啲學生走咗

2 ngo5 go3 zai2 heoi3 gwo3 jing1 gwok3
我個仔去過英國

3 keoi5 lo2 zo2 ce1 paai4
佢擺咗車牌

4 ngo5 dei6 zou6 gwo3 zing3 fu2 gung1
我哋做過政府工

The students have gone.

My son has been to England.

She's got her driving licence.

We've worked for the government
before.

5 ngo5 deng6 zo2 fong2

我訂咗房

I've reserved a room.

6 go3 bei3 syu1 fong3 zo2 gaa3

個秘書放咗假

The secretary has taken a day off.

7 ngo5 jam2 gwo3 cing1 dou2 be1 zau2 u

我飲過青島啤酒

I've drunk Tsingtao beer before.

8 ngo5 tung4 keoi5 paak3 gwo3 to1 o-tō

我同佢拍過拖

I've been on a date with him.

9 din6 fai3 gaa1 zo2 gaa3

電費加咗價

Electricity costs have gone up.

10 lou5 baan2 naau6 gwo3 keoi5 uih

老闆鬧過佢

The boss has scolded him before.

Exercise 18.4

Choose an appropriate adverb to add to each sentence from the list (a–f):

1 keoi5 mei6 si3 gwo3 ci4 dou3

佢未試過遲到

She's never been late.

2 ngo5 dei6 heoi3 gwo3 nei5 uk1 kei2

我哋去過你屋企

We've been to your house.

3 ngo5 sin1 saang1 faan1 zo2 se2 zi6 lau4

我先生返咗寫字樓

My husband has gone to the office.

4 keoi5 saang1 zo2 go3 zai2

佢生咗個仔

She's had a child.

5 ngo5 haau2 leoi6 gwo3 ci4 zik1

我考慮過辭職

I've considered resigning.

6 gaan1 zau2 lau4 saan1 zo2 mun4

間酒樓門咗門

The restaurant has closed.

a ji5 ging1

已經

already

b ngaam1 ngaam1

啱啱

just

cang4 ging1

曾經

once

d ji5 cin4

以前

before

e zeoi3 gan6

最近

recently

f cung4 loi4

從來

never

Exercise 28.1

Read the following numbers in Cantonese:

- | | |
|-------|------------|
| 1 34 | 6 1,200 |
| 2 79 | 7 12,000 |
| 3 106 | 8 24,302 |
| 4 234 | 9 43,545 |
| 5 818 | 10 315,000 |

Exercise 28.2

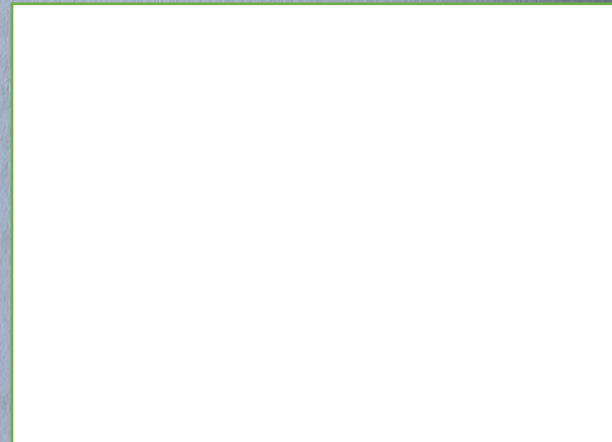
Read the following dates in Cantonese:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1 1 January | 6 4 July 1963 |
| 2 12 December | 7 30 June 1997 |
| 3 21 May | 8 31 December 1999 |
| 4 9 August | 9 29 February 2000 |
| 5 13 Friday | 10 15 September 2008 |

Exercise 28.3

Match the following times:

- 1 2.25
- 2 1.10
- 3 4.30
- 4 5.40
- 5 12.45
- 6 8.05
- 7 3.15
- 8 11.50
- 9 7.26
- 10 9.30



Exercise 28.4

Practise giving the following information:

148

- 1 today's date (gam1 jat6 gei3 jat6 kei4 今日嘅日期)
- 2 your birthday (saang1 jat6 生日)

- 3 your date of birth (ceot1 saang1 jat6 kei4 出生日期)
- 4 your telephone number at home (uk1 kei2 din6 waa2 屋企電話) and at work (gūngsī dihnwá 公司電話)

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