

CANTONESE

COUNTRIES: Southeast China
Vietnam
Kampuchea
Laos
Singapore
Malaysia

POST: Hong Kong

It is possible for a person from Hong Kong and another from Peking to read and write the same language but be unable to understand each other when they speak. Despite certain similarities in vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation, Cantonese is to Mandarin what German is to English.

There are many Cantonese dialects, but the most important one is spoken in Hong Kong, in which there are seven different tones that can give seven different meanings to the same syllable. They are: high, descending, rising, intermediate, low-descending, low-rising and low. For example, the syllable "si" can, depending on the tone, mean any of the following: to think, history, to try, poem, time, market, business.

The intonation plays a very important part in expressing emotion. The system of negation is not at all the same as in Mandarin.

This Chinese dialect is considered to be inelegant and very raucous.