

A Dictionary of Hong Kong English

Words from the Fragrant Harbor

Patrick J. Cummings and
Hans-Georg Wolf



香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press

14/F Hing Wai Centre

7 Tin Wan Praya Road

Aberdeen

Hong Kong

www.hkupress.org

© Hong Kong University Press 2011

ISBN 978-988-8083-30-5

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue copy for this book is available from
the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound by Condor Production Company
Limited in Hong Kong, China

Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	x
English in Hong Kong	xiv
A Guide to Pronunciation	xix
References and Suggested Further Readings	xxii
A Guide to Frequency	xxiv
Common Acronyms and Abbreviations	xxvi
Hong Kong English Dictionary	1
Appendices	
Cultural Conceptualizations	203
Name Changes in Hong Kong and Neighboring Asia	206
Hong Kong English Words Now Used Internationally	217
Sources for the Text Examples	221
Maps	277

Introduction

This dictionary is the first of its kind, in more than one way. Despite the fact that established and identifiable second-language varieties of English exist around the world, respective variety-specific dictionaries are still rare. As to Hong Kong English (HKE), apart from short lists of HKE words (Bolton 2002), no other compendium of HKE vocabulary has so far been written.

The exact status of HKE may still be a matter of debate among linguists and the informed public, yet what is indisputable is the unique character of HKE. This character has been shaped by Hong Kong's (colonial) history, its socio-cultural and political environment, and, most of all, the language that is predominantly spoken there, Cantonese. The entries in this dictionary, ranging from the sacred to the profane, in many ways reflect the linguistic, historical, cultural, and political situation of Hong Kong. At the same time, this reference work is a further step towards legitimizing HKE as an independent variety of English.

What is, what is not included in this dictionary? First of all, only words and word senses that are particular to HKE or have a specific reference to Hong Kong are listed. To take the example of **astronaut**, the general sense of "a person traveling or working in space," common to all varieties of English, is not considered, but only the sense specific to HKE, "a (male) person working abroad and living apart from his family." "Particular" does not mean "exclusive." In other

words, although most of the words and senses in this dictionary are specific to HKE, we do not claim that none of the items can occur or be used in a similar way in another variety. If that should be the case, they are most likely to be found in other varieties of Asian English. A case in point is the HKE word **shroff**, which comes from Indian English, and is still used in Indian English and Sri Lankan English. Some items that are part of the “common core” of English, such as **crossed cheque** or **triad** have been included, because they are used far more frequently in HKE than in other varieties and this use is indicative of a socio-cultural salience. **Crossed cheque**, for example, occurs eight times in the Hong Kong component of the International Corpus of English, but is not found in the British English component. We have also included some archaic items, such as **chopped dollar** or **chop boat**, which are no longer part of common usage, but can still be found in some historical contexts.

The entries come from a variety of sources: e.g., English-language newspapers based in Hong Kong, especially the *South China Morning Post* and *The Standard*; cartoons and literary works by such authors as Larry Feign and Nury Vittachi; government information published in Hong Kong; student essays, spoken language heard on TV and in the streets every day; and internet websites from Hong Kong. Where possible, we identified the source language or variety other than Standard English, for loan words (e.g., **dim sum**) and hybrid forms (e.g., **tai-tai lunch**), but not for loan translations—which are quite frequent in HKE

(e.g., **one big pot wages**). In most cases, the source is Cantonese or Mandarin (Putonghua), but there are also instances of input from others, e.g., Indian English and Malay. In cases where one particular source language cannot be clearly established, the possible source languages are indicated.

Except for some place names—where we did not see the need to document usage—and cases where the sheer number of spelling variants would have overstretched the entry, each entry, sense, and spelling variant comes with an authentic text example (in some instances slightly modified for stylistic or typographical reasons) to document usage and context. Illustrations for a number of items are also provided. We follow the convention of classifying the entries as noun (*n.*), verb (*v.*), adverb (*adv.*), adjective (*adj.*), prefix, suffix, interjection, fixed expression, and idiomatic expression. If spelling variants are too far removed from the main entry, they are listed as separate entries with a cross-reference. The most common variant is listed as main entry.

Besides a supplement of maps, this dictionary has five additional features (listed here not in the order of appearance). The first one is a list of acronyms and abbreviations commonly found in HKE. The second one is a collection of place name changes in Hong Kong and other parts of Asia, bearing evidence of the tension between a colonial past and a post-colonial presence. The third feature is a list of lexical items that have found their way from Hong Kong English to other varieties of English, i.e., are used internationally now. The fourth feature is an explication of

Introduction

culture-specific conceptualizations underlying some of the HKE items. The reader will notice that certain entries come with additional lexicographic information specifying what is called “conceptual domain” in linguistics, and mappings across these domains. Here, we follow a recent and innovative trend in lexicography that aims to systematize cultural information and make it explicit for speakers of other languages and varieties (Wolf and Polzenhagen 2010). The domains and respective conceptualizations, as well as their lexical instantiations, are assembled in a thesaurus-like appendix. In no other variety-dictionary has this approach been applied yet.

Although this dictionary is relatively short, we do hope readers will enjoy looking up words they have come across when visiting or living in Hong Kong, and discovering facets of Hong Kong life and culture—past and present—hitherto unknown to them.

English in Hong Kong

The history of English in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a political, cultural and linguistic borderland. European and Chinese cultures met in 1517, when the Portuguese started trading along the south coast of China. In the seventeenth century, the English came to the area, which became a linguistic contact zone between English, Portuguese, Chinese, and other languages. When a common language was unavailable, many people communicated in Chinese Pidgin English, the newly formed trade language spoken by both Western and Asian merchants along the south coast of China in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chinese Pidgin English was a simple language that combined words from several different languages: Malay, Portuguese, Indian English, Cantonese as well as Standard English. Even today in coastal trade cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai, the local English contains relics of Chinese Pidgin English.

When the UK colonized Hong Kong after the Opium wars in 1840–43 and 1856–60, new political boundaries were created. During the UK colonial period, many Indians worked in Hong Kong, and Indian English came to have a great lexical influence on HKE (and, in turn, HKE on Indian English). Education in missionary schools, and the need for middlemen between the English and Chinese-language groups, helped develop a bilingual Eurasian comprador class. With the late

twentieth-century expansion of education and growing English proficiency among the population, the comprador class became obsolete.

Following the 1997 handover of sovereignty to China, many boundaries have remained intact. Today, Hong Kong has multiple language boundaries, between different varieties of English (many of which spoken by expatriates), *Chinglish* (a mixture of Cantonese and English, whose linguistic status is still disputed; see entry for **Chinglish**), Cantonese, Putonghua and other languages such as Tagalog and Japanese.

The status of English in Hong Kong

Cantonese is the main and most widely-spoken language of Hong Kong. It is the first language of the vast majority of Hongkongers (89.2%, according to CIA 2010). It is also a common medium of primary and secondary education. However, the importance of English in Hong Kong goes well beyond the simple role of a colonial language after the colonizers have left. In the public life of Hong Kong, so much English is used that it is possible for expatriates to live in this city for many years without ever learning Cantonese or any Chinese dialect, and many do. At the political level, the government of China recognizes the need for English in politics and law, by including English as a second official language in the Basic Law:

In addition to the Chinese language, English may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities,

legislature and judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (*The Basic Law*, Chapter I: General Principles, Article 9)

The number of speakers of English has been increasing drastically from just 6.6% in 1983 to 43% in 2001, as the latest census results indicate (Bolton 2002b: 2). The greatest increase in the popularity of English has been after the UK agreed to hand over the territory to the People's Republic of China, not during the previous century of occupation. This trend suggests a delinking of English from its colonial legacy.

English is taught in schools as a second language, along with Putonghua, and sometimes used as the medium of instruction. Most university classes are conducted in English. English is needed for people to advance in many professions, such as banking. Yet schools treat English as a foreign language. Many English teachers will not accept local words in their classrooms, and English is still taught according to a British English standard, though hardly ever attained. This strict preference for some form of British English on the side of the educators is in stark contrast to the post-colonial attraction to English mentioned above.

In Hong Kong language loyalty can be a big argument, as the debate over medium of instruction has shown. Some people express a nationalist loyalty to Putonghua. Others insist on British English being taught. Unlike what might have been expected after the 1997 handover, Putonghua has not replaced English, and English is

still perceived to provide the best opportunities for success or prestige. Despite this, Putonghua, being the national language of China, will certainly be of increasing economic importance and its adoption by future generations is very likely.

What is Hong Kong English and who are its speakers?

Closely connected to the historical phases sketched above, there have been three different types of HKE. Some overlap exists as later types have inherited some words from earlier types. Chinese Pidgin English, while not understandable to most modern English speakers, was the first type of English to develop on the south coast of China. It was used mostly by traders and businessmen. The second type of English in Hong Kong was colonial English, with influences from Indian laborers and soldiers. The third is modern HKE, which is heavily influenced by borrowing from Cantonese and is mostly, though not exclusively, used by Cantonese first-language speakers. It is this type of HKE that is represented in this dictionary.

Is HKE a Chinese language? Originally, HKE speakers were UK and Indian merchants and their employees. However, today most speakers of HKE are ethnic Hong Kong Chinese and Cantonese first-language speakers. As much as Hongkongers are Chinese, HKE, in a cultural and social sense, has become a Chinese language, although, linguistically of course, it is not part of the Sino-Tibetan language family and it includes many non-Chinese lexical features. Albeit that the majority

of HKE speakers are Cantonese, HKE is spoken by speakers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Old China Hands who speak English as their first language and people from other places, such as India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. This broad range of influences has shaped HKE. It has distinctly local words, but is not strictly bound geographically or even ethnically. HKE contains, *inter alia*, British, American, Singaporean, and Indian influences and does not exist as an isolated variety. This *mélange* is intrinsic to HKE and reflective of Hong Kong's past and present.

The independence of HKE has been limited by the lack of a local language authority. Reference works, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, usage guides, and so on, are linguistic landmarks still missing for HKE. As pointed out above, many schools prefer to claim British English, of an unspecified type, as their standard and foreign teachers to teach it. That is to say, a colonial perspective will prevail as long as children are taught that "British English" is what they should aspire to. Without a recognized local standard there is little basis for a local teacher fluent in English to challenge a native speaker's opinion on how English should be used. This dictionary hopes to make a modest contribution to the recognition of HKE as a legitimate and independent variety of English.

A

ABC

idiomatic expression.

Definition: ① American-born Chinese; ② Australian-born Chinese.

Text example:

“We have several kinds of Chinese alone: Hong Kong Chinese, Mainland Chinese, Taipei Chinese, and not to mention the other overseas Chinese such as the **ABC** (American- or Australian-born Chinese) or the BBC (British-born Chinese).”



acting-up

fixed expression.

Definition: acting at a grade higher than one's current grade or rank (e.g., in the Civil Service).

Text example:

“In the case of **acting-up** with replacement (this involves acting in a functional post which carries a higher maximum salary point than that of the teacher's substantive rank) ... the rate will be revised to 100% after the first 180 calendar days of acting.”

See: **doubling-up**.



ah-ba

/əh ba:/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (阿爸).

Definition: father (affectionate and informal).

Text example:

“Through Jesus, who is our Brother, we both have God as our Father, whom we are encouraged to address in the most intimate and childlike way as ‘Abba’ (how close to the Chinese ‘**Ah Ba**’; also to the Indians ‘Appa!’) and we have Mary as our Mother.”



Cheung Chau Bun Festival

/tʃʌŋ tʃəʊ bʌn festɪvəl/ *n.*

Source languages: Cantonese (包山節), English. Also known as Cheung Chau Da Jiu Festival (長洲太平清醮).

Definition: a non-statutory holiday recently fixed to be held in Cheung Chau in the fourth month (8th day), to thank the God Pak Tai, among other activities. The buns are intended to appease the hungry ghosts of pirate victims that are said to roam the island in search of food.

Text example:

“After the parade is the competition that gives the celebration its slightly misleading English name of ‘the **Bun Festival**’. Three towers of buns ... containing thousands of buns on each are erected next to the Bak Dai Temple and young people scramble up to the top in a frenzied bid.”

See: **ghost**.



chick, chicken

idiomatic expression.

Definition: female prostitute.

Text example:

“Women prostitutes are called ‘**chickens**’ in Hong Kong, and the men are called ‘ducks.’”

See: **duck**.



chicken-worm

idiomatic expression.

Definition: a man who frequents prostitutes.

Text example:

“Hong sends **Chicken Worm** to harass Damon who in turn flushes **Chicken Worm** out from a brothel and severely punishes him.”



Double Tenth

n.

Definition: ❶ anniversary of the rebellion against the last Chinese dynasty; ❷ a failed ceasefire agreement between the Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist Party.

Text example:

- ❶ “1911 Mutiny of Imperial troops at Wuchang on 10 October (**Double Tenth**) leads to the outbreak of Chinese Revolution and the declaration of a republic at Nanking.”
- ❷ “The failure of the Marshall mission was in fact a foregone conclusion. Equally the earlier-made **Double Tenth Agreement** (through Hurley’s efforts) for ceasefire among the KMT and the CCP proved to be hollow.” 

doubling-down

fixed expression.

Definition: Acting on a junior post in addition to one’s own (e.g., in the Civil Service).

Text example:

“Acting allowance should not be granted for **doubling-down** acting appointment (i.e., a senior officer taking on the job of a junior officer in addition to his own).”



doubling-sideways

fixed expression.

Definition: Acting on a post at the same rank in addition to one’s own post (e.g., in the Civil Service).

Text example:

“Doubling-up, **doubling-sideways** or doubling-down. The acting appointment is for an officer to undertake the duties of a post in a higher, same or lower rank, in addition to the duties of his own post.”



D

ming pai

/miŋ pɑi/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (名牌).

Definition: commercial brand names of high status.

Text example:

“As against the well-defined set of **ming pai** or famous brands that the nouveaux riches gravitate to, the nouveaux chic use a wider gamut of brands.”



Miss

n.

Definition: a title used instead of “Ms.” by any adult woman married or not.

Text example:

“**Miss** Chan was born in Hong Kong in 1959 and is married with 2 children.”



mm goi (saai)

/m ɡɔɪ (sɑi)/ *fixed expression.*

Source language: Cantonese (唔該).

Definition: an expression equivalent to “thank you,” but used only for service and not for a gift or a compliment (usually spoken language).

Text example:

“Thank you all—**mm-goi saai!**”

See: **do-jeh.**



mm sai

/m sɑi/ *fixed expression.*

Source language: Cantonese (唔使).

Definition: don't mention it (in response to a “thank-you” for a service performed).

Text example:

“Mm goi’ (Thanks.) **Mm sai**’ (Don’t mention it.)”



mo lay tau

/məʊ leɪ tɑʊ/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (無厘頭).

Definition: nonsensical-style comedy, using vulgar Cantonese slang.

Text example:

“For Li, **mo-lay-tau** (‘nonsense slapsticks’) is only the symptom of a desperate condition, not in itself a positive or creative response to any situation.” 

Mong Kok

/mɔŋ kɔk/ /mɔŋ ɡɔk/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (旺角).

Definition: a crowded market and residential neighborhood in northern Yau Tsim Mong District.



Monkey God Festival

n.

Definition: a non-statutory holiday on the sixteenth day of the eighth lunar month, during which devout followers will re-enact the traditional trials of the mischievous and playful god.

Text example:

“Hot on the heels of the Mid-Autumn Festival is the festival celebrating the birthday of the most mischievous and resilient god in the Chinese pantheon—the Monkey God.” 

po-po (also pohpo, pohpoh)

/pɔ pɔ/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (婆婆).

Definition: maternal grandmother.

Text example:

- ① “Bye, Grandmother. I’m so happy to know my **po-po**.”
- ② “That was probably why she’d overlooked her cousin, because **pohpo** died the year before she left for Canada.”
- ③ “His **PohPoh** and KongKong are getting older so I’d really like to meet them sometime.”



pork chop

idiomatic expression.

Definition: a fat and ugly woman (derogatory).

Text example:

“... called her a ‘**pork chop**’ and pointed and leered at her breasts.”



praya

/praɪjə/ *n.*

Source language: Portuguese.

Definition: waterfront where ships are likely to dock (archaic).

Text example:

“The reclamation was carried out between 1890 and 1904 to extend the **praya** northwards to the present Connaught Road. The original **praya** was then renamed Des Voeux road to commemorate the Governor Sir William Des Voeux.”

Note: Now usually used in HK only as a place name. Outside of HKE the spelling *praia* is more common.



Shanghaianders

n.

Definition: people from Shanghai.

Text example:

“It is perhaps a mark of the **Shanghaianders**’ impact on Hong Kong that, despite their relatively late arrival, they give the impression that they have always been there.”



Shanghainese

adj.

Definition: of Shanghai, its people, language or food.

Text example:

“The importance of **Shanghainese** industrialists in the local economy is legendary.”



shao mai

n.

See: **siu mai**.

Sha Tin

/ʃɑ tɪn/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (沙田).

Definition: a district in the middle of Hong Kong containing a town of the same name built along the Shing Mun River Channel.



Shenzhen

/ʃɛnzɛn/ *n.*

Source language: Cantonese (深圳).

Definition: a Mainland city bordering on the north of Hong Kong.



T

tael

/teɪl/ *n.***Source language:** Malay.**Definition:** 1/16 of a catty.**Text example:**

“As many of these dried food delicacies are very expensive, they are customarily priced in unit of **tael**. But the shops would display or show the prices in such a way that creates the impression the prices are for a catty.”

See: **catty**.

taikonaut

/taɪkəʊnɔ:t/ *n.***Source languages:** Mandarin (太空人), Greek.**Definition:** a Chinese astronaut/cosmonaut.**Text example:**

“The Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, and China’s first **taikonaut**, Mr Yang Liwei, officiated at the opening ceremony of the ‘Exhibition on China’s First Manned Space Mission’ at the Hong Kong Science Museum.”



taipan

/taɪpən/ *n.***Source language:** Cantonese (大班).**Definition:** the head of a large powerful business (largely archaic).**Text example:**

“It had been used as the Russian Consul’s office and subsequently the residence of Augustine Herd & Co.’s **taipans**.”

Note: Currently mostly used for heads of long-established companies.

yum cha house

fixed expression.

Definition: a restaurant that specializes in yum cha.

Text example:

“The closest thing you’ll find is a **yum cha house**, or a dai pai dong.”

See: **dai pai dong**.



yum sing (also yum seng)

/jʌm səŋ/ fixed expression.

Source language: Cantonese (飲勝).

Definition: a cheer made before drinking an alcoholic beverage, popular at weddings.

Text example:

- ① “Between the many courses of the wedding banquet, a guest would leap up from his chair, shout ‘**Yum-Sing!** Good health!’ to the bride and groom, and down his generous measure of French brandy in a gulp.”
- ② “**Yum seng**. Cheers.”



yum-yum girl

/jʌm jʌm gɜ:l/ idiomatic expression.

Definition: bar girl, prostitute.

Text example:

“The pick-up bars still line the road, **yum-yum girls** luring passers-by into their neon-lit dens, but these are the illegitimate daughters of Suzie Wong, not of Chinese but Thai descent, wearing not elegant silk cheongsams but cheap miniskirts raised to immodest heights.”

See: **Suzie Wong**.



Cultural Conceptualizations

PAPER MODEL

A PAPER MODEL IS A REAL OBJECT
IN THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

➔ **hell bank notes,
paper money,
spirit money, joss paper**

PARENTAL FRIEND

A FRIEND OF THE PARENTS IS
A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

➔ **auntie, uncle**

SALARY

SALARY IS FOOD

EQUAL PAY IS EATING FROM THE
SAME FOOD CONTAINER

➔ **one big pot wages**

SEX

SEX IS RIDING

THE PERSON WHO ARRANGES SEX
IS A STABLE BOY

➔ **mafoo (mafu)**

SWEET SMELL

A SMELL IS A VALUABLE OBJECT IN THE
SUPERNATURAL WORLD

➔ **joss stick**

SUPERNATURAL BEING

A SUPERNATURAL BEING IS
A HUMAN BEING

➔ **“ghosts” like watching
this type of performance,
Hungry Ghost Festival**

Source domains

FAMILY

- ➔ PARENTAL FRIEND
- ➔ FELLOW MEMBER OF A SOCIAL GROUP
- ➔ MEMBER OF SOCIETY

FOOD

- ➔ CORRUPTION
- ➔ OCCUPATION
- ➔ BUILDINGS

FOOD CONTAINER

- ➔ OCCUPATION
- ➔ SALARY

GIFT

- ➔ CORRUPTION

HUMAN BEING

- ➔ SUPERNATURAL BEING

OBJECT IN THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

- ➔ PAPER MODEL
- ➔ A SWEET SMELL

RIDING

- ➔ SEX

Hong Kong English Words Now Used Internationally

The following English words are from Hong Kong and Chinese English, but are now commonly used in other varieties of English. Most of these words have not been included in the dictionary, since they are in such common use outside of Hong Kong. Those that do have an entry in the dictionary have a different pronunciation in HKE, as in the case of *chow mein*, or a different spelling, as in the case of *fung shui*. Some of these words or expressions have a secondary meaning in HKE, such as *wonton*. Others like *Cultural Revolution* are from Mainland China, but the word has been transmitted to the world through HKE.

acupuncture: a treatment for pain by inserting the tips of needles at specific nerve nodes

barefoot doctor: a lay health care worker, especially in revolutionary rural China, providing first aid, basic medical care, midwifery and preventive medicine

beggar's chicken: a chicken dish cooked wrapped in lotus leaves and clay

bitter melon: the bitter tasting gourd from a vine of the species *Momordica charantia*

capitalist roader: in Maoist political theory, a communist person or group who wishes to use capitalist methods to achieve communist goals

chase the dragon: smoking opium

Hong Kong English Words Now Used Internationally

chi: psychic energy

chop suey: a meat and vegetable rice-based dish of Cantonese origin

chopsticks: tableware consisting of a pair of sticks used to eat food with

Confucius: a Chinese philosopher (circa 551–478 BC) (also **Confucian; Confucianism**)

Cultural Revolution: ❶ a radical social reform in China initiated by Mao Zedong in 1965 and carried out by the Red Guards resulting in violent purges of intellectuals and socio-economic chaos; ❷ a lighthearted description of a major change in fashion or society (a sense which is not socially acceptable in Hong Kong)

dead cat bounce: a small, brief recovery in the price of a declining stock.

dragon dance: a dance performed by many people with a very long dragon costume

egg fu yung: a Cantonese-style farmer's omelette

face (to save/lose): status held in the opinion of others

feng shui: a traditional system of esthetics by means of geographic features

ginseng: a herb believed by some to have medicinal powers

gung-ho: to be very enthusiastic and dedicated

I Ching: an ancient Chinese manual of divination

ketchup: a thick tomato sauce, originally an Amoy fish sauce

kumquat: a small oval citrus fruit with thin sweet rind and very acid pulp or a tree that produces such a fruit

kung-fu: a Chinese martial art, with associations in myth and legend

la mein: a variety of pulled noodles

lemon¹: a yellow oval fruit with acidic flesh and the tree which produces it

Hong Kong English Words Now Used Internationally

- lion dance:** a traditional Chinese dance
- lo pan**, also **lou pan**, **luo pan:** a Feng Shui compass.
Note: Not to be confused with *Lo-pan*, the patron God of Carpenters
- loquat:** a small yellow subtropical fruit with a large stone
- lychee:** a fruit with a thin rigid skin enclosing a sweet pulp and a single seed
- mandarin**, *fruit:* a loose-skinned variety of orange
- Mandarin**, *language:* the dialect spoken in Beijing and the origin of Putonghua
- mandarin**, *official:* a senior government official of imperial China
- Middle Kingdom:** the country of China
- money tree:** a tree which is reputed to offer good luck, or any tree sold as a money tree
- Monkey King:** Sun Wukong, a character in the classical novel *The Journey to the West*
- napa cabbage:** a vegetable of the species *Brassica rapa* subsp. *pekinensis*
- paper tiger:** in Maoist political theory, a person or organization that appears powerful but is really powerless
- Peking duck:** a type of roasted duck, the best of which are made in Hong Kong, not Beijing
- pidgin:** a form of language used for trade between people without a common language
- potsticker:** a steamed or fried dough wrapped food filled with meat or vegetables
- Red Guards:** in Maoist political thought, young extreme-communist political enforcers
- running dog:** in Maoist political thought, a submissive follower of a different political system
- Shanghai** (v.): illegal forced service on a ship, often by kidnapping a drugged victim
- sifu:** a teacher, often used in Daoism or martial arts

Hong Kong English Words Now Used Internationally

Son of Heaven: the emperor of China

spring roll: chopped vegetables wrapped in thin dough and fried

squeeze: a corrupt payment obtained by coercion or intimidation

tai chi: a martial art based on sequences of slow controlled actions, often used for relaxation and balance and health

tea: a beverage made by steeping the dried leaves of the tea plant in hot water (also a small afternoon meal which includes tea)

tea eggs: a type of boiled eggs produced by a Hong Kong method

tofu: a curd made from soybeans

tycoon: a wealthy and powerful businessman

typhoon: a cyclonic tropical storm occurring in the China sea

warlord: an unaccountable military leader exercising civil power

winter melon: a large white-fleshed melon that is the fruit of *Benincasa hispida*

wok: a traditional convex frying pan

wonton: a type of dim sum filled with spiced minced pork, served in soup

ying yang: a philosophical description of how balanced opposing concepts, such as light and dark, are interdependent in the natural world

yu: fish

Zen: A Buddhist school of enlightenment through meditation

Note:

¹ The origin of the word *lemon* is uncertain, but may possibly be from Cantonese.