Lecture Abstract

This presentation analyzes several light-hearted Hong Kong Cantopop songs from the 1950s and 1960s sung by different artists. One such song, Ai Ni Ru Gu 愛你入骨, is included in the title and given a tongue-in-cheek, literal translation of “Love you to the bone.” The song is a duet sung by versatile comedic singer and performer, Zheng Junmian 鄭君綿 (1917-1994), together with a female singer, Bai Ying 白瑛. The humorous content of the song can be seen in the opening three lines sung by the young man (with the rhyming syllables in the short, checked, Entering tone (入聲) colored in red in the lyrics): 我愛你入骨 / 都因你係 / 標準三圍認真第 (I love you to the bone / Because you’re A-okay / All three measurements are number one).

In the presentation, the lyrics will be accompanied by audio sound files. Some background will be provided, and social implications of this post-WW II period in Hong Kong will be explored, as this period captures a unique blending of East and West, and of modern and traditional, that is richly reflected in these early Cantopop songs.

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Marjorie K. M. Chan is an associate professor of Chinese language and linguistics in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Ohio State. She oversees the M.A. and Ph.D. program in Chinese linguistics in her department, and teaches the full range of graduate courses in Chinese linguistics. Her research and publications focus on phonetics-phonology interface (with particular interest in prosodic phenomena) and dialectology (especially Cantonese, including synchronic and diachronic issues). Recent conference presentations and publications have explored issues in tone and intonation phenomena in Mandarin Chinese, language and gender, vernacular written Cantonese (based on 19th century missionary works, etc.), as well as forays into linguistic aspects of humor. In 2008, she organized the 20th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-20) at The Ohio State University, and co-edited a two-volume NACCL-20 proceedings afterwards. In the same year, she guest-edited a special issue of the Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association (2008) on second-language acquisition.

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