

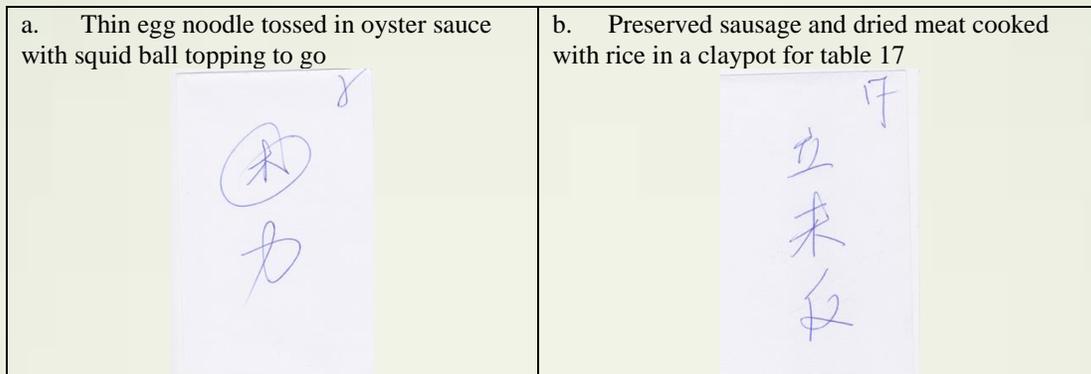


Department of English Language & Literature  
DEPARTMENT RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES  
<http://buenglish.wordpress.com>

Date & time: Monday, 22 January 2018; 4:30p.m.  
Venue: OEM1008, 10/F, OEN Hall Building, Ho Sin Hang Campus

## A Digital Humanities Experience of the Hong Kong Kitchen Shorthand *Lian-Hee Wee*

The Kitchen Shorthand (KS) has amused and bemused many Hong Kongers, and has found its way sometimes to pages in books on Hong Kong nostalgia. This cryptic writing (exemplified below) shows clear resemblances to Chinese orthography upon which the KS is based.



The KS is quite productive and can adapt to novel usage, thus easily applicable for the millions of combinatory possibilities and minor adjustments to specific order. Basic principles are easy to discern, although an algorithm to generate them to Turing machine standard is nowhere in the horizon.

### Principles of KS formation (Cheung & Wee 2017)

- Semantic Salience  
Preserve only the characters that are needed to identify the item.
- Rhyme is Reason  
Replace characters that require many strokes to write with characters that sound similar and require fewer strokes to write.
- Extraction  
Extract distinctive grapheme from chosen Chinese character.
- Diverse source  
Use symbols from any common source as alternative where possible
- Spatial usage and diacritics  
Designate space for specific functions.

While it would be exciting to figure out how, without high levels of literacy, the cognitive system of the Hong Kong waiter commands the KS, this workshop's goal is simpler: How can I create a digital archive/corpus for the KS so that the user will experience, as a real customer would, how the graphemes are creatively concatenated by our intrepid waiter? [reference and bio overleaf]

### Reference

Winnie H.Y. Cheung and Lian-Hee Wee (2017) *Principles of the Hong Kong Kitchen Shorthand*. Ms., Hong Kong Baptist University.

About the author: Lian-Hee Wee did accidental undercover work in eateries and restaurants from New Jersey to Hong Kong. For eight years, he collected Kitchen Shorthand data while also learning many other things about the trade. In 2013, he briefly ran a restaurant at Happy Valley, which shuttered because he hadn't learnt management. Most of his professional work, however, is in linguistic research, where he has (co-)edited and (co-)authored eight books and numerous articles. He also dabbles with music, poetry and animal activism. His forthcoming books are *Phonological Tone* (Cambridge University Press) and *Cultural Conflict in Hong Kong: angles on a coherent imaginary* (Palgrave, with Jason S. Polley and Vinton W.K. Poon.)

