Chapter 17
Chinese for Specific Purposes in the Hong Kong Context

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Abstract Chinese language education in its traditional sense focused primarily on the cultivation of students' knowledge of Chinese language and literature, mainly via the root learning of exemplary writings. Many of these writings were in fact traditional varieties of CSP, although their literary achievements were often given primary attention. Alongside the study of such texts, modern practical writings are also introduced to students after the 1990s. This paper reviews the situation and practices in the Hong Kong education sector regarding research on and the practices of teaching "Chinese for special purposes", the newly introduced "practical writing" or "Professional Chinese". Emphasis will be put on the relationship between traditional varieties of CSP and modern practical writings, and how programmes in the latter are designed and delivered.

17.1 A Brief Review of Chinese Practical Writing Research

While "English for specific purposes" (ESP) is a well-established academic discipline, its counterpart in Chinese, i.e. "Chinese for specific purposes" (CSP) is less well studied or even unheard of. That said, it does not mean that the creation and study of Chinese texts focusing on specific contents in order to address certain specific requirements or objectives are non-existent. Rather, a large number of texts produced throughout Chinese history were of practical purposes. These texts form a major body of references and resources for pre-modern Chinese scholars as well as students of the modern day to whom the Chinese language curriculum comprising a selection of such texts is always a core subject area in the school system. Alongside the study of such texts, which are always treated as works of Chinese literature nowadays given that their practical value has diminished, modern types of practical

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texts that align with the workplace manpower structure, workflow and etiquette of the modern society are also introduced to students. This latter kind of teaching is often termed the teaching of "practical Chinese" (應用文/實用文) in a general sense, or "professional Chinese" (專業中文) if the content is linked to certain industries or professions. Unlike ESP which is often considered as an outgrowth of English as a second/foreign language and can be learned at different levels (Dudley-Evans 1998), the teaching of practical/professional Chinese involved mostly L1 learners. Since systematic and large-scale teaching of Chinese as a second/foreign language has a relatively shorter history compared to that of English language teaching,[1] not much attention has been paid to CSP for non-native speaking learners since cultivation and enhancement of L2 learners' generic skills in the Chinese language are still considered by most teachers and learners as challenging tasks that should be given higher priority. A more detailed discussion of this development is given below.

It is argued that almost all texts produced in ancient Chinese society were originally for practical purposes, be they narrative, expressive, argumentative, or exploratory (Chan 1982). The inscriptions on the oracle bones and those on a variety of bronze utensils in ancient China were writings that served religious, political or social purposes. The great Confucian classics were texts illustrating the core value and beliefs in Confucianism, through records of the emperor's speeches, the etiquette systems, the ancient history and records of divination. In the dynasties that followed, from 221B.C. (the year that the Qin Dynasty established) onward, practical texts produced had become more diversified in terms of both content and language style. Cai Yong (蔡邕) (133A.D.–192A.D.) of the Han Dynasty was the first one to classify written texts produced during his era according to their functions. He classified articles produced by the emperors for giving orders/assigning duties and articles produced by government officials for reporting duties or seeking approval into different categories according to their functions and purposes. Cai's categorization had actually taken into consideration the political hierarchy in determining the relationship of the addressers and the addressees in different communicative events. Accordingly, official documents can be classified into three broad categories, namely texts for upward submission (上行), for downward dissemination (下行) and for horizontal transmission (平行). Since then, and until the downfall of the last imperial dynasty by early twentieth century, there have been anthologies of essays published before that, with texts collected and classified according to their stylistic differences, sometimes on their functional variation, resulting in diverging text types being proposed by authors of different anthologies. Based on analysis of the ancient anthologies, Chan (1982) proposed a

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[1]Even though starting from the Ming Dynasty (late fourteenth century) onward, students and scholars from neighbouring countries of China, such as those from Korea, Japan, Ryukyu, and Siam, started to visit China periodically, and learnt Chinese language as well as Chinese culture from the Imperial Academy (國子監), the notion of teaching Chinese as a second/foreign language was not formulated until after the introduction of modern linguistics to China in the twentieth century.

reorganization of traditional practical writings into eleven categories, namely (1) letters, (2) prefaces and post-faces, (3) celestial writs, (4) emperors' words, (5) memorials to the throne, (6) official documents, (7) inscriptions on memorial stone tablets and tombstones, (8) praises and prayers at sacrificial rites, (9) military documents, (10) epigraphs, exhortations, admonitions, and (11) religious documents.

However, it is worth noticing that although many of such essays were typical practical writings with specific communication purposes, many of them had been passed down and appreciated mainly for the superb literary skills embedded in them that qualified them as great works in the Chinese literary tradition. Two typical examples of texts serving specific purpose, yet composed in literary style are the two works produced by Zhu Qingyu (朱慶餘) and Zhang Ji (張籍), both poets of the Tang Dynasty. Zhu attempted to enquire the examiner about his chance of passing the imperial examination by turning the enquiry into a question put forward by a wife to her husband about the style of her eyebrows.[2] Similarly, Zhang depicted a lady returning in tears a gift to her admirer, while the real purpose of composing the poem was to turn down an offer of appointment.[3]

In fact, starting from Cao Pi's (曹丕) *Historical Allusions—Discussion on Essays*[4] (典論•論文) and Lu Ji's (陸機) *Wen Fu*[5] (文賦), the two works that laid the foundation of Chinese literary criticism, studies and analysis of written texts constantly attach primary importance to literary achievements of the texts, seldom to their functions, contexts or their practical values. While Cao Pi himself had summarized stylistic characteristics of four types of texts,[6] the summary was far too brief and loose to comprise only an adjective for each text type on the one hand, and on the other, he argued that the perfect mastery of different text types was a manifestation of the authors' innate talent or as a consequence of their diligent practices (Du 1981; Cheng 1985: 14). It is also worth noticing that irrespective of

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[2]The line in the poem that embedded the "hidden" message was "畫眉深淺入時無?" (Is the colour put on my eyebrows fashionable enough?)

[3]The two lines in the poem were very famous for demonstrating a touching love story: "還君明珠雙淚垂, 恨不相逢未嫁時" (In tears I return the shiny pearls to you. So regrettable it is that we hadn't met before I got married) which, however, is an euphemistic expression disguising the real intended message the poet wanted to convey.

[4]Cao Pi (187A.D.–226A.D.) was the emperor of Wei during the Three Kingdom period. Apart from a poet himself, he was also a literary critic. The chapter "Discussion on Essays" in his book *Historical Allusions* was the first work in literary criticism in China. In the chapter, he adhered great importance to literary works which he regarded as a splendour that had unending permanence.

[5]Lu Ji (261A.D.–303A.D.) was a famous writer and calligrapher of the West Jin Dynasty. His work *Wen Fu* focused on the discussion of literary theories and classification of text types, yet composed in the form of an ode.

[6]Cao proposed that texts all had the same root but differed in their branches, which were translated into elegance for memorials to the throne, rationality for argumentative letters, honesty for inscriptions and eulogies, and gorgeousness for poetries (夫文本同而末異, 蓋奏議宜雅, 書論宜理, 銘誄尚實, 詩賦欲麗).

whether it was personal style, genre style, or style of a certain period, similar criteria or adjectives such as "unconstrained, over-elaborated, simple and unadorned, prosaic, graceful" were used to explain or describe them. Since the critic Yan Yu (嚴羽) (1192–1245?) of the Song Dynasty who suggested that expression of profound message using limited words should be regarded as the highest standard[7] of outstanding poems, there was a tradition in pre-modern China that appreciation of literary works focused primarily on how messages were transmitted tacitly instead of in-depth analysis of the words or structures of the texts, thus failing to produce objective criteria for text evaluation, making it difficult for stylistic research in ancient China to come up with a scientific system of analysis (Yuan and Zong 1994: 231). Such a tradition could probably be accounted for by the fact that in ancient China, most civil service officials, who were also producers and critics of the practical writings, were recruited through the imperial examination which put much emphasis on the candidates' literary writing skills and the command of Confucian classics (Elman 2000). It was therefore not uncommon that even texts of practical use were composed with profound literary skills using classical language.

After the May Fourth Movement which advocated the overhauling of literary traditions by using the vernacular instead of classical language (Encyclopædia Britannica 1998), the situation became more complicated. Discussion on literary origin and faction, text composition, rules of writing, text analysis and appreciation, language use, art form, thematic style, etc. were often subsumed under different disciplines, such as text analysis, prose analysis, rhetoric, and stylistics, thus being approached from different perspectives. In terms of research methodology, before the 1960s, studies on language use and genre-specific style of texts by these different disciplines mainly followed the traditional practice of focusing on an individual writer or an individual article. Very often critics were concerned more about the themes, topics, propositions or key messages that a certain text wanted to convey, and what sort of rhetorical devices were used to help achieve better literary effects. Seldom were the communicative functions, purposes, participant relationships, and how such factors affect the lexical and grammatical patterns of the texts explored.

17.2 Form Practical Writing Research to Research on Chinese Registers

In the later 1950s, the former Soviet linguist V. V. Vinogradov was among the first linguists to describe the different styles of speech in respect to their functions (Sachkova 2012). Probably influenced by his work, starting from the 1960s, some

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[7]Yan Yu's book *Cang Lang Shi Hua (滄浪詩話)* has been regarded as the most representative work in literary criticism in pre-modern China. According to him, words have their ends, but not the messages they carry. The most successful poems should carry profound messages that could not easily be traced by the words, just like a deer hiding in the wood that one could not tell where to find the branches and where to find its horns.

scholars in the rhetoric circles began to notice that certain texts have specific communicative targets and purposes, and the use of language as well as the formation of style was largely constrained by the context, modes, channels, and content of communication. After the 1980s, different fields of western linguistic theories and concepts were introduced to China. Challenged by perspectives and methodologies different from the conventional practices, scholars in the field of Chinese rhetoric started to pay more attention to the close relationship between rhetorical use of language and specific contexts, and noted that the result of communication would be greatly affected if the choice of language did not conform to the context. Consequently, more and more researchers in rhetoric turned to the study of sentences, passages, texts and stylistic problems related to language use or contextual factors on top of discussing micro-rhetorical devices at character or word level. Researchers also started to explore features of different registers in their rhetoric studies, although the notion of "register" was not as clearly defined as what was proposed by sociolinguists of the western world—being language varieties identified according to their use in particular social contexts for particular purposes (Halliday 1978). There also appeared separate chapters dedicated to the study of registers (for instance, Zong et al. 1988; Li and Zhang 1986; Zhang 1993; Luo 1994; Yao and Pan 1995; Wang 1996). Some scholars even declared that registers involving language used in specific areas were more complex than that of literature since its purpose of expression, participants, and problems to be solved were more specific. "The more specific they are, the more complex they are" (Li and Zhang 1986: 202–203, 244). In these works, the term "register" (語體) gradually replaces the term "genre" (文體), meaning that the researchers are interested in more than just the characteristics of any independent texts or text types, but functional varieties with systematic features of language use that aim at fulfilling certain communication purposes in specific contexts (Yuan and Li 2005). Some scholars have also called for the inclusion of contextual elements in the study of rhetoric, believing that such an approach would greatly enhance the scope and practicability of rhetorical research (Hu and Zong 1987: 11).

In the following two decades, some works in register study started to come up with more concrete results, such as the suggestion of certain linguistic phenomena associated with functions and contexts (such as: ECNU & CRS 1987; Wang 1987; Li 1989; Wang and Chan 2000; Yuan and Li 2005). A large number of papers as well as independent monographs on register studies have been published. These works on register studies, compared to previous works on rhetoric or genre study, have extended their scope and content of study to include not just analysis of phonological or lexical features that carry rhetorical meaning, but also features at grammatical and textual levels (e.g. Li 1989; Zheng 1991; Wang and Chan 2000). In 2012, the journal "Contemporary Rhetoric" dedicated the entire Issue 6 to register studies, among which three papers were about grammatical patterns of different registers. Jin and Bai (2012) think that specific register requires the selection of vocabulary, syntactic structure, textual cohesive devices and prosodic form to correspond to its function and context; therefore the language elements used in specific registers and their respective configuration rules should become the core

topic of register research. In consonance to this trend, a number of syntacticians have also put forward the concept of "register syntax" when discussing prospects of research on syntax (e.g. Hu 1992; Tao 1999; Fang 2007; Feng 2010, 2014a, b; Wang 2011, 2012; Zhu 2012). They suggest that any register variation will lead to differences in syntactic features, implying that syntactic research and register research should be inextricably linked. It can be seen that as far as the study of register is concerned, scholars with different academic backgrounds have different points of departure, but they all come up with a similar conclusion. The rhetoricians propose the extension of the scope of rhetoric study to include devices not just at phonological or lexical levels, but also syntactic and textual levels. The syntacticians suggest an integration of syntactic research and register research given the close relationship between syntactic variation and register variation.

Amidst the above discussions, many scholars have also proposed to apply research results to teaching, especially to second language teaching (Luo 2001; Li 2004; Feng 2006; Zeng 2009), so that L2 learners would know how to use appropriate words and grammar to complete the communicative tasks in accordance with the context and participants. In the past decade, some universities in the Chinese mainland have offered courses in register study at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Subsequently, a number of master's theses combining register research with teaching Chinese as a foreign language have been published (e.g. Shu 2001; Xiang 2013; Tong 2016; Hu 2017). Just as ESP has its origin in English language teaching, the integration of register study, syntactic study and second language teaching seems to have gained recognition in both the fields of linguistics and education. While increasingly more people are learning Chinese as a second or foreign language, there arise different needs of the learners that curriculum designers and course organizers have to address. What should be pointed out though, is that such needs are not confined to second language learners. CSP teaching and study for L1 learners had a long history in China as elaborated in Sect. 17.1 of this chapter, although the approach had been rather different.

As mentioned above, alongside a long history of language training based on literary tradition, there were a large number of anthologies published in different dynasties containing mainly texts that were of practical use. Many of such texts, together with the Confucian canons, had become the major body of study for candidates of the imperial examination. A large number of the practical texts also constituted a core component of the Chinese subject in the modern-day school system. What made the study of Chinese practical texts so special was that many of the practical texts were composed in literary styles and were appreciated mainly for their literary achievement, with their functional and contextual factors often neglected. This is especially so in the modern days since the social structure and human relationship of the modern society differ tremendously from those of the ancient time, making the practical value of these texts obsolete. There is of course needs for the creation of new types of practical texts that fulfil the communication needs of the modern society. They are then given a new name "practical writings" (應用文) to differentiate them from the ancient practical texts. Nonetheless, the newly emerged practical writings, compared to the famous classical texts passed

down from the ancient times, seem to be much inferior in terms of their literary credit, and it is commonly believed among Chinese scholars that anyone equipped with profound knowledge in classical Chinese could easily master any kind of modern practical writing without proper training. It is therefore not surprising that teaching of newly created Chinese practical writings compiled in modern Chinese had not been given much attention until the 1990s when new text types such as press release, promotional leaflet, direct marketing letter, CEO's message, and company annual report started to emerge.

Chan (1982) who proposed to reorganize the traditional practical writings also endeavoured to introduce the convention, format, structure, language requirements and jargons used in practical writings that are still in use in modern society. While observing some of the practices in composing practical writings in the Chinese tradition, he went further to propose revisions and adjustments to both the format and the language of modern practical writings to align with the living style and etiquette of the modern society. His work has been considered as one of the most influential ones in the study and practice of modern practical writing in early years in Hong Kong.

In the last two decades, new approaches of text analysis were also proposed, incorporating studies at lexical and grammatical levels (Lee 2008), sometimes by adopting communication theories as well (Lee 2000). The study of practical writings has attracted more and more interest and attention, especially when many practical writings in Hong Kong demonstrate special linguistic features, such as mixture of Chinese and English, mixture of Classical and modern Chinese, and mixture of standard Chinese with vernacular Cantonese. One can also find gradual emphasis on the teaching of practical writings in curriculum documents for the Chinese language in the Hong Kong context, although the above suggestion of integrating register study with syntactic study have not yet been fully picked up by curriculum planners as well as front-line teachers. Below we shall briefly introduce the situation of CSP or register teaching in the context of Hong Kong and explore possible future directions of CSP development.

17.3 Teaching and Research on Chinese Practical Writings in the Hong Kong Context

17.3.1 Teaching of Chinese Practical Writings at School Sector

The two terms "register" or "CSP" are quite unfamiliar to the teaching profession in Hong Kong. A more common term adopted is "practical writings", or "professional Chinese" if the writings are related to particular professions. In earlier years, teaching of practical writings was not included in the school curriculum (Curriculum Development Council 1990). It was not until 1998 that a clear

provision of practical writing was proposed. In both the 1998 and 2004 documents, lists of practical writings to be taught were given. They include official letter, notice, diary, manual, advertisement, poster, leaflet, slogan and announcement. But other than the list, learning objectives and assessment criteria for such kinds of teaching were missing (Curriculum Development Council 1998, 2004).

That being said, for Chinese language teaching in the secondary school stage, there had been a tradition of focusing on the study of exemplary texts, which included a large number of practical writings of the ancient times, such as *Admonish against the expulsion of guest officials (諫逐客書), On the Six nations (六國論), Biographies of Lian Po and Lin Xiangru (廉頗藺相如列傳), Memorial to the emperor on dispatch of troops (出師表), Notes on Zuiweng Ting (醉翁亭記), Notes on Yueyang Lou (岳陽樓記)*, etc. In the 1990 curriculum document, 34 exemplary texts were listed as core study content for junior secondary school students. Schools could choose 20 to 24 texts from the list to constitute the school syllabus. Another 26 exemplary texts were identified for study at the senior secondary stage. The texts also formed an important component of the Chinese subject test in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), which was a public examination taken at the end of students' secondary school education and was considered as the gateway to further studies and career pursuance (HKEAA website). The exemplary texts for Chinese education at secondary level belonged to a variety of functional categories. They included: travel notes, biographies, prefaces, fables, letters from home, persuasive essays, and discourses on politics. It is obvious that the teaching of well-written practical texts has never halted throughout Chinese history. However, the tradition of focusing on the literary achievement of these texts has also been followed through. One of the reasons accounting for such a phenomenon is that these texts were composed using classical Chinese whose usage has become rather limited in modern society. In addition, the Chinese society has experienced huge changes at political, societal, economic, and educational levels in the past century since the fall of the Qing dynasty. Most of the addresser–addressee relationship and contextual factors that underlay the composition of the classical practical writings no longer existed, thus rendering many practical text categories obsolete. Text types such as emperors' words, memorials to the throne, inscriptions on tombstones, epigraphs and admonitions, etc., had either been replaced by new text forms written in modern Chinese, or had become redundant. It is only natural that when studying these texts, emphasis would be put on their literary achievement, instead of their practical value, which could no longer be applied to resolving communication problems in modern Chinese society.

To address communication needs in modern society, there are new forms of practical writings. In the colonial days when a large number of administration, legislative and judiciary documents were compiled in English, which was also extensively used in the business and industrial sectors, practical writings in Chinese were only used in limited areas and comprised a relatively small number of categories. This explains why the teaching of Chinese practical writing was not given much attention before 1998. With the opening up of China by the early 1990s, and the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China, Chinese is used more

extensively in all areas of the society to serve genuine communication needs between users of Chinese coming from different areas (Chan 2014). The teaching of practical writings was therefore given more emphasis in the curriculum documents.

In line with the policy of promoting practical writing among students, a *Reference for Chinese Practical Writing for Primary and Secondary Schools* (hereafter *the Reference*), covering 17 types of practical texts,[8] was published by the Curriculum Development Institute of the Hong Kong Education Bureau in 2001 (EDB 2001). A learning software based on *the Reference* was also developed and distributed to schools in 2006 (EDB 2006). Unlike other general guidelines on practical writings, *the Reference* provides detailed explanation on the functions of different categories of practical texts, the relationship between the addressers and addressees, the scope of usage, and the ways of expression and linguistic features characterizing each type of practical text. *The Reference* has also paid attention to the ways of presentation of the registers in printed format versus in electronic format publicized on the Internet. It points out that the physical layout of the Internet texts affected the structure as well as mode of presentation of the texts. The Internet version can thus be seen as variations to the traditional type of practical texts. *The Reference* has in fact introduced some new perspectives of analysing and discussing Chinese registers and can be seen as the emerging stage of Chinese for Specific Purposes, incorporating concepts and practices borrowed from sociolinguistics studies.

In 2004, the Hong Kong Government reconstructed a blueprint for education. It was proposed that starting from 2009, the secondary school would be changed from a seven-year system (five-year secondary school and two-year matriculation programme) to a six-year system (three-year junior high school, three-year senior high school) in 2009, and the university curriculum would also be changed from a three-year one to a four-year one in 2012. The Chinese Language curriculum for the new senior secondary (NSS) stage had thus undergone major changes. Under the old curriculum, Chinese language, Chinese literature and Putonghua were three related but stand-alone subjects. They were combined into one under the new curriculum, with a core compulsory component and an elective component. The study of the exemplary texts was eliminated from the core component, which shifted its focus to enhancement of students' language ability. Students were provided with a long list of reading materials instead and were required to demonstrate integration and application of language skills on a variety of topics in different contexts. The elective section consists of ten modules with cross-disciplinary elements embedded. For instance, in addition to Chinese literature and Putonghua modules, there are modules on general science, culture, performing arts, news and media writing and language application in multimedia settings, etc., to cater for the different learning interests and abilities of the students (CDC & HKEAA 2007).

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[8]The 17 types of practical writings include: (1) notice, (2) announcement, (3) informal note, (4) letter, (5) diary and weekly note, (6) regulation, (7) instruction, (8) guideline, (9) speech, (10) meeting note, (11) press release, (12) proposal, (13) report, (14) thematic/feature writing, (15) commentary, (16) advertisement, and (17) promotional writing.

In alignment with the curriculum change, the HKDSE examination has also introduced a number of new question types and assessment method in 2013. Instead of asking students to conduct in-depth analysis of the exemplary texts on top of assessing their other skills in speaking and reading, there was a paper on integrative ability that required students to demonstrate their sub-skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in relatively complex communication settings, such as answering questions or completing writing tasks after listening to audio/video recordings or after reading certain materials. Many of such materials were practical writings closely related to students' life experience, such as posters, promotional materials, press releases and meeting minutes, and the tasks often involved meeting specific communication needs, such as drafting a speech, writing a report or proposal, in order to demonstrate students' ability to interpret and integrate information, express opinions, make reasonable inferences or feasible recommendations, through the proper use of the Chinese language. The marking schemes required students to demonstrate contextual awareness and to use language appropriate to the contexts and the identity of the addresser required by the topic. There is evidence that both the NSS curriculum and the HKDSE examination have made an attempt to shift the traditional approach of relying too much on studying a limited amount of exemplary texts whose literary achievements are the major focus of attention, to emphasizing more on cultivating students' ability in applying their language skills to serving real-life communication needs, involving different media and multimodal meaning-making. The notion of "practical writing" has been expanded to include all text types that serve specific purposes, and the study of these different text types has become the core content area of the Chinese language subject.

For L2 learners of Chinese in Hong Kong, receiving CSP training is rather uncommon. These L2 Chinese learners can be classified into two broad categories. One comprising students coming from higher/middle-class families, and studying in international schools that mainly follow syllabuses of overseas countries. To them, Chinese is often learnt as an additional and elective language subject not necessarily leading to any formal qualification. Therefore, most Chinese subjects are pitched at elementary or low intermediate levels, with students only able to use Chinese for simple and general communication after completing their study. CSP training is entirely not applicable to these students. Another broad category of students are mostly coming from low-income families, belonging to various ethnic minority (EM) groups who study in mainstream local schools (Chan 2014). These students, while studying side by side with their local peers who are mainly ethnic Chinese, have to follow the local Chinese curriculum which is basically designed for L1 speakers. It turns out that the majority of these EM students failed to catch up with the syllabus, mainly owing to their inability in handling the Chinese language which is also used in most schools as the medium of instruction (MOI) for many other subjects. Passing the DSE Chinese subject also appears to be a mission impossible for them, thus barring them from gaining tertiary education opportunity since a pass in the DSE Chinese constitutes part of the entrance requirements for many tertiary institutions. In order to offer these students an alternative pathway, the

EDB introduced an "Applied Learning (Chinese)" subject to the senior secondary curriculum, as a parallel subject to the NSS Chinese, in order to cater for the EM students' different interests, needs and abilities (CDC & HKEAA 2009). Although this subject does not aim at providing pre-employment training, it focuses on practical use of the Chinese language in occupational settings, such as that of media communication, creative industry, business management, services, applied sciences, engineering and production. Since the subject aims at training generic language skills underlying common daily communication in different contexts, the EM students can choose topics related to different professions (EDB 2017). This subject was formally introduced in 2014/15 and is mainly provided by universities and tertiary institutions through outsourcing. It is anticipated that in the years to come, course providers may come up with research outcomes related to teaching of CSP to L2 learners in the Hong Kong context, with demonstration of course materials.

17.3.2 Teaching and Research on Cross Curriculum Register Variations

Since the 1970s, most secondary schools in Hong Kong have adopted English as their MOI. However, upon the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China, mother-tongue teaching was vigorously promoted by the education authority since 1997. The EDB has thus organized a series of training workshops for the front-line teachers to prepare them for mother-tongue education. One of the training teams that provided teaching support for the teachers adopted the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar proposed by M. A. K. Halliday to analyse the various registers constituting discourses used in school textbooks and teaching materials in subject areas such as history, geography, economics, physics, chemistry, and mathematics (Shum 2015). The focus of analysis was placed on how the linguistic features and discourse structure were configured to construct the knowledge of these different disciplines. Relevant research results were provided to teachers for reference in the form of teaching examples and register study seems to contribute quite substantially to the MOI reform. After the implementation of the new senior secondary school curriculum in 2009, the above-mentioned research team extended their practices to guiding the teaching of the general education subject, which is one of the core subjects in the NSS curriculum.

17.3.3 Teaching of Chinese Practical Writings at Tertiary Sector

Traditionally, teaching of practical writings has never been seen as academically rigorous enough to be given high academic status, as mentioned towards the end of

Sect. 17.2 above. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were only two universities in Hong Kong, both of which did not offer any subject in Chinese practical writing. For undergraduate students majoring in Chinese language and literature, their core area of study remained Confucian classics, history, philosophy and literature, despite the fact that many well-known classical texts were composed with specific purposes. Occasionally, subjects such as "Examples of various genres" (各體文章示例) could be found on the subject list, but the focus was again put on literary skills of the selected texts instead of the analysis of co-variance of linguistic features and contextual factors of practical texts.[9] It has been a common perception held by scholars in the field of Chinese language teaching and research that the study of great books or pursuing of literary creation deserves more attention and respect, while composition of practical writings only involves adjustment of basic writing skills that any person good in the Chinese language should be able to master with minimal or no prior professional training. Consequently, most scholars would only treat research on practical writings as secondary or subsidiary, making it even more difficult for the field to gain proper recognition (Lee 2004). Affected by such a widely shared perception, most curriculum planners did not see a need to offer such courses. Even for students from other disciplines, classical Chinese courses were organized for them if they were required to take Chinese courses at freshmen years at university. It was not until the 1990s that more and more language training elements were gradually added to Chinese language courses at tertiary level.

Hong Kong's economy started to take off by the late 1970s and experienced rapid development in the 1980s. The growing economy required a workforce well equipped with administration and management skills as well as high language proficiency. Therefore, the language courses offered by tertiary institutions gradually shifted from the learning of literary texts to the training of basic language skills and the composition of texts for practical purposes. The first general courses mainly focused on the writing of formal letters for different occasions, such as job application and resignation, leave application, invitation, acknowledgement and complimenting. The adoption of strict format with classical Chinese words and jargon was preferred. As business activities became more complex and diverse, new types of practical writing started to appear, resulting in new registers being introduced to practical writing courses offered by tertiary institutions. A small number of universities even offered courses in professional disciplines, such as Business Chinese, Legal Chinese, Engineering Chinese and Medical Chinese. That said, such courses were mostly taught by junior or lower-rank teaching staff who were not required to conduct research, meaning that both the design and the delivery of these courses were not well informed by research (Lee 2004).

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[9]The author of this chapter had taken such a subject while studying for an undergraduate degree in Chinese language and literature in one of the universities in Hong Kong, and found that this was one of the very few subjects involving text types of different registers offered during the 1970s and 1980s. The practice was not continued after the mid-1980s subsequent to the retirement of the staff teaching the subject.

It was not until the late 1990s that the above-mentioned phenomena began to change: on top of the efforts made by Shum (1997, 1999) and his colleagues (Shum et al. 2002) in adopting the Systemic Functional Grammar to analyse the structure and linguistic features of common practical writings used in the school settings and in various subject disciplines, Chan (2000) also adopted the same theoretical framework to explore the linguistic and grammatical features of three written registers, namely news (local, international, sports and financial), science reports, and different types of business correspondences through the construction of a small corpus; Lee (2000, 2008) introduces theories and concepts of modern business communication when exploring the use of language and communication skills in various types of business documents. The works of these three scholars are among the few published in the early 2000s, with relatively strong theoretical input and high academic standards.

On the other hand, the professional Chinese courses offered by certain universities have begun to demonstrate a closer link to the needs of the industries. For instance, as part of the new four-year curriculum, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University stipulates that students from all disciplines must take a discipline-specific (DS) language course in English and another one in Chinese, on top of two general language training courses. In the process of designing the Chinese DS courses, staff members from both the Chinese Language Centre and the various disciplines worked closely to co-develop the course content. Practitioners from the industry and professional bodies were interviewed to understand the industry's demand for language. More than 30 Chinese DS courses have been developed in 2017 while fine-tuning is still ongoing. The focus of training of these courses is put on the ability of students to summarize information, identify key points according to their importance, and the skills of organizing messages in meaningful order. The unit on written communication mainly teaches students how to compile thematic reports that fulfil genre-specific function and purpose. According to the relevant course documents (CLC 2015), students need to determine the content and structure of the report based on its function and purpose. However, when talking about language requirements, the course adopts a more traditional approach, only pointing out that the language of the special report needs to be accurate, concise, objective and normative but stops short of going further to explore the specific characteristics of such professional reports in terms of their lexical and grammatical features. After all, the teaching and learning of professional Chinese should focus on how the use of language helps to construct the professional knowledge, instead of an introduction of the professional knowledge per se. Since the above-named university seems to be the only tertiary institution that has gone so far as to develop a whole series of discipline-related teaching materials, it is fair to say that at present, the Hong Kong education sector still lacks sufficient understanding of and in-depth investigation into the teaching of CSP.

17.4   Concluding Remarks

The use of language is a kind of multiple-level social activity. When a person wants to convey a certain message to a specific addressee for fulfilment of certain purpose in a specific context, the language will have to be planned and adjusted by taking into consideration all such factors. In other words, the use of language is determined by factors including contexts, participants, purpose, and means of communication, on top of certain psychological factors which are not included in our present discussion. Such facts must be understood and mastered by those who study, use and teach language. In the past, the teaching and research on Chinese language education emphasized the cultivation of students' generic skills through in-depth study of selected classics and literary texts. Many people think that as long as a person's generic competence is high enough, he/she will be able to handle most communication tasks in various contexts across different professional fields. Therefore, it appeared to those people that there is no need for teaching or research on the application and use of written Chinese for practical purposes, resulting in a general negligence of CSP study in the Chinese territories. Such phenomenon has begun to change from the 1990s after the education authorities in Hong Kong have added elements of Chinese practical writing in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools and public examinations for school leavers. In addition, texts for specific purposes have become a major body of study for students of the school sector, although not necessarily under the name of "practical writing". At the tertiary level, even though the teaching of practical writings is quite common, the content and teaching approaches do not seem to be informed by up-to-date findings of academic research in rhetoric or genre-based syntactic studies. It is worth noticing that some universities have begun to offer professional Chinese courses that closely meet the needs of the industry. They have a more in-depth discussion of the context, objectives, functions, and structures of different professional registers, but the language features presented by the different registers are still insufficiently explored, and systematic research with theoretical underpinnings has yet to begin.

    As for the CSP teaching for second language learners, the main student body involved are EM students studying in mainstream local schools. A large percentage of them are unable to follow the Chinese language courses designed for native speakers. Some of them choose to take the Applied Learning (Chinese) course that started being offered in 2014/15. As the title tells, this programme has a strong application focus. It is closely tied to different professionals and the learning of various types of practical writings constitutes a major component of the programme content. It can be regarded as a typical CSP programme. Although the course providers still show little awareness of the importance of CSP research and practice, and it appears that there is still a long way to go for CSP teaching and research to generate more concrete output in the Hong Kong context, it is argued that study of practical writings in Hong Kong should be given more attention, not only because its scope is now largely extended to cover a variety of different texts used for specific purposes, but also because many such texts demonstrate linguistic features

unique to Hong Kong, such as different kinds of code-mixing, involving Chinese and English, classical and modern Chinese, Standard Chinese and vernacular Cantonese, etc. The convention, format and language use in many practical writings in Hong Kong, being a Chinese community greatly influenced by western practice in many aspects, have also shown characteristics different from those of other Chinese societies. Judging from this perspective, study of practical writings in Hong Kong carries special meaning and it is believed that the outcomes of the study would be able to contribute to CSP study in general in the years to come.

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