

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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## Book sheds light on writing styles in S'pore, China



At the launch event yesterday were (from left) Confucius Institute director Neo Peng Fu; Associate Professor Kou Hong, who wrote the book; Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat, who was guest of honour; Nanyang Technological University vice-president (alumni and advancement) Alan Chan; and Mr Cao Shihai, counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Singapore. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

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**Main differences in Chinese language usage in 2 countries involve sentence structure and vocabulary, says author**

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When using the Chinese language, Singaporeans tend to add a dash of English or a hint of dialect in their correspondence with Chinese businessmen or officials, and this can make their writing hard to understand.

To tackle such challenges and more, a book on applied writing in Chinese that compares writing styles in Singapore and China was launched yesterday at the National Library in Victoria Street.

The book's author, Associate Professor Kou Hong, a former visiting scholar at the National Institute of Education and the Confucius Institute in Nanyang Technological University, told The Straits Times that the biggest differences in the writing and communication styles of the two countries involve sentence structure and vocabulary.

"For Singapore, there is a mix of (translated) English expressions as well as influence from some dialects," she said in Mandarin after the book launch.

She is now a faculty member at the Shandong Police College in China, where she teaches applied writing to civil servants.

The book covers various categories of writing, including official letters, speeches, press releases, notices and agreements.

It serves as a guide for Singaporean government officials, professionals and businessmen who have to communicate formally with their Chinese counterparts, said the Confucius Institute, which published the book.

Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat, who was guest of honour at the event, said that the book can serve as a useful resource for Singaporeans who want to deepen their capabilities in the Chinese language.

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It costs \$20 and can be purchased at the Confucius Institute as well as selected bookstores, including Union Book Co and Maha Yu Yi in Bras Basah Complex.

Speaking to reporters after the launch, Mr Chee said: "Language is closely tied to culture, values and even the way we think."

While English is more commonly used here, young people should find opportunities to use their mother tongues, he added.

"It will make us a more diverse and resilient society, and also help us to better plug in to our region.

"If you have a good command of Chinese, for example, it will help you when you go to China, (or) when you interact with business leaders and friends from China.

"This will strengthen the bilateral cooperation between Singapore and China in the years to come."

Mr Chee had stressed at a dialogue during the book launch that the younger generation should be encouraged to use more Chinese in their daily lives.

"We must encourage the younger generation not to treat Chinese as just another examinable subject... In our daily lives, we must encourage them to speak (Mandarin) more," he said.