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中国·蚌埠

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# **Modern Ukrainian-Chinese dialogue: the influence of cultural differences on intercultural communication**

Liudmyla Horodniuk

## **Introduction**

The era of digitization, which humanity entered in the 21st century, brings people of different countries, continents and cultures even closer to each other. And thus, it requires mastering the means of modern intercultural communication. Ukraine and China have a great distance - physical, historical, cultural, they have numerous differences, but the strategic partnership of the countries, mutual respect of the people of the two countries, the desire of modern intellectuals to know more about the world, as well as specific joint projects - in trade and education, in science and culture , in traditional industry and high technologies, open up opportunities for us to better understand each other. All researchers boldly claim that the cultures of China and Ukraine have many common, but even more distinctive features. Differences prevail, there are many of them. First of all, these are worldviews and ethical ideas - how a person sees himself in the world, the society to which he belongs, his people, what he sees his purpose in, what he can afford and what he can't, how he has the right to behave, and how better don't behave Ukrainians have a completely different behavioral pattern than the Chinese. But differences, like any cultural diversity, are always interesting to understand and possible for a person who seeks dialogue and new intellectual and professional horizons. Therefore, a very careful attitude to them, a real effort to understand them and apply them in communicative experience, will help both countries and their citizens in cultural and educational exchanges. In this article, the author tried to reflect the main features of the modern dialogue between the Chinese who visited or lived in Ukraine and Ukrainians who became closer to China.

## **Official interstate cultural cooperation**

An agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the People's Republic of China on cultural cooperation was signed in October 1992, a year after Ukraine gained independence. So, our countries have been cooperating in the cultural field for more than 30 years. Taras Shevchenko is a great Ukrainian poet, artist and philosopher, a symbol of Ukrainian culture. In 2016, a landmark series of art exchanges took place between Ukraine and China. It culminated with the opening of the Taras Shevchenko Museum in Beijing in September 2016, the first institution of its kind to be funded fully by a foreign government and not the Ukrainian state or diaspora. This joint Chinese-Ukrainian initiative united the Chinese Academy of Painting and Calligraphy, the National Taras Shevchenko Museum and its fraternal organizations, and the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture of Ukraine, as well as both Embassies. It has challenged professionals and laymen alike to reconsider the symbolic and transformative role that Taras Shevchenko's work continues to play in Ukrainian society today. In 2017, the Cultural Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and the

Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China for 2018-2022 was signed. As part of this Program, in the fall of 2018, the Days of Ukrainian Culture in China were successfully held, which were solemnly opened by the then Minister of Culture of Ukraine Yevhen Nyschuk and the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, Luo Shugang. In the most prestigious architectural and artistic museum complex of China, Gugong ("Forbidden City" palace-museum), residents and guests of China were able to see the Exhibition of Cultural Monuments, Decorative and Applied Arts of Ukraine. The program of the Days of Ukrainian Culture included performances by the National Honored Academic People's Choir of Ukraine named after Verioivka, an exhibition of the works of the famous Ukrainian photo artist Volodymyr Kozyuk, and master classes on Petrykiv painting. The reports on the Days of Culture of Ukraine on the largest central TV channels of China, print and electronic media testified to the real great interest of the Chinese people in Ukrainian culture, art, traditions, history and tourism. In September 2021, the First Lady of Ukraine, Mrs. Olena Zelenska, took part in the online opening ceremony of the XI Beijing International Film Festival and gave a welcome speech as an honored guest. As part of the film festival, the wife of the President of Ukraine also opened the "Week of Ukrainian Cinema", the program of which presented the best masterpieces of Ukrainian poetic film art. On July 13, 2021 President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a phone conversation with President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping. The leaders exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of a strategic partnership between Ukraine and China and reaffirmed their mutual commitment to its development and deepening.

Ukraine's cooperation with the People's Republic of China in the field of education is one of the priority areas of bilateral relations. The main mechanism for its implementation at the intergovernmental level is the Subcommittee on Education Cooperation between Ukraine and the People's Republic of China, the fourth meeting of which was held on June 23, 2021 in Kyiv and Chernihiv, as well as in the cities of Beijing and Dalian in the format of a video conference. Ukrainian research centers have been established in 11 Chinese educational institutions in the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai (2), Dalian, Wuhan, Harbin (3), Xi'an and Zhejiang. Six Confucius Institutes operate in Ukraine. The Ukrainian language in the People's Republic of China is taught in seven educational institutions in the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Dalian, Hengshui, Xi'an and Wuhan.

#### **Ukrainians in China and Chinese in Ukraine**

In addition to significant events, there is a place for cultural communication in the everyday life of both countries. According to Chinese experts, as of 2022, 6,000 thousand Chinese citizens lived in Ukraine. Main location locations: major cities of Ukraine - Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Lviv. The Kharkiv and Odesa Chinese communities were considered the most numerous, and the Lviv community was considered the most active in cultural and social aspects. In Lviv, public figure Go Kai founded the International Public Organization "Cultural and Research Center of Ukraine and

China "Lanhwa", which developed the active life of the student community. It was even joined by citizens of Ukraine - those whose grandparents were Chinese, who feel Chinese blood in themselves and are proud of it. After the Russian invasion in 2023, the Chinese embassy in Ukraine evacuated a significant part of its citizens to their homeland, but, meanwhile, many remained and, together with the Ukrainian people, learn to live in new conditions every day and also experience the horrors of this war.

There is no Ukrainian community (diaspora) as an organized structure in the People's Republic of China. In general, these are people who came to China for the purpose of employment and study. Most of these people live in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as well as the Special Autonomous Region of Hong Kong. In Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Harbin and other large cities of the PRC, as well as in Hong Kong SAR, a number of Ukrainian associations have been formed, which do not have a formal structure and are not registered as organizations, but are voluntary associations aimed at solving current problems of their members, as well as to meet the national and patriotic needs of Ukrainian citizens.

#### **Common perceptions: what do Ukrainians know about China?**

As in the rest of the world, in Ukraine, almost everyone is at least familiar with the ancient arts of the Celestial Empire - feng shui, calligraphy, and the Chinese tea ceremony. In Ukraine, they understand the power of the Chinese tradition of tea drinking, that every stage, tea utensils, place and mood has an important meaning and meaning. The Chinese cherish their tea rituals and see tea as more than just a drink. Also in Ukraine, people are sincerely interested in the art of feng shui - there are whole schools where you can familiarize yourself with both the basic knowledge and the secrets of feng shui. Of course, Confucius, Lao Tzu and ancient Chinese philosophy in general are a mandatory and very important part of the course of philosophy, cultural studies and other humanities in any higher educational institution of Ukraine. Ukrainians (based on their own experience or based on ideas based on information) consider the Chinese to be incredibly hardworking, tenacious, persistent, purposeful people who achieve fantastic success in industry, IT technologies, technological inventions, in sports and show business thanks to, among other things and these properties. And we also perceive the Chinese as very educated, cultured, pleasant and constructive people who would never violate norms of behavior, promises, agreements, etc. The kindness and hospitality of the Chinese people are known to the whole world. Since 1999, the magazine "Ukraine-China" has been published in Ukraine, the Borys Kurtz Institute for the Study of Modern China has been operating, and the Ukrainian Association of China Studies is functioning. 2019 was declared the year of China in Ukraine. On November 5, 2020, the 14th International Scientific Conference "Chinese Civilization: Traditions and Modernity" was held in Kyiv, which was attended by 130 researchers, teachers, graduate students, master's students, and students. Thus, we try to know more about China. In order to introduce a unified state standard in Ukraine, scientists of the National Academy of Sciences have created an academic system of

transcribing Chinese words and proper names into Ukrainian. The system will ensure prevention of typos and errors when transferring Chinese surnames and names, geographical names, etc. This is of great importance for interstate Ukrainian-Chinese relations, it allows to exclude possible legal conflicts and disputes due to incorrect or inconsistent transcription. Equally important is the observance of a unified system of transcription during the teaching of the Chinese language in schools and higher educational institutions of Ukraine, as well as in scientific publications and mass media. The basis was the system created by I. K. Chirk (1922–2003), an outstanding Ukrainian translator and Chinese scholar who devoted more than 50 years of hard work to the development of Ukrainian Chinese studies.

### **The main differences**

One of the most important differences, according to those who have real experience of Ukrainian-Chinese communication, is a different idea about social behavior, about how a person should behave and realize himself in direct communication. Among the Han people, harmony and striving for the "golden mean" is one of the fundamental traditions. And the "golden mean" implies a certain restraint and appropriateness of emotions and their demonstration. The Chinese believe that the general social behavior depends on individual behavior, so they are not just restrained, but responsible for it. What they allow themselves to express in public. In this sense, Ukrainians are the actual opposite of the Chinese - cheerful, temperamental, noisy and frank. We do not hide the emotions that any stimuli and stimuli cause in us. If we are angry, everyone knows it. If we are happy, it is not a secret for others either. This does not mean that there are no reserved people among Ukrainians (of course, there are introverts, melancholic people, and just reserved people). They simply do not create a general picture of social behavior: in general, Ukrainians are emotional, expressive, temperamental, socially extremely active, they like to express their opinion on various occasions, boldly criticize what they do not like and express claims.

### **Chinese and Ukrainian - high-context cultures**

Chinese and Ukrainian cultures are high-context cultures, and this is always difficult for a representative of an alternative environment, a different language, a different type of thinking, different traditions, different expectations. High context culture is a term coined by anthropologist Edward Hall in 1976. In a high culture, some information remains unsaid, since all the necessary information is contained in the culture itself - in customs, in the manner of behavior, in the style of transmitting information. The meaning of the words themselves will not be enough for you to understand and comprehend the entire amount of information that they want to convey to you. You need to know all the background that you don't know. if you are not a carrier of culture. In this sense, low-context cultures (in which communicators are maximally specific, precise, straightforward at the verbal level) are more easily perceived by those who have little experience of communication in this environment. High-context cultures place a high value on interpersonal relationships, and group members form tightly knit communities.

## **Conclusions**

### **The power of intention and horizons of cooperation**

In any communication, the determining factor is the strength of intention. And it is imperative that the intention be respectful and creative. Ukraine and Ukrainians are open to business cooperation and cultural communication with the Chinese people. We are united by such important features as creativity and efficiency, the desire to develop ourselves and our states. Educational and cultural cases are among the most promising development projects. They are aimed at the mutual presentation of national cultural values through educational programs (international exchanges, master classes, competitions, Olympiads, public lectures, language courses) and appeal to the audience of the local elite intellectual club (scientists, teachers, public figures) and student youth. Such initiatives form effective communication platforms between Ukraine and China, between Europe and Asia.

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