

## **Filling the gap: the culture level integration between Britain and China**

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### **Abstract**

The multicultural society appear to us these days, is a controversial issue in many ways, of which shaking the foundation of Britain's society. One noticeable change is the migrants from every corner of the world, for example, the Commonwealth countries and the Polish migrant workers. It is however, the Chinese ethnic group in the UK society with which this research is concerned. People from other countries usually have their own language, culture, ideology and religion. How can this penetrate into the existing culture of Britain? Alternatively, can Britain's main stream absorb what the migrants have brought with them, as part of the culture? If not, is it possible to combining with the local culture to generate a derivative of UK's social main stream in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? This is a major issue for all concerned. Ultimately, it needs all involved as to generate a practical outcome, through the media, education system and possibly the intervention of the government.

Being a Chinese migrant, I have come across some areas of social issues, such as language, culture differences. Based on my experience, I have expressed some ideas about how to resolve these problems. The findings I have may help the others to be part of this community with much rapid progress. This article contains some constructive points that could be applied into the wider community in Scotland as an addition to the main stream approach of integrated multicultural society. It also contains the Chinese view of the existing social infrastructure, which may assist the local people to acknowledge the changing path of their own society. Eventually, the Britain's or Scotland's society will enter into a new multicultural and diverse page of future.

### **Introduction**

Chinese culture has a continuous and stable history over long period of time. It originated from the yellow soil highland area, growing and matured before spreading to the rest of china, mainly the northern China and the southern region from the Changjiang River. Although China suffered the military violation from the northern ethnic group, still was not able to sever the culture tie amount the people. Conversely, it was more likely to be defeated by culture force over a period of time. Even though, the Buddhism made inroads into Chinese society, making a great impact, still not breaking down the Chinese culture in any significant senses, as the Christian religion did in the western world being fundamental and lasting. The core and framework of Chinese culture has not been changed since then. Buddhism has not inspired a value shift, not even constructing a religion force which might surpass the imperial power, as what has happened in the west.

Differentiating from the western nations, in Chinese history, the concept of the law is ground in the immorality of human nature, which never changes. On the contrary, western law is based on the protection of majority, who are deemed to be good, from the actions of evil minority. As a result, the emperor has to introduce rules to control the society, make the people obey the rule, it needs law enforcement to govern the people following the rules, therefore, the administration created the law, which literally, in English, is 'law govern'.

The deeper connection between the two edges of Eurasia continent can only be achieved under the common understanding of cultural and historical commonalities. Better understanding between Europe and China is also necessary for both sides to take the full measure of what the two ancient civilizations can moving forward together. However, there is one doubt about China's intentions and it seems that China is still too unknown to be trusted, in diverse segments of Britain's society.

In a world, that is rapidly moving towards a predominantly technological and uniform system, language and culture are becoming increasingly crucial to defining a country, even an individual (Lin Yanqiong,2006:12). Therefore, in order to conclude the relationship between language and culture, it would be necessary to distinguish the definition of these two concepts. From the definitions of these two concepts, some facts that can be used to demonstrate a shiny point; a language both reflects the culture of its speakers and helps to construct their culture.

From the globalization perspective, it needs to be emphasized that the integration between the two nations in the various sectors, which would benefit us at the present, in terms of economic development. In the long run, much will be achieved at we can see at the moment, the co-operation in international affairs and the understanding of the order of the international community, which will only happen when there is a convergence at a culture level. Moreover, that is the contribution to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century new world which has so many segments within it, with the different culture coming along and conflicting each other.

#### **A diverse way of recognise the objective world**

The significant difference is the way of thinking among the two sides (Britain and China). After the publishing of Hegel's philosophy system, the distinguishing appeared stronger than ever in the west. Subsequently, the different ways of thinking result in several of behaviours. The culture difference between Britain and China, is that the Chinese put more focus on the "internal" factor, while the British would concentrate on the "external" factor, follow the rule of "opposite and unify" philosophy. Hence, the Chinese has a prosperous arts and social science, while the west (Britain) already has gone really far in the nature science field. It is a fact that, human being is part of the nature, not a group of creatures are in the opposition to the rest of the nature is finer and likely according with the order of the nature. This spot among the Chinese culture, however, which is the shining and reasonable concept close to the core of the objective world: The entire creature existing on the earth is internally connecting to each other, not just externally, with an order. It demands people's attention and thought on it, base upon the Chinese culture and experience.

There is another point which is different to the west, that is Chinese prefer to analyze things in a dynamic condition, while in the west, people are use to observing things in a static state. The Chinese

are good at considering things in a macrocosm with balance, and they don't distinguish the macrocosm from the microcosm, as those factors are connecting to each other, individual case has the benefit which can be applied to the general issues. On the other hand, the westerner tends to break down issues, with detailed analysis, use to understand the microcosm up to macrocosm. Furthermore, the Chinese cultures promoted the subtle apprehend rather than combating opponent aggressively, such as the skill of chess is relatively high, comparing to the westerner's sports capability. Chinese believe that a sports contest will never solve any key issues, thus they have not given it attention to date. They prefer to sit still, break through all the "QI" spot, and balance the inner strength to have longer and health life. Politically, the Chinese is aware of the collectivism comes first, and the collectivism is always more critical individual. Consequently, Chinese are tolerant and bearable of others, which contribute to teamwork, although it may cultivate egalitarianism. The westerner favours the venture and individual's success, regards benefits, hence the reason why the west step into the modern commercial civilization in next to no time, following the capitalism. The family to the Chinese brings a responsibility, however, for the westerner, it is expediency.

In a word, the Chinese way of thinking is solid, looking forward while looking back, achieving the success whereas looking on the failure, trying to learn a lesson from it, as the saying "the failure is the mother of the success". The westerner is always looking forward, not only rarely looking back but also seldom consider the blocking stumble, thus the western's way of thinking is linear, on the surface relatively to Chinese. This different way of thinking is not just because of the geographical or race distinction but also the different religious faith, or it could be explained as the different religion for the both sides, resulting in a different culture, thus we have different way of thinking.

### **The challenge of multiculturalism**

How shoaled the multiculturalism be dealt with? In recent years, the academic world has been promoting the diversity of culture. From the outset situation, it is recognized that human beings are diverse, which is matching the reality of the nature. In the developed countries, Encouraging multiculturalism represents respect for the human rights of the various races within the society. This issue is always tied up with the request of racial freedom. Thus, it is appropriate to raise this issue. As with most genuine questions, multiculturalism has its own constraints. Go too far at this point, it will lead to problems.

Firstly, when considering modern society, during the social development, the validity of multiculturalism is mainly accommodated in non-institutional culture area. If, particularly in the constitutional area, there is not enough emphasis about keeping the nationality character. That will generate the excuse for refusing the evolution, along with the unexpected stop down to the people and the nation. Currently, many eastern countries are still struggling to evolve. This is because they cannot release themselves from shackles of tradition. As well as, they are not willing to accept the genuine institutional culture.

Secondly, The Multiculturalism should not be used as an excuse to emasculate the genuine core value. The culture's core is the value notion; the modern culture's value is the individual's value; the citizen's right of freedom. The genuine institutional culture (democracy, law enforcement, constitution, etc) surrounding the citizen's freedom with the incessant protection to achieve the validity. Consequently, it moves on to the modern culture's core value. Hence, it can be recognized that almost every nation or country's successful modernization has been strongly connected to what extent, they absorb this core value.

If there is acceptance of those two boundaries above, the stumbling block, acknowledged in culture discussion of tradition and modern, will be removed. The academic field is quite passionate about finding the truth of freedom and democracy. Some scholars have approved the Chinese has its own advantage to cure the 'disease' within the western society, plus the west experts are fairly supportive about this point, thus it has been a new wave towards the highlight the nationalism character.

### **The transformations from Chinese nationalism into inter Chinese-Western culture**

Nationalism is a mentality concept; through it, it is possible to create an outlook, which, for example, grand on the Chinese thinking core. As Zhi Yuan mentioned in his 'Chinese nationalism's origin, development and destiny', the highest achievement of Chinese nationalism is that "it can inspire an enormous group of nationalists based on the China's current reality, and driven by the goal of accomplishing a prosperous and powerful China. In addition, those nationalist can have an overview of how to merge the two finest culture together. Returning to nationalism, it has not always been constructive force in the integration the two cultures. Nationalism is merely the exterior part of an appearance; it demands an imposed driven source to enrich our nationality and to have a solution which base on the institution and the culture. Furthermore this kind of solution is the essential route for the integration of western and Chinese culture.

It seems that the nationalism's internal flaws are being exposed, followed by the discussion of the nationalism. Some have raised the issue that of the exact considered nationalism. The possible answer to this will be the nationalism containing the inter china-west culture has to be the mature Chinese nationalism. And it will be a definite route for Britain to rethink the current multicultural argument. At the meantime, whether it's inspiring to a new national separateness, as we stick on the nationalism, this is countable. Thus It would be ideal that driving the pure nationalism into the inter china-west culture.

### **Alternative ways between uniformity and fragmentation**

It is a paradox that despite a long obsession for an immutable order-unity under the emperor mainly served by an ideology, orthodox Confucianism, and an obedient bureaucracy- China could well be prepared to act as a co-architect of a multipolar world. Western "Orientalism" reflects China's imperial vision of itself: a timeless pyramidal socio-political construction occupying the centre of the world. This "Orientalism", vulgar of sophisticated, is still one of the sources of the "China threat" refrain. Indeed, a re-emerging "central kingdom" - translation of the Chinese zhong guo, where the

notion of “kingdom” is not even obvious- would logically strive to gain a position of dominant centrality (David Gosset, 2006).

In that sense, the concern is just a consequence of a prejudiced primary assumption. One should stop to admit in vague representation such as the one behind the alleged quotation attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte: “When China awakes the world will tremble.” Is there thing we call threats to the west? China is, in fact, able to construct universalism, which is already partly accommodated in its own internal rule of unity with diverse character.

The system has been able for long period of time to structure the Chinese world, which has not diminished the Chinese history in it, and we should also notice to phases whose characteristic was to balance unity and diversity. If China has suffered in the past from totalitarian uniformity or the chaos of internecine fights, it also made the experience of a wide range of political configurations between these two extremes.

It is in that context that American analyst and academic Kendal Myers (Johns Hopkins University, Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies) is right to affirm: “China, like Europe, has had its own universal system, for the most part within China.” As a consequence, China has developed its own classical theories.

### **China: the Europe of the Far East?**

China, with population of 1.3 billion, is physically almost as large as Europe and much bigger than the European Union 25. These basic elements introduce us to the scale and variety of the Chinese world. Conventionally, one speaks of 56 ethnic groups composing China’s gigantic human mosaic. If the Han group, being itself much less uniform than it seems, makes more than 90% of the total population, one has to keep in mind that other minorities represent in total more than 100 million people. In such a context, it is vital to balance the legitimate need for unity with the richness of diversity. Indeed, in the struggle to safeguard the unity of the nationalities, it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and also necessary to combat local-national chauvinism.” (David Gosset, 2006) Returning to Europe (Britain), this kind of double simultaneous task would be familiar for the officials that countering the big-nation chauvinism and local chauvinism. On the one hand, Beijing has to make sure that the Han large majority does not involve in the pitfalls of exclusive nationalism within the Chinese world. Meanwhile, stay in alert of the trap of separatism.

This might be expressed as the Han group having to avoid the imperial temptations whereas China’s various elements still exist that does not reproduce the Western nation-state infrastructure. It seems like that China is well equipped to find middle ways between uniformity and fragmentation. Generally, constant progress in minorities’ participation into the socio-economic life of the autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia) will help to achieve the goal; the minority group has the power influence central government with the protection from constitution. By doing that, China is going to prove not only that it can have prosperous material achievement, but also it manages a high level of multiculturalism.

## **A Consideration of the connection between language and culture**

In a world, that is rapidly moving towards a predominantly technological and uniform system, language and culture are becoming increasingly crucial to defining a country, even an individual. Thus, before looking closely at the relationship between language and culture, it would be essential to clarify the definition of these two concepts.

According to Zdenek(2004:49)

The term language, as we have already seen, refers to the complex of universally human potentialities for vocal communication or, simply, to the gift of speech. By contrast, a language refers to any one of the several thousand systems of oral communication used by different human societies.

Another theory of language developed by Howard, Bourhis and Taylor (1977:89) is that "language is a tool man uses to encapsulate thoughts, symbols, and emotion". These two theories both specify that language is a way of communicating which equipped by symbolic representation. The culture and society contents have been enclosed in the language form; passing down from one generation to another, assisting a better communication between people.

Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, & Jones(2001:1) have defined culture as an Integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts , communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.

Is language the only part of how people define culture? From the content above, which indicate that language also reflects the culture as a component. Hence, it is commonly believed that language and culture could not be dealt with, separately. As well as, the culture associated with a language cannot be learnt in a few lessons about celebrations, folk songs, or customs of the area in which the language is spoken.

From the definition of these two concepts, some evidence can be found that the relationship between language and culture is a particularly rich area of exploration; a language both reflects the culture of its speakers and assists which dedicated to construct their culture. As Henry(2000q:30) points out

Whatever knowledge we acquire, it is always acquired through language and culture, two interlocked symbolic systems considered essential for human interaction and survival. Culture and language are so intricately intertwined that even trained scholars find it impossible to decide where language ends and begins or which one of the two impacts the other the most.

From his statement, it is very clear that language and culture could not develop without each other. Without language, culture would be virtually non-existent, as certain words or emotions can only be conveyed in certain languages; for example, the translation of a Chinese film's name and dialogue sometimes cannot express the original meaning. Take as an example the famous film, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon". The original meaning of this movie's name is that there are some excellent and impressive masters within the community, who prefer live on a low key life. The same holds true for language, as it is often impossible to translate texts while retaining the same literary and emotional connotations the original version enclosed, because certain words or the inferred meaning only exist in those original language.

According to Chee & Harris statement (1993:166) "Language is an essential element of culture for it reflects its nature and values". The subject of language-culture relationship was also prominent in the work of khambata & Ajami (1992:257) who claim that Communication and language are closely related to culture because each culture reflects what the society values in its language. Culture determines to a large extent the use of spoken language.

Furthermore, the number of language one knows also reflects on the level of cultural awareness one has. "The more language one knows, the more likely it is he/she will have a deeper sense of the various cultures that exist in the world" (Li, 2002:101).

Additionally, by learning a new language, it could possibly opens up a whole new culture. A foreign language gives people access to another culture, and humans' lives take on a brand new dimension. The great German poet, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, said in 1827: "whoever is not acquainted with foreign languages knows nothing of his own."(In Matussek, 2003:2) Seen like that, learning a language is almost comparable to a journey of discovery. Conversely, to lose a language is losing a whole culture.

### **Conclusion**

It is essential that Culture integration plays a role as the foundation of the Brit-China relationship. While trade, economic or political interests gather the most tension, culture is what can maintain the connection between Britain and China.

Ignoring this supporting element the Brit-China Bridge can easily collapse. Seeking a common ground while reserving the differences between the two sides, it is time for the two old worlds to join their strengths and wisdoms to open a more cooperative page of history. Hence, within the Britain's society, it can be promoted as main stream to influence and acknowledge the people, in order to reach a goal of diverse and multicultural community, as the existing benefit there. Furthermore, encouraging people to learn a foreign language would be an option to achieve this goal.

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