

Intercultural Understanding Guide: Chinese Culture

Geographic context:

- China, officially known as the People's Republic of China is located in East Asia.

Languages:

- Mandarin is the official language of Mainland China.
- Some regions speak Cantonese mainly, for example the Guangdong Province.
- There are also approximately 300 other dialects spoken across different regions in China.

Religion:

- China is officially an atheist state.
- While nearly half of the population is unaffiliated, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and Islam are practiced by many as well.
- For Chinese people, most religious practices are tied with everyday culture norms.

Values:

- Confucianism is a guiding philosophy within Chinese society.
- Within the social hierarchy, a person's position, occupation and level of education are essential to their status.
- The idea of 'face' is important for Chinese people, which is a concept of social reputation, honour and a representation of oneself. To lose face is to be less respected. An example could be dressing well at a family dinner with relatives to demonstrate a person is living a quality life, therefore earning face (social reputation) from relatives.

Social norms/structure/hierarchy:

- China has one of the most collectivist cultures in the world.
- Economic growth and increased financial independence is giving rise to more individualistic attitudes.
- There is an emphasis on social unity and harmony.

Communication style:

- The Chinese rely heavily on indirect communication.
- They rely less on words and are more attentive to posture, expression and tone of voice to draw meaning. The purpose is maintaining harmony and preventing the loss of 'face'.

Demographics in Australia:

- As one of the largest immigrant groups in Australia, there are 549,618 Chinese currently living in Australia. There are also 1,390,619 Australians who have Chinese ancestry according to the 2021 Australian Census.

