

УДК 81'42:070:811.161.2

Стаття надійшла до редакції [Article received] – 15.02.2025 р.

Фінансування [Financing] – самофінансування [self-financing]

Перевірено на плагіат [Checked for plagiarism] – 17.02.2025 р.

Оригінальність тексту [The originality of the text] – 92 %

<http://doi.org/10.17721/2663-6530.2025.47.14>

COMMUNICATIVE-DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES OF CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF CHINA IN THE UKRAINIAN INFORMATION SPACE

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The article examines communicative-discursive strategies for forming China's image in the Ukrainian information space, which are based on genre-discursive and linguopragmatic approaches that allow systematizing genre-specific features of information presentation and identifying rhetorical techniques and communicative strategies characteristic of news agencies, analytical editions, economic and socio-political media, as well as social platforms, including Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, and Medium, which ensures the multidimensionality of media discourse research and contributes to identifying their influence on the formation of the country's international image. The study employs methods of discourse analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis, which enable distinguishing dominant rhetorical techniques and genre characteristics of information presentation that shape an ambivalent perception of China's image in the Ukrainian information space, confirming the multifaceted nature of media positioning approaches for international actors.

Keywords: China, communicative-discursive strategies, communicative tactics, Ukrainian media, media discourse, linguopragmatic approach, media representation, information space.

(Current issues in linguistic communications [Aktual'ni pytannja komunikatyvnoi' lingvistyky])

Communicative-Discursive Strategies of Constructing the Image of China in the Ukrainian Information Space

(in English) [Komunikatyvno-dyskursyvni stratehii stvorennia obrazu Kytaiu v ukrainskomu informatsiynomu prostori]

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КОМУНІКАТИВНО-ДИСКУРСИВНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ СТВОРЕННЯ ОБРАЗУ КИТАЮ В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОМУ ПРОСТОРИ

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У статті розглянуто комунікативно-дискурсивні стратегії формування образу Китаю в українському інформаційному просторі, що базується на жанрово-дискурсивному та лінгвопрагматичному підходах, які дозволяють систематизувати жанрові особливості подачі інформації та виявити риторичні прийоми і комунікативні стратегії, характерні для новинних агентств, аналітичних видань, економічних та суспільно-політичних ЗМІ, а також соціальних платформ, зокрема Facebook, Telegram, YouTube та Medium, що забезпечує багатовимірність дослідження медійних дискурсів та сприяє виявленню їх впливу на формування міжнародного іміджу країни. У процесі дослідження використано методи дискурс-аналізу, контент-аналізу та порівняльного аналізу, що дозволило виокремити домінантні риторичні прийоми та жанрові характеристики подачі інформації, які формують амбівалентне сприйняття образу Китаю в українському інформаційному просторі, підтверджуючи багатогранність підходів до медійного позиціонування міжнародних акторів.

Ключові слова: *Китай, комунікативно-дискурсивні стратегії, комунікативні тактики, українські ЗМІ, медіадискурс, лінгвопрагматичний підхід, медіарепрезентація, інформаційний простір.*

The modern information space not only transmits political, economic, and sociocultural events on a global scale but also serves as a tool for instrumentalizing public discourse through the implementation of genre-stylistic and linguo-pragmatic strategies aimed at shaping public perceptions of certain countries, political processes, and international actors. This approach corresponds to the contemporary theory of discourse analysis, which emphasizes the role of linguistic strategies in shaping social reality [1; 2]. In particular, the use of genre-stylistic and linguo-pragmatic strategies is an important tool for influencing the perception of international events and political

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processes [3]. The relevance of systematic analysis of media discourse is determined by the ability of the media not only to inform but also to shape communicative strategies of explicit and implicit influence on the audience [4].

The relevance of the study is driven by the growing role of China in global politics and economics, which affects the shift in the geopolitical balance of power and necessitates a critical analysis of media discourses used to represent the country in Ukrainian mass media, as the media is not only a means of disseminating information but also a tool for shaping public perception, which may include both objective analysis of international processes and elements of manipulative influence realized through specific framing of information presentation, lexical choices, communicative strategies of explicit or implicit influence, ultimately determining the overall picture of China's positioning in the Ukrainian information space.

News agencies such as *Укрінформ* and *РБК-Україна* are characterized by a factual presentation of information, which is manifested in the focus on official statements, statistical indicators, and a neutral tone of presentation. However, even within the framework of a neutral style, it is possible to trace indirect informational influence realized through thematic accents, the placement of quotes, visual material design, the choice of experts commenting on the event, as well as the use of headlines that can not only inform but also shape a primary impression regarding events related to Sino-Ukrainian relations, which is characteristic of media discourse analysis where the media's ability to shape social realities through presentation and framing is essential [1; 2].

For example, in a news piece by *Укрінформ* about China's official policy regarding the ecological transition, the intention to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 is emphasized without a detailed analysis of potential risks and challenges, creating an impression of predictability and strategic stability of the country's environmental policy [7].

At the same time, in a piece by *РБК-Україна* covering a joint US-China statement on combating climate change, a direct factual presentation is used without expert commentary on the implications of this initiative for the global economy, which, on the one hand, supports informational neutrality, while on the other hand, indirectly contributes to the legitimization of China's diplomatic initiatives on the international

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stage [8], which corresponds to the strategy of informational influence in international relations [2].

Meanwhile, analytical media, such as *Дзеркало тижня* and *Європейська правда*, demonstrate a tendency towards deep and multi-level analysis of international politics, using a wide range of argumentative practices, including historical analogies, expert assessments, predictive models of situation development, and critical reflections on political and economic processes, enabling variability in interpreting China as an international actor and creating the basis for constructing informational frames that may emphasize both the potential of strategic partnership and the threats to regional stability or the prospects of economic cooperation between states.

One example of such an approach is an analytical article by *Дзеркало тижня*, which explores how China adapted its foreign trade strategy in response to the introduction of new tariffs by the United States [9], demonstrating both readiness for compromise negotiations and the ability to maneuver economically and form new strategic alliances within global trade, aligning with theoretical models of international politics where states use economic tools to strengthen their positions in the global market [3].

In another article by the same publication, the potential threat to global trade routes due to possible escalation of tensions between the US and China is analyzed, as Beijing views the Panama Canal as one of the key logistical hubs that could be used as a geopolitical leverage in case of a conflict situation in relations with Washington [10], which corresponds to the theory of international relations where logistical and trade routes are used as instruments of strategic influence on global politics [2].

The publication *Європейська правда* also pays attention to the dynamics of Sino-European relations, particularly highlighting the precedent of Beijing imposing sanctions against representatives of European state institutions [11], which is an unprecedented step signaling a change in the geopolitical paradigm wherein China positions itself as an independent regulator of international processes and gradually accumulates tools of diplomatic pressure, characteristic of concepts of diplomacy and international relations where countries use economic and political levers to strengthen their positions on the global stage [2].

Moreover, the publications of this edition consider the issue of Chinese investments in Eastern European countries, which emerges as one of the most controversial aspects of China's economic interaction with the region, as analysts point

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to the ambivalent nature of such investments, which, on the one hand, contribute to the development of infrastructure and production capacities, but on the other hand, may serve as an instrument of economic influence, requiring a balanced approach to strategic planning of further cooperation with China [12], which confirms the concept of using investments as an instrument of influence in international relations [3].

Economic media such as *Мінфін* and *Економічна правда* cover relations between Ukraine and China using specialized terminology and conceptual metaphors, including “*економічна експансія*”, “*глобальний ринок*”, “*фінансовий центр*”, and others, which not only record financial and trade processes but also shape the image of China as a dominant player in the global economy, simultaneously acting as both a potential investor and a competitor that poses challenges to Ukraine’s economic stability. For example, in an article by *Економічна правда* [13], the global expansion of Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer BYD, which raised 5.6 billion dollars to expand its presence in international markets, is analyzed, highlighting China’s ambitions to strengthen its positions in high-tech sectors of the global economy, which aligns with the concept of economic influence through investments and strategic maneuvers in international relations [2].

In a piece by *Мінфін*, the internal economic challenges of China are examined, particularly the increase in debt to a record 287.8 % of GDP in 2023, raising potential risks for the global economy, given China’s tight integration into global financial systems [14], enabling Chinese institutions to influence financial processes worldwide. This is why China is often referred to as “*фінансовий центр*”, as its economic problems have a significant impact on global financial markets and the stability of the world economy.

Furthermore, *Економічна правда* publishes materials that focus on Chinese subsidies for electric vehicle production [15], emphasizing China’s growing influence on the global electric vehicle market, reinforcing its role as a powerful economic actor on the international stage, where China becomes an important supplier and player capable of altering the competitive environment in global markets.

Conversely, socio-political media, such as *Лівий берег* and *Главком*, employ political frames to represent China, combining both diplomatic aspects of cooperation and security issues, forming China’s image through the prism of its relations with other international actors, defining its position in global geopolitical conflicts, and analyzing

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military-political strategy. For instance, in an article by *Лівий берег*, China is characterized as “світова потужність” [16], symbolizing China’s dominance on the international stage, and as “спритний гравець на полі світової політики” [Там само], highlighting China’s flexibility and strategic endurance in interstate relations, corresponding to theoretical approaches regarding power strategies in international relations through manipulation of images and discourses in political processes [2].

Meanwhile, *Главком* uses the metaphor “Китай як хижак, потенційна здобич”, emphasizing China’s strategic approach to other states, particularly to Ukraine, which may become “жертвою” by succumbing to economic pressure and investments that lead to dependence on China. In this context, China is portrayed as “токсини у вигляді привабливих інвестпроектів” [17], illustrating Chinese investments that initially seem beneficial but may cause strategic dependence of the country on China. Such strategies also correspond to concepts of *м’яка сила* and *жорстка сила*, developed within the context of international politics and manipulation through economic tools [5].

The metaphor “м’яка сила” describes China’s strategies through the use of soft influence tools such as economic and cultural initiatives [17], allowing it to strengthen its positions in Ukraine and other countries, highlighting China’s use of strategic influence through the economy, media, and other soft mechanisms that make it possible to shape the political course of countries without resorting to open aggression.

Official state media of Ukraine, such as *Голос України* and *Урядовий кур’єр*, use various metaphors to convey the complexity and scale of Chinese policy, emphasizing its cultural and economic influence on the international stage. In the publications of *Голос України* [18], China is often depicted through the metaphor “Великий шовковий шлях як міст між культурами”, symbolizing its role as a connecting element between East and West, emphasizing not only trade but also cultural and ideological interaction, as well as through the metaphor “моноліт нації”, indicating China’s historical unity, which, in reality, is a multiethnic society capable of integrating various ethnic groups. Moreover, the use of the metaphor “підтримка буддизму” emphasizes the strategic approach of Chinese leaders to supporting this religion [18], which is an important element in building internal unity and geopolitical influence of China in the East and on the international arena, corresponding to strategies of geopolitical influence through cultural instruments [5].

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On the other hand, *Урядовий кур'єр* uses metaphors to emphasize China's neutral position in the context of military conflicts, particularly through the metaphor "*цан-відбувайло*", which symbolizes China's refusal to accept accusations and emphasizes its desire to avoid being labeled as guilty, as well as through the metaphor "*позиція Китаю справедлива й об'єктивна*", demonstrating its orientation toward adherence to legal norms and a neutral role in conflict resolution. Moreover, the expression "*діалог та переговори як єдиний правильний шлях*" indicates China's strategic choice to support peace through constructive dialogue, demonstrating its willingness to make diplomatic efforts to resolve international crises. The metaphor "*архітектура європейської безпеки*" is used to emphasize the need to build a stable security system in Europe through diplomatic processes and mutual negotiations [19], which is an important element in China's foreign policy aimed at peace and stability, in line with the concept of *м'яка сила* in global international strategies [5].

Ukrainian social media and digital platforms, such as *Facebook*, *Telegram*, *YouTube*, *Medium*, and *LiveJournal*, serve as important communicative spaces where the image of China is formed through the combination of emotionally charged vocabulary, symbolic concepts, and metaphorical constructions, simultaneously representing both its economic and cultural power and its controversial role in global politics, creating a multidimensional discourse that influences public perception. This aligns with van Dijk's research on the media's impact on public perception and the formation of state images [2].

In the digital information environment, Ukrainian social media reflect the ambiguity of attitudes towards China, combining positive narratives about its economic growth, technological leadership, and cultural expansion with critical discourses focusing on issues of geopolitical influence, potential threats of economic dominance, and strategic maneuvering in international relations. This, in turn, underlines the diversity and variability of media coverage of China in the Ukrainian digital space, corresponding to theoretical approaches to the formation of social representations through media and communication platforms in the context of information wars [6].

For instance, a significant portion of communicative materials on *Facebook* and *Telegram* contains the metaphor "*економічний гігант*", emphasizing China's powerful economic impact on global processes, as well as the metaphor "*дракон*", symbolizing the strength, dynamism, and strategic prudence of Chinese policy. At the

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same time, it may evoke associations with a potential threat to the world order [20], which corresponds to the concepts of global influence through cultural and economic images in the media [6].

In blogs on *Medium* and *LiveJournal*, China is often portrayed through the image of “*Велика Китайська стіна*” [21], which acts as a symbol of isolationism and China’s desire to preserve its uniqueness, while the metaphor “*Китай як Конфуцій*” emphasizes traditional wisdom and philosophical foundations that influence the country’s modern political strategy, reflecting strategies of cultural diplomacy and the use of cultural images in forming the international image of the state [5].

On the *YouTube* platform, particularly in video analytics about Chinese diplomacy, the metaphor “*боргова пастка*” is widespread, characterizing China’s external investment policy as a way to gain control over other states through economic dependence, supplemented by the critical frame “*економічний хижак*”, indicating the aggressive expansion of Chinese corporations in the global market [22]. This reflects the use of economic instruments for strategic manipulation of global markets within the framework of the “*жорстка сила*” concept in international relations [5].

In social networks like *Instagram*, a positive frame “*Китай як центр культури та спадщини*” [23] is used, implemented through hashtags #ChinaInFocus and #ChineseCulture, forming the impression of the country as a center of ancient traditions, cultural influence, and tourist attractiveness, contributing to the spread of its positive image in the international space. This is part of the strategy of cultural diplomacy, actively used by states to enhance their own image on the international stage [5].

Thus, a comprehensive analysis showed that Ukrainian media demonstrate significant diversity in representing China’s image, depending on the genre and stylistic features of different media platforms. In particular, news agencies tend to present factual narratives focusing on official statements and statistical indicators, creating a neutral and objective image of China, while analytical publications apply a critical approach using historical analogies, expert assessments, and predictive models, contributing to the creation of a complex multi-layered discourse. Socio-political media build discourse through rhetorical techniques and symbolic images that emphasize geopolitical aspects and potential threats, while economic publications use conceptual metaphors and specialized terminology to characterize China’s economic expansion and its role in the global market, forming an ambivalent perception of the country’s international image and demonstrating the contrast of approaches to forming media discourse.

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(Актуальні питання комунікативної лінгвістики [Aktual'ni pytannja komunikatyvnoi' lingvistyky])
Комунікативно-дискурсивні стратегії створення образу Китаю в українському інформаційному просторі
 (Англійською) [Komunikatyvno-dyskursyvnii stratehii stvorennia obrazu Kytaiu v ukrainskomu informatsynomu
 prostori]

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PROBLEMS OF SEMANTICS, PRAGMATICS AND COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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Communicative-Discursive Strategies of Constructing the Image of China in the Ukrainian Information Space
 (in English) [Komunikatyvno-dyskursyvnii stratehii stvorennia obrazu Kitaiu v ukrainskomu informatsiynomu prostori]

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