

## Cultural Differences between Chinese and the Western in Daily Life

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**Abstract:** Language is the Carrier and Main Form of Culture. Chinese Culture is a Broad and Profound Complex System, Including Harmony and Moderation, the Sense of God and Man, the Value of Justice over Profit, Patriotism and So on. in Relation to a Person and a Member of a Social Group and Belonging to the Derivative, While Ignoring That a Person is an Independent Individual. Emphasize Human Social Personality, Despise Human Independent Personality. the Core of Han Culture is Collectivism. in Sharp Contrast, the British and American Countries Have Always Been Dominated by Individualism. as the Fundamental of the Society, People Cannot Sacrifice Personal Interests to Fulfill Social Interests. No One Can Interfere with an Individual's Behavior as Long as It Does Not Harm Others and the Society. Personal Property is Sacrosanct. as for the Relationship between People, British and American Countries Stress the Inherent Human Rights of Humanitarianism and Believe That All People Are Born Free and Equal. It Can Be Seen That the Values and World Outlook of Chinese and Western Culture Are Quite Different.

### 1. Introduction

With the Development of Cross-Cultural Communication, Cultural Integration and Infiltration Affect People's Life. Language and Culture Depend on Each Other and Influence Each Other. Language is an Important Carrier of Culture. the Word Culture is Widely Used and People's Understanding of Culture Varies. in a Broad Sense, Culture Refers to the Sum of Material and Spiritual Wealth Created by Human Beings in the Process of Social Practice. in the Narrow Sense, Culture Refers to Social Ideology and Corresponding System and Organization. Sometimes It Refers to Science, Literature, Art, Education and Other Aspects of Spiritual Wealth. Linguist Edward Sapir Put Forward That Culture is the Sum of What a Society Does and Thinks. Some Scholars Have Divided Culture into Two Types: One Includes Art, Music, Literature, Architecture, Philosophy, Science and Technology and Other Fields Reflecting Human Civilization; the Other Includes Human Life Style, Behavior Habits, Social Organization, Customs and Habits. Language Plays a Decisive Role in Human Activities and is Indispensable in Human Social Life. Modern Linguistics Derives from Two Traditions: Linguistic Tradition and Anthropological Tradition. the Tradition of Philology Starts from Comparative Linguistics and Historical Linguistics and Analyzes and Compares Languages through the Study of Literary Works and Written Documents. in the 19th Century, Philologists Laid a Foundation for the Study of Modern Linguistics, Which Gradually Developed into Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar and Bloomfield's Structuralism [1]. the Linguistic Tradition Emphasizes the Natural Nature of Language, Regarding Language as a Closed, Independent System and an Independent Marginal Science Covering the Humanities and Natural Sciences. Anthropology Refers to the Traditional of Using the Method of Anthropology to Study Language Since the Beginning of the 20th Century without Writing System and Traditional Text. Human Linguists Bao, and the Hypothesis Emphasizes the Social Nature of Language. It is Believed That Language and Host Language is Inseparable from the Social Environment, They Argue That Research in the Social and Cultural Environment of Human Life Language. the Natural and Social Attributes of Linguistics Require People to Examine the Communicative Process of Language from the Perspective of Culture. in the Process of Language Communication, People Are Not Only Involved in Language Communication, But Also Closely Related and Dependent Cultural System.

Scholars Differ in Their Views on the Close Relationship between Language and Culture.

Humboldt, a German Linguist, First Proposed Linguistic Determinism, Believing That Language Determines Thinking, Culture and World Outlook. Later, Anthropologist Despair's Student Wolf Developed This Theory into Linguistic Relevance Theory. for Wolf, Language is Everything. Language and Culture Are Mutually Restricted and Related, and Inseparable. on the One Hand, Language is an Important Part of Culture, Reflecting Cultural Characteristics and Conveying Cultural Information. on the Other Hand, Culture is the Carrier of Language. Human's Long History and Rich Culture Have Been Recorded by Language and Passed Down Till Now.

## **2. The Differences between Chinese and Western Languages and Cultures in Daily Life**

With the rapid development of globalization and economy, communication and exchanges among countries have become increasingly frequent. Language communication is the premise and foundation of understanding a country's culture. The understanding of a country's national culture enriches language learning [2]. To understand and compare the differences between Chinese and western languages, cultures is especially important for English learners whose native language is Chinese. Human's daily life is inseparable from language communication and communication, and culture records the rich life of human beings. In daily life, human beings are more likely to feel the differences between Chinese and western languages and cultures.

### **2.1 The Difference of Address**

Appellation in English. Mr., Mrs. And Miss are often used in formal situations in English. Use Sir and Madam or Ma'am if you don't know your last name. People in British and American families often ask each other to call them by their first name. When they first meet to introduce themselves, they ask for their first name. For example, I'm William Holland. But please call me Bill. Not only do close friends call them by their first names, but so do people of all ages. Children can also call adults by their names. My Australian friend HediTrask. Her nephew calls her Hedi. I think this is very impolite in China, so I suggest he call her Aunt Hedi. So did the children of her neighbors back home. We eventually respected her habit of calling her Hedi. It is still inappropriate to match the name in a formal situation or in a situation where the two parties are in great disparity. How a particular person should be addressed must take into account his occupation, position, age, relationship, situation, as well as his personal interests and habits.

Appellation in Chinese. China has the opposite habit. People of the same age or close friends may call them by their first name, while younger generations must address their elders with a title, such as aunt wang. Similarly, Chinese people can address people by title, such as brother-in-law. In English, people do not use "brother-in-law" as a title, but call them by their first name. In China, the title is used when addressing the senior to the junior, such as director Liu. Sometimes it is polite to address people with professional names, such as "teacher Chen". It is rare to hear people addressed by title or occupation in English. Only a few professions or occupations can be addressed, such as Doctor or Doctor with a Doctor's degree. Mr., Miss, etc. In Chinese, there are "comrade" and "master" to address strangers.

Appellation of relatives in Chinese has some features that English does not have. In English, brother is "brother" or "brother" and sister is "sister" or "sister". The word "uncle" in English is equivalent to an uncle. In our Chinese culture, we pay attention to the order of age, strictly distinguishing "elder brother" from "younger brother", "elder sister" from "younger sister". It also values paternity, matrimony or marriage. Our family according to the blood line far and near to distinguish close and close, the family has inside and outside the division of the blood. In the family, the first branch is the wife's eldest son. Collateral for ordinary, "concubines" (born). Relatives of a mother, sister, or daughter in the bloodline are "outside relatives," such as grandfathers, nephews, and grandsons. There is no such specific title in English [3]. The daughter of a sister or brother in Chinese USES the word niece. A son of a sister or brother is a nephew. Cousins in the mother's family and Cousins in the father's family all use the word cousin in English. The title of children and grandchildren is described in detail in China. The son of a grandchild is called a great-grandchild, and the son of a great-grandchild is a great-grandchild. Great - grandson and in

English

Great - great - grandson. The son of my great-grandson is Lai sun.

## **2.2 The Difference of Meeting Language**

There are many greetings in English. For example, “Good morning!” “Morning!” “Good day!” It's all very wishing. There are fewer in Chinese. A common greeting is “have you eaten?” “Where are you going?” Or use the other person's name or address “manager wang!” Now many Chinese also use “hello! Say hello.

Some words in English do not correspond perfectly. Neutral greetings in English such as “Hi!” It is difficult to find the corresponding word in Chinese. People use “hi! The Chinese equivalent of “hello” is not as clear as the latter.

Some face expressions in Chinese are rare in English. Some face expressions in Chinese are less common in English, so they are often misunderstood by westerners. “Did you eat?” “Where are you going?” In Chinese you can use salutation as a form of greeting. They're actually the equivalent of “Hi!”. People don't usually say this in English. “Have you eaten? If you haven't, I'll treat you to dinner.” “Where you going?” It's personal. Westerners have a strong concept of personal privacy. Use salutation instead of greeting. See teacher call 1 “teacher!” You can call your peers by their first names when you meet them. Juniors can also be addressed to elders. You can't use salutation instead of greeting in English. If you say “Tom! Tom will definitely answer “yes”. What's the matter? Tom thinks he is wanted.

Another common way to greet someone in Chinese is to ask them what they are doing. Meet someone on the street and say “go to work!” You can say “buy food! This greeting is common in China, where people seem to know what's going on. Context-related greetings play an important role in public places, places of residence, places of work and other occasions.

## **2.3 The Difference of Making Friends**

Generally speaking, British people are more reserved, introverted, polite and don't show their feelings freely. Americans are open-minded, hospitable, social and open to new things. If two Americans met on a certain occasion, they will talk more speculative even they are friends. American friendships are close, continuous, and intense, but it will disappear when circumstances change. After a few years of separation, they will write Christmas Cards, but the relationship will break finally over time. Western friends respect each other, help each other and treat each other honestly. They do not ask about each other's privacy or interfere in each other's private affairs. The economics of friends are clear. Chinese people are more cautious in making friends [4]. The friendship between friends is established gradually through mutual understanding. Feelings between friends do not divide each other, in order to friend can sacrifice their own interests. Friends depend on each other and have certain obligations to each other. Once people become friends, they tend to last a lifetime, and some develop into family friends between two families.

## **2.4 The Difference of Time Concept**

Westerners have a strong sense of time and tend to arrange things in advance, under which condition, they work and live in a planned way. They always make an appointment in advance, like seeing doctor. Visits that without appointment tend to interrupt other people's plans, which are considered to be impolite and may be turned down. Chinese people don't have the habit of making appointment, they contact and meet whenever they want and convenient.

## **2.5 The Difference of Hospitality and Table Manners**

When a guest comes to visit in China, the host warmly invites the guest to sit down and immediately pour tea and serve fruit. Regardless of whether the guest drinks or not, the host keeps adding water. After the western guest has sat down for a while, the host asks for advice: “Would you like some tea or coffee?” If the guest refuses again and again, the host will not insist on pouring water for the guest. After the first glass of water was finished, the host asked the guest again, “Would you like some more?” If the guest doesn't, the host will stop pouring the water. Drink up the

water in the cup. Westerners think it is a waste not to drink all the water. The quality and quantity of food at Chinese banquets are related to the status of the guests. The host set the best dishes before the guests. It is to let a guest eat more not only, more main is the hospitable that shows host and assiduous. During dinner, people talk to each other. If a banquet is given at home, the hostess usually accompanies the guests to eat for a while and then goes into the kitchen to be busy. The amount of food was so large that the guests could not finish it. During the dinner the host urged the guests to drink. Rich western food in the west generally only five or six dishes, appetizers, soup, side dishes, main courses (meat), dessert, coffee, portion to be able to eat the best [5]. If it is a family dinner and the guests eat all the dishes, the housewife will be very happy and think that the guests like her cooking very much. When the table is seated, the host and hostess are seated at each end of the table, and the most distinguished guest is seated on the right-hand side of the host and hostess. The hostess came to the table and began to eat. At dinner each person brings food to a large plate in front of him. Don't make a big noise when you eat, don't have food in your mouth when you talk, don't bite big pieces of food with your mouth, cut them with a knife, and then put them into your mouth with a fork. You can't lift a plate by eating soup with a spoon. The tableware of western-style food is complicated, different food uses different knife and fork. There was no interceding. Before and after the banquet, a variety of wines and beverages are usually prepared. Wine is the main variety, and there are a lot of rules about which wine to drink. At the end of the banquet the guests left the table and the host took out all kinds of sweet liquor for the guests to choose.

### **3. Learning about the Differences between Chinese Culture and Western Culture from “Gift”**

#### **3.1 Gift Characteristics of Chinese**

Although the specific situation of the eastern countries is different, there are many similarities in gift giving.

Form over content. If present Oriental gifts, famous brand goods and handicrafts with national characteristics can be regarded as the best choice. For them, the intellectual and artistic aspects of the gift often outweigh the practical. This point, the Japanese in the gift communication performance is particularly obvious.

Reciprocity. In the eyes of Oriental, reciprocity is the most basic courtesy. It is beneath one's dignity to come and not to be seen, whenever and wherever one is. What's more, when giving gifts in return, the form and content of the gift should be worked hard to show respect to others.

The gift giving should pay attention to specific directivity. Oriental usually pay more attention to the choice of gift object. Giving gifts to old people and children, no much to consider as long as the gift make others happy, but if the gift given to some people with special identity, we should make sure if the gift appropriate or not. There are many taboos in different countries, like gift number, color, pattern and so on. For example, in Japan, Korea and so on 9, 7, 5, 3 odd Numbers and 108 and so on are quite popular, especially to “9” and “9” multiple preference (but the Japanese do not like 9), but to “4” word taboo quite deep.

#### **3.2 Characteristics of Gifts from Western Countries**

Western countries are not as particular about the choice and preference of gifts as eastern countries. Usually, the gifts are colorful.

Practical content plus beautiful form. For westerners, a bouquet of flowers, a bottle of good wine, a box of chocolates and even a trip to the countryside are all good gifts. Plus, beautiful form, of course, is the best.

Gift sharing. In western countries, the recipient can usually open the package in front of the giver to express his appreciation of the content of the gift and share the joy of the gift together.

Timing. To avoid the suspicion of bribery, westerners usually prefer to present their gifts at the end of social activities.

Fewer taboos. With the exception of the disastrous 13th and Friday and special occasions such as

funerals, most western countries have relatively few taboos.

### 3.3 Main Reasons for the Differences

Culture is like an invisible hand controlling and dominating our life. The different customs of giving gifts reflect the cultural differences between the east and the west. Oriental culture has a long history, extensive and profound; Western culture is full of ups and downs and charm. The custom of presenting gifts in eastern and western countries is not only the embodiment of the cultural background, but also included in the cultural category itself [6]. To fully explain the above phenomenon, cultural factors are too complex and extensive. Here, I will only analyze the three main aspects.

#### (1) Historical reasons

There are many ancient civilizations with a long history in the east. Take China as an example. In the long feudal period, people attached importance to the “three cardinal principles” and the “Wuchang”, and social relations were characterized by human nature. Thus, a flexible philosophy and way of doing things based on the human touch conform to the characteristics of this kind of interpersonal relationship. Giving gifts has become an important way to achieve this goal. It can be seen that gift exchange is a social behavior that has existed in early human society and continues to this day. From the worship and worship of gods, to the peaceful co-existence of tribal countries, to the normal maintenance of human relations in secular life and the easy transmission of special meanings between men and women, gifts have conveyed various contents and meanings in different times and societies.

The history of the west is full of twists and turns, as well as democracy. For example, in the United States, which has a history of only 200 years, people from different cultural backgrounds moved there many years ago. They got rid of the inherent life pattern and etiquette norms, and survived and flourished in an uncultivated land, forming an independent, pragmatic and efficient life attitude. Americans show a more casual and freer attitude when it comes to giving gifts, but their seriousness about gift packaging reflects respect for people.

#### (2) National spirit and way of thinking

Eastern countries have a strong sense of patriotic cohesion, and pay attention to collective cooperation; Western countries have the spirit of adventure and pioneering, attach importance to personal struggle and self-reliance. In terms of national character and temperament, eastern culture is self-modest, reserved and introverted, and stresses “face culture”. Western culture is confident, competitive and adventurous, and thrifty. Oriental people think that the world is complete and harmonious, and they pay attention to the general and macroscopic aspects, which is a kind of integrated and comprehensive thinking. Westerners believe that the world is fragmented, and they like to see problems from a micro perspective, belonging to analytical thinking. Oriental thinking is rigorous, while western thinking is novel.

When receiving gifts from others, Chinese people like to say such euphemisms as “you are too polite” and “I am sorry to make you spend so much money”, but westerners do not.

#### (3) Religion and philosophy

Eastern religious concept is relatively weak, and religion has not formed a complete theoretical system, relatively loose. Westerners are more heavily dominated by religion. For example, Islam has a relatively strict rule on women's dressing. In their country, do not give any articles related to human figures or images of women [7]. In our daily international communication, the religious beliefs and taboos of different countries in the east and the west should be paid special attention.

Oriental lay particular stress on time and personal cultivation. Westerners lay stress on space and personal struggle. For example, when giving gifts, Chinese people like to pay attention to connotation and taste, while Americans are relatively casual.

#### (4) Habits and customs

Due to the differences in geographical environment and social development process, the customs and habits with national characteristics have been formed in the eastern and western countries. We should have enough understanding in the process of international communication. Chinese people

are accustomed to giving gifts of cigarettes and liquor. In Japan, liquor is allowed but not cigarettes. In China, for example, you can't give clocks to older people. "Farewell" sound with "farewell", unlucky. You can't send a comb in Japan because it sounds like death.

To sum up, communication reserve in language alone is obviously not enough for communication activities in eastern and western countries [8]. In order to make people with different cultural backgrounds communicate more smoothly, we must master the cultural knowledge of different countries. Just as the behavior of giving gifts, behind it hides such a rich cultural connotation. With the increase of international exchanges, the cultural differences between the eastern and western countries must be paid enough attention to.

#### **4. Summary**

From the above examples in daily life, we can clearly feel the existence of cultural differences between China and the west in daily life. These differences have brought inconvenience and even misunderstanding to the communication between people of different countries. Only when we have a good command of the differences between the two languages can we have a better understanding of other countries and our own language and have the flexibility to communicate in English.

Language is like a mirror of culture, reflecting the unique cultural characteristics of different nations and countries. When learning the English language, we should understand the particularity of the culture of western countries. By comparing and understanding the cultural differences between China and western countries in daily life, we can learn English on the basis of comparison and use English correctly so as to achieve the purpose of effective communication.

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