

# Language Differences between Chinese and Western Cultures

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**Abstract:** Although the general culture has the same basic elements and structure, but different cultural systems have their own different emphasis and the basic spiritual connotation. Culture is the basis of language, language is the carrier of culture, reflecting the culture. The national language behind any culture has kinship terms. Kinship appellation is not only a common language phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon, reflecting the cultural spirit and values of different nationalities. This paper will mainly from the perspective of Chinese and English appellation in Chinese and Western languages to explain and compare the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and analyze the reasons.

**Keywords:** Chinese and Western Cultural; Language; Appellation.

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## 1. Introduction

Human culture has the same content elements and basic structure. But specific to different nationalities, different regions of different cultural systems. Have their own emphasis and characteristics. On the different characteristics of Chinese and western cultures. It has been summarized and discussed by many scholars. Among them, Zhang Dainian summed up the basic thought of Chinese culture into four elements, namely, vigorous and promising, harmony with China, worship of morality and utilization, and coordination between heaven and man. Xu Xingyan summarized the basic spirit of Chinese and Western cultures from four aspects. He summed up to the west is characterized by scientific spirit, individualism, worship force is still fighting and open. China is characterized by humanistic traditions, group identity, moderation, peace and introversion. Chinese and western cultures show different characteristics because of the differences in geographical environment, production mode, political system, historical development and thinking mode: Chinese culture is more humanistic, introverted, collective and local; western culture is more religious, extraverted, individual and expansive.

Language not only expresses people's thoughts, but also can convey cultural connotation. Under the influence of different geographical environment, historical process, national culture and other factors, languages will have different differences, and their main differences will be reflected in vocabulary. The appellation is a kind of appellation that reflects the identity and role of an individual in a particular interpersonal relationship in human society. Appellation can reflect the social attributes and values of both parties in communication, which are closely related to the society, culture and ideas to which they belong. From the use of appellation, we can see the role identity, the relationship between the two sides of communication, emotional likes and dislikes, etc. Because of the difference between the ethics of Chinese traditional culture and the values of western society, there are obvious differences in many address forms between Chinese and English.

## 2. Difference of Hierarchy

Western culture has always advocated that everyone is equal, while the traditional Chinese culture has a hierarchy, which pays great attention to hierarchy. In Chinese culture, there are differences between young and old, between the old and the young, and between the old and the young. Britain and the United States and other western countries pay more attention to personal interests and rights, emphasizing that everyone is equal before God. The American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Human Rights both reflect the essential identity of society towards human equality. This cultural difference has caused the difference between Chinese and western appellation. Influenced by the cultural differences between China and the West, Chinese kinship terms have obvious traces of hierarchy. Among them, Chinese kinship terms can be roughly divided into clan relatives, foreign relatives and in-laws. These appellation, not only his birthright of brothers and sisters have to distinguish between the name. Generally speaking, the relationship between the clan and the external relatives is different, which is manifested in the appellation of "grandfather" and "grandpa," "grandmother" and "grandma." However, there is no such classification in English kinship terms, and the appellation is much simpler than that in Chinese. For example, brother includes brother and younger brother, uncle includes uncle, uncle, uncle. Children of similar ages are generally called each other by their first names, unlike in our country, where siblings cannot call each other by their names, but must call each other brother or sister. The idea of equality in Western culture also explains the fact that in some Western countries, such as the United States, children refer to their elders by their first names, sometimes even to their parents. For example, in China, people of higher rank should be addressed by their positions, such as "Director Su," rather than by their full names; for people of lower rank, they can be addressed by their full names, or by names such as "Lao Wu" or "Xiao Li." In some western countries such as Britain and the United States, westerners generally to the superior or no relatives elders can use Mr., Mrs., Or you can call them by their first names. In the west, in addition to the relationship between the two families are very close to the elders in the family can be called uncle aunt, but usually do not call, not

the habit of western English-speaking countries.

In China, since ancient times, people's daily life has been in use with the blood kinship system, that is, the patriarchal clan system. It is a kind of consanguineous kinship system that contains both true divine power and monarchical power accumulated in thousands of years of history of Chinese society. It is a family system based on the paternal blood relationship of each family and centering on the paternalistic system with obvious grades to determine the generational relationship of relatives in the family. It is a family system that clearly defines the status, rights and obligations and behavior norms of each person in the whole family by seriously distinguishing the relationship between consanguinity and affinity, and between clan and external clan. It is the core system that maintains and embodies the patriarchal clan culture of Chinese family. This hierarchical patriarchal clan system has resulted in a variety of Chinese kinship terms and complex system. For example, according to seniority, they can be divided into parents, uncles and peers; peers can be divided into older sisters, older brothers and younger brothers according to age; and they can be divided into paternal and maternal lines according to blood relationship. Women in the paternal line are called aunts, and women in the maternal line are called aunts. At the same time, according to blood relationship, it can be divided into direct blood relationship or collateral blood relationship, such as grandson, grandnephew, according to age, there are uncle, uncle and other titles; according to blood relationship or in-laws, there are brother, sister-in-law, sister, brother-in-law and other kinship titles. Brothers and sisters in a Chinese family are usually addressed by their birthright, such as elder sister, second brother, third brother, etc. However, the civilization in western countries has been open from the beginning due to the particularity of geographical environment. As Renaissance and Industrial Revolution took the lead in western countries and western countries entered industrialized society earlier, western countries took the lead in forming a very perfect bourgeois social system. In this kind of social system, the core of people's thought is freedom, equality and fraternity. Under the guidance of the thought of freedom, equality and fraternity, families with blood relationship and even family members are economically independent of each other. In addition, the members live very loosely, and the family members do not pay attention to the hierarchical dependence relationship between each other, and the concept of kinship is weak. Therefore, in western English-speaking countries, the appellation form of blood relatives and in-laws is relatively simple, there is no difference between inside and outside the primary and secondary, also do not distinguish between men and women. For example, a sister and a sister are both "sisters." The word "grandmother" can be used to refer to either grandmother or grandmother. The word "cousin" could includes sister and cousin.

### 3. Difference of Value

Since ancient times, China has a very collectivist values, value interpersonal relationship and peace. The Chinese believe that every member of society should fulfill the corresponding social rights and social obligations according to his social status. This kind of collectivist values and derived social behavior norms reflected on the address, resulting in China's rich and colorful social address. In social communication, there is a code of conduct, namely "modesty" and "respect," which makes Chinese people accustomed to

use honorific terms to others in interpersonal communication, while using humble terms to themselves, such as "humble" and "next," and calling themselves "father," "family kindness," "family brother," "son of a dog," etc.; and "father," "mother," etc. In western countries, due to the influence of religion, westerners don't value interpersonal relationship, people in the value orientation are mainly individualism. Westerners advocate freedom and competition, be particular about equality, like self-expression, value personal interests, advocate self-independence, family blood concept. It is this kind of individualistic values that makes westerners seldom use humble names in communication, and the appellation used is also very simple. For example, when addressing a person as a respectful name, the common forms are "Mr.," "Miss," "Sir," "Madam," etc. In general, "Mr.," "Mrs.," and "Miss" can be used with a surname or a first name.

Chinese culture emphasizes collectivism, emphasizing the sociality of individuals and others or in groups. Collectivism in Chinese culture pays attention to interpersonal harmony, and forms the concept of collectivism in China. Western culture is more emphasis on individualism, the individual as the starting point of social reality, that everyone is self-centered, everyone is the only one. This cultural difference is reflected in the kinship terms such as elders and younger generation when talking to the third person, often used "your uncle," "your sister Lin," "my child his father," etc., while westerners tend to direct name. In English, the word "I" must be capitalized, and other people can be lowercase, which clearly shows that "I" occupies a more important position. In the English kinship appellation system, there is no special appellation for the second generation of blood relatives, but the grand is added in front of the father/mother and son/daughter respectively. Reflected in the social address, Chinese social address and the appellation of the status, identity, occupation, title and other social identity between the people there are a variety of connections. In general social occasions people used to often add the corresponding professional after the surname, such as xu teacher, Zhu Dafu, accounting. There are some industry titles, such as director zhang, Qian Shuji, manager sun, etc., such as professor wu, He Gong, etc. In English, only a few people, such as professors, physicians, doctors, priests, and so on, are addressed with a title after the surname when they need to be addressed politely. In English, professional titles such as Teacher Black are not commonly used to address the other party.

### 4. Difference of Blood Relationship

Chinese traditional culture emphasizes blood clan relationship, while the concept of blood relationship of English nationality is weak. In modern Chinese, there are far more kinship terms than in English, such as "cousin, cousin" in Chinese, which is only a general term of "cousin" in English. The differences in the proportion of kinship terms between Chinese and English address systems show the differences in the importance attached to family structure and consanguinity between China and English-speaking countries. In Chinese, the use of kinship terms that indicate the beauty of consanguinity can make the relationship between the appellation person and the appellation person seem closer. In order to show the etiquette and kindness between people, Chinese people often use kinship terms to refer to people who are not related by blood. Neighborhood, for example, although there is no relatives or relatives, but people always

like to according to gender and age, respectively, call each other for a big ye, uncle, grandma, aunt, eldest brother, elder sister, etc. Or in the call each other in each other's name and a relative said nutrient-laden, such as building uncle, xiaomei elder sister, etc. Westerners don't pay much attention to blood relationship, not heavy family, more is to pursue individualism, children grew up very independent, grow up more inclined to separate from their parents. British and American people will never use uncle or aunt to address their parents 'close friends or visitors, nor will they use kinship terms to express their close feelings for non-relatives.

## 5. Enlightenment

Because Chinese and English are rooted in different cultural soil, they are endowed with different values and cultural connotations. Language is an important part of culture and expression form, is the carrier of culture, no language can be separated from the specific culture and independent existence. As a part of language vocabulary, appellation directly reflects one of the most important components of social structure, which can best reflect a nation's profound historical and cultural accumulation and its development and changes. The complicated appellation system in China and the West can well reflect the profound cultural deposits and the development process of languages and characters in China and the West, as well as the various differences between Chinese and Western cultures. A good understanding of different cultures in the address, to better understand the hidden behind the different cultural connotations, so we should make in-depth understanding of Chinese and Western address, while understanding the cultural differences behind the differences in address, so as to be more harmonious in the future interpersonal communication. Through the specific introduction and

examples of address forms in Chinese and western languages, we can better understand the differences between Chinese and western cultures and nationalities in values, cultural concepts, blood concepts and other aspects behind the language, help us better understand the language expression of the culture we have learned, understand the hidden connotation behind it, and better understand the different cultural spirits between China and the West.

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