

The Pragmatic Features and Functions of Chinese Daily
Language in English-Chinese Cross-Cultural Communication

英汉跨文化交际中的 汉语日常语用

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Preface

With the global economic integration process is speeding up, China, as one of the major developing countries with fascinating culture and potential development opportunities, attract more and more overseas students to learn Chinese, more and more business men to develop their career in China.

These comers to China are not only learners of Chinese language but also disseminators of Chinese culture. Their description of China and Chinese culture has definite authority and influence, and the effect of their description is even stronger than their motherland's official propaganda. They also have a significant impact on the relations between their own country and China, and play a vital role in establishing Chinese international image and fusing China

and the world.

Most learners of Chinese begin to learn it from the basis of language. During their course of learning and working, they do feel richness and variety of Chinese language; however, due to the cross-cultural pragmatic failures in daily communication, they have difficulties in cultural exchange and dissemination.

We all know that language and culture are not fundamentally separable. Culture refers to the total pattern of beliefs, customs, institutions, objects, and techniques that characterize the life of a human community (Deng, Liu, 1989). This means, it includes not only material things as cities, organizations and schools, but also non-material things such as ideas, customs, family patterns, knowledge, belief, art, law, ethics, customs etc. Language is an important carrier of culture and reflects the people's attitudes, beliefs, world outlooks, etc.

Now, more and more teachers and researchers have recognized the importance of cultural differences in learning Chinese, and think that the overseas learners of Chinese should have cross-cultural communication awareness. Only after understanding the daily pragmatic differences in the cross-cultural communication between English and Chinese, can they successfully solve the communication conflicts

caused by different customs, ways of thinking and psychological characteristics in their daily life and the process of learning and working.

Just like learning English, learning Chinese well means more than merely mastering the pronunciation and tones, grammar, Chinese characters and idioms. It also means learning to see the world as native Chinese speakers see it, learning the ways in which the Chinese language reflects ideas, customs, and the behavior of society. So learning Chinese is inseparable from learning its culture.

So in this book, the authors shall attempt to briefly study some Chinese cultural phenomena which differ from that in English (British in fact). There are many such differences and we shall focus on only those language involving daily life, such as addressing form, greeting, compliment, acknowledgements, invitation, refusal, apology, request, taboos, euphemism, color terms, animal terms and plant terms. In every aspect, the authors not only analyze the pragmatic features and functions of them in Chinese but also highlight the cultural differences carried by them that exist in cross-cultural communication between English and Chinese.

This book is intended for overseas students studying Chinese in China, teachers with Chinese as

a foreign language, for interpreters and translators; that is, for people who have frequent contact with native Chinese speakers, or who must use Chinese frequently. The author just intends to help these people better understand Chinese cultures to avoid communication errors or displeasures.

This book consists of thirteen chapters, the first six chapters written by Shi Xiuzhen and the rest written by Qu Ping. Shi Xiuzhen is responsible for the whole book. During the process of writing, the authors make references to some relevant research data, and so take this opportunity to extend the sincere acknowledgements. Because the limited capacity, there are inevitably inadequacies urging readers to give criticized correct.

Shi Xiuzhen Qu Ping
Dec.2012.

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Chapter 1

Address Forms

It is very natural for people to greet each other when they meet, but for the people who learn or use Chinese as a foreign language, the Chinese complicated address terms and appellations will make them confused, and even if they have learned them by heart, some amusing things would occur sometimes.

The Chinese address forms (称呼语) and appellations (称谓语) are different concepts but they are in close relation. The appellation is the name that people use to introduce the person to others, indicating the various social relations and social role played by the person. The address forms refer to the names that people use to greet each other, indicating the relationship between them. According to Modern Chinese Dictionary, appellations are derived from the words that indicate the relationships between relatives or other social relationships involving people's status, occupations etc. The address forms are the names that used by people to personally greet each other and represent the relationship among them.

Dai Zhaoming said: "The appellation is a form of addressing

that reflects the specific person's role and identity in the specific interpersonal relationships in the human society. This kind of address form always reflects the relationship between persons in a certain socio-cultural or particular language environment." The cultural implication contained in the address forms is reflected not only between the family members and in the social relations of the family, but also in the relations among various industries.

1. The Complex Family Address Forms

In English, the address forms for family members and other relatives are very simple when they meet and greet each other, for example, grandfather, niece and nephew. There are only differences about seniority and gender in English, but in Chinese address forms are far more complex than the ones in English.

1.1. The Address Terms between Husband and Wife

There have been a lot of changes about the address terms between husband and wife since ancient time in China, but “丈夫/妻子” is the most common in mandarin Chinese. It is only used to show the relationship between them on more formal occasions instead of addressing each other. In modern Chinese society, because of the cultural values of modern society and equality between men and women, couples can address their names each other.

The address terms between couples changes with ages. Young couples often use name-address. The address term between husband and wife is the more simple the more intimate. If the couple are

young, they often use popular address; if they are middle-aged, they address the nicknames of the full names (family name plus surname); and if they are old, lots of them address their spouse with the family name plus “old” (in Chinese: 老), for example: “老李”, “老王”. In recent years, the address term of “husband” (老公), “wife” (老婆) is increasingly common. Originally, “husband” (老公) and “wife” (老婆) are the address terms that a married couple use to call each other. Today, most of the young persons who fall in love like calling each other “husband” (老公) and “wife” (老婆), which shows that the background of using “husband” (老公) and “wife” (老婆) and the association of marital status have been reduced.

In some rural areas, the couples are too shy to call their mates' names. Before they have children, they just use “hey”, “hello” and the like words; after they have children, they call each other “孩子爹/妈(娘)” or “他(她)爹/妈(娘)” or “xx他(她)爹/妈(娘)”. When the husband introduces his spouse to others, he often uses “my wife”, “my child's mother”, “Xi Fu”, “the woman in my house” and so on (in Chinese: “老婆”, “我们家那口子”, “我掌柜的”, “我当家的”, “我屋里的”, “孩儿他妈”, “婆娘”, “媳妇”). When they are face-to-face, they just call each other “hey” “hello” (哎), or use an interjection plus what he would say, such as “Hey, I say!”, to attract the other's attention; Or they can call the other with their child's name. As for the address for the husband, there are “the head of my family”, “husband” (老公), “xx's father”, “lover”, “my husband” and etc (in Chinese: “当家的”, “老公”,

“孩子他爸”，“爱人”，“先生”，“丈夫”）。But there is a difference in the occasions that these words apply to; some of them are used for the formal occasions, while others are for informal.

Among the above addresses, “爱人” has its particularity. It originated from the English word “love” or “lover” and its meaning is Valentine, so in other countries, husband and wife do not use “lover” to call each other. But in China, “lover” (爱人) means spouse, referring to a husband or wife.

“爱人” first appeared in Chinese literature in the 1920s, but it became an address term between the husband and wife in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. In the beginning of the 1950s, this word became very popular in the New China and soon replaced other addresses between the couples, showing that “爱人” has a strong vitality which is the consequence of the social change as well as the psychological changes caused by the social change. The New China, as Socialist society, is a new social, in which people are willing to advocate and accept new things, and such new words as “爱人” can easily get a foothold. Moreover, the marriage relationship in New China was considered to be a new kind of conjugal relation which required new word to reflect. Compared with the arranged marriage, this new kind of conjugal relationship was in “love” and there was no gender difference and sex discrimination; therefore, it just met the psychological needs of equality between men and women, and equality between spouses. This is the reason that “爱人” is popular and is still used today.

In addition, some wives are used to calling their own husbands

as “my old man”(我老头儿) and also like addressing “your old man” or “her old man”(你老头儿, 她老头儿) when they talk about someone else’s husbands. As we all know, the “old man” originally means the aged men (mostly with intimate meaning) and later it refers specifically to the husband of a woman. The word of “old” means “elderly” and is commonly used as the honorific title, which is related to the habit of respecting the aged in China.

1.2. The Address Terms among Relatives

Chinese have experienced long-term patriarchal culture and hierarchical feudal society; as a result, the address terms among relatives are more complex than the English ones. There is not only the generational distinction but the differences in age and gender. The address terms extends from the single family to others. When the people with the same surname get together, they always distinguish generations and seniority to establish some kind of kinship, deepening feelings and interrelationships.

1.2.1 The Address Terms for the Eldership (grandparents and parents)

In order to clearly illustrate the address terms for the grandparents, let’s clarify the terms for parents and their relatives. Firstly, it divides into two categories: father’s and mother’s side. For the father’s side, his elder brothers are addressed as “Da Bo”, “Er Bo”(大伯, 二伯) and etc; father’s younger brothers are called as “Shu Shu” “Er Shu”(叔叔, 二叔) and etc. And their respective spouses are called as “Bo Mu” and “Shen Shen”(伯母, 婶婶). Father’s sisters are called as “Da Gu”, “Er Gu”(大姑, 二

姑)and etc.,and their spouses are called “Gu Fu”(姑父). For the mother’s side,her brothers are called as “Da Jiu”, “Er Jiu”(大舅, 二舅) according to seniority;and her sisters are called “Da Yi Ma”, “San Yi Ma”(大姨妈, 三姨妈) and etc.,and their spouses are addressed as “Jiu Ma” and “Yi Fu”(舅妈, 姨夫).When it comes to the parents of father,mother should use the same terms – “mother and father” to call them(公公,婆婆);while father can call the parents of mother “Yue Fu”, “Yue Mu”(岳父,岳母).Now with the introduction of the one-child policy,father comes to address mother’s parents as like his own.

Chinese address terms for grandparents are more complex than those for the parents’.Firstly,it distinguishes between the paternal and the maternal;secondly,it distinguishes between the old and the young. For the paternal grandparents,children call them “grandpa and grandma”(爷爷, 奶奶),if the grandpa has brothers,they and their spouses are called “great grandpa and grandma”(大爷爷,大奶奶), “second grandpa and grandma”(二爷爷, 二奶奶) according to the age. As for the grandpa’s sisters and their husbands,they are called “Gu Nai Nai”(姑奶奶) and “Gu Ye Ye”(姑爷爷)with seniority ranking. As for Grandpa’s cousins,the terms are the same but plus “Tang”(堂).

When it comes to the maternal grandparents,children call them “Wai Gong and Wai Po”(外公, 外婆)in Chinese. The address terms for the grandparents’ brothers are almost as same as the ones to the paternal grandparents,but “Jiu”(舅) will be added, for example,Wai Gong’s third brother is called “San Jiu Ye”(三

舅爷);while their sisters and husbands are called “Yi Nai Nai and Yi Ye Ye”(姨奶奶, 姨爷爷).All these terms should follow the rank and age,not freely to be used.

1.2.2 The Address Terms for the Same Generation Relatives

In Chinese,the same generation relatives include immediate family members and cousins. Firstly,the terms to the immediate family members are to be discussed. These terms distinguish between young and old,men and women,and give prominence to the marriage relationship. Generally speaking,when one calls his immediate family members the relative salutations should be used. It distinguishes between the seniority ranking and the gender,for example: “ elder sister/ brother”(大姐/哥), “the third young brother”(三弟), “the forth young sister”(四妹). And their spouses should be respectively called as “the elder brother/ sister-in-law”(大姐夫/大嫂), “the third young sister-in-law”(三弟妹) and “the forth young brother-in-law”(四妹夫)according to seniority ranking. In the marriage relationship,the husband calls his wife’s brother “Da / Xiao Jiu Zi”(大/小舅子)and her sisters are called “Da/ Xiao Yi Zi”(大/小姨子);while the wife calls her husband’s brothers “Da Bai zi (大伯子)”-the elder brother, “Xiao Shu Zi”(小叔子)-the young brother and his sisters are called “ Da / Xiao Gu Zi”(大小姑子).Of course,there is also the seniority ranking.

Secondly,the terms to the cousins are to be discussed. The address terms to the cousins in Chinese are more complex that they are in English. There are not only the differences between young

and old, man and woman, marriage relationship but also between the maternal and the paternal. From the blood relations, the paternal relatives are more intimate than the maternal ones because the paternal relatives have the same family name and have the same ancestry. For example, father's brother's children can be called "Tang Ge/ Sao" (堂哥/嫂), "Tang Di/ Tang Di Mei" (堂弟/堂弟妹) etc. Here "Tang" means they live in the same house and have the same ancestry. The children of father's sisters' are called "Biao Ge/ Sao" (表哥/嫂), "Biao Di/ Tang Di Mei" (表弟/表弟妹) etc.. "Biao", here means outsiders with the different family name. Similarly, all the children of mother's brothers' and sisters' are all called "Biao Ge/Sao" (表哥/嫂) and so on. In China, the patriarchal concepts dominate the family; thereof, there goes the saying "a married girl is like the water poured out".

1.2.3. The Terms for Younger Relatives

The terms for younger relatives mainly distinguish between marriage and relationships of closeness. In the immediate family, there are son/ daughter-in-law, daughter/ son-in-law. Children of his brothers and sisters are called niece/nephew (侄儿, 侄女, 外甥, 外甥女) and their spouses are called niece/nephew-in-law (侄媳妇, 侄女婿, 外甥媳妇, 外甥女婿).

As for the terms for grandchildren, there are differences on male and female, son's side and daughter's side. For the son's children, they are called grandson/ granddaughter (孙子/女), but for the daughter's children, they are called "outside grandson/ granddaughter (外孙/女), because according to the Chinese

tradition, a married daughter and her children belong to other family with another surname.

2.A Variety of Social Titles

Social titles are used in the social situations among the persons without kinship and they can be divided into the common social titles, the professional titles and the name titles. Different kinds of social titles have different social functions. Social titles are featured by the times and changes with the significant changes in the social structure; as a result, they can reflect the development and changing process of politics, economy and culture of an era. When people who do not have the kinship choose the salutation, they pay more attention to the social status, identity characteristics and intimacy in different situations. Even in the face of the same person, the salutation will change according to the different time, situation and environment. This change fully reflects the complex interpersonal relationships of human society, the living structures as well as cultural background and value orientation.

2.1 The Common Social Titles

The common social titles have a wide range of applications, not rigidly adhering to a particular object or social situations. The common social titles in the modern Chinese include “comrades, master, and teacher, Mr., Mrs., Ms. and Miss” (同志, 师傅, 老师, 先生, 太太, 女士, 小姐). Since they are widely used in society, their appearance and application are affected by politics and economy in a particular era.