



Aspects of Address Forms in Chinese and English: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Address forms are the most frequently used words in speech communication, and they are of great importance in interpersonal communication, particularly in cross-cultural interaction. In this article a tentative comparison of address forms in Chinese and English has been made from a cultural-pragmatic perspective with the aim to guide the interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, an investigation of various kinds of meanings conveyed in address forms and the way they affect the use has also been carried out with the purpose to offer explanations associated with cultures in different languages.

Key words: Address forms; Cultural-pragmatic comparison; Chinese; English

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INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that address forms are not only embodiment of the socio-cultural values of speech communities that use them, but their knowledge and appropriate use also form an essential part of a speaker's pragmatic competence. Despite this, little research, however, has investigated address forms from a perspective of cultural-pragmatic comparison with the aim to guide the interpersonal communication. This article is a tentative attempt to compare address forms

from a cultural-pragmatic aspect in Chinese and English, moreover, with the purpose to study address forms as an indispensable part of human communication, this article investigates various kinds of meanings that can be conveyed in address forms and the way they affect their use.

It is the focus of this article that there is the need to go beyond descriptions to explications of the use and meanings of address forms that are culturally and socially revealing. This view is illustrated by a comparative analysis of functionally equivalent address forms in Chinese and English. The similarities are noted and the differences explained in terms of the socio-cultural traditions associated with the respective languages. It is argued that insights gained from such studies are valuable for cross-cultural communication.

For the study of address form is a vast topic, it's impossible for this article to cover all the aspects of it. The focus of this article is to analyze these address forms that belong to social deixis in line with the theory of Charles J. Fillmore in *Lectures on Deixis*, i.e. second person pronouns and other address forms, consisting of names, titles, and kinship terms, which have the possibilities to be compared in these two languages from a social-cultural aspect. Moreover, a comparison of address forms will be made across these two cultures in a culture independent manner. Based on this purpose, this article has paid special attention on the similarities and differences in these two languages and explains the latter in terms of the socio-cultural milieu in which the address forms are used.

This article analyzes address forms in use, i.e. taking the role of context into consideration and studying them from a pragmatic perspective. Meanwhile, a comparison will be made between the functionally equivalent address forms of Chinese and English with the purpose to exemplify the cultural difference reflected by them. For as a system of symbolic signs, address forms reflect

and record culture; as one of the important form for communication, they convey and help to construct and reinforce cultural modes and cultural orientations. It's a study about cultural values and cultural norms that shape these different forms of address.

1. BASIC PERSPECTIVES OF ADDRESS FORMS

Zhu Wanqing, a Chinese sociolinguist, once has mentioned, "Terms of address are the most frequently used words in speech communication" (Zhu, 1992, p.145). As a vehicle for the expression or exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge, and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge, language is a system of signs used for communication. Used by human beings in the early period of human society, address form which plays an important role in interpersonal communication is an indispensable part of language.

1.1 Perspectives on Defining and Classifying Address Forms

The definition and classification of address forms are diversified. Ralph Fasold points out in his book, *The Sociolinguistics of Language*, "Address forms are the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while they are talking to them, there are two main kinds of address forms: names and second person pronouns" (Fasold, 2000, p.1). According to Tian Huigang, address forms are mainly classified into four kinds: kinship address, address in social intercourse, name address, and pronoun address. And Zhu Wanqing has classified address forms into two parts: "面称" and "引称". Gu Yueguo has made a thorough description about address system in Chinese, including official title, the title of a technical or professional post, occupational title, honorifics, general address, intimate address, name, and kinship term.

Functions of address is various: from the viewpoint of communication, address forms embody the various relationships between interlocutors; from the angle of society, they reflect the development of society; from the viewpoint of culture, address forms in different languages reveal the cultural differences of different ethics; from the angle of pragmatics, people use address in line with different contexts, and various address forms with same speech function convey different social deictic information.

1.2 Perspectives on the Development of Address Forms Study

Address forms study, which provides us with vital scientific basis for the development of language and culture, has attracted attention and interest of many scholars to study them from various angles: semiotics,

linguistics, anthropology, sociology, culturology, folklore and so on. Moreover, address forms could be studied from various perspectives of linguistics, particularly from the perspectives of pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

Scholars from different countries made devotion to the address forms research from the perspectives of sociolinguistics. In 1960, R. Brown and A. Gilman published their classic and most influential study of address forms, *The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity*, in which they carried out the study of second-person pronouns and proposed that pronoun usage was governed by two semantics: power and solidarity; in the early 50s of last century, Zhao Yuanren made a thorough description of address forms in his article, *Chinese Terms of Address*, and concluded a table of Chinese terms of address on vocatives and designatives which has no less than 114 forms. With the publication of a series of books: *Sociolinguistics: An introduction*, *The Sociolinguistics of Language*, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, a more thorough investigation has been made on the study of address forms in different countries from this perspective.

Address form has also been investigated from the perspective of pragmatics. According to the theory of G. Leech, General pragmatics consists of two parts: one is pragmalinguistics, and the other is socio-pragmatics. Socio-pragmatics focuses on more specific "local" conditions on language use in order to reveal that pragmatic descriptions ultimately have to be relative to specific social conditions, as Leech mentioned, "In other words, socio-pragmatics is the socio-logical interface of pragmatics" (Leech, 1983, p.10). While pragmalinguistics studies more linguistic end of pragmatics, that is to say, pragmalinguistics is language-specific, and socio-pragmatics is culture-specific.

In the past decade, Chinese scholars have also carried out study on this field. In 1990, *Politeness Phenomena in Modern Chinese* written by Gu Yueguo was published in *Journal of Pragmatics*, the key periodical of Pragmatics. In 2000, Mrs. Lee-Wong, Song Mei published *Politeness and Face in Chinese Culture*. Then more and more works have been written in this field, such as *The Address System in China and Western Countries* (《中西人际称谓系统》) written by Tian Huigang, which is the first book on address forms written in Chinese from a comparative way. Meanwhile, some other books have been published, for example, *A Comparative Study on Culture and Custom between China and English-Speaking Countries* (《中英文化习俗比较》), and *Aspects of Intercultural Communication* (《跨文化交际面面观》), which make devotion to the development of cultural and pragmatic comparison in China.

Cultural and pragmatic comparison of address forms is a fascinating field needed to be investigated, as Leech

mentioned, "I have not attempted much in the way of cross-linguistic comparison of communicative behavior, but this is a fascinating area of study in which much research remains to be done, and which has obvious applications to language teaching" (Leech, 1983, p.231).

As we have represented that Address forms, as a part of social deixis, could be investigated from the perspectives of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. But how to draw a demarcation line between the study differences between them? J. Thomas believes that pragmatics and sociolinguistics overlap in certain aspects, but their emphases are different.

Sociolinguistics is mainly concerned with the systematic linguistic correlates of relatively fixed and stable social variables (such as region of origin, social class, ethnicity, sex, age, etc.) on the way an individual speaks. Pragmatics, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with describing the linguistics correlates of relatively changeable features of that same individual (such as relative status, social role) and the way in which the speaker exploits his/her sociolinguistic repertoire in order to achieve a particular goal. (Thomas, 1995, p.185)

1.3 Perspectives on Confining the Research Scope of Address Forms in This Article

In line with the classification of C. J. Fillmore and S. C. Levinson, Deixis, which belongs within the domain of Pragmatics, consists of five categories, namely person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis, and social deixis. Among them, social deixis, in which functional accounts of language would need to relate with culture-specific aspects of interaction, concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee or speaker and some referent.

Stephen C. Levinson and Charles J. Fillmore hold different views towards the study scope of social deixis. Fillmore prefers a wider one and advocates studying social deixis not only from the socio-pragmatic way, but from the pragmalinguistic way, absorbing person deixis, as well as many aspects of the external analysis of conversations and many aspects of the external analysis of conversation and many aspects of the analysis of speech acts into the study scope of social deixis. While Levinson insists on studying social deixis from the social-pragmatic way only, as he argued in his works, *Pragmatics*,

Fillmore, unfortunately, then proceeds to water down the concept of social deixis by including, for example, much of the theory of speech acts. Here we shall restrict the term to those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants, or the social relationship between them, or between one of them and persons and entities referred to. (Levinson, 2001, p.89)

Concerned the places to look in a language for information on social deixis Fillmore contends, "Social

Deixis, then, is the study of that aspect of sentences which reflect or establish or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs" (Fillmore, 1997, p.111). Jiang Wangqi also prefers a wider one on the study scope of social deixis and asserts,

Social deixis is the use of deictic terms for indicating social status of the participants in a discourse, and their relations determined thereupon. So it is mainly the terms used in person deixis that are used here again, namely, personal pronouns and terms of address. (Jiang, 2000, p.31)

The author of this article tends to adopt Fillmore's theory of social deixis as a basic framework for this study. Based on his definition, Fillmore confined the places to look in a language for information on social deixis. These categories include:

A. The devices for person marking, such as the pronouns of Chinese (我、你、他、她), English (I, you, he, she).

B. The various ways of separating speech levels, as seen, for example, in the distinctions found in Chinese and English between plain, polite, honorific and humble speech.

C. Formal distinctions in utterances of various types that depend on certain properties of the speech act participants.

D. The various ways in which names, titles, and kinship terms vary in form and usage according to the relationships among the speaker, the addressee, the audiences, and the person referred.

E. The various ways in which linguistic performances can count as social acts, as in greetings, expressions of gratitude and so on.

F. The ways in which linguistic performances can accompany other social acts, such as the "There you go" of the waiter.

G. The various devices that a language provides for a speaker to be able to establish and maintain a deictic anchoring with a given addressee.

As a main category of social deixis, some address forms, such as second-person pronouns, names, titles, and kinship terms, which are included in A and D, are embodied in various speech forms used by the participants of the conversation, and play a vital role to convey social deictic information, therefore to be imbued with social-deictic function. In communication participants use various kinds of address forms to encode the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee or speaker and some referent. In this article, the author attempts to study these address forms, which belong to the overall address system on the one hand, on the other are indispensable component of social deixis, from a perspective of cultural-pragmatic comparison.

2. STUDY ON ADDRESS FORMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRAGMATICS AND CULTURAL COMPARISON

The following analysis examines the various forms of address used in context, more specifically with the intent of describing the form and function of these address terms. Without confinement to the conventional level, in this study an investigation will be made at the interpersonal level, which allows flexibility and negotiability. It's a tendency to place greater stress on the interpersonal, variational and negotiable aspects of language in contrast to conventional concerns with the more ideational, content-based and stable relations between forms and meaning in current language study, so it's necessary to investigate address forms at the interpersonal level, i.e. to study address forms from a dynamic way. Interpersonal function is concerned with interaction between the addresser and addressee in context and the addresser's attitude toward what he speaks. Form and use of address forms indicate the various grades of interpersonal relations. For example, a man named "林国华" might expect "林院长" from his colleague, "老爸" from his son, "国华" from his parents, "老公" from his wife. Accordingly, address forms, whether as norms or strategies, perform an important role as mediators of social relations in dyadic exchanges. It is the role of mediators of social relations and how these can be strategically manipulated in certain speech situations that forms the focus of this analysis. Furthermore, based on the research of form and function of address forms, culture values reflected by using them will also be investigated.

2.1 On Defining Context

Context has been understood in various ways. Based on the definition of *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, "Context refers to all elements of a communicative situation: the verbal and nonverbal context, the context of the given speech situation and the social context of the relationship between the speaker and hearer, their knowledge, and their attitudes" (Bussmann, 2000, p.100). Professor Qian Guanlian explains in his *Pragmatics in Chinese Culture*, "Context refers to the material and social circumstances, which consist of linguistic context and extra-linguistic context" (Qian, 1997, p.73). The linguistic context is composed of lexical, grammatical, and verbal context. And extra-linguistic context or context of situation refers to the actual speech situation in which a speech event had to be set. Malinowski asserts, "The conception of context must burst the bonds of mere linguistic and be carried over into the analysis of the general conditions under which a language is spoken... The study of any language, spoken by a people who live under conditions different from our own and possess a different culture, must be carried out in conjunction with the study of their culture and of

their environment" (Malinowski, 1923, p.306). Owing to cultural difference, the ways by which people from various cultural backgrounds address others or refer to themselves are much different.

In the light of the classification of Geoffrey N. Leech, speech situation consists of five aspects as follows: addressers or addressees, the context of an utterance, the goals of an utterance, the utterance as a form of act or activity: a speech act, and the utterance as a product of a verbal act. Since pragmatics studies meaning in relation to speech situation, reference to one or more of the above aspects of the speech situation will be a criterion. Therefore, the relationship between context and speech situation is overlapping.

Pragmatics studies the meaning in use, i. e. "Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning" (Yule, 2003, p.3). Context performs so important a role in communication that Ludwig Wittgenstein emphasizes, "... the multifarious uses of languages in the context of the social lives of flesh-and-blood human beings... language-games are played or enacted within a form of life—the social context in which a language-game can be played and interpreted" (Baghramian, 1999, p.87).

2.2 The Use of Names

A Chinese name is composed of two parts: surname (SN) and given name (GN). There are a superficial order differences between Chinese and English name, the former one is SN+GN, while the latter is GN+FN. In other words, Chinese name is arranged in reverse order from the English one. China is a patriarchal society and clan is the kernel component of society, which could be embodied by the use of SN in Chinese people's life. Chinese lay stress on SN and regard it as the root and spiritual home they belong to. English-speaking countries are mostly religious society, i.e. Christianity plays a vital role in people's life, including the use of names, for example, many English names are originated from Bible, such as Adam, Eva, Noah and so on.

The names referring to the addressee have both symmetric and asymmetric use in two-party conversations. The symmetric use means that the two interlocutors are equals, while the asymmetric use indicates the asymmetrical relationship of the two interlocutors. The following research will be made from the two aspects. The examples quoted here are from the spontaneous utterances or records of films.

2.2.1 The Symmetric Use of Names

Context: A first meeting of two Chinese Wang and Li.

Wang: 请问, 您贵姓?

Li: 小姓李. 您呢?

Wang: 鄙姓王.

This conversation is an introducing-each-other interaction between two Chinese. The above exchange between Wang and Li is a typical example of symmetric use of Chinese name. As we have mentioned that China is

a patriarchal society, and SN is a people's sigh in society. The above exchanges illustrate the overwhelming status of SN in communication, namely it's appropriate to ask SN of Chinese in the first meeting on the one hand, on the other a precious modifier “贵” should be combined with SN to express the respect to the other party. Meanwhile, Chinese people prefer to give their SN in an introducing-each-other interaction, but not a full name. Moreover, the emphasis is to accord due respect to the other, which may indicate self-abasement and exalting position of the other party. In other words, though both may be equals, speaker may wish to humble himself/herself by using the worthless modifiers “小” and “鄙”, which implicate the respect to hearer. This usage also demonstrates the core of the modern Chinese politeness, namely denigrating self and respecting other. Furthermore, the form of the introducing-each-other interaction between two Chinese is somewhat fixed, without too much flexibility. The “breakthrough” in English, which will be discussed in the following, is generally absent in Chinese.

It must be stressed, however, that this introducing-each-other interaction will differ from an English one under similar circumstances, which will be discussed later. Under such circumstances, the English people tend to self-introduce, i.e. to start with the speaker's own name. The reason for the Chinese to ask the hearer's name first lies in the core of Chinese culture: to show deference to other, namely other people's name is more important than ours and should be mentioned firstly, for name, in particular SN, is the symbol of a person in society. The following example is an illustration of introducing-each-other interaction of two Americans under the similar circumstances.

Context: A barbecue, the first meeting of two Americans

Barb: Ummm. Those burgers smell great. It's a perfect day for a barbecue.

Mike: It sure is. I'm glad it didn't rain. My name's Mike Gates, by the way.

Barb: Oh, hi! I'm Barbara Johnson. Nice to meet you.

Mike: I'm sorry, What's your name again?

Barb: Barbara. But please, just call me Barb.

Mike: So Barb... what do you do?

Barb: I'm studying medicine.

In this conversation, the relationship between Barbara and Mike is symmetrical, i.e. the interlocutors are equals and use the address forms of the same grade to address each other. This example illustrates the differences between the English and the Chinese in the introducing-each-other interaction, namely the English tend to self-introduce firstly. In this conversation what we are interested in is the FN “Barb” Mike used to address Barbara immediately after their self-introduction.

What does the “breakthrough” of addressing from Barbara Johnson to Barbara or Barb indicate? Ralph Fasold asserts, “Reciprocal FN address is surely a nearly

universal result of relatively high solidarity or intimacy” (Fasold, 2000, p.29). The author of this article holds a different viewpoint toward this phenomenon. English FN, such as Barb and Mike in this conversation have nothing to do with intimacy, and the illocutionary force of this usage lies in formality and friendliness, but not intimate. Intimacy implies a particularly close relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Although Mike Gates addressed Barbara Johnson as “Barb” from the very first meeting, this has nothing to do with intimacy between them. The address form “Barb” in this conversation has social-deictic function, i.e. embodying a series of social-deictic information: friendliness and informality.

2.2.2 The Asymmetric Use of Names

The asymmetric use of names indicates the asymmetrical relationship of the two interlocutors. English-speaking people focus on the symmetric use of name and tend to address others by using FN regardless of the symmetric or asymmetric relationship between them, and people don't regard this as a sign of disrespect, which could be regarded as a good illustration of core culture value in English-speaking countries: Equality. Originated from the ocean culture of English-speaking countries, equality is a cultural tradition in western countries. Ocean culture advocates opening to the world. This is quite counter to China, where agriculture emphasizing social estate occupies the leading position. Therefore, Chinese people can use Name+Title or Name+Kinship term (KT) to address others, indicating the asymmetric relationship between interlocutors, such as “刘院长” (SN+Title), “冰心先生” (GN+Title), “邓小平同志” (SN+GN+Title), “小张” (Title+SN), “老李师傅” (Title+SN+Title), “张叔叔” (SN+KT), “秀兰妹” (GN+KT).

2.3 The Use of Titles

The most noticeable differences between Chinese and English usage of titles lie in that the most professional titles (PT) can be used as address terms in Chinese to embody deference, but their English equivalents are not necessarily used in the same way. For instance, “老师”、“会计”、“护士”、“司机”、“售票员”、“服务员” and so on, while in English except a few conversational titles, such as “Doctor”, “Judge”, “Professor”, could be used as address, many other titles are not permitted to use independently. The misuse of titles is likely to cause problem in cross-cultural communication. The following example is a good illustration.

Context: A conversation between a Chinese student and an English lecturer.

Student: Teacher, how do you do?

Lecturer: How do you do? Where do you teach?

Student: No, I'm not a teacher, I'm a student.

Obviously, the communication failure is caused by the misuse of the word “teacher” as an address form. Although “老师” could be used as address form in Chinese, its English functionally equivalent does not. In this

conversation, student addressed the lecturer as “teacher”, but the latter interpreted it as a self-introduction. Through the analysis of the example, the importance of titles in communication is obvious.

As we have discussed that it is common to address people by using their titles, professional titles (PT) or official titles (OT) in Chinese, particularly with SN. For instance, “刘老师”, “谢校长” and so on. But it’s seldom for English speakers to address others like that. In English, only a few titles would be used: “Doctor”, “Professor”, “Judge” and so on, and the use of these titles is subtle, for instance, the title “Dr.” is always used in self-identification by medical doctors, but usually not by holders of other sorts of doctorates, if you hear somebody say “I’m Dr. Johnson.”, you can usually assume that he’s either a medical doctor or a newly minted recipient of the Ph. D. degree. But the Chinese equivalent “博士” could be used as address form by all sorts of doctorates.

Context: In the office of a college, a conversation between the dean (D) and a young teacher (Y), who is studying for her Ph. D.

Y: 张老师!

D: 王老师, 学得怎么样啊?

Y: 还行, 叫小王就好了.

In the above conversation, the young teacher addresses the dean by using SN+PT, “张老师”, which convey the social deictic information of deference and familiarity, but not SN+OT, “张院长”, an address form indicating deference and distance. When the dean addresses her by using “王老师”, she prefers to be addressed as “小王”, which indicates the core of Chinese culture: Showing respect to others by humbling oneself, and once again emphasizes her deference to the dean. Meanwhile, in Chinese it is common to refer self by using Modifier+SN, for example, “小王” in this conversation. “小” implies the social-deictic information of modesty.

2.4 The Use of Kinship Terms

Bloomfield asserts in his book, *Language*, that it’s very difficult to analyze kinship terms (KT) used in different languages. Kinship terms used for personal references are diversified in different languages. Generally speaking, English-speaking people attach less importance to kinship-terms, which is closely related with the clan and family. On the contrary, they place special emphasis on the right and on the autonomy of every individual, which is much more important than the responsibility to the clan and family. Compared with English speaking countries, kinship terms are particularly valued in Chinese social structure. Therefore, social factors such as relationship and solidarity are important contextual features, and Chinese culture encourages intimacy and closeness.

The diversity of Chinese kinship terms is reflected most ostensibly in the rich lexicon of the language. Those that could be called uncle or aunt in English are addressed

variously in Chinese: uncle (伯父、伯伯、叔父、叔叔、姑父、姨父、舅舅), aunt (伯母、婶婶、姑母、姑姑、舅母、姨妈). In the following, a comparative study will be made on the kinship use in Chinese and English, and an illustration will be exemplified as well.

2.4.1 The Use of Kinship Terms Caused by Marriage

Knowing how to address their father-in-law or mother-in-law has often been a problem for many English speaking people: Mr. Johnson is sometimes felt to be too formal, Mike too familiar, and Dad even unnatural. The reason of this embarrassment lies in the core culture value of English-speaking countries: Emphasis on the rights and on the autonomy of every individual, which leads to the focusing on one’s own family (kernel family), and lacking tight relation with other relative families. Based on this only a few of English kinship terms could be used as address terms. The following example is extracted from the film *Tess of The D’Urbervilles*:

Clare: “Are you Mrs. Durbeyfield?”

In this example, it was the first time that Clare met with Mrs. Durbeyfield, Tess’s mother. Clare addressed his wife’s mother by using Mrs. Durbeyfield indicates the loose relation between relatives in Britain, one of the English-speaking countries.

With comparison to English, most of the kinship terms could be used for addressing in Chinese. As we have mentioned, kinship terms are particularly valued in the Chinese social structure where Confucianism, advocating solidarity, is the main body of culture. Therefore, society is perceived as an extension of the family structure, i.e. in Chinese society family is the focus of life, all that relate with family should be paid great attention, so people try to treat their spouse’s parents and all other relatives as their own, if not, a conflict will take place between husband and wife.

2.4.2 The Use of Kinship Terms in the Same Family

It is a Chinese custom to address members in one’s family as “大哥”、“二姐”、“三叔” etc.. In Chinese culture order plays a very important role in people’s life. Influenced greatly by Confucianism, China is traditionally a family-based society. The ethics of human relationship known as “男女有别” (the distinction between man and woman), “长幼有序” (the order between the elder and the younger), “三纲五常” (three cardinal guides, i.e. ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife, and the five constant virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity), “五伦” (the five human relationships, i. e. ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brothers and friends). These doctrines stipulate how people should treat each other according to the distinctions set out in this hierarchy. Each one living in a group can not place himself above or beyond these relationships. Since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, Chinese social structure has changed in many aspects, but these basic human principles

are still deeply roots in the Chinese mind and colors life of common people.

2.4.3 The Use of Kinship Terms to Address Close Neighbors or Strangers

There are many instances of terms that are very obviously kinship terms but are used with people who are very obviously not kin by any of the criteria usually employed. Some Chinese kinship terms have extended and generalized usage in this aspect. For example, some Chinese kinship terms, such as “爷爷”、“奶奶”、“伯伯”、“伯母”、“叔叔”、“阿姨” can be used to address people who have no kin relation with the speaker. There are also a few of kinship terms that could be used in this way in English, but the use of them is not as popular as that in Chinese. Moreover, there are some subtle differences in the use of the same kinship term. For example, “Uncle” in English could be used for children to address a male family friend, while “叔叔” in Chinese can be used to address any adult male in public places like the street. One major reason for this language use is that China is basically patriarchal society where closeness and solidarity are key culture values. So Chinese prefer to contract social distance or signal solidarity by using kinship terms. On the contrary, in English-speaking countries distance is a positive culture value, associated with respect for the privacy of the individual. Therefore, it's seldom for English-speaking people to address relatives or close neighbor by using kinship terms, regardless to say strangers.

In China, verbal politeness means the observation of Li (礼), the use of appropriate address terms to one's seniors, i.e. an adult tends to receive non-reciprocal terms, like kinship terms, from his juniors. That an adult tends to receive non-reciprocal terms like kinship term is a cultural practice in China. In a sense, Chinese express deference and cordiality by using kinship terms to address non-kin relationships, then it is well known that Li Tiemei sang in 《红灯记》, “There are countless uncles in my family, and they are dearer than relatives.”

2.5 The Use of Personal Pronouns

Person Deixis, which mainly consists of personal pronouns, can be classified into three categories: first-person deixis, second-person deixis and third-person deixis. Among them some use of second-person pronoun could be studied from the aspect of social deixis, for it is necessary to use second-person pronoun according to certain context.

The study by Brown and Gilman shows that in many European languages there are the formal and informal second-person pronouns. Following the justly famous study of them we can use the symbols T for the informal pronoun and V for the formal pronoun. The pronouns referring to the addressee have both symmetric and asymmetric uses in two-party conversations. In symmetric cases people exchange T or V; in asymmetric

cases one person gives the other T but receives V or vice versa.

There were the formal and informal second-person pronouns in ancient English, but not in modern English. Therefore, the English “you” is a very democratic one on the one hand, on the other it is can be seen as a distance-building device, i.e. without any difference, the English “you” can't convey both the meaning of intimacy and distance at the same time. In other words, the English “you” is a social distance-building device used to keep everybody at a distance. The English “you” reflects the culture value of privacy in English. To have privacy means to be able to do certain things unobserved by other people. It is assumed that every individual would want to have a little wall around him/her to keep distance with other people. But there are subtle form differences in Chinese, i.e. “你” and “您” that roughly parallel the T and V forms in European languages. In Chinese “您” can only be used as honorific and might be used by speakers to show respect for the person they are addressing. Obviously, “您” has been largely replaced by “你” in spoken usage in present China.

CONCLUSION

In this article a tentative analysis of address forms has been made from a perspective of cultural-pragmatic comparison in English and Chinese. Observations and investigation of address forms in this article demonstrate that different cultures have different ways of addressing and different ways of addressing reflect diversified culture values. There are more differences than similarities in address forms in the English and Chinese address systems due to the socio-cultural milieu: China is mostly patriarchal society and clan is the kernel component of society which leads to some common cultural values, namely closeness, solidarity, intimacy, modesty, order etc. English-speaking countries emphasize on the right and the autonomy of every individual, which leads to the focusing on one's privacy.

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