

Contrast between chinese greetings and english greetings



Contrast Between Chinese Greetings and English Greetings
Abstract: As is known to all, greeting is not only an integral part of the language, but also an important part of social etiquette. It is used frequently in daily life. In daily communication, appropriate greetings manners is the key to establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Since China is totally different from the Western countries both in its history and its culture, it is undoubtedly that greeting, which is closely related to the cross-culture interactions, may easily lead to misunderstanding.

Understanding the differences in Chinese and English greeting well can avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. In this paper, we shall focus attention on study the similarities and differences in Chinese and English greetings. Key Words: greeting, English, Chinese, cultural differences, cross-cultural communication
Introduction As China enters WTO, the relationship between China and other English-speaking countries become closer and closer.

Because of the negligence of the strategies in cross-cultural communication, a lot of misunderstandings appear. It is necessary for us to learn more about cross-cultural communication and greeting differences. So how to start a perfect communication becomes so important nowadays. Since greetings occur among people all over the world, it appears to be a wonderful component of social behavior. To understand cultural differences in greetings better will definitely make a great improvement of human relations in cross-cultural communications.

Greetings are used to establish a communication or maintain social contact. It is a very important component in social etiquette. It is also one of the cultural blocks in cross-cultural communication. To know much about the greeting differences can enhance our cross-cultural communication. A contrast between English and Chinese greetings helps people to promote their cross-cultural awareness.

Greetings, as a phenomenon of language, are closely related with culture. They occur among people all over the world and appear to be an excellent unit of social behavior to study if one intends to make a contrastive study on what is universal, what is traditional, and what is distinctive in inter-cultural communications. A better understanding of cultural differences in greetings will surely boost the maintenance and improvement of human relations in cross-cultural communications. Since greetings are so important, the present thesis tries to analyze the common properties and differences between Chinese and English greetings as well as the factors causing these differences. In this thesis, Leech's Polite Principles as well as Brown and Levinson's Face Theory are applied. However, Chinese politeness has its own specifics, thus Gu Yueguo's theory are also applied to analyze Chinese greetings. The thesis consists of five parts. The introduction gives a general view of the thesis.

Chapter 1 reviews theories related to greetings. Chapter 2 mainly discusses the functions of greetings and various categories to classify them such as time, formality, contents, social settings and language origin. Chapter 3 tries to give a comparison between Chinese and English greeting including their common properties and differences and explores the causes of these

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differences from the aspects of cultural factors and social factors. The conclusion is the summary of the thesis. Chapter 1 Theories Related to Greetings Greeting is an important way for communication.

It is crucial for the establishment of social relationships. As a special part of politeness phenomenon, greetings have been studied by scholars both in English culture and Chinese culture. However, because of the cultural differences, sometimes what the Chinese people consider to be polite may not be true according to western culture. But anthropologists and linguists have been trying to generate models that could be applied to different cultures. Among them, the most influential ones are by Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978), each of which claims their universality. And in China, Gu Yueguo (1990) proposed five notions of politeness based on the Chinese conception of li mao.

In the following Part, the writer would look closely at these politeness systems. 1. 1 Leech's Politeness Principles 1. 2 Brown and Levinson's Face Theory 1.

3 Gu Yueguo's Theory Related to Chinese Culture Chapter 2 The Functions and Classification of Greetings 2. 1 The Functions of Greetings 2. 1.

1 Greetings as Linguistic Routines of Politeness Greetings, in fact, should not be treated as spontaneous emotional reaction, for most of them are highly conventionalized and follow patterned routines. Laver (1981: 299-305) makes a further study of the rationale for the existence of routine elements such as greetings in the linguistic patterns of conversation. He asserts that routine behavior is polite behavior. Greetings as conversational routines are <https://assignbuster.com/contrast-between-chinese-greetings-and-english-greetings/>

part of the linguistic repertoire of politeness. They are tools of polite behavior and their use is guided by a polite norm. 2. 1. 2 Greetings as Illocutionary Acts2.

2 The Classification of Greetings2. 2. 1 Greetings Classified According to Time2. 2. 2 Greetings Classified According to Formality2.

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5 Greetings Classified According to OriginChapter 3Similarities and Differences between Chinese and English Greetings3. 1 Common Properties of Chinese and English Greetings3. 1. 1 Greetings Concerning Reciprocal Nature3.

1. 2 Greetings Concerning Topics3. 2 Differences between Chinese and English Greetings3. 2. 1 Differences in ContentsThe content of Chinese greetings is concrete and concerns facts, whereas English greetings covers a lot of topics and do not involve facts. One remarkable property of Chinese greeting is that it usually takes personal matters as greeting topics.

Chinese people usually inquire others' age, income, and marriage, which actually are very public topics. Moreover, the more details one inquires, the more consideration he shows for the addressee. In Chinese culture, four specific sentences occur more frequently among people based on where and when they meet. They are 'How do you do?', 'Are you busy today?', 'Where are you going?', 'Have you eaten yet?' Response to 'How do you do?' is its repetition 'How do you do?'.

However, responses to the other greetings are normally answers on the basis of the real circumstance or position the addressee is in at the moment he/she is greeted. ??! (How do you do) is often used as a greeting among people who do not know each other or know one another but not very well, especially in the normal situation. For example: A teacher in languages department meets a teacher in history department on their way to work. 3.

2. 2 Differences in Terms of Address3. 2.

3 Differences in SemanticAnother difference of greetings between English and Chinese lies in semantics. Differences in semantics conveyed by routine expressions in English and Chinese greeting processes suggest that what is counted as polite in one language may not be considered so in another. A story is told that one American English teacher in China complained to authorities of a university that he was often asked about where he was going and what he was doing, sometimes even by persons he did not know. He felt that his privacy was intruded until the Chinese foreign affairs officers explained that in terms of Chinese greeting behavior this is a perfectly normal greeting routine. 3.

2. 4 Differences in Syntax3. 2. 5 Differences in Cooperative Responses3. 3
Factors Causing the Differences3. 3.

1 Cultural FactorsPrivacy is cherished in all cultures, but it is more highly cherished in the English culture. Members of individualistic cultures tend to engage in environmental to assert their unique identity and to claim private space than members of collectivistic cultures do. The Chinese attach great importance to mutual care, which is equally important as modesty. For <https://assignbuster.com/contrast-between-chinese-greetings-and-english-greetings/>

example, the Chinese sometimes like to make direct comments on some personal matters or to give direct advice to show concern for other's™ welfare. Gu Yueguo has rightly included 'attitudinal warmth', a highly valued trait in Chinese culture, as one of the four notions underlying the Chinese conception of *Limao*. Showing warmth and concern is regarded as a polite act in the Chinese culture. That's™ why when two Chinese meet each other even for the first time they might ask each other's™ age, marital status, offspring, occupation and income.

This conflicts with the people's™ individual privacy of English culture. Native speakers of English have such a strong sense of privacy that they are easily offended by comments which seem to invade their personal lives. 'Where are you going?' such kind of greeting is particularly distasteful to them.

Many foreign teachers in China complain that their room attendants are spies because the attendants have greeted them with 'where are you going?'. The Chinese think that they are being polite by showing concern for the other person. But the effects are against their good intentions. In the Chinese culture, it is not considered impolite but an indication of concern and kindness. But if western speakers were asked all such questions, they would feel their interactants are rudely infringing upon their privacy. 3. 3.

2 Social Fact Conclusion Greeting is a daily practice that is reutilized and happens at very low levels of awareness in cross-cultural interactions.

However, we can find it very problematic in cross-culture communications.

When it is used improperly, misunderstandings may occur.

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For example, if a Chinese student greets an American one with ??? Have you eaten yet???, he would be considered to be going to invite the American students to dinner. This is because greetings are not only a part of language, but also a part of culture. There is a gap between the language and culture in the intercultural communication. In this thesis, a contrastive analysis is made of such linguistic routines as greetings in English and Chinese. The functions of greetings are reviewed. The differences of greetings in the two languages are investigated.

The causes of these differences are also explored. It is found that Leech's Politeness Principle as well as Brown and Levinson's Face Theory are not so adaptable in the Chinese context and Chinese politeness has its own characteristics. Although the choice of linguistic routines is generally constrained by common social factors, the actual use may vary from person to person and from language to language. Through the contrastive analysis of greetings in Chinese and English communication, a comprehensive knowledge of culture-specific norm of politeness as well as its linguistic realization (e. g. greetings) is claimed to be crucial. Now, with the development of globalization, cross-cultural communication becomes more and more important.

In this world with a diversity of cultures, there are no cultures superior or inferior to another. But there are real differences between groups and cultures. Therefore, it is highly necessary to make cross-cultural studies of greetings in English and Chinese, which contributes much to enhancing the mutual-understanding across different cultures and avoiding potential

offence and insult in cross-cultural communication. Acknowledgements First,
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to