

## Analysis of Perceptive Factors in Cultural Communication

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**Abstract:** The paper mainly analyzes the perceptive factors in cultural communication including food, color, social greetings, value orientations and religious beliefs. People's perception to a large extent is restricted by these cultural factors. By comparing the differences, people from different cultures can have a deep understanding to the western cultures and have a smooth communication with each other.

### 1. Introduction

With the development of global economics, the contacts between different cultures is closer and closer. However different countries hold different beliefs and opinions due to various cultures. Therefore, misunderstanding easily occurs in cross-cultural communications. To avoid this kind of misunderstanding easily and to enhance the mutual-understanding across different cultures, it is necessary to make a detailed comparison between different cultures.

As we know, culture is deeply rooted in people's perception. The cultural influence on perception is a process of attribution of the behavioral indications, which is based on the past life experience. The accumulation of life in the past naturally derives from the process of cultural acquisition. Therefore, different culture engenders different perceptive system.

### 2. Foods in the Perception of Culture

People's preference for taste varies from their place of origins, beliefs and cultures. Take Indians for example, cows are regarded as a sacred animal in Indian culture, which is forbidden to eat whereas in western countries, beef steak is popular with western people.

Chinese culinary techniques are the first class in the world and Chinese restaurants are found everywhere around the globe. In the quest for good food in China, the most useful quality may be a spirit of adventure. Many foods considered delicacies by the Chinese cause Westerner to shudder. Among such exotica are snake, sea slug, turtle, bird's nests formed of swallows' saliva, dried jellyfish and webs of duck feet. Though a bit startling to the eye, thick, dark, firmly gelatinous sea slugs are delicious cooked in a velvety, dark sauce that is mellow with wine and fragrant with star anise. This is a sauce that would make even paper towels palatable.

As to the eating etiquette taboo, dining etiquette varies from culture to culture when taking food, Chinese should not glance left and right, and cannot choose and pick in the public dishes. People should ask others for help when out of reaching dish, and avoid leaving their own seats to get dishes. During the dinner, do not burp and make noise when people have noodles and soup. In the west, people do not make the noise of knife-scraping plate and always speak loudly. When people drink soup, they should spoon soup without noise. When people eat bread, they cut it into two parts and then tear into small cakes to eat. They do not take food for others with their own Tableware. The food that people do not eat cannot be thrown on the ground or on the Tablecloth, and should be put in the corner of the plate.

As to the atmosphere when dining, Chinese prefer lively atmosphere, and westerners like quiet atmosphere. For westerners, privacy is a taboo in the dining Table while for the Chinese people, any topic that can create the happy atmosphere is preferable.

### 3. Color in the Perception of Culture

In the aspect of color, different color represents different cultural meanings. Every color stands for their unique cultural connotations.

Colors have direct effect on vision. It is common that people use different colors to express their feelings. In Chinese culture, red always indicates prosperous, happiness, cheerful, revolution and auspicious, so we always use red to decorate important days. For instance, during the spring festival, we paste red couplet, hang on red lantern and play red fireworks to celebrate spring festival. Therefore, there are many trademarks including red, such as “Hong Mei” beer, “Hong Shuangxi” cigarettes and “Hong Qi” car. But in the view of American and English, they regard red as a negative word which always connected with violence, blood, danger and misfortune, such as “red hands” and “red alert”. The brand “Hong Deng” radio once has a slow seller abroad. By doing a survey it is founded that “Red light” in English means nightspot, so we can see that realizing the cultural differences of target language is very important.

In Chinese culture, white is the opposition color of red. It's a taboo word and it reflects the Chinese people's rejection and disgust both in material and spirit. Firstly, In Chinese white symbolizes death and mourning. For example, In Chinese the word, which can be translated as wedding and funeral in English. When someone dies, people call the funeral as “white event families and the relatives of the dead's should be dressed in white. Secondly, white can describe the person with shallow knowledge and born of humble parentage. People use “white hand” to express a man without knowledge or an inexperienced youth. Last, white also means “innocence.” People use “white” to express someone is innocent and he or she isn't evil.

The meaning of white in English is very different from Chinese. In western culture, white is their favorite color because Westerners think white represents elegance and purity and beauty. In western weddings, brides always wear white wedding dresses and a long white veil with the white flowers in their hands symbolizing purity of love. White has connotations of honesty and integrity in western culture. There are many words to show this such as “a white spirit, white man and white hand”. A literate and educated man can be referred to as “a white spirit, white man and white hand.” An upright official who does not accept bribes and is totally honest is called a white hand man.

White has the meaning of lawful and non-harmful. In western country, the documents released by authorities are called “white paper”. They are used to call the legal market as “white market.” When someone tells lies that do not do harm to someone else, it is called “white lie”, which means the lie is not harmful and malicious.

Another word “Yellow” is the symbol of carefulness, happiness, sunshine and warmth whereas in European countries, it has something to do with “ignorance” and something negative. Why there is such a big difference? Actually, it can date back to ancient China, China used to be a feudal country, only emperors can be dressed in yellow, it is a logo of imperial power or authority. For the Europeans, in the middle age, the Jews suffered from a period of humiliation by wearing yellow sign in their breast. Green in western and eastern cultures share something negative. In the westerners' eyes, green is the synonyms of jealousy, greed and money. Chinese people have vigilance against green, if males wear green hat, it means their wives are not faithful to them. In Islamic countries, green is the color of holiness and solemnity, therefore, the flags in Islamic countries are mostly green.

### 4. Social Greetings in the Perception of Culture

Greeting is an important way for communication. It is crucial for the establishment of social relationships. However, because of cultural differences, sometimes what the Chinese people consider to be polite may not be true according to western culture.

The content of Chinese greetings is concrete and concerns facts, whereas English greetings covers a lot of topics and do not involve facts. What matters most is privacy, privacy is cherished in all cultures, but it is more highly cherished in the English culture. Members of individualistic cultures tend to assert their unique identity and to claim private space than members of collective cultures do.

Chinese people usually inquire others' age, income, and marriage, which actually are very common topics. While for the westerners, these personal questions are taken as an infringement on their privacy.

One remarkable characteristic of Chinese greeting is that it usually takes personal matters as greeting topics. In Chinese culture, four greetings 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 the repetition. However, responses to the other greetings are normally answers on the basis of the real circumstances or position the addressee is in at the moment he/she is greeted. The Chinese think that they are being polite by showing concern for the other person. Moreover, the more details one inquires, the more consideration he shows for the addressee.

From the perspective of the English speaker, the above exchanges might not be considered appropriate because they have different patterns in terms of greeting. "How do you do?" "Good morning/afternoon/evening," "Hi/Hello," followed by "How are you?" or comments on weather such as "Beautiful weather isn't it?" or "How are things going/ How are you doing?" are more frequently used. In response to the greetings "How do you do?" and "Good morning/afternoon/evening," mere repetitions are applied while in response to "How are you?" or "How are things going/ How are you doing?" "Fine", or "Good" or "Very well" are frequently used, followed by "Thank you", When responding to the comments on weather as a greeting, the speaker normally responds positively, such as "Yes, it (really) is" or " Yes, I like/love it".

## **5. Other perceptive factors**

Culture and perception have close connection. Apart from what the above mentioned, value orientations, religious beliefs and so on, all these things have imprinted on family, marriage, morality, happiness and art. For Chinese, children should be filial, obedient while for the westerners, it is hard to understand. Westerners put great emphasis on individualism and seek to prevail over others, and even try to conquer the nature. For people in eastern countries, the westerners' ideas are centered on selfishness and fighting.

## **6. Summary**

Through the analysis of perceptive factors in Chinese and English cultures, we came to a conclusion that the cultural differences are deeply rooted in their perception to the world. Language barrier actually is a minor part in communication, and the real and effective barrier is the perception to the world, if we understand the connotations and implications behind the words, we can have a smooth communication.

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## **References**

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