

# A Comparative Study of Kinship Address Forms between Chinese and English from an Intercultural Communication Perspective

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**Abstract:** Kinship address forms carry profound connotations. They are linguistic, social, and cultural phenomena, all of which hold significant importance in daily communication. Due to diverse social backgrounds, substantial differences exist between English and Chinese kinship address forms. Although the study of kinship terms is not a novel topic, it continues to be of research value due to its frequent usage in daily communication. Under the guidance of intercultural communication theory, this paper provides a brief comparison of Chinese and English kinship address forms, considering perspectives from the elder generation, the same generation, and the younger generation. It analyzes the underlying causes in terms of social structure, cultural background, and economic context, with the aim of fostering an awareness of cultural disparities between China and Western countries. This understanding can help reduce culture shock and the occurrence of pragmatic failures and provide valuable references for future comparative studies. The results demonstrate that Chinese kinship address forms are intricate and detailed, accurately describing all kinship relationships, including lineal and collateral, paternal and maternal, consanguinity and affinity, elder and younger generations, among others. In contrast, English kinship address forms are highly generalized and simplistic, typically distinguishing only between males and females.

**Keywords:** Kinship address forms; Intercultural communication; Comparative study.

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## 1. Introduction

Language and culture are closely intertwined. Culture exerts a significant influence on language, which in turn shapes culture. English and Chinese have evolved within vastly different cultural contexts, leading to substantial variations in their expression of address forms. Address forms encompass appellations people use to address one another based on their relationships, status, and occupations, both within their families and in broader social contexts. These address forms can be categorized into three primary groups: social address forms, name address forms, and kinship address forms. This paper predominantly focuses on the study of kinship address forms.

Kinship address forms, often used among family members, refer to the names that identify the relationships between the kinship member and themselves centering on consanguinity and affinity (Li, 2015). Objectively, the blood ties existing in various societies are similar, but the kinship address forms that reflect these blood relations vary based on cultural contexts (Shu, 2015). This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of kinship address forms in English and Chinese from three perspectives: elders (illustrated by the relatives of the parent's generation), peers of the same generation, and the younger generation. Subsequently, it explores potential reasons for these differences, examining social structures, cultural influences, and economic factors in order to better achieve the purpose of intercultural communication. It is important to note that this paper focuses on the general kinship address forms in English and Chinese and does not consider specific regional variations.

## 2. Literature Review

Intercultural communication theory is a multidisciplinary framework rooted in fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and communication studies. It primarily focuses on the processes and outcomes of communication between different cultures, aiming to help people better understand, interpret, and address the challenges of intercultural communication.

### 2.1. Intercultural Communication Study

Intercultural communication studies first emerged in the United States. The United States, being a nation of immigrants, experienced cultural collisions due to the emphasis on and preservation of various cultural backgrounds. This diversity created a multicultural landscape, sparking widespread interest among American scholars and professionals in the field of intercultural communication. In the 1960s, American sociologists, anthropologists, and others conducted comprehensive research on intercultural communication. The formal establishment of intercultural communication as an academic discipline on a global scale began in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

### 2.2. Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural communication theory asserts that culture serves as a significant backdrop to communication, encompassing language, values, beliefs, social norms, and practices, among other elements. These cultural differences can profoundly influence communication styles and expectations.

#### 2.2.1. Research by Foreign Scholars

Notable scholar Edward T. Hall is a key figure in intercultural communication theory. His seminal book *The*

*Silent Language* lays the foundation for the field, delving into the relationships among time, space, and communication. He explores the idea that nonverbal communication, often referred to as “the silent language” plays a crucial role in human interaction and is deeply intertwined with culture. Building on his earlier research, Hall further explores the concept of high-context and low-context cultures in the book *Beyond Culture*. High-context cultures rely on implicit communication, shared context, and nonverbal cues, whereas low-context cultures rely more on explicit verbal communication. Understanding this distinction is crucial for effective intercultural communication.

Geert Hofstede offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending and comparing different cultures in his work *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. This framework is grounded in a set of cultural dimensions, including individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, among others.

Stella Ting-Toomey introduces the concept of “face” in her book *Communicating Across Cultures*, which represents an individual’s public self-image and identity. She discusses how different cultures may engage in face-saving or face-threatening acts and how understanding face dynamics can improve communication.

### 2.2.2. Research by Domestic Scholars

China embarked on its research in intercultural communication relatively late in the academic arena. It was in the early 1980s when the eminent linguist, Professor Hu Wenzhong of Beijing Foreign Studies University, initiated research in the field of intercultural communication. Initially, Chinese scholars directed their efforts towards foreign language teaching and exploring the intricate relationship between culture and language.

As time progressed, notable scholars such as Bao Ji’ao, Chen Lai, and Zhao Peng redirected their focus towards various aspects of intercultural communication. Their research spanned East-West cultural differences, the impact of culture on cognition and communication, and the nuanced adaptations of politeness principles across diverse cultural contexts. This body of work provided invaluable theoretical and practical foundations for the development of intercultural communication theory in China. Furthermore, it played a pivotal role in enhancing the intercultural competence of Chinese students and professionals.

Given the profound significance of intercultural communication theory in fostering intercultural understanding and mitigating cultural conflicts, this paper will undertake a comprehensive examination of English and Chinese kinship address forms, guided by this theory. The primary objective is to facilitate cultural understanding, ameliorate intercultural conflicts, and augment communication skills within diverse intercultural environments.

## 3. Types of Kinship Address Forms in Chinese and English

The complexity of kinship address forms reflects social context as much as the language itself. Centering on the commonly used kinship address forms, this section compares English and Chinese kinship terminologies from three aspects: elders, the same generation and younger generation.

### 3.1. Address relatives of the elder generation

Relatives of elder generation include both the parental and ancestral generations. Due to the limitations of human lifespan and differences in family situations, kinship address for great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents are not widely used in most families. Therefore, this study focuses solely on the parental generation.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the differences in kinship address forms for elders (relatives of the parents’ generation) between English and Chinese, considering both blood and marital relationships. Notably, Chinese kinship terms distinguish between paternal and maternal sides, reflecting the dominant status of men within the family. Relatives on the mother’s side are considered less closely related and are addressed differently (Zhang, 2011). In Figure 1, the father’s siblings are commonly referred to as *bo fu* (father’s elder brother), *shu fu* (father’s younger brother) and *gu mu* (father’s sister) while their spouses are addressed as *bo mu* (father’s elder brother’s wife), *shen mu* (father’s younger brother’s wife) and *gu fu* (father’s sister’s husband). Conversely, the mother’s siblings are usually called *jiu fu* (mother’s brother) and *yi ma* (mother’s sister) with their spouses referred to as *jiu mu* (mother’s brother’s wife) and *yi fu* (mother’s sister’s husband).

Chinese kinship terms also pay attention to birth order and seniority, evident in terms like *da bo fu* for the father’s eldest brother and *xiao jiu fu* for the mother’s youngest brother. The words *da* and *xiao* indicates the order of age. Figure 2 displays address forms for parents-in-law. In Chinese, the husband’s parents are typically addressed as *gong gong* and *po po* by the wife while the wife’s parents are called *yue fu* and *yue mu* by the husband.

Contrasting with Chinese, English speakers primarily employ uncle and Aunt to refer to all of the parents’ siblings and their spouses, resulting in repeated and generalized kinship address terms. There are no specific address forms for each relative. In terms of addressing parents-in-law, English uses father-in-law and mother-in-law to refer to both sides without distinguishing other aspects. It’s evident that English kinship address forms do not explicitly convey paternal and maternal distinctions or birth order and seniority. In English-speaking countries, when addressing two elders simultaneously, their names are often added to the end of the address, such as uncle John and aunt Lily. Alternatively, they may be addressed directly by their names, which is considered acceptable and not impolite in English-speaking cultures. Therefore, even though English kinship address forms may lack specificity, it is generally acceptable within English-speaking societies.

### 3.2. Addressing relatives of the same generation

The kinship address forms within the same generation are further divided into consanguinity and affinity. Consanguinity comes in two forms: lineal and collateral. Lineal consanguinity refers to the connection that exists between persons where one is descended from the other. Collateral consanguinity, on the other hand, is the connection that exists between persons who share common ancestors but are not descended from each other (Morgan, 2009, p.404). In Chinese kinship terms, lineal siblings and their spouses are generally referred to as *ge ge/sao zi* (elder brother and his wife), *jie jie/jie fu* (elder sister and her husband), *di di/di mei* (younger brother and his wife), *mei mei/mei fu* (younger sister and her

husband). If one has many siblings, distinctions are made based on age in addition to gender. For example, *da ge/da sao* is used to refer to the eldest brother and his wife, while *xiao mei/xiao mei fu* is used for the youngest sister and her husband.

Children on the paternal side are called *tang*, which is an abbreviation of *tong tang* (from the same family). The children of the maternal side are referred to as *biao*. Originally, *biao* meant a coat but later extended to signify “outside”, representing relatives who are not of the same clan. The use of *tang* and *biao* reflects the closer and more intimate

relationship on the paternal side and the more distant connection on the maternal side. Therefore, cousins on the paternal side are addressed as *tang ge* (father’s brother’s elder son), *tang di* (father’s brother’s younger son), *tang jie* (father’s brother’s elder daughter) and *tang mei* (father’s brother’s younger daughter). The cousins on the maternal side are addressed as *biao ge* (mother’s brother’s elder son), *biao di* (mother’s brother’s younger son), *biao jie* (mother’s brother’s elder daughter) and *biao mei* (mother’s brother’s younger daughter).

**Figure 1. Relatives by blood**

<b>Parents</b>	Fu qin, Ba ba		Mu qin, Ma ma	
	Father, Daddy, Dad		Mother, Mommy, Mom	
	<b>Paternal side</b>		<b>Maternal side</b>	
<b>Parents’ siblings (In order of age)</b>	<b>Father’s brother</b>	<b>Father’s sister</b>	<b>Mother’s brother</b>	<b>Mother’s sister</b>
	Bo fu, Shu fu (Da bo fu)	Gu mu (Xiao gu mu)	Jiu fu (Xiao jiu fu)	Yi ma (Da yi ma)
	Uncle	Aunt	Uncle	Aunt
	<b>Spouse of father’s brothers</b>	<b>Spouse of father’s sisters</b>	<b>Spouse of mother’s brother</b>	<b>Spouse of mother’s sister</b>
<b>Spouse of parents’ siblings (In order of age)</b>	Shen mu, Bo mu (Da shen mu)	Gu fu (Xiao gu fu)	Jiu mu (Da jiu mu)	Yi fu (Xiao yi fu)
	Uncle	Aunt	Uncle	Aunt

**Figure 2. Relatives by marriage**

<b>Parents-in-law</b>	<b>Husband’s parents</b>		<b>Wife’s parents</b>	
	Gong gong	Po po	Yue fu	Yue mu
	Father-in-law	Mother-in-law	Father-in-law	Mother-in-law

In English, it is common to use brother and sister to refer to lineal siblings, which primarily highlight gender. The terms “elder” and “younger” can also be added to emphasize age, but they are not commonly used in everyday address. Spouses of siblings are typically referred to as “in-law” to signify the legal relationship that makes them relatives. Cousin is the primary term used by English speakers to address the children

of their parents’ siblings, without distinguishing by age, gender, seniority, or paternal and maternal sides. The term “cousin-in-law” is used to refer to their spouses. However, English speakers often prefer to address these relatives by their names directly, and these specific terms are typically used when explaining one’s relationship with these relatives to others.

**Figure 3. Relatives by blood**

<b>Lineal siblings (In order of age)</b>	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>	
	Ge ge (Da ge)	Di di (Er di)	Jie jie (Da jie)	Mei mei (Xiao mei)
	Elder brother	Younger brother	Elder sister	Younger sister
<b>Spouse of siblings (In order of age)</b>	Sao zi (Da sao zi)	Di mei (Er di mei)	Jie fu (Da jie fu)	Mei fu (Xiao mei fu)
	Sister-in-law		Brother-in-law	
	<b>Paternal side</b>		<b>Maternal side</b>	
<b>Cousin (In order of age)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
	Tang ge, Tang di (Da tang ge)	Tange jie, Tange mei (Da tang jie)	Biao ge, Biao di (Da biao ge)	Biao jie, Biao mei (Da biao jie)
	Cousin			

**Figure 4. Relatives by marriage**

<b>Siblings of spouse</b>	<b>Husband’s brothers</b>	<b>Husband’s sisters</b>	<b>Wife’s brothers</b>	<b>Wife’s sisters</b>
	Bo ge, Shu zi	Gu jie, Gu zi	Jiu ge, Jiu zi	Yi jie, Yi zi
	Brother-in-law	Sister-in-law	Brother-in-law	Sister-in-law

### 3.3. Addressing relatives of the younger generation

Kinship address forms for the relatives of younger generations are also divided by blood and marriage. Figures 5 and 6 clearly illustrate that in both consanguinity and affinity, the terms for the children of one's brothers and sisters differ. The children of one's lineal brothers are called *zhi zi* (brother's son) and *zhi nu* (brother's daughter), while the children of one's lineal sisters are referred to as *yi sheng* (sister's son) and *yi sheng nu* (sister's daughter). When addressing the children of one's husband's brothers, a wife

uses *zhi zi* and *zhi nu*, and for the children of her husband's sisters, she uses *wai sheng* and *wai sheng nu*. Conversely, when a husband addresses the children of his wife's brothers, he uses *zhi zi* and *zhi nu*, and for the children of his wife's sisters, he uses *yi sheng* and *yi sheng nu*. These terms are commonly used when introducing relatives to others. While it's acceptable to address younger generations by their names to show closeness, it's not appropriate to do so with elders.

English, on the other hand, offers a simpler way to address relatives of the younger generation. English speakers use nephew and niece to refer to both the children of one's lineal siblings and the children of one's spouse's siblings.

Figure 5. Relatives by blood

Children	Er zi		Nu	
	Son		Daughter	
	Brother's children		Sister's children	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Siblings' children (In order of age)	Zhi zi (Da zhi zi)	Zhi nu (Da zhi nu)	Yi sheng (Da yi sheng)	Yi sheng nu (Da yi sheng nu)
	Nephew	Niece	Nephew	Niece

Figure 6. Relatives by marriage

	Children of the husband's brother		Children of the husband's sister	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Children of a spouse's siblings	Zhi zi (Da zhi zi)	Zhi nu (Da zhi nu)	Wai sheng (Da wai sheng)	Wai sheng nu (Da wai sheng nu)
	Nephew	Niece	Nephew	Niece
	Children of the wife's brother		Children of the wife's sister	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Children of a spouse's siblings	Zhi zi (Da zhi zi)	Zhi nu (Da zhi nu)	Yi sheng (Da yi sheng)	Yi sheng nu (Da yi sheng nu)
	Nephew	Niece	Nephew	Niece

As seen in the figures above, Chinese kinship address forms are intricate and diverse. Whether in consanguinity or affinity, they are distinct—each term corresponds to a specific person or identity. Chinese kinship address forms typically differentiate by gender, age, paternal and maternal sides, and more when addressing relatives, whether they are elders, of the same generation, or younger. Chinese people generally avoid addressing relatives by their names directly, as it is considered impolite, especially when addressing elders. In conversations involving specific relatives, it is customary to use precise terms rather than calling them by their names. For instance, to address one's father's second elder brother, the term used would be *er bo fu*. "Er" indicates that he is the second child among his siblings, and "bo fu" is the appropriate term for addressing one's father's elder brother.

In English-speaking societies, the situation is quite the opposite. While similar kinship relationships exist, English kinship address forms are less varied, often relying on repetitive terms that primarily distinguish gender. In spoken English, it is common to call people by their names directly, regardless of whether they are younger, parents, or even elders. This practice is believed to foster a sense of closeness and equality. Address forms are typically used only when mentioning relatives to others.

## 4. Understandings the differences between English and Chinese kinship address forms

The differences between Chinese and English kinship address forms are significant factors contributing to the cultural distinctions between China and the West. It is only by comprehending these distinctions and their underlying reasons that individuals can effectively engage in intercultural communication. This section primarily analyzes the reasons for the divergent kinship address forms in English and Chinese from social, cultural, and economic perspectives.

### 4.1. Social structures

#### 4.1.1. Kinship systems

Lewis Henry Morgan, a renowned American anthropologist and social theorist, published *The Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* in the 1870s. He proposed the existence of two fundamentally distinct kinship systems: classificatory and descriptive. The classificatory system was prevalent in primitive societies, whereas the descriptive system may have been more common in civilized nations. In the classificatory system,

consanguineous relationships are not described individually but are classified into categories, regardless of their proximity or distance to Ego (the central person), and a single term is used to refer to all individuals within the same category (Morgan, 2009, p.403). A classic example of this system is the English word "Cousin", which is used to refer to any relative of the same generation, whether they are the children of one's paternal or maternal uncle or aunt. Conversely, in nations employing the descriptive system, the relationship between the relative and the speaker is explicitly indicated. For instance, in Chinese, *tang di* specifically refers to the son of one's father's brother, and this individual is expected to be younger than oneself. This descriptive system results in distinct address forms for each relative.

#### 4.1.2. Types of kinship terminology

From a cultural anthropology perspective, American anthropologist Murdock introduced six types of kinship terminology: Eskimo, Sudanese, Iroquois, Hawaiian, Omaha, and Crow (Murdock, 1967, p.223). The most intricate among these is the Sudanese system, characterized by its highly descriptive nature, assigning distinct terms to various relatives. Chinese kinship address forms fall under the Sudanese system. In Europe and the United States, the prevailing system is Eskimo, which primarily distinguishes nuclear family members from other relatives. Within the nuclear family, specific descriptive kinship terms are used for parents, siblings, and children. In contrast, for other relatives, kinship address forms are more generalized, making no distinction between relatives on the paternal and maternal sides. This system emphasizes the prominent role of the nuclear family within the kinship structure.

## 4.2. Cultural backgrounds

The differences in kinship address forms reflect the different cultural backgrounds of Chinese and Western societies.

### 4.2.1. Individualism and collectivism

Confucianism has exerted a significant influence over Chinese society, forming a traditional cultural system with Confucian ethics at its core. This system emphasized strict hierarchies within families and values such as ritual, loyalty, and filial piety (obedience to parents, respect for parents, honoring of ancestors, financial support of parents), all of which underscored the collective interests of clans.

In broader society, China endured centuries of feudal rule, resulting in a social structure divided into different hierarchies and classes. Rulers, officials, and scholars emphasized social order and loyalty, further reinforcing the values of collectivism. Given these complex social and family structures, characterized by distinct social classes and relationships, the use of precise and intricate kinship address forms became necessary. These detailed forms enabled individuals from different classes and personalities within the same family to coordinate effectively, contributing to an orderly society that maintained the unity and continuity of larger families.

In contrast, Western culture places a strong emphasis on individualism, highlighting personal freedoms and rights (Zhang, 2006). While the West also experienced a feudal society, the Renaissance in the 14th century marked a shift towards opposing the confinement of individuals by religious theology and advocating for freedom and liberation. Following the Bourgeois Revolution, ideas of freedom, equality, and philanthropy gained prominence. English-

speaking countries lack the traditional, millennia-old core ethical philosophies found in China, such as Confucianism. With a greater focus on nuclear families, their family structures are simpler. Consequently, English kinship address forms are fewer and more general, often lacking distinctions related to the closeness or remoteness of kinship relationships and seniority.

### 4.2.2. Low context and high context

High Context transactions feature preprogrammed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. Low Context transactions are the reverse. Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context (both internal and external) (Hall E. T, 1976, p.101).

In Chinese, kinship terms clearly reflect a high-context culture. They are often not straightforward but depend on the relationship between the speaker, the listener, and their ages. For example, if the person being addressed is the elder sister of one's father, she would be called *gu mu*, and the eldest sister would be called *da gu mu*. If he is the elder brother of one's mother, he would be called *jiu fu*, and the eldest brother would be called *da jiu fu*. Furthermore, high-context cultures typically have complex social norms, and these norms are also reflected in Chinese kinship terms. In formal and informal situations, different terms are used as a form of social etiquette. For example, in formal situations, parents can be called *jia fu*, *jia mu*, *fu qin*, or *mu qin* to show respect and humility. In informal situations, more affectionate terms like *ma mi* or *ba bi* can be used.

On the other hand, low-context cultures emphasize direct and straightforward communication. In English, kinship terms are generally more direct and do not require much contextual or situational information. They also do not heavily reflect differences in social status or age. For example, one can directly refer to siblings as brother or sister or even use the person's name. This is a simple and straightforward way of addressing someone without involving complex social norms or cultural backgrounds. Additionally, low-context cultures emphasize social equality and individualism, where people tend to treat individuals of different social status and age more equally. In English, kinship terms are typically neutral and do not emphasize social status. For example, relatively neutral terms like uncle or aunt can be used to indicate kinship without focusing on social status.

### 4.2.3. Masculinity and femininity

Masculinity and femininity are aspects of cultural dimensions that can also be reflected in Chinese and English kinship terms, albeit in subtle ways. These dimensions, as identified by Geert Hofstede, refer to the extent to which a culture values traditionally masculine or feminine qualities and roles.

The practice of distinguishing between genders is integral to how the Chinese address their relatives. Chinese kinship terms frequently emphasize gender roles. In ancient China, families and clans were interconnected through patrilineal bloodlines, with males assuming dominance within the family structure. The maternal side, as collateral relatives, held significance primarily in terms of lineal blood relationships. For example, terms like *fu* and *mu* are used to denote parental figures. These terms reflect traditional gender roles within the family, where the father is seen as the primary breadwinner and authority figure, while the mother is associated with nurturing and caregiving responsibilities. Chinese kinship

terms can also reflect cultural expectations related to masculinity and femininity. For example, the term *xi fu* (daughter-in-law) carries connotations of duty, obedience, and adaptability, reflecting certain traditional expectations for women in Chinese families.

In contrast, English kinship terms tend to be relatively gender-neutral when compared to Chinese counterparts. For instance, in English, the term “cousin” can apply to all children of parents’ siblings without specifying gender. This neutrality reflects a degree of gender equality and avoids reinforcing rigid gender roles.

It’s essential to recognize that in contemporary Chinese society, an ongoing shift towards more gender-neutral language and evolving gender roles is observed, mirroring changing cultural norms and values. Consequently, some individuals and families may opt for more inclusive and gender-neutral language when referring to their family members.

### 4.3. Economic systems

The differences in kinship address forms between English and Chinese cultures are also influenced, to some extent, by economic development. Cultural and geographical variations have led to divergent agricultural and economic practices in China and English-speaking countries. Driven by the agricultural-centric perspective, traditional Chinese society heavily relied on farming, demanding a substantial labor force. Consequently, larger family sizes with more human resources translated to increased economic power. Traditional Chinese society centered on the clan as the primary production structure and favored the cohabitation of extended families. People’s livelihoods and production were closely tied to the family and clan, necessitating detailed and precise kinship classifications. This was because economic and property inheritance relations often extended even to collateral relatives.

In contrast, cultural groups, such as those in English-speaking countries, associated with relatively simple kinship systems like Eskimo, have regarded the nuclear family as the primary production unit. Historically, they had mercantile tendencies, and with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, they embraced industrialization early on. As a result, individuals in these regions did not rely on large families or clans for their survival, and group relations exerted minimal constraints on individuals. Following the establishment of modern capitalism, high social population mobility, based on private ownership, made it challenging to maintain stable group relations. Consequently, there was no need for such a precise division of kinship address forms in these societies.

## 5. Conclusion

Language serves as both a carrier and a reflection of culture (Shu, 2015). The distinctions between English and Chinese kinship address forms illuminate the contrasting cultures of Chinese and Western societies. China’s prolonged feudal clan system has deeply influenced the intricate kinship address terms (Zhang, 2006). In Chinese, kinship address terms are finely divided, with strict differentiations based on gender, age, paternal and maternal relations, consanguinity, affinity, and more. This complexity arises from China’s history as an agrarian society for thousands of years. Traditional Chinese society centered on agriculture, with the clan as the primary unit and a patriarchal family structure. Given the extensive clan membership and the need for strong connections,

addressing people by their names was infrequent, especially beyond those of the same or younger generations. Within this context, having specific address terms for each relative became essential.

In contrast, in English-speaking countries, kinship address forms are relatively general and inclusive, often with high repetition. They do not typically distinguish between paternal and maternal relatives or prioritize age distinctions. English-speaking societies emphasize small nuclear family units and place a premium on freedom and equality, encouraging individuals to address each other by their first names. The influence of mercantilism and early industrialization allowed English-speaking countries to enter the industrial age ahead of others, enabling individuals to function independently of large extended families. Consequently, family members in these societies interacted less frequently, reducing the urgency for intricate kinship address forms.

It’s important to note that there is no inherent superiority between different kinship systems; each has its unique role and relevance within its respective society. In essence, the study of kinship address forms aims to enhance understanding of the Chinese and English languages and their accompanying cultures. This understanding helps cross-cultural learners avoid pragmatic errors in future communications and engage in more effective intercultural exchanges.

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