Can You Say My Name?

Understanding Chinese & Taiwanese Students’ Names in a U.S. Context

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Survey Finding Summary:
Do you have an English name?

- In 2017, a survey was sent to 3672 international students and scholars from P.R. China, including:
  - 3166 students
  - 506 scholars
- In 2019, a survey was sent to 393 international students and scholars from Taiwan, including:
  - 385 students
  - 8 scholars
Survey Responses

China

Taiwan

I am an international...
340 responses

I am an international...
76 responses
Do you have an English name?

China

340 responses

- Yes: 58.8%
- No: 41.2%
China: 58.8% = I prefer to use my English name because...

- 55.6% = "It is easier for others to pronounce it."
- 44.1% = "Others can not pronounce my Chinese name accurately."
- 3.2% = "I like my English name better than my Chinese name."
China: 41.2% = I prefer to use my Chinese name because...

- 62.4% = “I love my Chinese name because it represents my family tradition and has a special meaning.”
- 33.5% = “I do not want to be called something else.”
- 22.9% = “Others do not have trouble pronouncing my name.”
How do you introduce yourself to someone who is not Chinese?

China

![Pie chart showing the percentage of responses to the question. 70.9% introduce themselves with their Chinese name, and 29.1% introduce themselves with their English name.]
Do you have an English name?

Taiwan

![Pie chart showing the percentage of people with an English name in Taiwan. The chart indicates that 81.6% have an English name, while 18.4% do not.](chart.png)
Taiwan: 81.6% = I prefer to use my English name because...

- 68.4% = “It is easier for others to pronounce it.”
- 44.7% = “Others can not pronounce my Chinese name accurately.”
- 18.4% = “I like my English name better than my Chinese name.”
Taiwan: 18.4% = I prefer to use my Chinese/Taiwanese name because...

- 47.4% = “I love my name because it represents my family tradition and has a special meaning.”
- 25% = “I do not want to be called something else.”
- 19.7% = “Others do not have trouble pronouncing my name.”
How do you introduce yourself to someone who is not Chinese/Taiwanese?

Taiwan

[Pie chart showing responses: 65.8% choose to introduce themselves with their Chinese/Taiwanese name, 34.2% choose to introduce themselves with their English name.]
My name is Huan-Hsiang...

Taiwan

- Meaningful name given by my parents.
  - Huan (煥) - Bright
  - Hsiang (翔) - Soaring
- Had an English in childhood name as “supposed” to have due to Western influence.

U.S.

- Initially used English name as “It is easier for others to pronounce it.”
- Sense of incongruence when using English name.
- Feeling proud of own cultural identity and heritage through using original Chinese name.
- Respect.
My name is Kate ...

China

- Chinese names: unlimited combinations of thousand characters.
- Meaning is more important than sound.
- The culture of a foreign language school

U.S.

- Adaptation
- Social acceptance
- Convenient in communication
- Future career
Impact of Pronunciation

• If someone pronounces your name correctly, you feel acknowledged, accepted, respected...

• If someone mispronounces your name, you feel uncomfortable, misunderstood, marginalized...
Why is this important?

• Names are very personal and an important part of everyone’s identity.

• Foster a feeling of acceptance. Identity does not need to be compromised in a new environment.
What can we do to have a positive impact on this process?

Ask
- Help me pronounce your name
- What do you want to be called?
- What name do you want to go by?

Check
- Once you hear the name, repeat it and ask if you got it right.

Model good practice by calling individuals by name
- Use a prompt “Remind me of your name again!”

Practice
- Repeat the name to yourself several times aloud.
Chinese/Taiwanese Names and Characters

- Family name is listed first and generally has one character:
  - Gong Li
  - Zhang Fangyuan
  - Ouyang Zhenxun

- No middle name. Given name usually has one or two characters.
- Both family and given names are used when addressing someone.
- Addressed by first name only among family members or relatives.
- Characters: simplified (China) vs traditional (Taiwan)
- Taiwan: first name is hyphenated in most cases if it contains two characters.
Pronouncing Chinese Names

- **Pinyin**, or Hanyu Pinyin, literally, spell out the sound. It is the official phonetic system for transcribing the Mandarin pronunciations of Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet.

- Example: 欢迎 huan ying

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<th>m</th>
<th>f</th>
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Pronouncing Taiwanese Names

- **Phonetic Symbols**, or bopomofo, also called Zhuyin, is the major Chinese transliteration system that is nowadays most commonly used in Taiwan.

- **Example**: 歡迎 ㄏㄨㄢ ㄧㄥˊ
Chinese is a tonal language. This means the pitch or tone in which a sound is said affects the meaning.
Example: ma

There is also a neutral (or toneless) tone, which is pronounced very weakly. The neutral tone has no mark above the vowel.
Chinese vs Taiwanese: Spellings and Pronunciations

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<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Taiwanese</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weng</td>
<td>Ueng/Weng</td>
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<td>Zheng</td>
<td>Tseng</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xie</td>
<td>Hsieh</td>
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<td>Zhang</td>
<td>Chang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cai</td>
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</table>
Resources

Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies

Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA)

Michigan Taiwan Student Association (MTSA)

Mandarin Chinese Pinyin Chart

The Ann Arbor Chinese Language and Culture Meetup Group
Q & A

Evaluation

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