

Chinese Name Pronunciation

Xinrui Li, PhD

Program Manager

Career & Professional Development Office



**Scripps
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Why should we care

- Large Chinese-speaking population at Scripps Research
- Not just Chinese names, but all names
- Cultural competence

How are Chinese names different from American names?

- **Family name** + **Given name**
Yao Ming
Mao Zedong
- No middle name
- Family name is normally one syllable (occasionally two)
- Given name can be one or two syllables (occasionally three)
- Each syllable has 4 tones



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yao_Ming

Xinrui Li can be pronounced $4 \times 4 \times 4 = 64$ different ways!

How are Chinese names different from American names?

- Chinese family names are more “concentrated”

Most common family names:

U.S.		U.K.		China	
Family Name	% of Population	Family Name	% of Population	Family Name	% of Population
Smith	0.79	Smith	0.76	Wang 王	7.25
Johnson	0.62	Jones	0.61	Li 李	7.19
Williams	0.53	Williams	0.46	Zhang 张	6.83

Summary of concentration:

- U.S.: Smith (0.79%), Johnson (0.62%), Williams (0.53%) = 1.94%
- U.K.: Smith (0.76%), Jones (0.61%), Williams (0.46%) = 1.83%
- China: Wang (7.25%), Li (7.19%), Zhang (6.83%) = 21.27%

How are Chinese names different from American names?

- Chinese first names are more unique
 - Given names almost always picked for the meaning (and sound)
 - 伟 Wei (great)
 - 强 Qiang (strong)
 - 丽 Li (pretty)
 - 诚 Cheng (honest)
 - 聪 Cong (smart)
 - Given names almost never inherited from a family member or celebrity

Chinese Pinyin 101 (Mandarin)

- Pinyin: literally “spelled sounds”, is a system to write standard Chinese using a Romanized alphabet
- The first widespread pinyin: **Wade-Giles**, was developed by two British diplomats around 1859. Still in use in Taiwan
- In the 1950s, the mainland Chinese government developed the **new pinyin**

Peking ----- Beijing
Chungking -- Chongqing

Pei leoh Ming (I.M. Pei) -- Bei Yuming
Tsai Ing-wen ----- Cai Yingwen

Chinese Pinyin 101

- Another complication: Mandarin vs Cantonese
- Hong Kong names are spelled in Cantonese in Wade-Giles
Chow Yun-Fat ---- Zhou Runfa



Romanization variations

张

Zhang: Mainland China

Chang: Taiwan

Cheung: Hong Kong

Jang/Chang: Korea

Trương/Trang: Vietnam

Let's try a few names!

- Try saying the names aloud
- Write down the ones you find difficult

Bin Cai

Yanqiao Chen

Shaoquan Qian

Ge Song

Licheng Yang

Zhixiang Xu

Jian Li

Simple vowels

- **A - father**
 - Ma = mah
 - Ta = tah
 - Chang – rhymes more with “bong” than “bang”
- **E - uh**
 - He = huh
- **I - bee**
 - Li = lee
- **O - or**
 - Bo (starts out like “war” then changes into an “aw” or “uh”)
- **U - boo**
 - Wu = woo
 - After j, q, x and y, as a German **ü**
 - Yu = Yü

Chinese Pinyin 101:

Consonants

- **J - jump**

- Jiang = ji-ah-ng
- Ji = jee

- **X - sheep**

- Xi = shee
- Xiao = shee-aw

- **Q - cheese**

- Qi = chee
- Qun = ch-when

- **R - pleasure**

- Ran
- Ren

Chinese Pinyin 101: Consonants

- **C - cats**

- Cai = tsai
- Can = tsan
- Cong = ts-uh-ng

- **Z - dz**

- Zai = dz-eye

- **Y - you**

- Yuan = you-one
- Yang = young

Chinese Pinyin 101: Consonants

- **Zh - jog**

- Zhang = j-ah-ng
- Zheng = j-uh-ng

- **Ch - change**

- Chang = ch-ah-ng
- Chu = Choo

Chinese Pinyin 101:

Compound vowels

- **AI - eye**

- Mai = m-eye
- Tai = t-eye

- **AO - awe**

- Cao = ts-awe
- Shao = sh-awe

- **EI - may**

- Mei = may

- **EN - en**

- Chen = chen

Compound vowels

- **IA - chia**

- Xia = shee-yah
- Qiang = ch-yah-ng

- **IE - ee + yet**

- Xie = shee-yeh

- **IU - you**

- Liu = lee-you

- **IAO - ee + awe**

- Liao = lee-awe
- Xiao = shee-awe

- **IAN - yen**

- Xian = shee-yen
- Qian = chee-yen

Chinese Pinyin 101:

Compound vowels

- **OU - oh**

- Hou = h-oh
- Lou = low

- **ONG - uh ng**

- Cong = ts-uh-ng
- Rong = r-uh-ng

Compound vowels

- **UA - oo+ah**

- Hua = who-ah

- **UE - oo+eh**

- Xue = shoo-eh
- Yue = yoo-eh

- **UI - way**

- Hui = hoo-ay
- Sui = soo-ay
- Rui = ray

- **UO - water**

- Guo = g-wa

- **UAI - oo+eye**

- Huai = hoo-eye
- Shuai = shoo-eye

Compound vowels

- **CHI/SHI/ZHI - shirt** (say shirt but stop just as the “r” sound is beginning)
 - Chi = chr
 - Shi = shr
 - Zhi = jr
- **Zi/Ci/Si/Ri - i is a silent uh**
 - Zi = zuh
 - Ci = tsuh
 - Si = suh

Let's practice!

Thanks to our facilitators! Let's start with their names :)

- Yan Cao
- Haina Huang

Top five issues

- Ang (Wang)
- C (Cao)
- Q (Quan)
- X (Xin)
- Zh (Zhang)

References and Resources

Materials adapted from:

- <https://chinesepod.com/tools/pronunciation/>
- <https://prezi.com/dme747vds2fu/copy-of-how-to-pronounce-chinese-names/>
- <https://www.cs.rutgers.edu/~mdstone/class/ls04/lec/chinese.pdf>

Useful websites

- <http://pronouncenames.com/>
- <http://studentaffairs.ucdavis.edu/stayday/stayday-2015/pronouncing-chinese-names.pdf>