Chinese Name Pronunciation

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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

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

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yao_Ming
How are Chinese names different from American names?

- Chinese family names are more “concentrated”

Most common family names:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th></th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Name</td>
<td>% of Population</td>
<td></td>
<td>Family Name</td>
<td>% of Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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  Pei Ieoh Ming (I.M. Pei) -- Bei Yuming
  Chungking -- Chongqing  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
Chinese Pinyin 101:
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
Chinese Pinyin 101:

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
Chinese Pinyin 101:

**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
Chinese Pinyin 101:

**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://pronuncenames.com/