Crash Course Chinese

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Presented by William & Mary Confucius Institute
Overview of the Workshop

- Composition of Chinese names
- Meanings of Chinese names
- Tips for bridging the cultural gap
- Structure of the Chinese phonetic system
- A few easily confused syllables
- Chinese as a tonal language
- Useful expressions in daily life
## Composition of Chinese Names

- Chinese names include 姓 surname and 名 given name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>姓</td>
<td>Surname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>名</td>
<td>Given name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Given name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Given name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>杨 (yáng)</td>
<td>璐 (lù)</td>
<td>鲁 (lù)</td>
<td>晨 (chén) 一 (yì) 夫 (fū)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>刘 (liú)</td>
<td>燕 (yàn) 敏 (mǐn)</td>
<td>Yanmin</td>
<td>Liu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>陈 (chén)</td>
<td>晨 (chén)</td>
<td>Chenyifu</td>
<td>Chen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Composition of Chinese Names

• The top three surnames 王(wáng), 李(lǐ), 张(zhāng) cover more than 20% of the population.

• Compound surnames are rare. They are mostly restricted to minority groups. Familiar compound surnames are 欧 (ōu)阳(yáng), 东(dōng)方(fāng), 上(shàng)官(guān), etc.
What does it mean?

• Pleasing sounds and/or tonal qualities
• Beautiful shapes (symmetrical shaped characters like 林 (lín), 森 (sēn), 品 (pǐn), 晶 (jīng), 磊 (lěi), 鑫 (xīn)).
• Positive association
• Masculine vs. feminine
Major types of male names

- Firmness and strength: 刚 (gāng), 力 (lì), 坚 (jiān)
- Power: 伟 (wěi), 强 (qiáng), 雄 (xióng)
- Bravery: 勇 (yǒng)
- Virtues and values: 信 (xìn), 诚 (chéng), 正 (zhèng), 义 (yì)
- Beauty: 帅 (shuài), 俊 (jùn), 高 (gāo), 凯 (kǎi)
Major types of female names

- Flowers or plants: 梅 (méi), 菊 (jú), 兰 (lán)
- Seasons: 春 (chūn), 夏 (xià), 秋 (qiū), 冬 (dōng)
- Quietness and serenity: 静 (jìng)
- Purity and cleanness: 白 (bái), 洁 (jié), 清 (qīng), 晶 (jīng), 莹 (yíng)
- Beauty: 美 (měi), 丽 (lì), 倩 (qiàn)
- Jade: 玉 (yù), 璐 (lù)
- Birds: 燕 (yàn)
Cultural nuances regarding Chinese names

• Names reflecting particular times such as:
  援(yuán) 朝(cháo) Supporting North Korea
  国(guó) 庆(qìng) National Day
• Female names reflecting male chauvinism such as:
  来(lái) 弟(dì), 招(zhāo) 弟(dì), 娣(dì) Seeking a little brother
• Since 1950s, women do not change their surnames after getting married in mainland China.
Tips for bridging the cultural gap

• Ask Chinese people what the meaning of their names is to show your care without offending them. They might tell you a story about it!
• Sometimes a Chinese person may go by an English name. You can ask them which name they prefer to be addressed by. The preference varies by person.
Structure of the Chinese Language

- Pinyin
  - Initials
  - Finals
  - Tones
- Characters
  - Radicals
  - Stroke Order

你好!
Hello!

nǐ hǎo
你好！
Hello！
Structure of Chinese Pinyin: initial + final + tone

你 nǐ = n + ī
好 hǎo = h + ǎo
叭  trumpet
拔  pull
靶  target
爸  father
### Summary of Initials (21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>similar to “Jee” in jeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>similar to “chee” in cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>similar to “shee” in sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>similar to “ds” in beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>similar to “ts” in cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>similar to “s” in snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zh</td>
<td>similar to “dr” in dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch</td>
<td>similar to “ch” in church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sh</td>
<td>similar to “sh” in shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>similar to “r” in rose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
早上好！Good morning.
Zhū Chang

Zhāng Chang
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Finals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple finals (6)</td>
<td>a o e i u ü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound finals (13)</td>
<td>ai ei ao ou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ia iao ie iu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ua uo uai ui üe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal finals (16)</td>
<td>an en ang eng ong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ian in iang ing iong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uan un uang ueng üan ün</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top 10 surnames in China (2014)

李 王 张 刘 陈
杨 赵 黄 周 吴
A few popular compound surnames (2014)

ōu yáng zhū gě duān mù shàng guān

欧阳 诸葛 端木 上官

huáng fǔ nán gōng sī mǎ dōng fāng

皇甫 南宫 司马 东方
How to greet Chinese people?

nǐ hǎo
你好！
Hello!

zǎo shànghǎo
早上好！
Good morning!
chī le ma

吃了吗？ Have you eaten?
Useful expressions in daily life

xiè xiè （nǐ）
谢谢（你）！
Thanks/thank you!

bú kè qì
不客气！
You are welcome!
对不起！
I’m sorry!

没关系！
That’s all right!
zhōu mò yú kuài！

周末愉快！

Have a great weekend!
再见！
Goodbye！
xiè xiè

谢谢！

Thank you!