



Article

Going by an English Name: The Adoption and Use of English Names by Young Taiwanese Adults

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Abstract: It is easy to understand why Taiwanese students play the part of the name assigned to them in English class, but why do so many of them continue to use this name long after their school years? A survey of young Taiwanese adults, with follow-up interviews, investigated how and why they acquire and use an English name. The results mirror previously reported tendencies and suggest some new insights into the motivation and functionality of this practice. The data show that self-identification with their Western name offers pragmatic social and cultural advantages, including international identity, escape from rigid cultural formalities impeding social advances, establishing friendliness without getting too close, as well as self-expression. As concerns the often discussed nature of English names, the results indicate that the selection of an English name is influenced by Chinese name selection practice, the tendency to make the name unique or somehow related to the Chinese name, and especially by its intended role. As in previous studies, we found some unusual names, but these were used mainly as a nickname in communication with peers.

Keywords: English name; Chinese name; Taiwan; pragmalinguistics; sociolinguistics; naming practices; identity; nickname

1. Introduction

In recent years, it has been increasingly common to hear Asian people introduce themselves under their “English name”, although only a fraction of them were born in a western country or into an international marriage. This trend of using English, or more precisely, foreign names, can be observed especially among ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong (e.g., Mathews 1996; Li 1997), Singapore (Tan 2001), Macau (Cheang 2008), Taiwan (Liao 2000; Chen 2015), and also mainland China (Lee 2001; Edwards 2006; Henry 2012). While the practice of acquiring and using an English name can be at least partially ascribed to the challenging pronunciation of Chinese names and specific Chinese naming practices (e.g., Jones 1997; Li 1997; Louie 1998; Liao 2000; Chen 2016; Guccini 2017, etc.), including the relative flexibility of having multiple names in traditional Chinese culture, it may vary in some local aspects, having arisen under different historical circumstances and pursuing various aims.

Cheang (2008, p. 197), researching the use of English names by the Macanese, noted that in many countries with a colonial past, it is not uncommon for people to receive a name in other than their native language. Mathews (1996, p. 404), who studied the use of English names by ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong, pointed out that western names are convenient especially in educational and commercial settings for being perceived neither as formal as full Chinese names or intimate as Chinese given names. According to Li (1997), the Hongkongers who have adopted an English name are called by their Chinese name much less frequently. Other research into the use of English names by Chinese learners of English from the Chinese mainland (Edwards 2006) has indicated that English names can be imposed by teachers of English (cf. Sercombe et al. 2014), and that the widespread practice of adopting

English or anglicized names reveals the users' attitudes, both positive and negative, to British culture and learning English. Chien (2012) found that using English names positively influences the English learning attitude of Taiwanese elementary school children.

A number of studies discuss the nature of English names adopted by ethnic Chinese (e.g., Lee 2001; Liao 2000; Heffernan 2010), pointing out that many of these names significantly differ from names typically used in English-speaking countries, and attribute this difference primarily to the influence of Chinese naming practices. However, it remains unclear in what situations such unusual names are actually used.

The above-mentioned papers address the issue of the adoption of English names by ethnic Chinese from various perspectives, and with the focus on various target groups, including, for example, ethnic Chinese students staying abroad (Heffernan 2010; Chen 2016; Guccini 2017; Schmitt 2019).

This paper explores the practice of acquiring an English name among the Taiwanese, and the functions that these names are seen to fulfill outside of English class, in their adult life, not only when communicating in English, but also in Chinese. While it is expected that most adults in their 20s and 30s have acquired an English name, as the acquisition seems closely connected with the Taiwan's education system, the aim of this research is to provide insights into the motivations for its continuous use in their adult life.

The research also investigates the perception of the relative importance of their English name, and from this perspective considers their particular name choices as well as the manner and circumstances in which they use their name.

Furthermore, we question to what extent the adoption and use of their foreign name outside of English class has become an integral part of Taiwanese culture.

2. Methodology

The initial data for this study were collected through a survey questionnaire (Google Forms, English and Chinese versions) (Please see English version in Supplementary Materials) filled out by 76 respondents, 61 females and 15 males, age 18–41. Since the goal of the research was to understand the motivations for the continued use of English names by young Taiwanese adults, which is a qualitative question, we chose a smaller sample size questionnaire complemented by follow-up interviews, rather than a sample size sufficient to support statistical analysis, although noticeable trends were pointed out in the paper.

The questionnaire survey was conducted in the autumn of 2019, shortly after 40 of the respondents had arrived at the Faculty of Informatics and Management of the University of Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. They came for one semester from various study fields from several different Taiwanese universities. Three respondents worked as teaching assistants at the Department of Asian Studies at Palacky University, Czech Republic, and the remaining respondents were in Taiwan, reached through one of the teaching assistants. The gender imbalance was caused primarily by the predominance of women at the universities. However, there was no indication that gender was a significant factor among our respondents, so no attempt was made to seek gender balance or to divide the respondents into two groups by gender.

Questions raised by the responses to this initial survey were further investigated for more in-depth information during interviews with 11 respondents at the University of Hradec Kralove, who either expressed interest in the research or were asked to clarify some answers, and, additionally, the 3 respondents at Palacky University.

The mother tongue of the respondents was mostly Mandarin, in a few cases Taiwan Southern Min or Taiwan Hakka, but all of them were fluent users of Mandarin. English was their first foreign language, which they had studied for at least 10 years, and most of them enjoyed using it. With regard to their education, they either were enrolled in or had graduated from at least a bachelor's degree, and most had experience studying, or at least traveling abroad.

The structure of the questionnaire, which consisted mostly of open-ended questions, was as follows: The first part solicited the abovementioned background information. The second part inquired about the circumstances under which the respondents acquired their first English name, who had given it to them and when, and how many times they had changed their name. We sought more detailed information concerning their currently used name, including why they selected it, their satisfaction with it, and its perception in respect to their Chinese name. The last set of questions focused on how and why the respondent uses their current name in interaction with foreigners, and with other Taiwanese.

The follow-up interviews followed the structure of the questionnaire and were used to clarify the meaning of some responses and elicit more detailed information concerning issues raised by the survey. Additionally, the respondents were free to express their feelings and viewpoints, which exposed further aspects not included in the original questionnaire.

The comments by the respondents cited in the following section to illustrate the various points under discussion come from the questionnaires. Those written in Chinese are presented in English translation.

The research was conducted with a limited number of respondents who might well be better educated and more global than their peers, although, as explained above, the respondents staying in the Czech Republic had just arrived and it was, in most cases, their first stay abroad. Thus, their stay in Europe might influence their future use of their English name but not so much their responses to the questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1. Acquisition of an English Name as an Established Practice within Taiwan's Education System

Heffernan (2010, p. 33) noted that the English names of Hong Kong respondents in his survey tended to be chosen by a family member, but not so in Taiwan, the Mainland or Korea. Although some of our respondents stated they had received their English name from their parents, at birth, or a few years later, the majority received their first English name from their first teacher of English at an educational institution, most of them during either pre-school education or elementary school education, the rest when in high school.

In Taiwan, it has become a common practice to receive an English name during the first English class at either a regular school or a cram school (private after-school classes). Until 2001, English was taught as a mandatory subject from junior high school, in 2001 it was officially introduced to elementary schools as well, starting in the fifth grade, and four years later in the third grade (Chen and Tsai 2012). Thus, respondents above the age of 31 started learning English at school not later than at the age of 12 or 13, i.e., in junior high school. Those 25–30 years old had started by the age of 10 or 11, i.e., in the fifth grade of elementary school, and younger respondents by the age of 8 or 9. However, some of them started learning English much earlier, in kindergarten or privately. In addition to making it possible for foreign teachers to pronounce and remember their students' names, the acquisition of an English name is used to help the students identify with the target language and culture (Chien 2012).

The practice now has been ubiquitous for several decades, and consequently is an expected part of their shared culture. The vast majority of the respondents (98.1% of those below the age of 30 and 85.7% of the older respondents) have an English name. Only four respondents (one in her 20s and three in their 30s) did not initially admit to having an English name. These four perceived their Chinese name easy to pronounce and remember, and one of them additionally considered it more respectful to be called by her Chinese name.

Many respondents described the bestowal of an English name by their teacher as a routine at their school. Some teachers suggested the respondents a few names to choose from or tried to find a name that would sound similar to the respondent's Chinese name, but in some cases the selection depended more on the seating order in the classroom than anything else. One respondent (29 yrs.) mentioned that she received her English name, *Naomi*, when she was eight from the office lady at the counter of the children's English cram school.

3.2. Changing Names

Considering the nature of the acquisition, it is not surprising that more than half of the respondents changed their English name at some point in their life. This selection of one's own English name shows an obvious interest in having an English name, and particularly having one that expresses the bearer's self-identity. Most of those who had not changed it either received it from their parents (just as their Chinese name) or had a chance to influence its selection. The majority of those who changed their name did so only once, often because they did not particularly like the name selected by their teacher, and thus later chose a new name they liked, as illustrated by examples 1 and 2:

(1) *My first English name was Angela, and I thought it was too common when I was 13, so I changed it by myself. I took my current name from an actress of an American TV drama that I liked at that time.* (Elena, 24 yrs.)

(2) *I changed my English name when I went to college because my previous English name, which I had received from my kindergarten teacher, was too childish.* (Claire, 20 yrs., transl. from Chinese)

Some respondents mentioned that they had used various names, depending on the class or occasion, and later, in high school or at college, chose their current name, with which they feel comfortable. Interestingly, some respondents make use of several names at the same time: they can get a new English name in addition to their existing name or names upon entering some new social circle.

As example 1 demonstrates, a frequent reason for changing the name is that it is too common. Meeting a person with the same name is a good enough reason to choose a new one. The new name does not necessarily have to be unique but needs to be unique within the respondent's environment (cf. Liao 2000, pp. 135, 173; Lee 2001; Cheang 2008, p. 200 reported similar findings for Macau).

Another reason for changing the name is the desire to have a name that would have a deeper meaning than just some randomly selected name, would better express or suit the respondent's personality, would be evocative of the sound or meaning of the respondent's family name or Chinese given name, etc. (cf. Chen 2015). Here are some examples of English names that are related to their bearers' given names through sound similarity: 毓昕 *Yùxīn*¹ → *Cindy*, 明軒 *Míngxuān* → *Michelle*, 亮婷 *Liàngtíng* → *Tina*, 奕伸 *Yìshēn* → *Eason*, etc.

In addition, the selection is frequently motivated by Western popular culture, the respondent's favorite personality, often an American TV drama character or actor (example 1), member of a music band, sportsman, etc., or is carefully selected from a name dictionary. The influence of Western culture is obviously present in name selection, and its popularity among the younger generation shows a desire to be a part of Western culture.

Most respondents are satisfied with their current name, including many who had not been satisfied with their first name. A few respondents still plan to change names when they find one they really like, or when their life situation changes (example 3).

(3) *My current name Pica is motivated by my school nickname Pikachu. It seems too "childish" so I might have to get a new one when facing some professional occasion.* (Pica, 23 yrs.)

3.3. The Nature of the Names

It has been repeatedly pointed out in the literature that Chinese people tend to like unique English names, including names that are common nouns, such as *Butterfly* (Heffernan 2010), *Moment* (Liao 2000, p. 157), *Bison*, *Echo* or *Feeling* (Lee 2001), names of famous personalities such as *Magic Johnson* (Lee 2001), fictional and mythological characters such as *Lancelot* (Liao 2000, p. 157), *Jekyll*, *Satan* and *Medusa* (Lee 2001), etc.²

¹ Chinese names are transcribed using the Pinyin system.

² McPherron (2009) noted that mainland Chinese English names may be quite unusual (i.e., not typically American or British), but many of his respondents said that they would change their name if they went abroad.

However, only a few of the names given by our 76 respondents were of such various natures. The rest of them were already existing names (see Table 1 below). According to worldwide statistics provided by the website “The meaning of the name”,³ more than half (51.5%) of the respondents’ names rank among the 500 most frequent names (male and female names combined), and more than two thirds (70.6%) rank among the top 1000 names. Another website, MyNameStats.com,⁴ which provides statistics for name occurrence in the United States (also male and female names together), yielded similar results: 55.9% of the names rank among the top 500 and 67.7% among the top 1000 names. Only 10.2% of the names according to the former statistics and 13.2% according to the latter were as rare as ranking outside the 10,000 most frequent names. Furthermore, some of the more unique names given by our respondents are simply modified variants of relatively common names, such as *Anny* (from *Annie*), or *Evone* (from *Evonne*), which the name bearers either misspelled or just wanted to be unique (cf. McPherron 2009).

Table 1. Frequency of occurrence of the respondents’ English names.

Frequency of Occurrence	“The Meaning of the Name” (%)	MyNameStats.com (%)	Examples
1–499	51.5	55.9	Male: <i>Gilbert, Jack, James, Joe, John, Neil, Sam, Wayne</i> ; Female: <i>Alison, Angela, Ashley, Carol, Cindy, Claire, Erica, Grace, Heidi, Jenny, Jessica, Joanne, Lisa, Michelle, Nicole, Peggy, Samantha, Shane, Shirley, Tammy, Tiffany</i>
500–999	19.1	11.8	Female: <i>Belinda, Daisy, Elena, Maggie, May, Naomi, Sylvia, Trisha, Vivian, Yolanda</i>
1000–1499	5.9	5.9	
1500–1999	2.9	5.9	Male: <i>Johann, Kai</i> ; Female: <i>Demi, Genie, Hollie, Ivory, Kelsie, Mina, Winnie</i>
2000–4999	10.3	4.4	
5000–9999	0	2.9	
10,000–19,999	2.9	2.9	Male: <i>Draven, Eason</i> ; Female: <i>Effy, Evone, Pica, Sylvania, Witty</i>
20,000–39,999	4.4	0	
40,000–	2.9	10.3	

Four of the names given by the respondents are actually just Romanized Chinese names, which the respondents nonetheless considered their English name (e.g., *Yachi*). For some Taiwanese, the term “English name” seems to refer not just to a name that might be used in an English-speaking country, but to any name written in the Latin alphabet.

3.4. The Perception of One’s Own English Name

When asked to categorize the significance of their English name, almost 40% of the respondents valued their English name as much as their Chinese name, and one person even higher. The rest considered it less important or a nickname (Table 2).

Table 2. The perception of one’s own English name.

	Respondents (%)
Name which is more important than your Chinese name	1.4
Name which is as important as your Chinese name	39.7
Name which is less important than your Chinese name	28.8
Nickname	30.1

³ Available online: <https://thenameofthename.com/> (accessed on 6 March 2020).

⁴ Available online: <https://www.mynamstats.com/> (accessed on 6 March 2020).

Those who marked their English name as equally important as their Chinese name usually have a more frequently used name; names such as *Effy*, *Draven*, *Pica* or *Witty* were considered a nickname or less important than their Chinese name. For example, *Effy* (30 yrs.) received this name from her husband. She likes it because it is cute and considers it her nickname, which she uses only occasionally.

The only respondent who marked his “English” name more important than his Chinese name studies his MA overseas. He does not like being associated with China, and therefore has no affinity to Chinese names in general. He even changed his name on his official documents, although he chose the name *Johann* because it is close to his Chinese name *Jiāhàn* (佳翰). He does not mind his own name in particular, but he dislikes Chinese names in general.

It might be expected that those who are not particularly happy with their Chinese given name might place more importance on their English name. While they receive their Chinese given name at birth and cannot influence the choice (although one respondent has changed her name), with the English name they have the freedom of selection. Yet there does not seem to be any correlation between the preferences for their Chinese or English name based on the liking/disliking of the former. Unsurprisingly, those changing their English name were among those actually using it.

Those who consider their Chinese name more important emphasize the fact that it has a meaning, that it is the first gift they received from their parents, and that they live in Taiwan. Several respondents clearly value the permanence of their Chinese name.

(4) *As for Asian people, our original names have more meaning to us, according to our religion and culture. The English name is a kind of name that helps me get in touch with foreign culture.* (Claire, 21 yrs.)

(5) *Chinese name is a name parents will think about for a long time to pick or create... From the name, we can understand what parents want to give to their child. You can only change your name twice during your whole life, but we can change our English name anytime . . .* (Cindy, 22 yrs.)

Those who consider their English name as equally important as their Chinese name say that while both names represent them, the English name is also part of their identity, especially for those who have chosen their own name, and they would not now want to change it.⁵

(6) *They are both “me”.* (Daisy, 22 yrs.)

(7) *I like the [English] name I use now. I use this name not only as a nickname but also as my official name when I publish a paper or make a public presentation. This name is also registered in my passport as an “also known as”.* (Gilbert, 41 yrs.)

(8) *One [the Chinese name] is the expectation of my parents, one [the English name] is the name I chose for myself.* (Shirley, 29 yrs.)

3.5. Using Their English Name

Almost everyone gets an English name for their English class, and it is among that group they use it almost exclusively, and this use usually spreads to interactions with peers even outside the classroom. Several respondents also mentioned parents, who initiated or otherwise supported its acquisition. On the other hand, many parents of the respondents do not even seem to know the English name of their child, or do not consider it important. This could be related to the relatively recent nature of this phenomenon.⁶

Their use of their English name varies widely, influenced by both their attitude and environment. During their elementary and high school years many respondents considered their English name simply

⁵ On questions of identity, particularly for overseas students, see [Schmitt \(2019\)](#).

⁶ For parental views of the adoption of English names see [Huang and Ke \(2016\)](#).

an unavoidable thing required mainly in English classes, especially those taught by foreigners, but later they began to appreciate it not only in communication with foreigners but even with other Taiwanese.

As Table 3 below and the respondents' further comments indicate, the next place after school where English names are commonly used is in companies, especially those with foreign partners or customers. As many as 38.5% of the respondents use their English name in communication with their colleagues, which is a high number, considering that many of the respondents are still students and probably not all of them have a part-time job. In interaction with close friends, the respondents use their Chinese given name or full name, their Chinese nickname and also the English name. The choice depends, among other factors, on the particular situation and mood. One in four respondents marked the English name as the most common choice. The same number of respondents marked English for communication with not very close friends, but not the same ones. Some prefer using it with close friends, some with not very close friends (see Section 3.5.2). Not surprisingly, English names are also preferred when communicating on Facebook and other social media where the English name serves as their pseudonym.

Table 3. The use of English names with certain groups of people.

	Number of Respondents (%)
Parents	9.0
Partner	16.7
Close friends	25.6
Not very close friends	25.6
Colleagues at work	38.5
Teachers of English	92.3
Other teachers	19.2

It is possible in Taiwan to include the English name as an “also known as” in the passport along with the Chinese name (cf. Schmitt 2019), and 12.3% of those who possess an English name take advantage of this possibility. Several respondents mentioned having their English name on a school ID or other document. These examples show a serious identification with the English name, and even official authorities accept its use.

When asked in which situations they would use only their Chinese name, most of the respondents mentioned official situations, when signing official documents or when they need their name to match their official documents. Chinese names are also preferred in communication with older people and within the family.

3.5.1. English Names in Communication with Foreigners

Similar to Neil in example 9 below, almost all the respondents prefer using their English name when communicating with foreigners. Several respondents explained that sometimes they did not even recognize that a foreigner had called their Chinese name. They wish to avoid a situation when the foreigner cannot remember or pronounce their Chinese name correctly, which could be embarrassing for both parties. In addition to accommodating the foreigner, they also protect their own face, as example 10 illustrates:

(9) *I feel more comfortable when people call my English name.* (Neil, 21 yrs.)

(10) *The last word of my Chinese name is hard to pronounce in the right way for foreigners. If they pronounce it in the third tone, the meaning of the word will change from poem to dung. And I really want to avoid that kind of situation.* (Ivory, 21 yrs.)

Many Chinese given names are quite problematic for foreigners. Those who can speak Chinese may not realize that without the knowledge of the rather complicated Romanization rules one can hardly guess the reading of a name such as *Guǎngxiáng* or *Xiānqīng*, and, moreover, pronounce it with

the proper tone (which, unlike in these two examples, is usually not even indicated in the transcription), and thus with the correct lexical meaning. Such a name is then hard to remember, too. An English name also makes a clear distinction for a foreigner between the given name and the family name. An English name thus makes it easier to start a conversation and develop rapport.

Some of the respondents, on the other hand, feel uncomfortable using an English name, since people from most non-English speaking countries use their own name when communicating with foreigners.

(11) *When I studied abroad, I always used my Chinese name. Everyone from different countries used their real name to introduce himself or herself, only Asians hesitated. I felt bad for this kind of situation. We can still be proud of our own name.* (Ashley, 23 yrs.)

3.5.2. English Names in Communication with Other Taiwanese

Although some respondents answered that they only use their English name when communicating with foreigners and never with Taiwanese people, for others it is quite common. The following two respondents (examples 12 and 13) both have an English name and consider it as important as their Chinese name, yet they have a very different experience with its use in interaction with other Taiwanese people:

(12) *I never met a situation that they [Taiwanese people] would call my English name, except for an English class.* (Peggy, 21 yrs.)

(13) *It is a very common way for the Taiwanese to use the English name with their friends they meet in informal occasion.* (Gilbert, 41 yrs.)

For some respondents, an English name is simply trendy, classy, or cute. Many in the younger generation like to identify with Western culture, an aspect which is not unique to Taiwan. To Jack (20 yrs.) an English name gives a feeling of a Chinese person born in the U.S., an image he likes. Its use is convenient as it is usually easier to write (requiring fewer strokes) and, interestingly, easier to remember. This is quite understandable in regard to foreigners, especially those who do not speak Chinese, but surprisingly, this is often true even among the Taiwanese. Naturally, native speakers of Chinese have no problem pronouncing Chinese names, but because of the high frequency of similar-sounding names, they may find a Chinese name difficult to remember with confidence.

In addition to being used among friends, where they are usually treated as a nickname, some respondents mentioned that they used their English name when meeting someone for the first time. They reported that English names are easier to use; they help people get closer and facilitate friendship (examples 14 and 15). Addressing and referring to people in Chinese requires a thorough judgement of the person's age, social status, the degree of familiarity, formality of the occasion, etc. to choose the proper term of address. An inappropriate choice may jeopardize smooth communication. In Chinese culture, developing relationships is a process that normally requires quite some time and a number of steps (for a detailed explanation see (Li 1997, p. 502)). The English name is a shortcut, a convenient means of address, which is less formal than the surname, and at the same time less intimate than the Chinese given name, the use of which might be in that situation considered inappropriate or overfamiliar.

(14) *[The English name] is convenient because you don't have to choose whether to call the other person with his or her full name, just last name with Mr. or Ms. or just first name.* (Eason, 27 yrs.)

(15) *[The English name] makes it easier to get closer with new friends.* (Pica, 23 yrs.)

While in some situations the use of the English name helps to get closer, in others it helps keep the desired distance. Several respondents mentioned that they prefer using their English name when meeting someone for the first time (especially people of approximately the same age) or someone they are not familiar with, if they want to sound friendly enough, but do not wish to risk a closer relationship.

(16) [I use the English name] *at my work or when meeting someone I'm not familiar with. I think the Chinese name is used only when he/she is already a friend.* (Eason, 27 yrs.)

(17) *I don't want my Chinese name to be known by unfamiliar people.* (Naomi, 29 yrs., transl. from Chinese)

Whether accelerating intimacy or keeping a distance, the use of the English name conveniently helps to create “safe closeness”.

4. Conclusions

One increasingly influential name selection criterion in many countries is for the name to be easy for foreigners to remember and pronounce, and to identify the name bearer as part of global society. For example, in Japan, which employs Chinese characters in its writing system, a growing number of parents seek for their children foreign-sounding names, or names which they think would sound natural in the West, such as 望愛 *Noa* (*Noah*), 咲空 *Sara* (*Sarah*), or 伶音 *Reo* (*Leo*), creating an interesting combination of a “foreign” sound and a “domestic” visual form (Baresova 2016). By contrast, the Taiwanese seem to stick to more traditional names (although the selection of the characters used in the names has been, of course, influenced by various trends), and the need for a name that would succeed in the globalized society is accomplished by the acquisition of an additional “English name”, which is (as mentioned in Section 3.2) often somehow related to the Chinese name, most frequently through sound similarity.

Twenty-first century Taiwan has been taking steps toward being a Mandarin-English “bilingual nation” (Financial Supervisory Commission Republic of China (Taiwan) 2019). In addition to the practical benefits in global communication, it promotes a distinct Western identity and cultural separation from mainland China (Eliassen and Rich 2019). The use of English names has become symbolic of their vision of global modernization.

The origin of using English names in Taiwan seems to be closely connected with Taiwan's English language policy and education. Assigning an English name, originally for the benefit of teachers unfamiliar with Chinese, has become an integral part of the immersion experience of language acquisition during the last several decades. Our respondents acquired their first English name not later than in high school, and current children receive it during elementary school or in a private English-immersion preschool with foreign teachers, the number of which has increased considerably since the turn of the century, or even at birth.

It is often pointed out that Chinese people, including the Taiwanese, tend to choose very unusual English names. These “English names” are not necessarily names typically used in English-speaking countries but are in some way Western. The tendency to pick a unique name is important in Chinese name giving (Liao 2000), but it is also a more general trend, which has been observed worldwide (Lee 2001), including Japan (see Kobayashi 2009; Baresova 2016), among other countries.

While the acquisition of an English name has become an integral part of Taiwanese culture, as almost every young Taiwanese person has an additional “English” name, the perception of having an English name varies. Consequently, the way people perceive their English name influences their choice of name as well as the way they use it. Our survey indicates that the selection of an English name is not only influenced by Chinese name selection practice and the tendency to make the name somehow related to the Chinese name, but also depends on whether it is considered a nickname to be used mostly with friends, or a name as important as the Chinese name to be used in their work environment. As in previous studies, we found some unusual names, but these were used mainly as a nickname in communication with peers.

Although, for a few respondents, their experience with an English name did not extend beyond school classes, it is generally considered a convenient tool for communication in global multicultural society, which contributes to smoother communication, and the young adults surveyed increasingly see merits in its use even when interacting within their own culture, such as facilitating easier but limited intimacy, and providing a unique, positive, easy-to-remember identifier.

The research was conducted with a limited number of respondents, all of whom were studying at or had graduated from university and most of whom had some experience abroad. Thus, our respondents might well be more global than their peers. Consequently, their use of English name might not be representative of the general population in Taiwan. However, our research indicates that even young Taiwanese without foreign experience find it beneficial to use an English name, and conversely, some respondents while abroad have grown averse to it. A large-scale random sample research project would clarify the prevalence of using an English name and might further explain the cultural and pragma-linguistic motivations of this interesting aspect of Taiwanese culture.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/9/4/60/s1>, Questionnaire: English Names of Taiwanese Young Adults Survey.

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