

Englishised names? Naming patterns amongst ethnic-Chinese Singaporeans

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The study of names (or, to give it its more high-falutin' name, *onomastics*) has not always been accorded high academic prestige and is often thought of as a non-specialist's hobby horse. The fact that most books on naming in bookshops seem to address only prospective parents who need to name their child also does not give the study a high standing. In the university context, this is not something that receives a lot of attention, except within semantics and philosophy where the status of names (as opposed to other words) has been discussed; and within the history of English where place names are studied in relation to their etymology. In this journal, though, attention has been given to commercial names (Banu & Sussex (2001), McArthur (2000)) because of interesting instances of hybridisation involving English and other languages.

Given the centrality of names to a person's sense of self and sense of identity (in the sense used by Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985)), it makes sense to accord it with greater attention than it has done.

For example, my name, as it appears in my identity card, birth certificate and passport, is Peter Tan Kok Wan. Many readers will already express surprise at my family name appearing in the middle of my list of names. Most Singaporeans, when encountering my name, will definitely recognise it as a *Chinese* name (as opposed to an Indian, Malay, Eurasian or European name). (I will define what I mean by 'Chinese name' below.) They will also definitely recognise that this is not the name of someone from China. If probed further, they will also go on to say that this is not the name of someone from Taiwan or Hong Kong either. They might, in addition, make certain assumptions about my social background, my religion, perhaps even my educational background and my age.

Englishisation

It seems to me that Englishisation is a useful label to describe what has been happening to the names of the ethnic Chinese in Singapore.

Kachru (1986) suggests that Englishisation is a very potent force in South Asia. The term refers to the way South Asian and other languages are being influenced by English in terms of their phonology, syntax, lexis and collocations. McArthur's *The English Languages* also provides some panels to illustrate Englishisation in other languages mainly in terms of lexis: Tok Pisin (eg *bebi* = baby), Japanese (eg *aisukurimu* = ice-cream) and Malay/Bahasa Malaysia (eg *cek* = cheque) (McArthur 1998: 23–29).

Whilst other languages in various parts of the world have been Englishised, the English language itself has also been indigenised. I have elsewhere talked about this kind of 'nativisation' in Singaporean and Malaysian English (Tan 2001). Clearly, in multilingual situations where there are many opportunities for language contact, this process of a local language being Englishised and the English language being indigenised seems almost inevitable!

A little aside here: one might ask, why *Englishisation* rather than *Anglicisation* which is a more established term to be found in dictionaries? The Bank of English corpus of English texts (or the Collins COBUILD Corpus) reveals 24 occurrences of the items *anglicise* /*anglicize* and *anglicisation*/ *anglicization* in their various inflected forms; and no occurrences of *englishise*/ *englishize* or *englishisation*/ *englishization*. Although the majority of the 24 occurrences referred to language and in particular names (eg ‘The last name is an **anglicized** version of Nguyen – the pronunciation is similar’), there were a number of occurrences where the term referred to other things like food (eg ‘It was an unabashedly **Anglicised** curry, of grated apple, sultanas, ...’). I continue to use Kachru’s term *Englishise* to make clear that the reference is linguistic, rather than general or cultural with reference to the people of England.

A strong motivation for Englishisation is the extension of both the resources available in a given language and its functional range.

It seems to me that one reason for the linguistic ‘openness’ toward English on the part of the Hindi enthusiasts is that the process of Englishization unconsciously operates as a linguistic device to ‘equip’ the Hindi language with the functional range of English, which, consequently, might lead toward an ‘upward’ move of Hindi in the hierarchy of linguistic roles.

(Kachru 1986: 149)

Englishisation is also closely associated with the notion of modernisation, new learning and new technologies. Sometimes, Englishisation occurs also to reflect a cultural shift to reflect a re-negotiation of cultural values and relations. We can see this, for example, in some instances where English loanwords are used even when there was no initial lexical gap. We can take the example of the use of English-based first- and second-person pronouns (*you, I*) in colloquial Malay. Here, for example, is a message posted in the Malaysian UFO Network Mailing List.

Now I think I understand... I nak tanya pada you Fakhroul, so bagi you 1% daripada 99% makhluk UFO adalah MUSLIM..???

Now I think I understand ... I want to ask you, Fakhroul, so for you 1% out of the 99% of UFO creatures are MUSLIM..?? (*my translation and my emphases*)

Muz (4 Dec 1998)

The first sentence is in English. Thereafter, the writer switches to Malay where we see the use of *I* and *you*. Of course there are first- and second-person pronouns in Malay: *saya, aku* and the royal *beta* for the first-person; *awak, kamu, anda, engkau* and *kau* for the second-person; and in many situations, even these are avoided and an honorific or a third-person reference is used. In the context of a complex system of pronouns depending on the relationship between the sender and the receiver, is it any surprise that some have opted for the more ‘democratic’ English pronouns instead?

Names are surely not impervious to the process of Englishisation too. In fact, names that we think of as quintessentially English are frequently derived from other sources. One important source is (Norman) French following the Norman conquest of Britain in 1066 (*Alan, Bernard, Geoffrey, Henry, Constance, Emma, Yvonne*). Another is Hebrew following the Reformation and the preference of Protestants for using the Bible as a source of names

(*Benjamin, Daniel, David, Michael, Deborah, Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah*). There are names that can be traced back to Old English elements (*Alfred, Edgar, Edith, Edward*) but these constitute only a relatively small proportion of available English first names. (For further examples, see Dunkling (1993: 42–45).)

The Chinese Naming Conventions

The Chinese naming tradition is very well established and I shall only discuss the main points. The Chinese personal name is made up of two components. The first element is the surname or *xing*, which is usually monosyllabic (and therefore written with one character), as in *Chen, He, Li* or *Wang*, although there are a few disyllabic ones like *Situ*. Unlike in some other traditions, such as the Anglo-American one, the range of surnames is much smaller, so that about 87% of the Han Chinese people (the main ethnic group in China) use the most common 100 surnames (Louie 1998: 35). (Note that in this section, I use the well-established pinyin system of Romanisation based on the Mandarin Chinese pronunciation.)

The next element is the given name or *ming* or *mingzi*. This is usually disyllabic (written with two characters) although it can be monosyllabic (written with one character) as well. Where the given name is disyllabic, one of the syllables (usually the first) could be the ‘generation name’ which would be shared with the person’s relatives of the same sex of the same generation on the male line.

For example, my Chinese name based on pinyin is Chen Guowan. Chen would be my surname; and Guowan my given name. The Guo element in my given name is my generation name which I share with my brother and all my male cousins on my father’s side of the family. Table 1 gives some examples of well-known Chinese names, including the normal way they are represented in English texts: the philosophers *Confucius* and *Mencius*; the Chinese Nationalist leader *Chiang Kai-shek*; the Kuomintang leader *Sun Yat-sen*; the founder of the People’s Republic of China *Mao Zedong*; the Hong Kong film magnate *Run Run Shaw*; the former Singaporean Prime Minister *Lee Kuan Yew*; and the Malaysian actress and former Bond girl *Michelle Yeo*.

Surname	Given Name	Usual English Version
Jiang	Jieshi	Chiang Kai-shek
Kong	Fuzi	Confucius
Li	Guangyao	(Harry) Lee Kuan Yew
Mao	Zedong	Mao Zedong <i>or</i> Mao Tse-tung
Meng	Zi	Mencius
Shao	Yifu	(Sir) Run Run Shaw
Sun	Zhongshan <i>or</i> Wen	Sun Yat-sen
Yang	Ziqiong	Michelle Yeo

TABLE 1. Some Well-known Chinese Names

Two points about the system which contrasts with the Anglo-American system need to be pointed out. Firstly, the surname always comes first. As Louie puts it,

Since early on in their civilization, the Chinese have placed the surname first in a name, which seems to emphasize that the family comes first in an individual’s

identity. Other Asians, such as the Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, also place the surname first. In Europe, Hungarians and Rumanians follow this name order as well. (Louie 1998: 51)

Because of this differences in ordering of names, I will use the terms ‘surname’ and ‘given name’ as opposed to the more familiar terms ‘last name’ and ‘first name’ or ‘forename’.

Secondly, all the characters of Chinese are technically available as Chinese-based given names. There are no words especially reserved for names as there are in English (like *Matthew* or *Barbara*). The semantic transparency of Chinese-based given names does mean that meaning must feature highly in the choice of any Chinese-based given name. This contrasts to the situation in English: how many of us know offhand that *Matthew* means ‘gift of God’ or that *Barbara* means ‘foreign woman’ (Hanks & Hodges 1990: 230, 35)? Hence, there is a higher reliance on other factors for the choice of an English-based given name, such as sounds or associations. This is not to say that the Chinese do not rely on sounds or associations or that there are no character that is more likely to be picked as Chinese-based given names. Of course there are. Only meaning must feature more highly in Chinese-based given names.

Traditional Chinese Naming Practices beyond China

The discussion above might begin to suggest that the naming practices of all ethnic Chinese are uniform. This is certainly not the case. Even within mainland China, there are differences in the distribution of surnames between the north and the south. The great surnames in the north are *Li*, *Wang*, *Zhang* and *Liu*; whereas in the south they are *Chen* (*Chan*, *Tan*), *Zhao* (*Chew*, *Yeo*), *Huang* (*Wong*, *Ooi*, *Ng*), *Lin* (*Lam*, *Lim*) and *Wu* (*Ng*, *Goh*) (Louie 1998: 35). I have included some alternative versions of the surnames in parentheses to indicate typical southern pronunciations. This is significant because most Chinese immigrants to other parts of the world come from southern China. Tsai’s (2000b) study (see below) confirms the prevalence of southern surnames in Taiwan: the top three are *Chen*, *Lin* and *Huang*. And of course, the present Taiwanese President is *Chen* Shui-bian.

There have been some studies involving the naming practices of the ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong among bilinguals (Li 1997), in the USA (Louie 1998) and in Taiwan (Tsai 2000a, 2000b). Jones (1989, 1997) studied the naming practices amongst the Chinese in what was then Malaya (now Malaysia). They involved very different methodology. Li’s work is based on questionnaires sent out in the 1990s as well as press cuttings in the same period. Louie’s work covers a wider time span and makes use of a range of ethnographic methods involving press reports, official documents, gravestones. Tsai’s work is based on about 200,000 names who passed the Taiwanese college entrance examinations in 1994–97. Finally, Jones’s study is apparently based on his work in the Immigration Department headquarters in the northern Malayan island of Penang in the 1950s.

Whereas Li’s study includes unofficial names, the other studies focus only on official names. Also very important from our point of view, Tsai’s study is based on the names in their Chinese form (*ie* using Chinese characters) whereas the other studies give attention to the Romanised forms too.

Finally, the countries from which the names are taken represent very different contexts from the point of view of the position of the English language. Using traditional terms, we could

label the USA as an English-as-mother-tongue (EMT) country, whereas Malaysia and Hong Kong are English-as-a-second-language (ESL) countries and Taiwan is an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) country. Not surprisingly, the notion of Englishisation is touched upon in the Hong Kong and American contexts, and to a certain extent in the Malayan context.

Jones's work is also relevant from the point of view of Singapore because in the 1950s Penang, like Singapore, was governed by the British and they are only some 400 miles apart. Also like Singapore, it was an island where most of the inhabitants were ethnic Chinese, the majority of whom spoke Hokkien Chinese (a southern Chinese language) with an English-speaking élite. (For details, see Heidhues (2000: 157–160).) What is especially interesting is that the names and forms described are conform, almost completely, to those found in the Nanyang University (1960) data mentioned below.

Chinese Names in Singapore

In the examples of Singaporean names that follow, I shall use three sources:

- (1) Nanyang University (1960) – this is the list of the 1960 graduates of Nanyang University in 1960 (I use the abbreviation NU for names from this source);
- (2) University of Singapore (1968) – this is the list of the graduands of the University of Singapore in 1968 (abbreviation: US); and
- (3) National University of Singapore (2000) – this is the list of the graduands of the National University of Singapore in 2000 (abbreviation: NUS).

I should also add that Nanyang University was a Chinese-medium university that eventually merged with the University of Singapore, an English-medium institution, to become the National University of Singapore, which is English-medium except for a few programmes. These name records have been used because they have been roughly sorted out according to age and definitely sorted out according to sex (and a title, usually 'Miss', is appended to female names). The name records from the Registry of Births in Singapore, unlike in some other places, is not open to public inspection. It will also be obvious at this stage that I will only focus on *official* names.

The NU and US data provide us with the names typical of older Singaporeans today whereas the NUS data provide us with names of those in their 20s. The NU and the US data contrast because the typical Nanyang University student would be fluent in Chinese, including Mandarin Chinese, but not necessarily be fluent in English. Not surprisingly the NU names conform more closely to the traditional Chinese naming conventions mentioned above. The University of Singapore students, on the other hand, would have gone through English-medium education in school; ethnic Chinese students will speak some Chinese languages, though not necessarily Mandarin Chinese, and literacy in Chinese cannot be assumed.

It will also be necessary for me to clarify my terminology at this stage. I will use the term 'Chinese name' to mean names of the ethnic Chinese, conforming to a greater or lesser extent to the traditional Chinese convention of personal names. I will use the term 'Chinese-based name' to refer to names that are derived from Chinese words and characters. 'English-based name' refers to a name derived from given names of English speakers or names based on the English language, but not from Chinese characters. In the lists that I consulted, English-based names generally appear *before* Chinese surnames whereas Chinese-based names generally appear *after* Chinese surnames.

The Exponents of the Englishisation of Chinese Names

So how then can we say that Chinese Names of Singaporeans have been Englishised and what has this got to say about the Chinese in Singapore?

1. Romanisation

It is important to point out that it is the version of the name spelt out in the Roman alphabet that constitutes the official name of individuals in Singapore. This contrasts to the situation in mainland China where a person's official name is the one written in Chinese characters. The Romanised name is therefore 'fixed' and an individual is not at liberty to alter the spelling of his or her name. In such a context, the individual would claim ownership of the name in its representation in terms of letters of the alphabet. In the same way, an Ann would say that 'Anne' is not her name; a Geoffrey would say that 'Jeffrey' is not his name. In the same way, the pinyin version of my name Chen Guowan looks totally alien to me.

Given that the Roman alphabet in Singapore is primarily associated with the English language, Romanisation can be seen as Englishisation. This is emphasised in the way the names are laid out in Nanyang University (1960): see Table 2.

姓名 NAME	
中文 CHINESE	英文 ENGLISH
王綏鈞	Ong Chooi Koon
吳秀英	Woo Siew Yin (Miss)

TABLE 2: Extract from the Nanyang University *List of Graduates, 1960*.

What is particularly interesting to me is the fact that all names here are listed in two formats, labelled 'Chinese' (and in Chinese characters *zhong wen*, 'Chinese language') and 'English' (*ying wen*, 'English language'). The version in Chinese characters is considered the *real* Chinese version of the name and the Romanised version is considered an English version, or, more accurately, an Englishised version.

Another feature to point out is that most of the most of the names have been Romanised not based on Mandarin Chinese pronunciation, but on pronunciation in southern Chinese languages like Hokkien Chinese or Cantonese Chinese. In pinyin, Ong Chooi Koon becomes *Wang Suijun*. But even in pinyin, the tone information (Chinese is a tonal language) is often omitted, although it can be included in the form of diacritics or numbers (*eg Wang2 Sui1jun1*). The southern Chinese languages, lacking a systematic convention of Romanisation, cannot include tone information, so that these are lost in the process of Englishisation.

2. Romanisation based on English

It is not the mere fact of Romanisation alone that we can say is an exponent of Englishisation. It is also fairly obvious that peculiarly English orthographic conventions and English orthography-phonology correspondences have also been employed.

1 Dieu Eng Keong (US)
2 Law Cheng Por (NU)
3 Lee Yoke Cum (NUS)
4 Regina Loo Yuet Lye (NUS)
5 Robin Chee Rhern Whee (NUS)

TABLE 3. Names Illustrating English-style Romanisation

Examples of English orthographic conventions employed are

- silent letters, like
 - silent <h> in *Rhern Whee* (5)
 - silent <e> in *Lye* (4)
 - silent <r> after vowel letters in *Por* (2) and *Rhern* (4) – this assumes a non-rhotic pronunciation of English; the <r> affects the quality of the preceding vowel where <or> produces /0/, not /o/; and <er> produces /@/, not /E/.
- letter doubling, like
 - <oo> in *Loo* (4)
 - <ee> in *Lee* (3) and *Chee* (5)

Examples of English orthography-phonology correspondences are

- the digraph <ch> given the value of /tʃ/ in *Cheng* (2) – as in *Church*
- the digraph <aw> given the value of /0/ in *Law* (2) – as in *Jaw*
- the digraph <eu> given the value of /u/ in *Dieu* (1) – as in *neutral*
- the letter <e> given the value of /I/ in *Eng* (1) and *Cheng* (2) – as in *England*
- the letter <u> given the value of /V/ in *Cum* (3) – as in *mum*

This contrasts to, say, the Indonesian situation, where Romanisation was in the direction of Dutch conventions, so that *Loo* would have been *Loe* and *Chee* would have been *Tjie*. (There is a discussion of the Indonesian spelling of Chinese names in Jones (1997: 64–65).) This also contrasts with other standardised systems, such as the Hanyu Pinyin system (mentioned above) and the Wade-Giles system for Mandarin.

3. English-based given names

For most, though, the most obvious feature of Englishisation in Chinese names in Singapore is the presence of English-based given names. The former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew commented on naming trends amongst Chinese Singaporeans in September 1984 which was reproduced in *The Straits Times*:

... over one-third of Chinese parents registered additional Western or Christian personal names for their sons and daughters.

Twenty years ago (1964), only one-fifteenth registered Christian personal names. Western influence has increased by five times.

(*The Straits Times*, 22 September 1984)

We might doubt whether ‘Western influence’ is measurable in the way described, but clearly the change is significant. The figures would probably be higher today. The NUS data of graduands, mainly born in the late 70s, have a proportion of names with English-based given names comparable to the figures given by Lee. By contrast, however, the NU data only reveal two names with English-based given names. Table 4 gives examples of names with English-based given names.

1. Lily Shaw (NU)
2. Nellie Tay (NU)
3. Ronnie Neo Choon Kiat (SU)
4. Victoria Hsui (SU)
5. Mabel Lee Siew Peng (NUS)
6. Mark Lee Tze Ming (NUS)
7. Paul Leonard Yeoh (NUS)
8. Wendy Praise Cheng Kai Huey (NUS)
9. Maximilian Mark Cheong Seng Loong (NUS)
10. Eileen Goh (NUS)
11. Michelle Loke (NUS)

TABLE 4. Names Illustrating English-based Given Names

Also significant is the number of names that include English-based middle names or second given names (names 7–9). There can be no doubt that this can be linked to the fact that the huge majority of Anglo-American names include middle names.

4. The abandonment of Chinese-based given names

As a result of the inclusion of English-based given names, the Chinese-based given names might be considered redundant. Names 1, 2, 4, 7, 10 and 11 in Table 4 above illustrate names in this format. It also needs to be added that I would expect people with names 5 and 6 would introduce themselves as ‘Mabel Lee’ and ‘Mark Lee’ in contexts where given names and surnames were required; and as ‘Mabel’ and ‘Mark’ where only given names were required. In other words, Chinese-based given names do not seem to typically play a significant role where individuals also have English-based given names.

Every term when I take tutorials at university, there would also be students who, on my official list, have only Chinese-based given names but I would be asked to address them by some English-based given names. Non-official English-based given names can also eclipse official Chinese-based given names.

5. Name order

The fact that three-quarters of the population of Singapore is ethnic Chinese means that the normal Chinese name order – with the surname first – can be preserved without causing confusion in the way they might do in other countries: for example, *Ong* is the surname of Ong Chooi Koon (Table 2). Outside of Singapore, though, the ethnic Chinese frequently find it easier to put the surname last, as in the case of the cellist Yo-yo Ma, for example.

The introduction of English-based given names means that two systems are at play: the Anglo-American system of given name(s) *before* the surname and the Chinese system of given name *after* the surname. The result is therefore a hybridised system.

The university lists might, however, suggest greater uniformity than is the case though. The university lists have been standardised to conform to the format <English-based given name> + <surname> + <Chinese-based given name>, as in ‘Mabel Lee Siew Peng’ (from Table 4 above). However, the name order can be standardised differently; in alphabetised lists, for example, it is normal for names to conform to the format <surname> + <Chinese-based given name> + <English-based given name>. Names 6 and 7 in Table 4 would then appear as:

Lee Tze Ming, Mark
Yeoh, Paul Leonard

The commas might, additionally, be omitted and the names would appear to conform to the traditional Chinese order.

Interestingly though, if any initials are used, the surnames would normally go to the end, as in Mark T. M. Lee. This applies also to names that do not contain English-based given names; ‘Lee Yoke Cum’ (Table 3) could style herself as Y. C. Lee. (The way I use my name professionally also conforms to this format.) In this respect, therefore, the name order can be considered Englishised.

Other Influences: Mandarinisation and Pinyinisation

Clearly, Englishisation is not the only phenomenon occurring in Chinese names in Singapore. The Singapore government is also keen to promote Mandarin Chinese (as opposed to other Chinese languages) as the Chinese language to unify the Chinese people; in recent years, Mandarin Chinese has been promoted to win over English-speaking Chinese individuals too. At one stage also, ethnic Chinese pupils in schools were to be known only by the Mandarin Chinese versions of their surnames and Chinese-based given names, and Romanised in the pinyin system. Jernudd (1994) discusses this in the context of linguistic rights.

I mentioned earlier that the Chinese in Singapore are generally from *southern* Chinese stock and spoke non-Mandarin Chinese languages, as reflected in the traditional Romanisations of their names. Clearly, Mandarinisation and Pinyinisation are now very much in force. Here are some examples from the NUS data.

1. Chen Yanfeng
2. Mark Lee Tze Ming
3. Lim Aizhen
4. Jacqueline Lim Su Tsi
5. Ng Zhi-Yuan

TABLE 5. Mandarinised Names

Of the names in Table 5, only the first one conforms completely to pinyin Romanisation. Names 3 and 5 represent partial pinyinisation because the surnames still represent non-Mandarin Chinese surnames. The pinyin system is distinct in its use of letters and digraphs like <c>, <q>, <x>, <z> and <zh>. Names 2 and 4 also represent Mandarinisation but the spelling seems to have been influenced by the earlier Wade-Giles Romanisation which, among other things, used digraphs like <hs>, <tz> and <ts>.

The use of pinyin is not without its problems, and generally the other ethnic groups in Singapore, who generally do not know Mandarin Chinese, find the representation employing <c>, <q>, etc. alienating. Recently, the name of a shopping centre and market have reverted to its pre-pinyin name: Tekka (from Hokkien Chinese *tek* ‘bamboo’, *kha* ‘foot’). For many years, the sign announced the building as the ‘Zhujiào Centre’ (and *zhu* and *jiao* are pinyinised Mandarin for *tek* and *kha* respectively).

Unorthodox Names

As mentioned earlier, in the Chinese naming conventions, theoretically all the characters in the language are available as names. The practice of assigning ordinary English words as given names is, in fact, not totally foreign to the history of English names. The Puritans used names like Fight-the-good-fight. Some of the names based on Christian virtues like *Honour*, *Grace* and *Charity* are still in use today. It might seem not unlikely that the Chinese might resort to this convention whilst choosing English-based given names.

Indeed, a report in the *New York Times* by Jennifer 8. Lee suggests that the young in mainland China are assigning themselves names, among other things, derived from common nouns.

Ms [Satan] Zhou is hardly the only one at her Shanghai-based company with a notable English name. Among the 170 or so employees at Intrinsic Technology and Linktone, where wireless data technologies are developed, are Bison Zhang, Jekyll Ji, Redfox Cui, Cherry Ge, Echo Zhang, Feeling Chen, Three Sun and Seven Lee.

(Lee 2001)

The journalist’s name herself is distinctive, with a number for a middle name! It must be said that the English-based given names mentioned here are self-assigned ones as opposed to official names. The journalist’s name, though, is possibly an official name. Of the given names listed, most are based on English common nouns and numbers; ‘Feeling’ is ambiguous; one appears to be based on Robert Louis Stevenson’s fictional character; and Ms Zhou’s ‘Satan’ is the name of the devil!

My lists of Singaporean Chinese names, however, did not reveal many names based on ordinary English words (see, for example ‘Wendy **Praise** Cheng Kai Huey’ in Table 4). There was a Cherry as in Lee’s (2001) example above; but this is also an established English-based given name, derived either from French *chérie* (darling) or Charity (Hanks & Hodges 1990: 62). And there is also a Jolly.

What is in evidence, though, are fanciful or invented names. The names in bold face in Table 6 are some examples.

Eilina Look Fern Fern (NUS)
Lavon Ho Fern Ling (NUS)
Lilia Yip Mei Jin (NUS)
Merisa Ng Sze Ern (NUS)
Odilia Teo San San (NUS)
Wagen Teh Kan Wee (NUS)
Xhann Chew Ai Leng (NUS)

TABLE 6. Some Unorthodox English-based Given Names

This, however, constitutes a small proportion of the English-based given names, as would be typical in lists of names of English speakers. The motivation must be the desire to have given names that are unique and distinguishing.

Conclusion

It seems clear to me that Chinese names in Singapore are being hybridised in the direction of Englishisation. The features mentioned can also be related demographic statistics from the Singapore Census of Population, 2000. The following features will be related to the Englishisation of names.

- (a) Literacy in English for resident population aged 15 and above has risen from 63% (in 1990) to 71% (in 2000) (Singapore Census 2000b: 2).
- (b) The percentage of residents as a whole reporting the use of English as the home language has risen from 18.8 (in 1990) to 23.0 (in 2000) (Singapore Census 2000b: 3).
- (c) The percentage of ethnic Chinese residents reporting the use of English as the home language has also correspondingly risen from 19.3 (in 1990) to 23.9 (in 2000), with the figures being higher for children (5–14 years) and youths (15–24 years) than the older residents (Singapore Census 2000b: 4–5).
- (d) The percentage of Christians has risen from 10.1 (in 1980), through 12.7 (in 1990) to 14.6 (in 2000) (Singapore Census 2000a: 1).
- (e) The rise is associated with religious shifts within the ethnic Chinese; within the ethnic Chinese group, the percentage of Christians has risen from 10.9 (in 1980), through 14.3 (in 1990) to 16.5 (in 2000) (Singapore Census 2000a: 4).
- (f) There is a correlation between religion and home language. ‘Singapore residents who have adopted English as their home language appear to have greater exposure to the influence of Christianity. Thus, in 2000, Christians formed the largest group among the English-speaking population’ (Singapore Census 2000a: 7).

Clearly, the increase in literacy and, more importantly, the use of English in the home and other private domains, suggests some level of acceptance of English as a first language amongst some sections of the ethnic Chinese population. This is a trend that looks set to continue particularly as there seems to be increased English usage amongst the young. In such a situation, the Englishisation of names seems not surprising.

Finally, English-based given names are also frequently regarded as Christian names. The 1984 *New Straits Times* article (which reproduced Lee Kuan Yew’s speech on names) continued to refer to English-based given names as *Christian names*. The increase in the number of Christians, together with the increased use of English, together make potent forces to account for the Englishisation of Chinese names in Singapore.

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