



Linguistic Analysis of Nicknames of Junior High School Students

Chao-chih Liao
National University of Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Abstract

Liao (2000) categorized (nick)naming rules for Taiwanese, leaving plenty of room for further research. This study aims at something more, using another tack to analyze nicknames and their relationship to formal full names in data from the 250 nicknames of 295 junior high school graduates, as eternalized in Graduation Memory Album. Findings include: significantly more males than females had nicknames (91.61% to 78.29%; p -value= 0.001); 110 (44% of 250) nicknames directly linguistically related to their full name, among which 44 (40%) used puns. Such pun-related nicknames constitute 14.91% of the sample size, 'marked' enough to make 82% of Taiwanese parents-to-be studied try their best to avoid homophonic effect in naming children (Liao 2000: 240). Nicknames homophonic with names may not be more derogatory than those not. A naming rule of 'do not let your children have the name homophonic with bad words' should not be taken too seriously. Young children used six rules of Liao's (2000) in nicknaming: one new rule is found, which is not their creation, though. One suggestion to namers and named: produce their own nicknames and promote them.

INTRODUCTION

Onomastics is a part of linguistics, generally ignored by linguists (Algeo 1985). Liao (2000) pointed out that in Chinese naming, for files at Civil Registration Office, one rule is 'do not be homophonic with words containing bad meanings' with a higher-level principle of 'wishing the name-bearer to be successful in life, as their names stand for.' This paper includes nickname types and relationship with a formal name to de-emphasize the naming rule of 'do not be homophonic with words containing bad meanings.' Most Taiwanese are very conscious about giving beautiful, decent, elegant, elaborate, ambitious names to their children. Many consult onomancers: 38.83% of parents of *Ss*' (subjects') born in 1979-81 consulted onomancers for naming them, while 70.4% of the *Ss* will do it to name their future children (Liao 2000: 238). Liao (2000: 240) found 82% of future namers in Taiwan taking a rule of 'do not let your children have the name homophonic with bad words' as paramount among 19 naming rules, because parents have the experience of hearing or having

nicknames based on homophones. In 1999, I had the chance to see the Graduation Memory Album of Feng Dong Junior High School in Taichung County, Taiwan, and was surprised to see that one class had nicknames, no formal names, kept. Years later, they might not remember each other's formal name any longer. Now I analyze five albums from 1999 to 2003 concerning the eight classes with nicknames. The students were born in 1984-88; data represent 15-year-olds' nicknames.

For this study, I define a nickname as an informal name for someone, different from the formal name registered at the Civil Registration Office. All *Ss* for this study had formal names of XXX YYY-ZZZ, XXX being the family name and YYY-ZZZ two characters of personal name. Chinese write and call the family name first. No *Ss* had one-character personal names. When a subject's nickname was written as YYY-ZZZ, I do not treat it as a nickname because it is a usual addressing practice to show intimacy between interlocutors. In Taiwan, it seems only people of higher or equal status call low-status persons or peers by YYY-ZZZ. Those of low social status usually addresses those of higher status with a proper title or XXX + title in that order. Someone might argue that *Ah-ZZZ* is the Taiwanese way of calling people at the home domain or among good friends. It should not be called a nickname. According to the working definition above, it is. I have to make it clear, because in the data, we find *Ah-XXX* or *Ah-YYY* not so common in Taiwan as *Ah-ZZZ*. To be fair, all three are nicknames.

The rule of *Ah-ZZZ* shows familiarity. It gives people the feeling of being friendly and familiar. This rule is common in Taiwanese nicknaming; President *Chen Shui-bian* has the nickname of *Ah-bin-ah* in Taiwanese or *Ah-bian* in Mandarin. Many young people feel that *Ah-bian* or *Ah-bin-ah* is like their friendly neighbor, not a person of extreme high status. When I was in grade school, my parents and siblings called me *Ah-di* in Taiwanese. My family members and all neighbors were called by

Ah + ZZZ

However, not thinking that they showed affection, I just felt that it was annoying and it was the Taiwanese habit in calling each other. They indeed show familiarity, which may breed contempt. I prefer to be called *Chao-chih* in Mandarin, my two-character personal name. Louie (1998: 50) points out that prefixing a given name by *Ah* dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C-221 A.D.). Han Emperor *Wu Di* was called *Ah-Kiao*; *Ah-man* was the milkname of Tang Emperor *Xuan-zong*. Referring to Chinese books about these emperors, I found no small name or milkname of *Ah-Kiao* and *Ah-man*, but I did find historical figures in the third century with such nicknames: *Cao Cao* milknamed *Ah-man* and the son of *Liu Bei* milknamed *Ah-dou* (source: *San-guo-yan-yi* 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'). In the Jin Dynasty (179-420), a concubine of an emperor was named *Ah-chun* (*Jin-shu niu-zi xing-ming-xue* [*Female Onomastics in Jin Dynasty*]).

This paper might help in intercultural communication because Taiwanese may want to nickname their international friends, following the same rules whereby they nickname peers. International people can nickname Taiwanese interlocutors for solidarity; the paper may help create Taiwan-sized nicknames. Readers, especially westerners, may find metaphoric meanings of nicknames, most different from what they are familiar with, and use the data in humor studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most nicknames are for fun; the website <http://howto.yahoo.com/ask/19990201.html> deals with the question of "Why is New York City nicknamed 'The Big Apple'?" In 1971 "Big Apple" became the catch phrase of the city's official tourism image as a fun and wholesome place to visit, rather than a dark and dangerous city of crime. A good nickname may change people's impression of a place or person.

Teasing or fun theory was proposed for Taiwanese people's nicknaming (Liao 2000), which shows their humor. Many like good nicknames but dislike bad ones because they feel teased or insulted. Teasing, irony, and sarcasm do not fall in the category of Chinese humor (Liao 2003). Some Taiwanese even dislike good nicknames; they feel flattered or over-complimented. Liao (2000) offered nine rules: (1) affectionate names; (2) prefix one character of a full name by *Ah* (empty bound morpheme), *lao* ('old') or *xiao* ('little'); (3) homophonic wordplay; (4) opposition to something about the formal name; (5) the birth order of the sibling; (6) fortune-teller's instructions; (7) describe the person, ability, figure, fondness, etc., or the opposite quality; (8) given by relatives; and (9) birth year, gender, or horoscope. The first four show linguistic orientation; the last five may not. Taiwanese nicknames may reflect metaphorical usage of Taiwanese, Mandarin or other Chinese dialects, even English. Nicknames are usually less elegant than registered formal names, a kind of anti-movement toward the elaborated, elegant, and decent formal name.

Shankle (1955: vi) claimed that Americans use more nicknames than any other people. They give them to their wives, husbands, children, friends, enemies, etc. No name is too sacred or base for them to shorten or modify into some affectionate, humorous, or abusive sobriquet; they can be complimentary or satirical. Reading his book makes a learner of English as a Foreign Language understand connotations of some American English words. Jim Abbitt was nicknamed Jackrabbit by sports writers in 1937 for his fast and elusive moves. It is almost inevitable that a runner named J. Abbitt would be called Jackrabbit (ibid: 1). In Taiwan, when a person is nicknamed Rabbit, it does not mean that he is a fast runner, but a person with two big upper front teeth. In Buckie, Scotland, people were traditionally called by nicknames (Wilson 1998: 280). In three East Sutherland villages, individuals were known by by-names. Official names were virtually non-functional (Dorian 1970).

Berger (1993: 18) indicates language techniques of humor include allusion, bombast, definition, misunderstanding, facetiousness, insults, infantilism, irony, exaggeration, over-literalness, puns (wordplay), repartee, ridicule, sarcasm and satire. Yet Chinese do not recognize them as humor, especially when they become the butt. Reading the following, we (readers and I) will feel it. Many Taiwanese nickname peer students by wordplay. In this study, 44 nicknames (14.91% of the sample size 295) related to formal names are playing with puns.

Yang (1991: 35) points out that a nickname reflects a person's impression of the nicknamed. If a person is nicknamed *Chang-she fu* ('a long-tongue woman'), we know what it means forthwith. The sobriquet might be offensive and not used in the person's presence. Yang was happy in university years at being nicknamed *She-zhang* ('Club

Chief') because he headed the Harmonica Club. During two-year compulsory military service he was called *Bo-shih* ('Doctor'), though he had not obtained the degree. He liked those nicknames and warned that in personal or company naming one should avoid homophones of bad objects (Yang 1996). Yang's friends might have called him *She-zhang* and *Bo-shih* to tease him, but he never felt it; not zeroing in on nickname study, he thus gave such strange advice. If he had, he might have been amazed by fellow Taiwanese associative abilities, creativity and innovation in making pun nicknames and finally given up the idea. Morgan, O'Neill, and Harre (1979) suggested nicknames can be understood in four fashions: norm, social control, status, and insult. Dexter (1949) perceived college students with nicknames as more popular. Busse (1983) found nicknames relatively common in an American high school setting: 55% of boys and 40% of girls had them, while 70% of the boys and 68% of the girls approved of their nicknames; only 5% of boys and 15% of girls disliked theirs. In Taiwan junior and senior high schools, as high as 73% of boys and 51% of girls have nicknames, yet more than 57% of the nicknamed disliked them (Liao 2000). In this study, readers will find a higher percentage of boys and girls have nicknames.

Nicknaming is universal. People use it among relatively closed groups like slang and other forms of exclusive behavior to reinforce their boundaries and control access. It is central to unofficial rituals of abuse and mockery, whether the object of derision is present and addressed directly, or absent and 'called' only in the third person. At the extreme, nicknaming becomes a mode of scapegoating and humiliation, of collective bullying. But not all nicknaming is hostile; it may be deferential or signal membership of a friendship group (Wilson 1998: 287).

THE STUDY

I checked the Graduation Memory Album of students who left Feng Dong Junior High School in June 1999-2003. Each year, approximately 1100 students, distributed in 28 classes, graduated from the school. In 1999, five classes eternalized their nicknames. In 2000, none did. In 2001, two classes did. In 2002, one class did; and in 2003, another one did. One class in 1999 had 38 students, all with nicknames, and they did not eternalize their formal name. In 2001, one class recorded nicknames, but I cannot match these with formal names. Hence this study only analyzes students in eight classes (Classes A, B, C, D in 1999; E and F in 2001; G in 2002; and H in 2003). Mentors A-H for Classes A-H, respectively, indicated that nicknaming in the eight classes was just as popular as other classes. In other words, the phenomena were in normal distribution with other classes and might stand for the commonality in junior high schools in Taiwan.

Table 1: Having nicknames or not

Class	Females			Males			Total
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	
A (1999)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	15	20 (83%)	4 (17%)	24	39
B (1999)	14 (90%)	1 (7%)	15	26 (100%)	0	26	41
C (1999)	21 (88%)	3 (12%)	24	13 (72%)	5 (28%)	18	42
D (1999)	16 (47%)	18 (53%)	34				34
E (2001)	13 (72%)	5 (28%)	18	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	20	38
F (2001)	17 (100%)	0	17	19 (100%)	0	19	36

G (2002)	12 (100%)	0	12	19 (100%)	0	19	31
H (2003)	17 (100%)	0	17	17 (100%)	0	17	34
Total	119 (78%)	33 (22%)	152	131 (92%)	12 (8%)	143	295

We had 295 students (152 females and 143 males) in the classes (Table 1). We know not if all who had their nicknames recorded in the album liked their nicknames or not. It seemed that most did and therefore eternalized them. For the minority who did not, this might be collective bullying. These nicknames are as complimenting, humiliating and/or downgrading as those studied in Liao (2000). Table 1 shows that Class C was special: more females than males having nicknames. Class D consisted of all females; a lower ratio had nicknames. Two-gender interaction may influence nicknaming.

Table 2 Having nicknames versus not

	Yes	No	Total
Females	119 (78.29%)	33 (21.71%)	152
Males	131 (91.61%)	12 (8.39%)	143
Total	250 (84.75%)	45 (15.25%)	295

Chi-square value = 10.111 (DF=1; p-value = 0.001)

Table 2 shows nicknames more prevalent with males than females (91.6% to 78.3%). We divide nicknames into those related to formal names and those not. Table 3 tallies 110 people's (44% of 250) nicknames directly related to formal names, 56% not.

Table 3 Nicknames directly related to their names

	Yes	No	Total
Females	57 (47.90%)	62 (52.10%)	119
Males	53 (40.46%)	78 (59.54%)	131
Total	110 (44%)	140 (56%)	250

Chi-square value = 1.401 (p-value = 0.237)

Of 110 nicknames directly related to formal names, most (54; 49.09%) related to ZZZ of formal names, 24 (21.82%) to XXX (family name), 15 (13.63%) to YYY, 4 (3.64%) to combination of XXX and YYY, 13 (11.82%) to the combination of YYY and ZZZ.

Linguistics Related Phenomena

Among students whose nickname arose from their formal names, 54 (49.09%) were related to ZZZ of their name. 22 (40.74% of the 54) were formed by *Ah* + ZZZ. The rest 33 nicknames (one repetition of *Ah* + ZZZ) produced by the linguistic analogy of ZZZ are derived by six rules: R(a) Prefix with *Xiao* (小 'little'); R(b) suffix with *Zi* (子 'an empty bound morpheme'); R(c) duplicate ZZZ (including one repetition of *Ah* + ZZZ); R(d) use ZZZ to produce an adjective, object or famous person's name; R(e) single out ZZZ, specific with Class E; and R(f) find some homophonic, alliterate or rhyme character and an object/term associated with it (see Tables 4-1 and 4-2 for male and female cases). The first five rules do not include use of homophones.

Table 4-1 Males' nicknames directly related to ZZZ (14 different entries)

Names	Nicknames	Meaning
R(a) Prefix with <i>Xiao</i> (小)		
a. <i>Xu Rui-jien</i> (徐瑞鍵)	<i>Xiao Jien-jien</i> (小鍵鍵)	'Little key-key'
b. <i>Lin Shih-hao</i> (林世豪)	<i>Xiao Hao</i> (小豪)	'Little <i>Hao</i> '
R(b) Suffix with <i>Zi</i> (仔)		
c. <i>Zhang Zhih-jie</i> (張智傑)	<i>Jie-zi</i> (傑仔)	'Excellence'
d. <i>Zhang Yan-jing</i> (張言敬)	<i>Jing-zi</i> (敬仔)	'Respect'
e. <i>Chen Zheng-yan</i> (陳政諺)	<i>Yan-zi</i> (諺仔)	'Proverb'
f. <i>Lien Wei-yuan</i> (連尉淵)	<i>Yuan-zi</i> (淵仔)	'Deep river'
R(c) Duplicate ZZZ		
*a. <i>Xu Rui-jien</i> (徐瑞鍵)	<i>Xiao Jien-jien</i> (小鍵鍵)	'Little key-key'
g. <i>Chen Ying-hong</i> (陳映宏)	<i>Hong-hong</i> (宏宏)	'Grand, grand'
R(d) Add a modifier, or produce an adjective, an object or a famous person's name		
h. <i>Zhang Shih-chang</i> (張仕昌)	<i>Ji-chang</i> (姬昌)	'A king in the Western Chou Dynasty (1122-770 B. C.)'
i. <i>Li An-lun</i> (李安倫)	<i>Fei-lun</i> (肥倫)	'Fat' <i>Lun</i>
j. <i>Zheng Hong-an</i> (鄭宏安)	<i>Kang-an</i> (康安)	'Healthy, Safe/Peaceful'
R(e) Single out the character		
k. <i>Luo Wei-jun</i> (羅偉峻)	<i>Jun</i> (峻)	'Steep'
R(f) Find a homophonic, alliterate, rhymed character and an object/term associated with it		
l. <i>Dai Kun-yu</i> (戴昆育)	<i>Se-yu</i> (色魚)	'Colorful fish'
m. <i>Zhang qin-min</i> (張欽閔)	<i>Xi-mi</i> (洗米)	'Wash rice'
n. <i>Zhang Gen-hao</i> (張根豪)	<i>Gang-gang hao</i> (剛剛好)	'Just fine'

*for repetition of an entry throughout the paper.

Comparing Tables 4-1 and 4-2, we see females lack nicknames formed by R(b), suffix with *Zi* (仔) in Mandarin (*Zai* in Cantonese; /e/ [as get, bet in English] in Taiwanese), and they have six more instances in R(a), prefix with *Xiao* ('little'). R(b) for males seem to come from a male famous singer with stage name of *Liu De-hua* (劉德華), who--everyone knows--was nicknamed *Hua Zai* (華仔) in Cantonese. *Ss* were nicknamed by the singer. Prevalence of females with R(a) applied to their nicknames should be from an actress with the stage name *Xiao-yan-zi* ('Little Swallow'). In Table 4-2 R(a), we find *Cheng Chuan-yan* nicknamed *Xiao-yan-zi* by the actress. Actually, *Xiao-yan-zi* is the application of three rules: R(a), R(d) and R(f). R(a) for females is also quite conventional (Liao 2000, as above-mentioned). The nickname of *Xiao Jien-jien* 'Little key-key' (Table 4-1) is also the application of R(c) and R(a); his name thus appeared twice. The six rules do not exclude one another; sometimes they combine to function in a nicknaming speech act. The one called *Se-yu* ('Colorful fish' (under R(f) of Table 4-1) was because of ZZZ of his formal name and he liked to tell sexual jokes, which is called *huang-se xiao-hua* 'Yellow Jokes' in Chinese. Se or *huang-se* is used to mean sex-related or sexual. He was also nicknamed by his fondness.

Table 4-2 Females' nicknames related to ZZZ (19 different entries)

Names	Nicknames	Meaning
R(a) Prefix with <i>Xiao</i> (小)		
a. <i>Chen Chun-mi</i> (陳春米)	<i>Xiao-mi</i> (小米)	'Little rice'
b. <i>Xu Meng-yi</i> (徐夢逸)	<i>Xiao-yi</i> (小逸)	'Little Yi'
c. <i>Luo Zhen-pei</i> (羅真珮)	<i>Xiao-pei</i> (小珮)	'Little Pei'
d. <i>Chen Yi-ying</i> (陳怡穎)	<i>Xiao-ying</i> (小穎)	'Little Ying'
e. <i>Chen Hui-jun</i> (陳蕙君)	<i>Xiao-jun</i> (小君)	'Little Jun'
f. <i>Huang Jia-ling</i> (黃嘉玲)	<i>Xiao-ling-zi</i> (小玲子)	'Little bell'
g. <i>Cheng Chuan-yan</i> (程川宴)	<i>Xiao-yan-zi</i> (小燕子)	'Little swallow'
h. <i>Lai Yun-xiang</i> (賴韻翔)	<i>Xiao-xiang-gu</i> (小香菇)	'Little mushroom'
R(b) Suffix with <i>Zi</i> (仔)		
None		
R(c) Duplicate		
i. <i>Qiu Xuan-pei</i> (邱璇珮)	<i>Pei-pei</i> (珮珮)	Jade, jade
*j. <i>Lin Yan-ci</i> (林晏慈)	<i>Ah Ci-ci</i> (阿慈慈)	kind, kind
k. <i>Huang Jie-mei</i> (黃傑玫)	<i>Mei-mei</i> (玫玫)	Rose, rose
R(d) Use the character to produce an adjective, an object or a famous person's name		
l. <i>Zhang Yu-ping</i> (張毓蘋)	<i>Ping-guo</i> (蘋果)	Apple
*f. <i>Huang Jia-ling</i> (黃嘉玲)	<i>Xiao-ling-zi</i> (小玲子)	Little bell
*g. <i>Cheng Chuan-yan</i> (程川宴)	<i>Xiao-yan-zi</i> (小燕子)	Little swallow
m. <i>Li Jing-wen</i> (李精文)	<i>Jia-gu-wen</i> (甲骨文)	The earliest Chinese characters inscribed on turtle shells or ox bone
*h. <i>Lai Yun-xiang</i> (賴韻翔)	<i>Xiao-xiang-gu</i> (小香菇)	Little mushroom
R(e) Single out ZZZ		
n. <i>Lin You-xuan</i> (林祐瑄)	<i>Xuan</i> (瑄)	
o. <i>Lin Yu-wen</i> (林育玫)	<i>Wen</i> (玫)	
R(f) Find a homophonic, alliterate, rhymed character and an object/term associated with it		
*g. <i>Cheng Chuan-yan</i> (程川宴)	<i>Xiao-yan-zi</i> (小燕子)	'Little swallow'
*h. <i>Lai Yun-xiang</i> (賴韻翔)	<i>Xiao-xiang-gu</i> (小香菇)	'Little mushroom'
p. <i>Lai Ying-fen</i> (賴櫻芬)	<i>Fen-yuan</i> (粉圓)	'A sweet snack'
q. <i>Zhang Xin-yu</i> (張馨瑜)	<i>Jin-yu</i> (金魚)	'Golden fish'
r. <i>Liang Jia-yu</i> (梁家毓)	<i>Ai-yu</i> (愛玉)	'A kind of sweet snack; love jade'

Mentor H pointed out that *Lai Yun-xiang* gave herself the nickname of *Xiao-xiang-gu* 'Little mushroom' (Table 4-2 R[a], R[d] and R[f]). She believed 'Little mushroom' was unique because it was not given by someone else.

Twenty-four nicknames are related to family name, XXX. *Ah* + XXX is much rarer

than *Ah* + *ZZZ*. Tables 5-1 and 5-2 list all 14 male and 10 female nicknames: the first category, 5-1(a) and 5-2(a), may not be so downgrading, using no puns. The first four examples in 5-1(a) literally upgrade the nicknamed; however, they might feel it an irony at age 15. The *Ah Li* and *Wen Zi* in 5-1(a) are neutral, while the last one, *Dai Bao* ‘*Dai* Treasured,’ shows the addresser’s intimacy toward him; he was put at a baby position. The two cases in Table 5-2(a), 22 cases of *Ah* + *ZZZ*, R(a) in Tables 4-1 and 4-2 tell us that Liao’s (2000) nicknaming rule of ‘prefix one character of the full name by *Ah* (empty bound morpheme), *lao* (‘old’) or *xiao* (‘little’)’ still holds true for the *Ss*. Seven nicknames for 5-1(b) use puns. First *XXX*, of the nicknamed was substituted by another character with the same pronunciation, and a common word from the substituted character is produced.

Table 5-1 Male *XXX*-related nicknames (14 entries)

Name	Nickname	Meaning of nickname
5-1(a) Original <i>XXX</i>		
a. <i>Chen Shih-hua</i> (陳世華)	<i>Chen Bo</i> (陳伯)	<i>Chen</i> Big Uncle
b. <i>Zhu Min-jie</i> (朱民傑)	<i>Zhu Bo</i> (朱伯)	<i>Zhu</i> Big Uncle
c. <i>Shen Bo-yi</i> (沉柏誼)	<i>Shen Be Be</i> (沈ㄅㄛ ㄅㄛ)	<i>Shen</i> Big Uncle
d. <i>Cai Ming-han</i> (蔡明翰)	<i>Cai Da-xia</i> (蔡大俠)	Cai Big Righteous Hero
e. <i>Li Yung-chin</i> (李永進)	<i>Ah Li</i> (阿李)	<i>Ah Li</i>
f. <i>Wen Hong-wen</i> (溫泓文)	<i>Wen Zi</i> (溫仔)	‘Wen’s’ or ‘Of Wen’
g. <i>Dai Zhih-xun</i> (戴誌勳)	<i>Dai Bao</i> (戴寶)	<i>Dai</i> Treasured
5-1(b) Pun application		
h. <i>Hou Cheng-you</i> (侯承佑)	<i>Ah-hou</i> (阿猴)	‘Monkey’
i. <i>Lai Yi-sheng</i> (賴易聖)	<i>Lai-pi-gou</i> (癩皮狗)	‘A Cheap Dog’
j. <i>Cai Chang-cheng</i> (蔡昌政)	<i>Cai-tou</i> (菜頭)	‘Radish’
k. <i>Zhang Jun-hao</i> (張峻豪)	<i>Zhang-lang</i> (蟑螂)	‘Cockroach’
l. <i>Cai Jia-hao</i> (蔡佳豪)	<i>Cai-niao</i> (菜鳥)	‘A novice’
m. <i>Wei Hao-huan</i> (魏浩桓)	<i>Xiao-xong-wei-ni</i> (小熊維尼)	‘Winnie the Pooh’
n. <i>Hong Yu-chen</i> (洪羽辰)	<i>Hong-mao</i> (紅毛)	‘Red Hair’

Tables 5-1 and 5-2 hint that males are more likely called by 5-1(a) rule, some similar to *XXX* + title. However, Chi-square test to Table 5-3 shows no significant difference. According to his mentor, ‘*Shen* Big Uncle’ was so-called for being extremely serious and polite, unlike naughty early teens; therefore, they put him in an upper generation.

Table 5-2 Female *XXX*-related nicknames (10 entries)

Name	Nickname	Meaning of nickname
5-2(a) Original <i>XXX</i>		
<i>Wu Jing-chia</i> (吳靜佳)	Lao <i>Wu</i> (老吳)	Old <i>Wu</i>
<i>Jiang Yi-chan</i> (江乙禪)	<i>Xiao Jiang</i> (小江)	Little <i>Jiang</i>
5-2(b) Pun application		
<i>Peng Yu-ting</i> (彭玉婷)	<i>Peng Peng</i> (澎澎)	‘a brand of bathing lotion’
<i>Yan Xiu-zhen</i> (顏秀禎)	<i>Yan xiao-ji</i> (鹽小雞)	‘Salty fried chicken’
<i>Cai Yi-wen</i> (蔡伊雯)	<i>Cai-tou</i> (菜頭)	‘Radish’
<i>Ke Pei-xiu</i> (柯佩秀)	<i>Ke-dou</i> (蝌蚪)	‘Tadpole’

<u>You Xiao-qing</u> (尤曉菁).	<u>You-yu</u> (魷魚)	‘Squid’
<u>Hong Hui-qi</u> (洪慧琦)	<u>Fen-hong Zhu</u> (粉紅豬)	‘Pink pig’
<u>Su You-xuan</u> (蘇祐萱)	<u>Su-ji</u> (酥雞)	‘Crisp chicken’
<u>Liu Li-jun</u> (劉俐君)	<u>Liu-ding</u> (柳丁)	‘Orange’

Table 5-3 Comparing Tables 5-1 and 5-2

	Original XXX	Pun Application	Total
Females	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10
Males	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	14
Total	9 (37.5%)	15 (62.5%)	24

Chi-square value = 2.24 (DF=1; p-value = 0.134)

Fifteen (13.63%) nicknames related to the second characters (Table 6). Six nicknames use the original YYY as a syllable/character, the rest nine had pun application.

Table 6 YYY-related Nicknames

Formal Name	Nickname	Meaning
Males (original YYY)		
<u>Chen Kun-yi</u> (陳昆意)	<u>Xiao-kun-chong</u> (小昆虫)	‘Little insect’
<u>Lin Chang-yue</u> (林昌岳)	<u>Da-tou Chang</u> (大頭昌)	‘Big head Chang’
Males (Pun application)		
<u>Luo Ji-zhe</u> (羅基哲)	<u>Xiao-ji</u> (小雞)	‘little chicken’
<u>Zeng Wen-zheng</u> (曾文正)	<u>Wen-zi</u> (蚊子)	‘mosquito’
<u>Wu Zhu-xuan</u> (吳朱玄)	<u>Zhu-xie</u> (豬血)	‘pig blood’
<u>Liu Bi-kai</u> (劉弼凱)	<u>Da-bi-zi</u> (大鼻子)	‘big nose’
Females (Original YYY)		
<u>Zhang Pei-ru</u> (張佩如)	<u>Pei-pei</u> (佩佩)	‘admire, admire’
<u>Hua Yu-xuan</u> (華雨軒)	<u>Xiao-yu</u> (小雨)	‘small rain’
<u>Liu Man-jun</u> (劉曼君)	<u>Man-yu</u> (曼魚)	‘eel’
<u>Lin Wan-qi</u> (林婉琪)	<u>Ah-wan</u> (阿婉)	‘Tactful’
Females (Pun application)		
<u>Huang Meng-qi</u> (黃孟琪)	<u>Ning-meng</u> (檸檬)	‘Lemon’
<u>Zhang Xiao-ping</u> (張筱萍)	<u>Xiao-bai</u> (小白)	‘Little white’
<u>Zhuang Yu-xuan</u> (莊于軒)	<u>Xiao-yu</u> (小魚)	‘small fish’
<u>Liao Wen-xin</u> (廖玟欣)	<u>Wen-zi</u> (蚊子)	‘mosquito’
<u>Zhu Wan-zhen</u> (朱婉甄)	<u>Wan-gong</u> (碗公)	‘big bowel’

Four nicknames relate to XXX plus YYY (Table 7), thirteen YYY + ZZZ (Table 8). According to her mentor, *Ke Xie-jia*'s (Table 7) name was re-parsed to become *Ke-xie* (‘depend on relations’) in Taiwanese and *Jia* (‘good’) in Mandarin. In this case, *Ke-xie* should be the use of pun, not the original Mandarin of *Ke Xie*. We find all four cases of nicknames related to XXX + YYY are pun-related, yet do not count *Ke-Xie* in the category of pun use because the editors’ use of the original XXX-YYY.

Table 7 Nicknames related to XXX + YYY (4 entries: 2 males; two females)

Formal Name	Nickname	Meaning
<i>Li Zong-xing</i> (李宗興; male)	<i>Li Zhong gou</i> 李忠狗	'your faithful dog'
<i>Hong Zhong-qing</i> (洪仲慶; male)	<i>Hong-zhong</i> (紅中)	'a token in mahjong' or 'a forbidden drug'
<i>Ke Xie-jia</i> (柯協佳; female)	<i>Ke-Xie</i> (柯協)	'related'
<i>Luo Yong-wen</i> (羅詠文; female)	<i>Luo-yong</i> (裸泳)	'naked swim'

Table 8 Nicknames related to YYY + ZZZ (4 males; 9 females)

Formal Name	Nickname	Meaning
Males (Original YYY + ZZZ)		
<i>Wu Huai-qin</i> (吳懷欽)	<i>Huai-qin gou</i> (懷欽狗)	' <i>Huai-qin</i> , a pleasing dog'
Males (pun application)		
<i>Cai You-jien</i> (蔡祐健)	<i>You-jien</i> (右鍵)	Right button (mouse)
<i>Zheng Yong-jin</i> (鄭永進)	<i>Yong-jien</i> (勇健)	'Brave-Strong'
<i>Lin Jia-hui</i> (林家輝)	<i>Ka-fei</i> (咖啡)	'Coffee'
Females (Original YYY + ZZZ)		
<i>Lin Zhih-chun</i> (林智淳)	<i>Zhih-chun mei</i> (智淳妹)	' <i>Zhih-chun</i> , younger sister'
<i>Han Ying-ying</i> (韓瑩瑩)	<i>Ying-zi</i> (瑩子)	'Clear'
<i>Lin Bei-yi</i> (林貝怡)	<i>Bei-yi mei</i> (貝怡妹)	<i>Bei-yi</i> , younger sister
Females (Pun Application)		
<i>Su Yu-ting</i> (蘇于婷)	<i>Yu-ting</i> (愚婷)	'Foolish <i>Ting</i> '
<i>Zhang Min-qi</i> (張閔琪)	<i>Mi-qi</i> (米奇)	Chinese transliteration for 'Micky (Mouse)'
<i>Lin Shih-yu</i> (林詩雨)	<i>Si-yu</i> (死魚)	'Dead fish'
<i>Zhang Xin-yu</i> (張馨雨)	<i>Liu Xing-yu</i> (流星雨)	'Meteor shower'
<i>Li Mei-qi</i> (李美琪)	<i>Mi-qi</i> (米奇)	Chinese transliteration for 'Micky (Mouse)'
<i>Huang Jing-fang</i> (黃靖芳)	<i>Jing-yuan</i> (靖圓)	' <i>Jing</i> round'

'*Huai-qin* dog' (Table 8) was so-called because his words are very sweet, catering and pleasing. *Ka-fei* 'Coffee' for *Lin Jia-hui*'s nickname includes several steps in 'deep structure': (1) *Jia-hui* (Mandarin) is pronounced in Taiwanese as *Ga-hui*, (2) *Ga-hui* sounds like *Ka-fei*, because Taiwanese often mistake /f/ as /h/--Taiwanese has no /f/ phoneme. (3) The nickname of *Ka-fei* 'Coffee' is created. *Huang Jing-fang*'s nickname, *Jing-yuan*, is complicated: first, YYY is used; then, ZZZ, *fang* 'fragrant,' is altered to its pun--*fang* 'square'--which in Chinese describes persons who speak literally and directly, lacking tact. *Jing-fang* was this kind of person; her classmates labeled and expected her to be more tactful and diplomatic. In Chinese, *yuan* 'round' can be the antonym of *fang* 'square.' If we review nicknaming rules of Liao (2000), her nickname combines use of R3, R4 and the last phrase of R7: (R3) homophonic wordplay, (R4) opposition to something about the formal name and (R7) describe the person, ability, figure, fondness, etc., or the opposite quality.

Nicknames Not Related to Names

Since nicknames in this category are not related to formal names, we only list the 140 nicknames in Tables 9-1 (male) and 9-2 (female).

Table 9-1 Male Nicknames not related to names

Nicknames	Meaning
(A) Objects and food items	
<i>Man-tou</i> (饅頭)	'Chinese bread'
<i>Rou-yuan</i> (肉圓)	'Meat Ball'
Pen Pen (in English)	'Pen Pen'
<i>Ji-dan</i> (雞蛋)	'Chicken egg'
Sky (in English)	'Sky' (from the surname of Skywalker in the movie, <i>Star War</i>)
<i>Kui-mao-lu-dan</i> (Q毛魯蛋)	'Curly Hair soybean-sauced egg'
<i>Lu-dan</i> (魯蛋)	'Soybean-sauced egg'
<i>Qiao-ke-li</i> (巧克力)	'Chocolate'
(B) Flora	
<i>Pu-tao</i> (葡萄)	'Grape'
<i>Sen-sen</i> (森森)	'Forest-forest'
<i>Ba-le</i> (芭樂) (two people)	'Guava'
<i>Da-mu-gua</i> (大木瓜)	'Big Papaya'
<i>Da-fan-shu</i> (大蕃薯)	'Big sweet potato'
<i>Ku-gua</i> (苦瓜)	'Bitter gourd'
<i>Teng-mu</i> (藤木)	'Rattan wood' (the name of a cartoon figure in <i>Slam Down</i>)
(C) Body Parts	
<i>Da-tou</i> (大頭) two people's nickname	'Big head'
<i>Guang-tou</i> (光頭)	'Bald head'
<i>She-shou</i> (射手)	'Shooter'
<i>Da-bi-kong</i> (大鼻孔)	'Big nostrils'
<i>Pi-pi</i> (屁屁)	'Bottom (Baby talk)'
<i>Xiao-bai-lian</i> (小白臉)	'Little white face'
(D) Animals & excretions	
<i>Mao-zhu</i> (毛豬)	'Hairy pig'
<i>She-bo</i> (蛇伯)	'Snake Big Uncle'
<i>Di-shu</i> (地鼠)	'Earth Mouse' or 'Hole digger'
<i>Xiao-hei</i> (小黑) two men's nickname	'Little Black' (also popular dog names in Taiwan)
<i>Qing-wa</i> (青蛙)	'Frog'
<i>Po-hou</i> (潑猴)	'Naughty Monkey'
<i>Xiao-jing</i> (小鯨)	'Little Whale'
<i>Cang-ying</i> (蒼蠅)	'Fly'
<i>Ah-long</i> (阿龍)	'Dragon'
<i>Zhu-zi</i> (豬仔)	'Pig'

<i>He-ma</i> (河馬)	‘Hippopotamus’
<i>Xiao-zhu</i> (小豬)	‘Piglet’
<i>Xiao-wu-guei</i> (小烏龜)	‘Little Turtle’
<i>Xiao-hu-niu</i> (小狐牛)	‘Little Fox Ox’
<i>Ya-zi</i> (鴨子)	‘Duck’
<i>Xong</i> (熊)	‘Bear’
<i>Wu-guei</i> (烏龜)	‘Turtle’
<i>Pang Qi-er</i> (胖企鵝)	‘Fat penguin’
<i>Xun-long</i> (迅龍)	‘Speedy dragon’
<i>Jin-gang</i> (金剛)	‘Chinese translation of the name of a movie about a strong Chimpanzee’
<i>Xiao-ma</i> (小馬)	‘Little horse’
<i>Zhu-tou</i> (豬頭)	‘Pig Head’
<i>Xiao-ji</i> (小雞)	‘Little chicken’
<i>Shui-wa</i> (水蛙; in Taiwanese)	‘Frog’
<i>Ma-shih</i> (馬屎)	‘Horse’s solid waste’
<i>Gou-pi</i> (狗屁)	‘Dog’s gas waste’
(E) Humans	
<i>Suo-zhang</i> (所長)	‘Institute Chief’
<i>Lao-ah-bo</i> (老阿伯)	‘Old Man’
<i>Guan-gong</i> (關公)	‘An ancient hero <i>Guan-gong</i> ’
<i>Dai-dai</i> (呆呆)	‘Fool, fool’
<i>Xiao-jun</i> (小君)	‘Little emperor’
<i>Shih-zhang</i> (市長)	‘Mayor’
<i>Pang-ge</i> (胖哥)	‘Fat big brother’
ET (Extra Terrestrial; in English) 3 people	‘ET’
<i>Lao-da</i> (老大)	‘The eldest’
<i>Huang Tai-zi</i> (黃太子)	‘Yellow Prince’
<i>Ha-li</i> (哈利)	‘Harry’
<i>Kang-kang</i> (康康)	‘Health Health’ (a male entertainer’s stage name)
<i>Xiang-shui-nan</i> (香水男)	‘Perfume Man’
<i>Bin-la-deng</i> (賓拉登)	‘Bin Laden’
<i>Xiang-jiao-xiong</i> (香蕉雄)	‘Banana Hero’
<i>Shui-ye-ming</i> (水野明)	‘Water-wild-clear (like a Japanese name)’
<i>Xiao-ding-dang</i> (小叮噹)	‘Hero in a Japanese animated TV series’
<i>Ku-ba</i> (酷巴)	A figure in a Japanese cartoon
<i>Xiao-Qiang</i> (小強)	‘A common boy’s name in children books’
(F) Brand name	
<i>Man-niu</i> (蠻牛)	‘Strong ox/cow (a brand of drink)’
<i>Hei-qiao</i> (黑橋)	‘Black Bridge (a brand of sausage)’
(G) Others	
<i>Pang-pang</i> (胖胖)	‘Fat-fat’
<i>Ao-xiao-hong-chen</i> (傲笑紅塵)	‘Proudly Laughing at the Mundane’

	Society'
<i>Ah-li-gu</i> (阿力古)	
<i>Yong-gong</i> (用功)	'Study hard'
<i>Dong-dong</i> (東東)	'East East'
<i>Shou-nai</i> (手奶)	'Hand-milk'

Some explanations from mentors about nicknames in Table 9-1: 'Yellow Prince' (9-1E) was so nicknamed because his family treated him like a prince--he had all enviable comforts of living, and 'yellow' because he watched sexual CDs as of 1999. One 'Little Black' (9-1D) was named so because his skin was tanner than the others' (owing to his love of outdoor sports. Many black dogs in Taiwan are called 'Little Black.' The 'Little Black' in Class H did not complain about his nickname. 'Chocolate' (9-1A) was called so because his skin was darker than others. 'Shooter' (9-1C) was good at shooting basketball. *Jin-gang* (9-1D) was very strong, like the chimpanzee in a movie translated into Chinese as *Jin-gang*. 'Fat Penguin' (9-1D) was fat and walked like a penguin with the front parts of the feet more separated than the ankles. 'Frog' (9-3D) once took a frog to class and terrified a classmate. He loved playing with animals and also raised snakes at home. All his nicknames were animal-related. 'Bitter Gourd' (9-1B) was unhappy most of the time. A person with a sad/unhappy face is often nicknamed 'Bitter Gourd' or 'Bitter Gourd Face.' 'Little White Face' (9-1C) was so named because he always attached to someone both physically and mentally. He seldom had his own idea. The mentor believed the 'Little White Face' here could not be explained in a conventional adult way to mean 'a man financially depending on a woman.' 'Bin Laden' (9-1E) was so designated due to his ugliness. In Taiwan Osama bin Laden was translated as 'Bin Laden.' *Xiao-ding-dang* (9-1E) looked like a figure in the Japanese cartoon series. Japanese comic books and animated TV series have been popular in Taiwan for the past 20 years or so. 'Study hard' (9-1G) was so named because he looked stupid, bad at human relationship and was seen to read books all the time. All the 12 above-mentioned cases seem to show that nicknamers generally catching a bad quality or event of a person to describe. In Taiwanese society, suntan skin is ugly and pale color is beautiful, so people take umbrellas to block out sunshine. To describe a tanned person, 'Little Black' or 'Chocolate' are good nicknames. 'Study hard' was also nicknamed from a negative point of view.

Table 9-2 Female nicknames not related to names

Nicknames	Meaning
(A) Objects and food	
<i>Tong-xiang</i> (銅像)	'Copper Statue'
<i>Xiao-long-bao</i> (小籠包) 3 females' nickname	'Little steamed bread'
<i>Ah-mi</i> (阿米)	'Rice'
<i>Feng-li</i> (鳳梨)	'Pineapple'
<i>Xiao-bu-dian</i> (小不點)	'Little not enough to form a dot'
<i>Fei-ren-zai</i> (非人哉)	'Not a human'
<i>Dian-dian</i> (電電)	'Electricity Electricity'
Apple (English)	'Apple'
<i>Wa-wa</i> (娃娃) 3 females' nickname	'Doll'
<i>Qiao-ke-li</i> (巧克力)	'Chocolate'

<i>Zhu-xie-tang</i> (豬血湯)	'Pig Blood Soup'
<i>Ke-ke-mi</i> (可可米)	'Good Good Rice'
<i>Qiou-qiou</i> (球球)	'Ball Ball'
<i>Ka-fei</i> (咖啡)	'Coffee'
<i>Bu-ding</i> (布丁)	'Pudding'
<i>Xiao-feng</i> (小風)	'Breeze'
<i>Nai-ji</i> (奶雞)	'Buttered Chicken'
<i>Rou-yuan</i> (肉圓) 2 females'	'Meat Ball'
<i>Da-bing</i> (大餅)	'Big biscuit'
(B) Flora	
<i>Ah-dou</i> (阿荳)	'Bean/Pea'
<i>Xiao-kuei</i> (小葵)	'Little sunflower'
(C) Body Parts	
<i>Da-tou</i> (大頭)	'Big head'
<i>Mao-mao</i> (毛毛)	'Hair-hair'
(D) Animals and excretion	
<i>Hei-zhu</i> (黑豬)	'Black pig'
<i>Zhang-lang</i> (蟑螂)	'Cockroach'
<i>He-ma</i> (河馬)	'Hippopotamus'
<i>Tu-tu</i> (兔兔)	'Rabbit Rabbit'
<i>Ya-zi</i> (鴨子)	'Duck'
<i>Jian-gou</i> (賤狗)	'Cheap dog' (A Japanese cartoon series translated into Chinese as <i>I have a cheap dog</i>)
<i>Xiao-fei-zhu</i> (小肥豬)	'Little fat pig'
<i>Ah-hou</i> (阿猴)	'Monkey'
<i>Jin-yu</i> (金魚)	'Golden fish'
<i>Mi</i> (咪)	'Onomatopoeic sound of cats'
<i>Shui-mu</i> (水母)	'Jellyfish'
(E) Humans	
<i>K-Po</i> (K 婆)	'K old-woman'
<i>Ah-ma</i> (阿嬤)	'Grandmother'
<i>Ma-ma</i> (媽媽)	'Mother'
<i>Xiao-hai</i> (小孩)	'Child'
<i>Kong-mei</i> (恐妹)	'Terrible younger sister'
<i>Ah-mei</i> (阿妹) 2 females' nickname	'Younger sister' (the nickname of a famous Taiwanese singer)
Gordan (in English)	Gordan
<i>Tai-guo-zi</i> (泰國仔)	'A person from Thailand'
<i>Ma-li-o</i> (瑪利歐)	'Sounds like an English name'
<i>Zi-zi</i> (仔仔)	'Child Child'
<i>Xiao-ye</i> (小野)	'Little wild; a Japanese surname'
<i>Da-bing-mei</i> (大餅妹)	'Big biscuit younger sister'
<i>Lao-yao</i> (老妖)	'Old Witch' or 'the youngest'

<i>Mei-huan</i> (美環)	'name of a female cartoon figure'
(F) Brand names None	
(H) Place name	
<i>Xiao-gu</i> (小谷)	'Little valley'; a Japanese family name
<i>Chong-sheng</i> (沖繩)	'Okinawa'
(G) Others	
<i>Jia-jia</i> (佳佳)	'Good Good'
<i>Xiao-xiao</i> (小小)	'Little Little'
<i>Xiao-pang</i> (小胖)	'Little fat'
<i>Hao-qi</i> (好奇)	'Curious'
<i>Kiu-kiu</i> (QQ)	'(for food to have the quality of being) elastic and tasty'
<i>Hei-gui</i> (黑鬼)	'Black ghost'

Here are some explanations of nicknames in Table 9-2 from the mentors. 'Electricity Electricity' (9-2A) was attractive to males, who were spontaneously drawn to her; she thus got the nickname. *Dian* ('electricity') is young people's term to mean 'attractive' or 'to attract.' 'Not a human' (9-2A) was not seen to study hard, but her performance on tests was almost always perfect. It should be complimentary to her, since it implied that she had some special godly quality of omnipotence. *Mama* 'mother' was mostly quiet and serious like a mother. *Xiao-hai* 'child' was shorter and smaller than most classmates. 'Big Biscuit' and 'Big Biscuit Younger Sister' were for their big faces. 'Okinawa' loved Japanese things and had visited Japan before. *Lao yao* ('Old Witch' or 'the youngest') was the youngest child at home, with two elder brothers. Her nickname meaning 'the youngest' is pun with 'old witch,' which she always wrote.

Interview the mentors

Of the 140 classes, eight taught by different mentors recorded both their formal names and nicknames. Mentors interviewed pointed out how students took initiative to keep both nicknames and formal ones; they felt it all right. Mentor A pointed out the two editors in Class A complained of some peer students lacking nicknames because they had hoped everyone to have one recorded. Mentor B indicated that some students had more than one nickname; however, only one was recorded. He believed that in the first year, there was a nicknamer for everyone in the class, at first fellow students might not have liked nicknames. Later on, after being together for three years, they were used to them and did not mind any longer. He remembered well that most students called each other by nicknames, but cannot recall if they use Mandarin or Taiwanese to call each other. Mentor C indicated high popularity of nicknames in her class was due to good peer interaction, like a harmonious family. Mentor H said that her students liked fooling around and did not study hard; therefore, all of them had nicknames. Three mentors understood origins of many nicknames and explained to me, while others seldom called students by their nicknames. They knew students used nicknames extensively among themselves.

In sum, the nicknaming phenomenon is popular with Taiwanese 15-year-olds. Some

people are very good at giving nicknames to signal membership in a friendship group. Nicknames show group solidarity, fun, and teasing. People nickname you either by taking one character out of your full name, or by remembering one event (especially bad one) about you, understanding what you like, your personality, feature of your body or temperament. Nicknaming ways are multiple. Parents can try their best to follow the rule of ‘do not have a name obviously homophonic with something not as sacred as human beings,’ but they also must prepare for nicknamers being too creative, innovative, cunning for their children to avoid.

DISCUSSION

Ah + ZZZ of a formal name is how the incumbent and former national presidents were nicknamed. The incumbent President, *Chen Shui-bian* refers to himself as *Ah-bian*; the previous one, *Lee Teng-hui* (in office 1990-2000) as *Teng-hui*. However, people, especially southern Taiwanese, refer to him as *Ah-hui* or *Ah-hui-ah*, to show their respect and positive emotion toward him. The self-reference of the current President, inaugurated on May 20, 2000, may set a Taiwanese trend, so that in Classes G and H (Table 1), we find all *Ss* have nicknames. This study finds Taiwanese junior high students in 1999-2003 fonder of nicknaming than their American counterparts, as Busse (1983) and Shankle (1955) found, and more than the Taiwanese senior high school students (Liao 2000). We find no name too sacred or base for *Ss* to shorten or modify into an affectionate, humorous, or abusive sobriquet. Here I give Taiwanese parents a suggestion: just give your children a name you expect them to be and ignore the possibility of a satirical or complimentary sobriquet. Look more at the bright side of nicknaming (as symbol of solidarity, in-group relationship, humor and fun), not the dark side of the meaning of nicknames (to downgrade a person to a plant, food item, animal, etc.) and be happy.

Actually, I have listed all nicknames of 250 people from Tables 4-1 to 9-2. Comparing the nicknames in [Tables 4-1 through 8] and [Tables 9-1 and 9-2], we find the former group’s nicknames may not be uglier than the latter’s. That is, nicknames not related to names are even worse than those related, yet at least members of the latter group have no reason to complain to their parents who gave the nickname-generative name.

When future parents seriously take the rule of naming, “do not let your children have the name homophonic with bad words,” those so-called bad words are like nicknames below Tables 4-1 R(f) and 4-2 R(f). Parents cannot do anything to pun nicknames in 5-1(b) and 5-2(b) because Chinese/Taiwanese do not alter family names. Historically, Chinese change family names only (1) to avoid being killed for being in the same family with a capital criminal, and (2) on order from the emperor (as an honor) to give up their own family name and change to the royal family’s. The royal order may be negative too: when one’s *XXX* is the same as *YYY* or *ZZZ* of a member of the royal family, the family name also had to be discarded. Nowadays, numbers of Chinese people’s surnames are bigger than before for one more reason: some people made a mistake in reporting to the Civil Registration Office and had to take the wrong family name. The Civil Registration Office might have erred, and citizens were lazy to ask them to change back (perhaps for the fear of red tape).

Rules of Nicknames

Analyzing the nicknames above and interviewing Mentors A-H, I found six of Liao's (2000) nicknaming rules applied: (R1) affectionate names (duplication of one syllable/character); (R2) prefix one character of the full name by *ah*, *lao* ('old') or *xiao* ('little'); (R3) homophonic wordplay; (R4) opposition to something about the formal name; (R5) the birth order of the sibling; and (R7) describe the person, ability, figure, fondness, etc., or opposite quality. These rules should be applied in a higher frequency than R6, R8 and R9, which were not used by *Ss* in this study: (R6) fortune-teller's instructions; (R8) given by relatives; and (R9) the birth year, gender, or horoscope. R6 is more family-based; my previous study (Liao 2000) only found two cases: Parents worried about *Ss*' bad health and schooling performance, consulted onomancers, and changed addressing and reference practices without having names formally changed. Two cases, each applying R8 and R9--relatively few, compared with the other seven rules--were reported in Liao (2000). There is a new rule found: (R10) suffix one character of the full name by *Zi* (子/仔) pronounced in Mandarin, *Zai* in Cantonese, or /e/ or /ah/ in Taiwanese. Taiwanese junior high school students code-switch frequently, mainly in Mandarin and Taiwanese, and in this specific case in Cantonese too, for the Hong Kong singer, *Hua Zai*. At least we can count the relative distribution of R1-R4 and R10.

R1: 7 (2.8% of 250 having nicknames)

R2: 30 (12%)

R3: 44 (17.6%)

R4: 1 (0.4%)

R10: 9 (3.6%)

From the above, we know homophonic wordplay is the most important linguistic technique in nicknaming (44 cases); second, prefixing of *ah*, *lao* and *xiao* (30); third, suffixing of *zi* (9); fourth, affection of duplication (7); and fifth, antonym of (the pun of) the formal name (1). From here, we understand why the naming rule of 'do not have a name pun to an entry not as sacred as human being' is important.

No nicknames

We still have 45 subjects without nicknames. They may not be so popular among fellow students or might resist being nicknamed. A mentor believed that nickname use and popularity should be independent of each other. Another mentor gave one reason for those who did not have nicknames: Once I gave a student a nickname of *Da-pang* ('Big Fat') because of his figure. I want to show my friendliness to him. But he said, "My name is Chen Zheng-wei." This was exactly the same way I resisted my mother-in-law's nicknaming my daughter as 'Big Fool' (Liao 2000: 96).

Nicknames and gender

Table 3 above proves that female and male nicknames are not significantly different from each other concerning the point if they are directly linguistically related to their full names. Tables 10 and 11 tally both sexes' nicknames similar in relative

distribution to the characters of their full name, and the pun usage. The only gender difference is in Table 2: significantly more males than females (91.61% to 78.29%) had nicknames.

Table 10 Linguistically related to which characters?

	1	2	3	1 + 2	2 + 3	Total
Female	10 (17.54%)	9 (15.79%)	27 (47.37%)	2 (3.51%)	9 (15.79%)	57
Male	14 (26.42%)	6 (11.32%)	27 (50.94%)	2 (3.77%)	4 (7.55%)	53
Total	24 (21.82%)	15 (13.63%)	54 (49.09%)	4 (3.64%)	13 (11.82%)	110

Chi-square value = 3.048 (DF=4; p-value =0.550)

Table 11 Use of puns?

	Yes	No	Total
Female nicknames	24 (42.11%)	33 (57.89%)	57
Male nicknames	18 (33.96%)	35 (66.04%)	53
Total	42 (38.53%)	67 (61.47%)	110

Chi-square value = 0.772 (Df=1; p-value =0.380)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Nicknaming rules may change. Liao (2000) used data from Ss born in 1955-82 to get nine rules. Data from this group of Ss born in 1984-88 led us only to seven rules. The research methods also count: Liao (2000) used the data of Ss' self-narration, this study analyzed the files in Graduation Memory Album; Ss could not be reached. Nicknames homophonic with names may not be more derogatory than those not. The rule of 'do not let your children have the name homophonic with bad words' should not be taken too seriously. The young children used six rules of Liao's (2000) rules in nicknaming: one new rule is found, which is not their creation, though. The namers and named can produce their own nicknames and promote them, as 'Little Mushroom' did. When one does not like a nickname, a typical way to resist is to say, "My name is XXX YYY-ZZZ." Then the nickname might not survive.

Limits

I got the written data on the students' nicknames without the chance to ask them why they were so nicknamed, language used in nicknaming, or if they liked these nicknames. Readers, particularly, those familiar with Mandarin or Taiwanese, may find certain nicknames can be changed into pun-reading and downgrade the nicknamed, like Table 4-1, shown here again: the second column of the two rows having two syllables, with four additional Chinese characters. The first two characters were written in the Graduation Memory Album, those in the brackets were the immediate pun I think of. Mentors' explanation was the meanings of 'mirror' and 'swallow.' One mentor opined that nicknames are for oral practice, not writing. One should catch the sound of each nickname, not notice how editors wrote it. This shows the student editors' euphemistic attitude toward nicknames. In the analysis, I tried to be faithful to what was written, not based on my intuition about puns.

Part of Table 4-1: Male nicknames related to ZZZ

Names	Nicknames	Meaning
d. <i>Zhang Yan-jing</i> (張言敬)	<i>Jing-zi</i> (敬仔 [鏡子])	(['Mirror'])
e. <i>Chen Zheng-yan</i> (陳政諺)	<i>Yan-zi</i> (諺仔 [燕子])	(['Swallow'])

I have planned the next study, changing the method to get the origin of nicknames from the nicknamed themselves and if the junior high school students liked them or not. Readers can expect it.

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About the Author

Chao-chih Liao's researching interests are in humorology, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, teaching English as a foreign language, English for specific purposes, and onomastics. The author's email accounts: ccliao@nuk.edu.tw and ccliao@dragon.nchu.edu.tw