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# Chinese couple tried to name baby "@"



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Thu Aug 16, 3:00 AM ET

BEIJING (Reuters) - A Chinese couple tried to name their baby "@," claiming the character used in e-mail addresses echoed their love for the child, an official trying to whip the national language into line said on Thursday.

The unusual name stands out especially in Chinese, which has no alphabet and instead uses tens of thousands of multi-stroke characters to represent words.

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"The whole world uses it to write e-mail, and translated into Chinese it means 'love him'," the father explained, according to the deputy chief of the State Language Commission Li Yuming.

While the "@" simple is familiar to Chinese e-mail users, they often use the English word "at" to sound it out -- which with a drawn out "T" sounds something like "ai ta," or "love him," to Mandarin speakers.

Li told a news conference on the state of the language that the name was an extreme example of people's increasingly adventurous approach to Chinese, as commercialization and the Internet break down conventions.

Another couple tried to give their child a name that rendered into English sounds like "King Osrina."

Li did not say if officials accepted the "@" name. But earlier this year the government announced a ban on names using Arabic numerals, foreign languages and symbols that do not belong to Chinese minority languages.

Sixty million Chinese faced the problem that their names use ancient characters so obscure that computers cannot recognize them and even fluent speakers were left scratching their heads, said Li, according to a transcript of the briefing on the government Web site ([www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn)).

One of them was the former Premier Zhu Rongji, whose name had a rare "rong" character that gave newspaper editors headaches.

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