

# **A PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY INTO JAPANESE NAME USE, LANGUAGE LEARNING, AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although having language learners adopt second language (L2) personal names for use in the classroom is common in both U.S. K-12 FL teaching and in ESL for children and adults in many countries, the research literature, particularly for non-English FLs, is very small. This study endeavored to illustrate the opinions of FL learners of Japanese in a residential immersion program in the Midwest U.S. about their program's use of L2 names, using participatory methodology. Volunteer students worked in small teams to conduct narrowly-focused interview research projects in Japanese and present findings to their peers. The project leader conducted reflective interviews with all student researchers and later reanalyzed the data, using a modified grounded theory framework based on that of Charmaz (2001). Interview data shows that learners in this program frequently develop new personalities attached to their L2 names, and that these personalities include a range of positive qualities, including improved confidence, assertiveness, talkativeness, and extraversion. Students also feel that names help create an immersion atmosphere and that they facilitate speaking in Japanese, and nearly all students enjoy having L2 names. Participatory methodology also facilitated meaningful experiential learning and language proficiency development for the student researchers, and seems to have uncovered a sense of common purpose among program participants and shared feelings of belonging in the program. Suggestions are made about the applicability of this research to mainstream L2 classrooms.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Though language learners in many countries, often with teachers' encouragement, choose personal names from that language (L2 names) to use both in the classroom and beyond, published research on this practice is scarce. Yet if research were to suggest that this practice is helpful or harmful, the knowledge gained could have broad-ranging impact, as L2 names can be adopted or rejected easily and without any material cost to learners or schools.

During summer 2010, I designed and led a participatory research project at *Mori no Ike*, Concordia Language Villages (CLV)'s Japanese immersion summer program,<sup>1</sup> that addressed the impact of L2 names on adolescent foreign language learners' experiences. Residential

summer-camp programs foster close relationships between students and teachers (counselors), and as a long-time staff member in the program, I knew I could not follow a traditional research model that would disrupt these relationships. In this project, student researchers developed their own mini-projects to investigate L2 name use at CLV, analyzed interview and/or survey data they collected, and created research project presentations in Japanese for their peers and counselors. I also interviewed each student researcher individually in English to clarify their findings and gather their impressions of their experience and of the project's impact on their own learning and development as Japanese users. In this paper, I develop my rationale for investigating the practice, focusing on existing L2 name research, the role of imagined L2 communities, and the case for student-centered participatory research. Following that, I report on the context and design of the study, including the student researchers' mini-projects, share my own analysis of the data, and discuss why this matters, for these students and for other language learners.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### *The Uses of L2 Names*

The majority of research on L2 names in language education considers the premise that students with L2 names can or will develop new identities in the new language, and that this is not only facilitative of language acquisition, but empowering. Teachers have also been known to use L2 names, or to pronounce their students' given names with an L2 accent, for a wide variety of other pedagogical reasons, including familiarizing students with common names, letting students know how their names might sound when pronounced by L2 speakers, learning about cultural practices related to names, acquainting learners with L2 phonology, making the classroom a "language island," creating camaraderie within the class, encouraging language play, and even "[increasing students'] sensitivity to all the Pedro, Maria, Joaquins, and Estebans in the world" ("Assigning Foreign [sic] Lang. Names," 2010, "FLTEACH FAQ - Names, Names, Names," 1998, "Spanish Names for Class?," 2010).

In Lozanov's "Suggestopedia" method, learners were strategically assigned names, addresses (in a target language-speaking country), and occupations; all of these were specifically selected so they would contain difficult sounds, encouraging the learners to practice those sounds

(Bancroft, 1978, p. 170). Bancroft and others (“FLTEACH FAQ - Names, Names, Names,” 1998; Ludescher, no date; “Spanish Names for Class?,” 2010) suggest that new identities can take pressure off learners, perhaps because when mistakes are made, it is the L2 person, not the learner, who made them (Bancroft, 1999, p. 63). Giving students new names is thus one of many techniques teachers might use to create a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom. Though use of L2 names is widespread in U.S. K-12 foreign language courses, the scant published research focuses exclusively on “English names” among immigrants (Thompson, 2006) and ESL students (Burke, 2001; Edwards, 2006) and in EFL situations in Asia (McPherron, 2009; Moen, 2009; Silver & Shiomi, 2010; Yihong, Limei, & Wei, 2010). Chinese students of English, especially, are known for their use of original and unusual L2 names.

Just as using a particular language can act as a marker of membership and grant access to certain communities of practice, names can also act as identification badges that allow easy access to communities of practice (Thompson, 2006, p. 189). In a case study of three Korean-American adults, Thompson (2006) found that for all her participants, having “English names” or names that sounded like American names facilitated their participation in American society. She also found that the experiences her participants had with their “ethnic” names were often associated with strong emotions, like embarrassment (p. 197).

Edwards (2006) and McPherron (2009) both discuss the perspectives of Chinese students who have taken on English names, in Britain and in China, respectively. Edwards also finds teachers who have been told (as Bancroft suggests) that having students take English names will make it possible for students to “take on an English persona more easily” (p. 94). For her participants, choosing their own English names was in many cases an empowering exercise (p. 94). Still, she argues that Chinese students may also take “unusual” names to distance themselves from their teachers, as a form of resistance that mocks the practice (p. 100). Countering this, McPherron (2009) finds that his students in China are often ambivalent about English names, but do not use them in a spirit of resistance (p. 532). He finds that students’ names often reflect their own concerns and values, and may change as their community memberships evolve (p. 524). When students find that their creative English names may be stigmatized outside their school community, they sometimes change to more traditional names, or develop ambivalent feelings toward their English names; many also change to more traditional names as their proficiency improves (pp. 527-529).

In the Australian ESL context, Burke (2001) finds that it is only the learners who have been forced to adopt English names, and especially the learners whose English names have been chosen for them, that have negative feelings about the practice (p. 21). Many language teachers, particularly ESL teachers, strongly oppose assigning English names to students, and roundly criticize teachers who use L2 names to make it easier for themselves to pronounce students' names. Several argue that assigning L2 names is paramount to stripping students of their very being:

- “The students' names may be all they have left when they arrive in this country, and both parents and students will appreciate your efforts to use their given names.” (Educational Services Branch, Dept. of Education, New Brunswick, 1996, p. 4)
- “Worse still [than Anglicizing the pronunciation of a student's name] is the practice of giving learners ‘English’ names, for it completely obliterates the learner's original identity.” (Sangpanasthada, 2010, p. 38)

Some foreign language teachers also accuse L2 names of being unrealistic, likely to be rejected by L2 speakers outside the classroom, too much work for teachers, disrespectful to students (as their names are their identities) and even to parents (as they may be offended by the child's new name, or that the name they gave their child has been replaced), and simply ineffective (“Assigning Foreign [sic] Lang. Names,” 2010, “FLTEACH FAQ - Names, Names, Names,” 1998, “Spanish Names for Class?,” 2010).

Yet studies do show that using L2 English names can be beneficial. Yihong et al. (2010)'s participants, Chinese university EFL students, frequently chose names of role models (including nonnative speakers of English) and discussed their desire to become more like those people, creating “bridges between the imagined and the real” (p. 13). L2 names gave students a vehicle for agency, “to be a captain of my own heart” (p. 14). Some students claimed that their English names represented their “real” selves, though others worried that their English names “had nothing to do with me” (pp. 9-10). Here again, learners who chose their names carefully reported positive effects, while learners forced into L2 names were apathetic about the practice (p. 9). Still, many learners struggled with defining, differentiating, and merging their “real” and “imagined” L1 and L2 identities, and sometimes changed their L2 names, dropped them altogether, or replaced them with original Chinese names based on their English names (p. 12).

Silver and Shiomi (2010) did a quantitative study of university EFL students in Japan, looking at the effects of English L2 names on students' reported willingness to communicate, as well as students' general opinions about the utility of L2 names. Many of these students also chose the names of role models (p. 188). Their survey results, particularly in the area of willingness to communicate, were quite mixed; most responses were evenly balanced between positive, negative, and neutral responses, though nearly two-thirds of the students stated that they liked their English names, and a few even mentioned that their names made them feel like native speakers (pp. 189, 195). Responses to the question "Did you feel like a different person?" were split nearly evenly three ways, though twice as many women as men responded positively (p. 190). Particularly strikingly, when asked if they would prefer to be called only by their Japanese names, over half the students responded that they had no opinion on the matter, only 5% suggested that they would rather be called by their Japanese name, and no students expressed a strong preference for their Japanese name (p. 193). Still, Silver and Shiomi rather unconvincingly conclude that English names increased students' willingness to communicate and have many benefits for these students.

The limited literature suggests that the foreign language and second language accounts differ markedly: in FL settings (including EFL), L2 names are playfully created and may help learners situate themselves in imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003), third places (Kramsch, 1993), or cultural safe houses (Canagarajah, 2004). In ESL settings, L2 names may be created out of convenience or necessity, or even imposed, and seem to serve most often as receptacles for other-influenced "foreigner" identities or as resistant identities learners use to diffuse pressures to assimilate.

What effect might an L2 name have beyond the classroom? Bryant (1984), who had his students adopt French names, professions, and hometowns, reports that they enjoyed the experience, though the student comments given are quite vague (p. 773). He also states that he hopes that these "alter egos" will "[have] some residual effect after class as well" (p. 773), but does not explain what this desired effect would be. Moen (2009) conceives of the Korean EFL classroom as a location where "cultural code-switching" can take place, yet he suggests that "[j]ust as in youth culture it might be doubtful that a young person might stay in the youth culture permanently...this practicing of hybrid culture is not necessarily transformative" (para. 21).

### ***Imagination and Imagined Communities***

Recent studies of L2 learning have investigated the role of the imagination and the idea that L2 learners may be influenced or motivated by “imagined communities” (e.g., Norton, 2001, citing Anderson, 1991). It is possible that using an L2 name in the classroom encourages program participants to live in a highly “imaginative” community, in the sense of Wenger (1998)’s “imagination”, which he defines as “a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (p. 176). All foreign language programs by their nature transcend time and space. Learners are asked to ignore local norms for communication and use new ones, changing the nature of their existing relationships with their peers. This can be quite daunting, as learners may have known each other for years, and are in a relatively familiar environment, where using L1 would be expected and using L2 highly unusual, if not completely ridiculous. Experiential education, through immersion programs and especially residential ones, may facilitate the kind of imagination needed for learners to make the transition to using the L2. Still, Hamilton and Cohen (2005) acknowledge that this is fundamentally not authentic, but “more akin to life on a theater stage or in film, where almost no activity is unfocused” (2005, pp. 11-12). Rather than being a meaningless charade, though, creating an imaginative space in the classroom maximizes opportunities for language input and use and creates a unique environment where learners can perhaps more easily create new images of the world and of themselves, and taking an L2 name can be the formal beginning of that process.

Though FL learners being perceived by other L2 speakers as belonging to the L2 community may be quite unlikely (e.g., Armour, 2003, p. 122), FL learners, by nature or by necessity, often imagine different possible worlds, where one’s language communities are not determined by ethnicity or birth and learners can at least play at being members of new communities. The special issue of the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* edited by Kanno and Norton (2003) provides numerous examples of this. Furthermore, the work of Armour (2000; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2009), Rampton (1995), and Kramsch (1997; 2009), to name only a few, provides diverse examples of foreign language learners belonging to communities classically thought to be the property of native speakers. Following Kramsch (2009, p. 16), it seems that it is precisely FL learners’ capacity to *imagine* belonging to other communities, and FL teachers’ and

programs' provision of spaces and contexts for learners to practice this and play it out, that makes their experience of personal transformation through language learning possible.

### ***Participatory Research***

All forms of educational and social research face the danger of putting research subjects (participants) in the position of objects from whom the researcher will more or less humanely and painlessly extract data, with few or no opportunities for the participants themselves to influence how the project will be done, to benefit from the project, or even to know the results. Though IRBs today do focus on protecting the rights of those who are now called “participants”, and researchers may have to state in their applications how participants will benefit from being studied, much of the educational and social research that is done has few or no immediate benefits to participants. Even interviews and ethnographies, where participants are not subjected to invasive procedures or stressful (or boring!) tests, and may even benefit from interacting with researchers and having their stories heard, can be awkward or inconvenient under the best of circumstances.

One response to this situation is to adopt a participatory research methodology. In this approach, also called “participatory action research”, participants take the role of researchers<sup>2</sup>, determining at least some of the scope and goals and actively collecting data within their community. Rather than doing “research on students,” we are doing “research with students”. Though this methodology is not especially widespread in second language research, in the United Kingdom, linguistic research co-led with students has been taking place for several decades (Cheshire & Edwards, 1998, p. 192). Egan-Robertson and Bloome (1998)'s edited volume presents a variety of projects involving K-12 students as language and culture researchers. Unlike many forms of inquiry, participatory research has near-immediate, local, social action—improving the lives of participants or improving a community—as one of its goals (Higgins, 2010).

At first glance, participatory research has some obvious practical benefits for project leaders. Creating a situation where participants “do most of the work” is appealing, yet full of both transformative and exploitative possibilities, leading to Kemmis and McTaggart (2000)'s critical question, “Is this research really about social improvement, or is it only about efficiency, with basic values unquestioned?” (p. 567). In my case and for educational researchers, I would add,

“What can students learn from doing PR, and how can it give them a better educational experience than they would have had without it?” After considering the ethical concerns (that participatory research may be a new, better-looking form of exploitation, but exploitation all the same) and the practical concerns—getting IRB permission for a project whose goals are not yet completely clear, where the investigators will be encouraged to tweak the protocols, and where the investigators are themselves minors; explaining the project to students and parents; training and supporting the student researchers; explaining to other teachers what their students will be doing—it is tempting to abandon the idea, just be very careful about ethics, and do the research alone.

Yet participatory research has clear potential benefits, both short- and long-term, for the students who become involved. In the short term, student researchers use language and academic skills to do a meaningful project that can be graded as part of a school curriculum. In the long term, involving youth as creators of knowledge and responsible actors in their community can deeply influence their lives. Consider this quote from Paula Palmer (1980), who organized a student-led community research project in Costa Rica:

“High school students...already possess a basic knowledge of national and international history. But few have had the opportunity to *be* historians. They have studied fine literature, but few have had the opportunity to *be* writers. They may have taken business courses, but few have had the opportunity to run their own business. Community research in the high school curriculum makes of students historians, writers, and business men and women. It is a serious undertaking because the result of the students' work is a public product...” (p. 1, as cited in Montero-Sieburth, 1998, p. 230)

Involving students as “historians, writers, and business men and women,” i.e., responsible actors in society, is strongly in line with the goals of language programs that seek to foster social justice, global citizenship, critical thinking, or task- or project-based learning. Furthermore, involvement in participatory research has also been shown to be beneficial to the development of participants’ self-esteem and self-efficacy (Mercado, 1998, p. 71).

Furthermore, Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1998) argue that “[r]esearch that is bounded by classroom and library walls, in which students are expected to reproduce the knowledge printed in authoritative texts, is little more than legitimized plagiarism,” and that teacher-directed inquiry that sets out to find what the teacher (probably) already knows is “little more than a teaching

trick” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1998, p. xii)—more fun, but ultimately accomplishing the same result as a lecture. For language teachers in particular, asking students to discover or produce what the teacher already knows (“display questions”), to the exclusion of students’ own knowledge, is frowned on in Communicative Language Teaching (Gebhard, 1996, p. 71). Participatory research changes the role of students from absorbers and regurgitators of knowledge, dependent on teachers, to empowered creators and thoughtful users of knowledge, who can continue to learn throughout their lives, inside and outside of formal education, and the latter is what we want to encourage at *Mori no Ike*.

## THE STUDY

### ***Mori no Ike: Imagined Community Meets Intentional Community***

This study took place within the context of a four-week high school credit-granting summer immersion program (“credit program”) for ages 13-18 at *Mori no Ike*, Concordia Language Villages (CLV)’s residential Japanese program. Two-week noncredit programs for adolescent and younger students were taking place simultaneously; due to logistical constraints, those students did not participate in the study. The credit program is a combination of intensive language instruction (three formal class hours per day), experiential learning activities, and traditional American-style summer camp activities. Students are not barred from using English (the L1 of nearly all participants), though using Japanese is necessary to participate in most aspects of camp life, and credit students are graded on their efforts to use Japanese. The program is offered twice per summer; this study combines data from the two groups.

Participants live together in a camp setting, sharing cabins with students from across the United States, and with both American and Japanese counselors, who all share their interest in Japanese language and culture. Japanese is spoken throughout the day, inside and outside of classes (though many learners use English among themselves). Many architectural elements, signs, and decorations are Japanese; the food served is mostly Japanese; purchases at the store must be made in Japanese yen from the camp bank. Students’ contact with the outside world is limited to letters; e-mail, Internet access, non-Japanese media, and electronic devices are prohibited.

Everyone at *Mori no Ike*, including students, teachers, and support staff, chooses and uses Japanese names, typically first (given) names. These are the only names staff use with students; everyone's "English names<sup>3</sup>" (legal names) are kept secret, and are only used in certain administrative contexts, such as grade reports and healthcare logs. Students rarely need encouragement to use their own and others' Japanese names. Nearly all staff and most students keep the same Japanese name year after year. At *Mori no Ike*, the director of summer programs frequently tells staff members and students that "[you] have a chance to be better at the Villages than you are anywhere else in your life" (Froslie, 2011, p. 4), and Japanese names are believed to support personal identity transformation within the camp setting.

The dynamics of Japanese name use at *Mori no Ike* are both similar and different from those discussed in the literature review. Similar to McPherron (2009), students may change their names as their proficiency improves (inasmuch as *Mori no Ike* students' proficiency is, loosely, tied to their age) or when they decide their current name is embarrassing: some veteran students report having one name as a child, sometimes a more fanciful name like *Ryuu* (dragon), and changing it to something less "corny" when they became teenagers. *Mori no Ike* students also occasionally choose unusual names, like *Chokoreeto* (chocolate) or *Samurai*<sup>4</sup>.

## **Participants**

*Mori no Ike* enrolls students aged 7-18 from across the United States, many of whom return summer after summer; this study was open to students in the high school credit program. Roughly two-thirds of study participants were returners to *Mori no Ike*: 18 were first-year students, 13 second-year, 9 third-year, 8 fourth-year, 4 fifth-year, 2 sixth-year, 1 seventh-year, and 1 eighth-year. The program is open to all students who wish to enroll (no admission requirements); need-based scholarships are available. Knowledge of Japanese is not a prerequisite, though most credit students have some previous exposure, most commonly through self-study, tutoring (11%), school classes (18%), or previous *Mori no Ike* experience (68%; percentages can overlap). Many have studied other languages in school. Only a few students (who are all English-dominant) are heritage learners, and the few students with non-English L1s also seem to be English-dominant. Roughly half the participants are from Minnesota (where the camp is located) and the rest of the Midwest; the rest are from a variety of other U.S. states, and one lives in Japan. A substantial proportion have chosen Japanese because of their passion for

anime and manga; others are usually interested in Japanese pop music, martial arts, fashion, or pop culture, and seem to be studying the language for these personal reasons more than for academic or economic reasons (e.g., college admission, a business career).

*Mori no Ike's sensei* (counselors and teachers) are primarily American college-aged students of Japanese, including many program alumni, as well as a few heritage speakers, with a few Japanese nationals (often students at US universities). Most do not have formal teacher training. My role during the camp session was that of credit curriculum facilitator, which meant that I supervised the teachers who taught the credit classes, and managed the logistics and student issues related to the credit program, but did not have students of my own.

Participation as an interviewee or student researcher was open to all 109 students in the two credit programs; 75 students received parent permission, 69 gave their own assent, and 56 students and six *sensei* were eventually interviewed, some up to four times, by different teams with different questions, for a total of 95 interviews conducted by 13 student researchers working in eight teams. The student researchers were given a list of the available interviewees and made their own decisions about who to interview. I also conducted 14 additional interviews exclusively in English, one with each student researcher (one did a written survey and conducted no interviews).

### ***Preparing for Participatory Research at Mori no Ike***

This project was carefully designed to fit gracefully into the *Mori no Ike* program, while serving the needs of students, teachers, myself as the project leader, and parents and outsiders wishing to understand L2 names. The student-produced video ethnographies described in Higgins (2009) and the projects described in Egan-Robertson and Bloome (1998) inspired many aspects of the study. I developed a rationale, research questions, project goals, and procedure that made use of existing program practices, working with staff members, former students, and administrators at a variety of levels to establish the legitimacy of the project.

Participatory research methodology helped to further students' personal development as it investigated it, while avoiding creating "extra work". The project was integrated into *Mori no Ike's* existing "community-oriented final project" requirement; by choosing this, student researchers who chose this option benefited from having extra support to plan and execute their final projects (as several aspects of the project were defined from the start). Many admitted that

they had chosen this project for these very reasons, but nearly all also added that the topic had been personally meaningful to them before they began, or that it became so.

As “insiders”, student researchers were in a position to develop particularly illuminating and locally appropriate interview questions, and participatory research allowed them to ask and answer questions that mattered to them, while avoiding questions that could be too personal or irrelevant. Doing peer interviews with student researchers also reduced the potential for intimidation and possibly gave the interviewees a greater degree of control over the stories they chose to tell, reducing the likelihood that students would “tell [the project leader] what she wants to hear.”

### ***Research Questions and Project Goals***

Working within this paradigm, the project was able to pursue multiple goals in a closely-integrated way: these included program evaluation, student-centered learning, encouraging more complex usage of Japanese, respecting participants’ (both student researchers’ and interviewees’) agency, and collecting broad and deep data. Though each added complexity to the project, each also made the project stronger, and their interdependence helped make the project viable, believable, and intriguing to potential participants. Though the goals for each of the student researchers’ projects were determined by the student researchers themselves, I developed the following research questions to define the scope of the study and to set some initial parameters.

1. What do students and staff see as the purposes of using Japanese names in this program and what value, if any, do they ascribe to the practice?
2. How do students and staff members describe the meaning or importance of their Japanese names in their lives inside and outside the program?
3. What effects, if any, do students and staff say Japanese names have had on their language learning experiences and motivations?
4. How do students and staff position themselves as speakers of Japanese and participants in a Japanese-speaking community? How might the use of Japanese names influence this?

### ***Data Collection***

I shared my ideas and hopes for the project with the students during a discussion following an explanation of the program’s final project requirement. As in previous years, students were

expected to develop a “community-oriented project” individually or in a group of up to three students. These have commonly involved creating books or performances about various aspects of life at *Mori no Ike*, leading a village activity, or interviewing peers and *sensei* to collect information about a topic. Just as other students selected their own project topics based on their interests and experiences, each team of student researchers developed their own project on a particular theme within the larger concept of studying Japanese name usage at *Mori no Ike*. Students who became student researchers participated in a training session and were given a handout with sample interview questions in Japanese and English and a list of rules to follow (see Appendix A).

Student researchers were expected to conduct their interviews in Japanese; this was 25% of their grade<sup>5</sup>. Due to the language requirements of the assignment competing with the nature of the questions being asked, which were usually too complex for many students to answer in Japanese, I explained to all the students that it was acceptable to respond to questions in English, but that the student researchers had to ask their questions in Japanese, and do their best to clarify the meaning in Japanese, “as *sensei* would,” before resorting to English. As part of narrowing their focus, student researcher teams were encouraged to develop their own questions (see Appendix B), as long as they stayed within the general scope of the official questions<sup>6</sup>.

A large number of students (many more than I expected) volunteered to become student researchers and take active roles in designing and conducting the research. Like other credit students, the nine student researcher teams (including the one who conducted a written survey) filled out proposal forms (Appendix C) that had to be approved by their class teacher, then by me as the credit curriculum facilitator. The student researchers chose the following topics:

- Yuuta: Do the sources of students’ Japanese names influence the perceived benefits of having a Japanese name?
- Keiko: Japanese names at *Mori no Ike* vs. L2 names in a foreign language classroom
- Naoya and Suzume: Do you like your names (Japanese and legal)? Do you like to keep your legal name a secret? Should Japanese names be optional? Do Japanese names help students adjust to the program?
- Jirou: How do students and *sensei* choose their Japanese names?
- Hideaki, Kanae, and Osamu: Are you a different person with your Japanese name? Does having a Japanese name affect your learning?

- Aki, Chieko, and Sayaka: What do students who have chosen the names of fictional characters have to say about their connections to those characters?
- Ichiro: What does it feel like to use a Japanese name? Does it have an effect on language learning?
- Satoru: Case studies of particular people at *Mori no Ike* and their Japanese names
- Susumu (written survey): How did you choose your Japanese name, and do you like it? Do you use your Japanese name outside of camp? Do you think Japanese names affect language learning? What if we did not have Japanese names at *Mori no Ike*?

I managed the consent/assent process, and trained the student researchers in voice recorder usage, interviewing techniques, and confidentiality. All interviewers made at least one supervised practice recording during training. Having only about nine days to plan, collect data, analyze, and report, the student researchers worked quickly and conducted a large number of interviews, along with developing creative and artistic ways of presenting their data.

Three days before returning home, the student researchers presented their projects to the entire camp, poster session-style, in Japanese (see Image 1), and I audio-recorded and photographed these presentations, as well as making photocopies of smaller images and documents student researchers produced. I interviewed each student researcher individually in English before they returned home, asking about how they decided to participate in the study, their project's goals and findings, why they believe *Mori no Ike* has everyone use Japanese names, and whether they supported the practice. I also asked most student researchers about their own Japanese names and how they chose them, what they felt they had gained from doing this project, and whether we should do more projects of this kind.

### ***Data Analysis***

I used a modified grounded theory procedure, based on that of Charmaz (2001), to analyze my data. “True” grounded theory calls for re-interviewing or repeated data collection as themes begin to emerge, to clarify the findings, but my research context did not allow for this. After listening to all of the recordings and making detailed notes on their contents, broadly transcribing statements that seemed important or especially relevant to the project, I reread through the notes several times, looking for common statements and themes, replaying the recordings as needed to clarify, check for additional details, and make more notes. Themes were assigned colors and

marked as I reread through the notes, and marked passages were tabulated to facilitate comparison across participants.

## EMERGENT THEMES

### *Names Are Essential to Immersion*

Nearly half the participants invoked “immersion” as a key concept when defending the use of Japanese names. They characterized *Mori no Ike* as an immersion setting, despite the fact that most students speak English most of the time, and even *sensei* speak English at times. Still, names seem to help create a sense of immersion, as they “get you more into the culture,” “seal you off from the rest of the English world,” and even “almost [give] you the sense that you’re in the country.” Many students claimed that using English names and English words (sometimes even established loanwords, like *teeburu* ‘table’ and *beddo* ‘bed’) was “awkward,” and that code switching like this made speaking Japanese difficult, which is in line with research suggesting that beginning language learners are poor code switchers (e.g., Legenhausen, 1991, sec. 1.3). Nearly half the participants stressed that Japanese names are essential to maintaining the flow of conversation.

Many students and *sensei* connected the idea of living in an immersion environment to the broader consensus that *Mori no Ike* is a separate place, where many community members lead different lives than they would at home, as Shoko-*sensei* (a staff member) explains here:

“I think everyone having a Japanese name...helps make *Mori no Ike* its own specific world, where everybody can focus on who we are here, and what we do here, and not get distracted by what you are or who you are when you leave *Mori no Ike*. And I like that people only know each other’s Japanese selves at *Mori no Ike*.<sup>7</sup>”

### *Japanese Names (and Their Users) Fit Into the Language Better*

Most students claimed that Japanese names sounded better than English names in Japanese. They are “culturally pronounceable” and “sound like they’re supposed to be there”; they do not sound “weird,” “random,” or “far-fetched,” “disrupt the air of Japanese-speaking-ness,” or “distract from the message.” Kanon said that using a Japanese name “sounds better, like you’re paying respects.” Kanae said, “whenever you call somebody by an American name, it’s like, it

doesn't feel right on your tongue....” Shinjuu and others discussed the issue in terms of insiders and outsiders:

*“Nihongo no namae wa—nihongo no kyanpu dakara, Eigo no namae wa chotto...outsider mitai. Eigo no namae ga areba, chotto outsider no kimochi.”* (Japanese names are—it’s a Japanese camp, so English names are sort of...like outsiders. If we had English names, [we’d] feel sort of like outsiders.”)

Several students stated that using Japanese names primes them to speak in Japanese rather than in English, making using the L2 more natural. Kenta explained, “it seems like when someone says ‘Kenta’ I say *hai*, not ‘yes?’ or ‘what?’” and Masaki concurred: “if everyone was referring to each other with their English names, then people would have the mindset of speaking English...since everyone refers to me in a Japanese name [sic], I feel like responding in Japanese, instead of English.” Takeshi described English names as being “like a trigger that would revert you back to English for a second, and then you’d have to go back into Japanese.”

Japanese names help students and teachers feel like legitimate speakers of the language; *sensei* especially mentioned feeling more credible as teachers with Japanese names, and that students might respect their authority more because of this. Shoko-*sensei* described this quite emotionally:

*“Amerika no namae wa, ano hito wa Amerikajin deshou? Doushite Nihongo wo oshieru koto ga dekimasu ka? Doushite ano hito ga wakarimasu ka? Dakedo, Nihongo no namae da to...hen na oto wa shimasen. Nihongo no namae de, ‘sensei’ ga totemo natural deshou. Dakara...suki desu. Demo katakana<sup>8</sup> no Eigo no namae purasu sensei wa hen da to omoimasu.* (As for an American name, that person is American, right? Why are they able to teach Japanese? Why can they understand it? But if it’s a Japanese name...it does not sound strange. With a Japanese name, ‘sensei’ sounds very natural, right? Because of that, I like it. But an English name in katakana plus ‘sensei’ is strange, I think.)

Students, too, admitted that it would be “hard to take [teachers] seriously” if they used their real names. As for themselves, many students expressed that Japanese names make speaking Japanese more acceptable and more natural; Keiko said,

*“If I came here, and I was Leslie...it’s not as starting over-ish...it’d be me, English person, trying to talk in Japanese, instead of a person trying to learn Japanese, who already has a Japanese name and now needs to figure out how to talk as their Japanese name. [Without a*

Japanese name], I'm not really trying to learn Japanese. I'm trying to get by in a Japanese place, kind of....”

Takeshi made a similar comment: “The whole complete immersion thing is really completed by the use of a Japanese name, ‘cause, you know, it’s no longer, ‘John’s learning Japanese,’ it’s ‘Akio’s learning Japanese,’ you know, ‘cause it really fits...it really helps a lot.’” Another student, who has lived in Japan, expressed this particularly concretely:

“when I become Masumi, then I can be a person who actually can speak Japanese, and try to learn as much as possible, when [in Japan], when I have my normal English name, I...shouldn’t try to use Japanese because I don’t know it fluently yet.”

### ***My Japanese Name Really Is Me, or, I Feel Japanese***

Most students keep their names from previous summers, unless they are “taken” or “stolen” by another student, due to the program’s first-come first-served, one-person-per-name policy<sup>9</sup>. One student has kept her name for eight years, though it has caused some embarrassment and frustration:

“*Watashi no nmae wa, chotto, hazukashii* (My name is, a little, embarrassing). A lot of the *Nihonjin no senseis* (native Japanese *sensei*) are like ‘*eee? o-namae wa Higashi desu ka?*’ (Huh? Your name is East?) and they think it’s really weird...and I’ve gotten that reaction a lot, but it is my name, so I’ve kept it, even though [its meaning] isn’t significant to me at all, but I’m still really attached to my *Nihongo no nmae* (Japanese name) because I’ve had it for eight years...I like it because of that...because it’s like my Mori no Ike name...”

Virtually all students (both first-time and returning) who were asked whether they would keep their name said that they would, and many mentioned that they would be angry if they had to change. This is perhaps connected to their current phase of development as adolescents; Hideaki stated, “I feel like it gets more important the older you get,” (though it is not clear whether he meant keeping the same name, or just having a Japanese name), and my experience suggests that younger students seem to change their names more from year to year.

Students may become as attached or more attached to their Japanese names than to their legal names. References to “English names” or “American names” significantly outnumber references to “real names” in the data; Japanese names are very “real”. Many mention adding their Japanese names to their Facebook profiles as their middle names or even as their first names, replacing

their legal names. When Yuuta asked one student whether she uses her Japanese name on Facebook, she lamented that she did not know how to type in Japanese script on Facebook, and they had a brief whispered conversation about how to do this and which other students had done it. When students correspond (online or in person) outside camp, nearly all reported using their Japanese names with each other, even when non-camp friends are involved in the conversation.

Chieko provided a rather extreme example of Japanese names taking precedence over students' legal names: "When I get a letter from home, and it has my real name on it, it's really confusing...I just get really used to being Chieko here...." Keiko said that Japanese names make students "free to be who [they] want to be" and that having a Japanese name is "like a secret code...that's so cool that [people outside] have no idea who I am," to which her interviewer Ichiro added "who I really am." Sayaka, who is too old to return, said, "I would keep my name for years and years if I could," and "I would never change it. ...Each year I chose it, I felt more strongly about it; when I got here this year, I was like, 'people better not have taken my name, 'cause I'm gonna be pissed!'" to which her interviewer Satoru responded "yay, *Watashi mo* (me too)." I asked Satoru directly why he thought people kept the same name year after year, to which he replied simply, "Because that's who they become...." Yet students who have changed their names (voluntarily or not) still tend to report feeling attached to their current Japanese names: Eri, who is on her second Japanese name, told Yuuta, "It's my name, it's just kinda who I am now, I can't change it." Yuuto, who is on his third, says his current Japanese name "has become who I am at *Mori no Ike*, or...I've become the name, more." Still, there are a very few students who choose not to adopt new names, when their legal names are Japanese or sound plausibly Japanese. Arisa (Alyssa), for example, said "I think it'd be kind of weird if I used a different name, because...it just wouldn't seem like me...."

When asked if they ever felt Japanese, either due to their Japanese name or to speaking the language, students' opinions were quite divided. Though Arisa does not use a Japanese name, she said, "[using names] does help if people consider themselves more Japanese with a Japanese name." Many students do report "feeling Japanese"; Reiko says that

"having to call myself by that name all the time...I do that in my head, and I think that really helps me because I'm not thinking of myself as an American, I'm thinking of myself as someone who has some part of them that's maybe a little bit *Nihonjin* (native Japanese)!"

When asked how she would respond to a friend outside of camp who thought Japanese names were weird, Kanae said she would tell them “you get to be Japanese for a month, almost...”

Others question whether there is a need to become Japanese, or whether this is even possible. Musashi, who does use a Japanese name that is not his real name, explained, “I think [being asked if speaking Japanese makes you feel Japanese is] a rather loaded question. You can become a part of any culture, with or without the language, as long as you’re willing to immerse yourself.” Nanako told her interviewer that the camp’s tradition of having Japanese names was *kakkoii* (cool), but that “affect, personally, *arimasen. Kakkoii, demo, effects, nan demo nai.*” (It does not affect [me] personally. It’s cool, but there are no effects at all.) She also denied ever feeling Japanese: “*Iie. Watashi wa, eeto, blonde. Hontou ni Nihonjin, arimasen.*” (No. I’m, uh, blonde. Truly not Japanese.)

Some students’ comments suggest an awareness of the difficulties they face as nonnative Japanese speakers trying to fit into the Japanese-speaking world outside of *Mori no Ike*. A few mentioned avoiding telling Japanese people outside of camp about their Japanese names. Hideaki made a different, poignant comment, when asked whether having a Japanese name helps him learn: “As Hideaki, I’m maybe a person that’s like a tiny bit *Nihonjin* [Japanese] as opposed to, like, kinda that dude....” Who is “that dude”? Could it be an *otaku* (“nerd”) or a *henna gaijin* (“strange foreigner”)? *Otaku*, in the American context meaning (exclusively) an anime/manga nerd, who might try too hard to be Japanese by engaging in activities like cosplay (dressing up as anime/manga characters) is a label that “serious” Japanese learners usually prefer to distance themselves from (e.g., Williams, 2006, p. 110). The adjective *hen* (strange, weird) carries a strong negative connotation in Japanese, and the term *henna gaijin* seems to suggest that there exists a more acceptable group of “non-strange” foreigners, who avoid strangeness by not speaking too much Japanese or learning too much about Japan<sup>10</sup>. Discourses like these complicate the dynamics of fitting in as a nonnative Japanese speaker.

### ***With My Japanese Name, I Become a Different and Better Person***

Many of the student researchers, including Hideaki, Kanae, and Osamu’s group, Sayaka, Chieko, and Aki’s group, and Satoru, felt that they were different people at *Mori no Ike*, or that they had separate “*Mori no Ike* personalities,” and investigated whether others felt likewise. Hideaki, Kanae, and Osamu concluded that most, though not all, students report separate

personalities for each language, and depict this on their poster (see Image 1), with two identical-looking people at the top, with flags in their hair and with “English” and “Japanese” tattooed on their faces, holding hands (representing students who feel the same with either name and in either language) and two rather different people, again with flags and tattoos, turning away from each other at the bottom (representing students who feel their two names refer to different selves). The text of the poster explains that most students perceived themselves to be in the second situation. Kanae, who drew the images, explained that many of their interviewees felt trapped into one way of being with their English names: “in the other [English] name, everybody already knows them as a certain way and they can’t really break out of that.” Adopting a new name provides a chance for students to literally “make a new name for themselves” (in her words).

The belief that one has a separate *Mori no Ike* personality is shared by both first-year and returning students, as well as *sensei*. Like others, Osamu (a first-year student) explained how Japanese names allow students to be “completely new” people, who “can change how [they] want to act, and feel like [they] can be a lot more free with what [they] do.” When asked, he added that he had not heard one of the program director’s speeches to this effect. Hideaki added that even the students who did not feel they had a second personality still like having Japanese names, and emphasized that “*Mori no Ike* personalities” are “not a schizophrenic thing” but a healthy thing, as they reveal students’ high levels of investment in the program.



*Image 1.* “Names and Personality” Project Presentation.

Sayaka, Chieko, and Aki found that although many students did not want to be entirely like the characters whose names they had chosen, they admired them, and a few did see those characters (or the actors who play them) as role models. Aki, for example, wants the calmness, self-confidence, and “really good study habits” of the characters whose name she shares, and says her name

“makes me feel like I could be a nicer person...it makes me feel like I should try and be a better person, *demo* (but), it also is partially just that I’m at *Mori no Ike*, and this is a place where I can try and recreate myself, which is also part of why I chose this name ‘cause it’s like, recreate myself kind of like them.”

Most students took pains to point out that not all aspects of these characters appealed to them—that they did not want to be magical girls, pilot spaceships, or to have killed their own father at age 5(!)—though some did wish to share their characters’ fighting, musical, or breakdancing talents. Megumi, like Aki, feels that being called by a name similar to that of a character she admires helps her keep her goals in mind:

“although adopting Megumi does not make me *motto* (more) sophisticated slash *genki* (energetic, spirited), it reminds me of how I strive to be like that, so I suppose it has in a way, served as kind of motivation, or a prompting to help me improve my Japanese and such.”

Positive traits students’ Japanese-name selves reportedly have include assertiveness, extraversion, being openly gay, confidence, popularity, kindness, and being more “intense” or energetic. Students who feel braver and more outgoing should be able to engage others in conversation more easily, and take risks with the language that they might not take in a classroom or in Japan. Aki explained that

“as my American name, I would never get up in front of people and do a *melodrama* (skit)...[my classmates are] not knowing me as me, as the person who freezes up in front of people and hates to talk in front of crowds; it’s like this is my chance to, do something about it.”

This risk-taking is not only linguistic: others compared their initial uneasiness with using Japanese names with their initial reactions to *rajio taisou* (traditional morning exercises and line dances): a veteran student researcher and a first-year student researcher said,

- “I used to think [having Japanese names] was really stupid. But I also used to think that *rajio taisou* was stupid, and, ((dramatic voice)) look at me now!”
- “I myself thought the idea was kinda weird at first, when I first heard about it. [...] I would tell [students reluctant to adopt Japanese names] just try and get used to it, like with the dances, the *rajio taisou*, I’m just like ((dramatic, creepy voice)) ‘What am I doing here? This is so weird!’ and now I’m like, ‘Yeah, *rajio taisou!*’”

Though this kind of personal growth may not be indicative of socialization into Japanese culture, increased self-confidence, openness, assertiveness, talkativeness, extraversion, popularity, “getting to be yourself,” and other traits students associate with their Japanese name selves are typically considered to be positive signs of personal growth for American adolescents, especially the “quiet” or “geeky” types who make up the majority of *Mori no Ike* students.

It is important to note that no students mentioned carrying these new traits over into their lives outside *Mori no Ike* (though they were not asked about this either). They are strongly attuned to how social expectations are different at camp; a student who described their *Mori no Ike* personality as more flamboyant said, “I don’t really have to worry about the ‘socially acceptable’... ‘cause we don’t really have any socially acceptable [sic] here at *Mori no Ike*!”

While students deeply appreciate this opportunity to escape the social pressures that keep them from “being themselves” or being the way they are at camp while at home, they also seem to be keenly aware that they are not yet ready to be themselves in a less supportive environment. Several students questioned whether it was having a new name, or being in the program’s unique environment, that led to this kind of growth. Furthermore, a very few students felt that Japanese names had little or no effect on their learning or their personality:

- “Absolutely not. I mean, yeah, it does keep me in the language...it’s just fun.”
- “No I don’t really think it’s had an effect on my Japanese learning...I just think of it kind of as a name, I mean I guess it gives me more of a Japanese flair...”
- “I don’t really think it has an effect. [...] I just act the same as I do at home.”

### ***Japanese Names Help Students Feel “Connected”***

Japanese names promote a sense of connectedness to Japanese-speaking communities at home and abroad, as specified in the fifth “C” of the National Standards for Language Learning (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1993, p. 4). Students reported variously that their Japanese names connected them to the characters, or specific or imagined Japanese people, who shared their names, to their peers and counselors in the village, to Japanese speakers as a group, to the program, and to the language itself. Belonging to a community, not only of native Japanese speakers but a community including new friends and *sensei*, and even “belonging to” Japanese history and legend and to “the [camp] environment”, is crucially important to many students, as Kojirou and many others explained: “It’s cool that everyone here has their *Nihongo no namae* (Japanese names) and it makes us, like, part of a group....” Suzume said, “Having a Japanese name makes me feel more like I’m a part of *Mori no Ike*, as opposed to a visitor.”

Though the literature on imagined communities (e.g., Kanno & Norton, 2003) defines them as existing only in the members’ minds (p. 241), *Mori no Ike* and other CLV programs encourage and make it possible for participants to behave and live as members of a collective imagined community, while physically living together in “real” community. *Mori no Ike* students tend to have a broad base of shared interests, facilitating the building of deep relationships between students and between students and counselors; the village is in many ways an intentional community. Kanno and Norton (2003) also explain that the pull of an imagined community may

also lead learners to engage in new and alternative or unusual ways of learning (p. 246). Coming to *Mori no Ike* is itself a decision to try a new way of learning (immersion); after arriving, students make choices to participate in different activities and construct particular identities and communities by claiming membership in different groups around the village (student council member, singer, Lady Gaga Club member, etc.). This leads to imagining particular kinds of relationships with the world, which provides foundations for different kinds of learning and different learning outcomes (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 246).

### ***Getting Rid of Japanese Names Would Be Disastrous***

Though students seem to agree that Japanese names do not directly contribute to language acquisition, they are also quite adamant that Japanese names are essential to the program and should not be discontinued, at any cost. If they were in charge of *Mori no Ike*, all would keep Japanese names for everyone, and would encourage reluctant students to give them a try. Yuuta, Susumu, Ichiro, Naoya, and Suzume also asked their interviewees similar questions, and got virtually the same response. At the same time, students do not necessarily feel that it is important to keep their English names secret: many stated it did not matter, and a few explained that people would still call them by their Japanese names, even if they knew their English names (which is usually though not always the case, in my experience). On the other hand, Naoya disagreed, saying,

“when people know my English name...it takes away. It makes me feel like, to them I’m not Naoya anymore, I’m, my English name, but while I’m at camp, I feel as if it’s better when people know me by my Japanese name, because it just makes me feel better when talking.”

Nearly all students and *sensei* argued strongly for the importance of Japanese names to the program, making the following comments about what would happen if students and staff were no longer permitted or required to have Japanese names:

- *Mori no Ike* would seem different, not the same, less friendly and open, less Japanese, the magic would be gone (9 mentions)
- It would be weird, sad, depressing, confusing (6)
- “I would be mad”, “upset,” “people would suddenly hate *Mori no Ike*” (4)
- *Mori no Ike* would be less serious, people would take it less seriously, students wouldn’t treat teachers the same way (3)

- It couldn't be done; *Mori no Ike* wouldn't work; it would make *Mori no Ike* a cram school; it would take away the "I could be a different person" factor; people would be uncomfortable, because they liked the anonymity; we should keep Japanese names, even if they don't help (once or twice each)

Nanako's response was the most visceral:

"Noooooooooooooo iyiayaiyaiya da iya da iya da iya da iya da mou ikkai iya da takusan iya da. (Bad bad bad bad no way no way no way...one more time no way very much no way.) *Hontou ni kakkoi.* (They're really cool.) *Namae wa suki desu.* (I like names.) ((Yuuta responds: "Dude.")) *Owari.* (I'm done.)"

## CONCERNS

Before collecting data, like some of my student researchers, I questioned whether L2 names were really meaningful to the average student. I had expected to find at least some students who disliked having Japanese names, and who shared Hoffman (1989)'s sentiment that their Japanese names were "...not us. They are...disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be [us]" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 105). In CLV's French program, I had known students who instructed everyone to call them by their real names. Mariko, who had attended CLV's Chinese program, complained that although she had had a Chinese name there, everyone used English names, and "*chotto downer datta* (it was kind of a downer)." Communication with a colleague in the Chinese program confirms this, and that they assign Chinese names by modifying students' English names, rather than allowing students to choose from a list or to propose their own names, as is done in the Japanese, French, and many of the other programs. Though there were two or three students who questioned the value of Japanese names, they were all but drowned out by the resounding chorus that Japanese names are useful and personally meaningful.

Some of the anti-English name comments in the literature mention that L2 names give students the impression that they cannot be themselves in the L2, that being a different person in a different language is counterproductive or even harmful, or even that L2 names wall off and trivialize the new language (e.g., "Assigning Foreigh [sic] Lang. Names," 2010; Scott & Ytreberg, 2004, p. 11; "Spanish Names for Class?," 2010). I was a bit distressed by students' repeated assertions that English names did not fit when speaking Japanese, and wondered

whether this might build a sort of wall that might block the best parts of their *Mori no Ike* selves from crossing over into their outside-world selves. However, conversations with veteran staff members and program administrators after data analysis was completed produced a wealth of stories about program alumni whose L1 and L2 names and personalities have grown together in their adult lives, and for whom the positive traits associated with their L2 personalities have “taken over”, despite their origins in identities that were only played out for a few weeks each year.

## DISCUSSION

### ***Findings***

The student researchers’ findings clearly show that students believe Japanese names are a crucial part of their language-learning experience at *Mori no Ike*, that they enjoy the tradition, and that it should be continued. Japanese names give students and staff members courage to speak Japanese, remind them to stay in the language, and make speaking Japanese seem more “natural”. Both students and staff tend to develop Japanese-speaking personas around their names, which differ in positive ways from their L1 personas, though to varying degrees; common traits these have are confidence, talkativeness, and extraversion, and occasionally “feeling more Japanese.” These personas are maintained even if students must change their Japanese names, though most prefer not to change their Japanese names, once they have settled on one. With Japanese names, students and staff view themselves as legitimate speakers of Japanese, though several question their right to speak Japanese without a Japanese name. Japanese names play an important role in establishing *Mori no Ike* as a separate place, culturally, socially, and psychologically, which seems to make these experiences possible, and nearly everyone involved in the project recognizes and appreciates this.

### ***Imagined Communities and Language Learning***

Kramsch (2009) argues that adolescents turn to language learning precisely because it offers an alternative to the “real world”, where they “can be or at least pretend to be someone else, where they too can become ‘cool’ and inhabit their bodies in powerful ways” (2009, p. 16). Feeling that *Mori no Ike* is like a separate world, distinct from “the real world”, seems to be

inextricably linked to the perceived benefits students gain from Japanese names. In this place, the CLV “playworld” (Hamilton & Cohen, 2005), students do feel safe and supported in trying out new, powerful ways of being and new ways of relating to others, in both English and Japanese.

*Mori no Ike*’s use of Japanese props, decorations, cultural practices, music, and language alludes to a Japanese-speaking imagined community outside the camp, while also providing focus and direction for the growth of the camp’s existing intentional community. Japanese name use validates and strengthens program participants’ connections to these communities, marking them as members of both the *Mori no Ike* intentional community and of their larger imagined communities of anime fans, Japanese TV drama watchers, artists, gamers, language teachers, and Japanese speakers around the world. Crucially, Japanese names facilitate belonging without drawing undue attention to participants’ status as language learners, as they make students and *sensei* “sound like [people] who ought to be able to speak Japanese.”

### ***Reflection on Participatory Research and Language Use***

A research paradigm that frames learners as L2-using members of a community, not just students, must find ways to reaffirm participants’ community membership and let them explain their experience themselves. As I am myself a member of this community, it was personally important to me that my project be done in collaboration with the students. My most prominent concern when developing this project was that it never become a disruption to the program or sacrifice the students’ learning opportunities, subjectivity as individuals, or agency as language learners and researchers in the interest of collecting more or “better” data. Notice that I have removed the word “research” from the phrase “research project” above, because it has been so much more. Academically, it fulfilled the student researchers’ final project requirements; educationally, it was an authentic opportunity to use Japanese for a specific, meaningful purpose, at a relatively high level of linguistic complexity. Many student researchers also reported that this project “made [people at camp] think about their Japanese names.” Socially, it encouraged students to interact with teachers and each other in a new way, and seemed to uncover a sense of common purpose at camp: student researchers found that their peers and teachers mostly shared their beliefs about the program’s effect on their lives and their learning, which often came as a pleasant surprise. Personally, many students appreciated having a place to talk to others about the differences between their camp selves and their “real world” selves.

Many student researchers also reported that it was exciting and validating to investigate their own experience at camp and their peers' opinions about it, and to contribute to the program in an official way:

- “It just sounded like ‘aw, this is my first year here, and I get to be part of some really big cool research thing’ ....”
- “[I] thought, yeah, I wonder what some of the students think about this.... . There are some things I’d like to find out, and...if getting these interviews is also going to be helping someone else, then I’d also like to do that, and maybe see the final product.”
- “It was really fun to go around and talk to people and find out what they thought....”

The interviewees' honesty and candor, perhaps facilitated by having peer interviewers, revealed their strong interest in the questions being asked, and many mentioned their eagerness to know the results. For several student researchers, working on the project was what prompted their awareness of the importance of their Japanese names:

“I didn’t think that we would end up seeing as much of a connection [between students, their Japanese names, and their “*Mori no Ike* personalities”], and I didn’t really realize my connection to my name until after we had done [the interviews]...didn’t realize that my name really does mean a lot to me.... I didn’t realize that ‘til we started thinking about it. And I think it made a lot of other people [doing] this project realize that their names are important to them, even if they didn’t think they were.”

The requirements of the project as a Japanese-using and language-learning activity did occasionally conflict with the student researchers' efforts to gather rich data. The vast majority of responses to questions are in English, or English mixed with Japanese; those that are entirely in Japanese are usually less detailed, and are sometimes unclear. Furthermore, not all of the student researchers had the language skills necessary to make their questions clear to their interviewees. Though some developed creative and effective strategies for this, the recordings indicate that most students and several student researchers had trouble. Still, many students, especially those participating in 24-hour language pledges, did make commendable efforts to use Japanese while still responding to the questions in as much depth as possible. Some of the lower-level student researchers also reported that the project helped them improve their Japanese; one even said that because of the project, “[I learned] that I could speak Japanese, which was—really amazing.”

Involving “non-specialists” as data collectors in qualitative research is not without complications and drawbacks; the way questions are asked matters, and the student researchers were at a disadvantage, due to their limited Japanese skills. The bilingual nature of the interviews also placed some constraints on the interactions between participants in the interviews. Some were more conversational, while others were limited to yes-no questions. For most if not all of the student researchers, this was their first interview research project, and the first research project they had ever done in Japanese. Still, I believe that the benefits student researchers gained from helping design and direct this project outweigh these drawbacks.

### ***Final Thoughts***

Though Japanese names have been highly beneficial in this program, it is unclear what benefits of L2 names would transfer to classroom foreign language learners. If the teacher really can maintain a “playworld” atmosphere where learners can see each other as potentially different people, adopting L2 names may be another practice to add to Hamilton and Cohen (2005)’s recommendations for facilitating CLV-like language play in school environments. Still, participants’ own statements that having L2 names in regular school language classes has not usually been either meaningful or useful show that this may be challenging. However, Keiko and Taka’s comments that having a distinct name in each of their L2s has helped them to switch languages more easily, and the vast number of assertions that hearing one’s L2 name prompts an L2 response, suggest that in immersion schools or other multilingual contexts, L2 names may assist with code switching.

These participants, speakers of a majority language (English) who choose freely<sup>11</sup> to learn another language primarily for personal enrichment, are admittedly a privileged group of learners. Still, there are millions of children and adolescents studying foreign languages in the US more or less by choice, even though their situation is unusual in a larger global context. Circumstances may be very different for “traditional” second language learners, yet *Mori no Ike* students are arguably on “a second language island in a foreign language sea” (Hamilton, 2011). Learners outside CLV may very well experience a greater feeling of legitimacy speaking the language with an L2 name, or feel more part of the L2 culture after spending time there (e.g., Armour, 2003; Silver & Shiomi, 2010), and develop personalities that they associate with

speaking the L2, which they can turn on and off at will (see Armour, 2000, p. 265's description of Lola and "Akiko").

It is possible that Japanese learners, as students of an "exotic" language, or as students who feel that it is hard to "be themselves" in their regular L1 environments (as many reported), may have more salient experiences arising from the use of L2 names. In the future, I hope to interview additional participants from other languages to explore what cultural and social differences may exist between the language programs at CLV, and to check other perspectives on the ideas expressed by the student researchers and their interviewees, following the path of grounded theory.

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## NOTES

1. The program is named here with permission.
2. To avoid confusion in these explanations, I will use “project leader” to refer to myself, “student researchers” to refer to students who designed mini-projects and collected data, and “interviewees” or “their peers” to refer to students who were traditional participants (who were interviewed or surveyed by student researchers, but were not student researchers themselves).
3. Throughout this paper, as my participants do, I use “English names” to mean names used outside of camp, when virtually all participants are living in English-speaking environments. Of course, not all these names are of Anglophone origin.
4. All names, both English and Japanese, have been replaced with pseudonyms.
5. Students were graded by their teachers (*sensei*), not by the project leader. Though some teachers became participants, none were involved with any other part of the study.
6. Back-translating the questions was unnecessary, as comprehensibility was far more important than semantics, and the vast majority of students ended up responding to the English versions or to student researchers’ own Japanese adaptations of the official questions.
7. Interview excerpts are quoted in the original language(s); most students responded to the more complex questions in English, unless they were participating in a 24-hour language pledge.
8. *Katakana* is the Japanese script used to write “foreign” words, including loanwords and names of non-Japanese people (including “foreigners” of Japanese ancestry).
9. The findings of this study led to this policy being relaxed somewhat.
10. Nishizaka (1999) defines and discusses *henna gaijin* at length.
11. Though some villagers are forced by their parents to attend, this is uncommon.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**TRAINING MATERIALS FOR STUDENT-RESEARCHERS**  
**(ENGLISH PORTIONS ONLY)**

**Official Interview Questions**

1. How did you choose your Japanese name? Do you like your Japanese name? Why? Would you keep your name if you came back to Mori no Ike in the future? Has your connection to your name changed over the years?)
2. Have you had other Japanese names? Is there a reason you changed your name?
3. Do you use your Japanese name outside of Mori no Ike? How? Why? Do you use it with Japanese people? People who do not speak Japanese?
4. Do you think that using a Japanese name has had an effect on your learning of Japanese? How? Has it had an effect on your life, or your personality?)
5. Do you like our custom of using Japanese names at Mori no Ike? Why? What is it like to use a Japanese name? In your opinion, why do we use Japanese names at Mori no Ike? Do you think it has an effect on language learning?
6. This is just a theoretical question, but what if we were to stop using Japanese names at Mori no Ike?
7. Can you speak Japanese? Do you think that you are bilingual? What does “bilingual” mean?
8. Why do you want to learn Japanese? Where/in what kind of situations do you see yourself using Japanese in the future?
9. Some people feel like they “become Japanese” when they use a lot of Japanese. Have you ever felt like this? Can you tell me about it?
10. Is there anything else you’d like to talk about before we finish this interview?

**Student-Researcher Training**

**Why does this research matter?**

1. We don’t know if using an L2 name helps!
2. No one has put students’ voices in the spotlight.
3. No one has asked foreign language learners (students learning a language not generally spoken in their community).
4. We don’t know what using an L2 name means for people at CLV!

**Research Questions:**

- What do students see as the purposes of using Japanese names in this program? What do staff members see as the purpose of using Japanese names in this program? What value, if any, do they ascribe to the practice?
- How do students and staff members describe the meaning or importance of their Japanese names in their lives inside and outside the program?
- What effects (if any) do participants say choosing and using a Japanese name has had on their language-learning experiences and motivations?
- How do students position themselves as speakers of Japanese and participants in a Japanese-speaking community? How might the use of Japanese names influence this positioning?

**Description of my role**

As a “student researcher”, I will gather data from my peers to learn more about our use of Japanese names at *Mori no Ike*, our motivations for learning and using Japanese at *Mori no Ike*, and our thoughts about

multilingualism and identity. Most of this data will be informal “interviews” or conversations, which I will record with the provided recorder. After discussing my plans with Koyomi-sensei, I may also collect other data. After collecting/presenting my data, Koyomi-sensei will talk to me about the experience; this conversation will be recorded.

### **Training and Procedure**

- I will pay attention during training provided by Koyomi-sensei. I will ask questions as needed.
- I will not allow anyone who has not been trained by Koyomi-sensei to make recordings (録音するrokuon suru), or handle the recorder (録音機 rokuonki).
- I will follow all rules given in training, as well as all *Mori no Ike* rules, when I record.
- At the beginning of every recording, I will say my Japanese name (\_\_\_\_です), where I am (\_\_\_\_にいます), and the date and time (“jiyuujikan”, “uchidanran”, etc. are fine), and have each person present say their name and 録音してもいいです (It is okay to record).
- I will not erase any recordings I make.
- If my recorder malfunctions or needs to be charged, I will tell Koyomi-sensei. If I cannot find my recorder, I will tell Koyomi-sensei or another sensei immediately.

### **Confidentiality and Research Ethics**

- I will not collect data from or record anyone whose parents have not signed a consent form; Koyomi-sensei will tell me who these people are.
- I may record or collect data when sensei are not present, but I may not prevent sensei from being present.
- I will treat people I record as I myself would like to be treated; I will not use the recordings or recorder in any way that might hurt, embarrass, or intimidate someone.
- I will keep the recorder safe at all times, in its pouch in my backpack or bag; I will not allow anyone except Koyomi-sensei or the dean to have access to it. If I lose the recorder or if it is found outside my possession, I may have to give up the privilege of participating in this project.
- If someone tells me something that could affect their or another person’s health or safety, I will stop recording and tell a sensei, the dean, or the nurse immediately.
- I will not make anonymous or secret recordings; all persons being recorded must state their name and give assent to be recorded at the beginning of each recording. If someone arrives in the middle of a recording, they must also state their name and assent before speaking into the recorder.
- I will not make recordings in situations or locations where people would expect privacy (such as restrooms); if I wish to record in the *uchi*, all my cabin sensei and cabinmates must give permission.
- I will not record in locations where people nearby might accidentally be recorded.

### **Credit Student (*Gakusei*) Final Projects**

- I can use the data I collect, and my reflections and/or findings, in my final project.
- I can keep materials I make (such as posters) for my final project, though I cannot keep the recordings. As with other final projects, Koyomi-sensei may ask to take pictures or make copies of these materials.
- If I withdraw from participation in this study before final projects are due, I will be given some assistance in coming up with an appropriate final project. I understand, though, that completing a final project is ultimately my responsibility.
- I understand that my class sensei may ask Koyomi-sensei questions about the nature of my work as a student researcher, my work ethic, etc, as part of determining my grades for my final project, but that Koyomi-sensei is not permitted to assign my grades.

**Ownership of Data**

- I understand that the contents of the recordings I make may not be replayed for anyone not included in the recording, and that I may not tell anyone not included in the recording about the specific contents of the recording, except the nurse or dean in cases where someone's health or safety could be in danger.
- I understand that for privacy reasons, I may not keep copies of the recordings I make. I will not use any device besides the provided *rokuonki* to make recordings.
- I understand that I may quote and paraphrase students in talking about my project, but that I may not reveal their names or identities without their permission. If I have questions about this I will consult with Koyomi-sensei.

**Right to Withdraw**

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, and will not be penalized in any way for my decision. I will return the recorder to Koyomi-sensei, and my recordings can be erased if I ask.
- I understand that other participants also have the right to withdraw, and that I must tell Koyomi-sensei if this happens; I will not shame, embarrass, or act disrespectfully toward anyone who chooses to withdraw or who does not wish to be recorded. If students want their recordings erased, I will tell Koyomi-sensei.
- If I am a credit student, I understand that I will still be obliged to complete a final project of some kind (see above).

**After The Session Ends**

- I understand that these agreements are in force both during my time at Mori no Ike and after I leave, even if I do not return or intend to return to Mori no Ike in the future.
- I have a right to contact Koyomi-sensei at any time if I have questions about the study. Her e-mail address is hansonml@hawaii.edu.
- If I have questions or concerns about my rights as a participant in this study, I may also contact [camp administrators, my advisor, my institution's IRB]. Their contact information is also on the consent form my parents or guardians signed.
- I will provide an e-mail address if I would like to be contacted about the results of this study and receive a copy of the final product. I may make comments, which can be incorporated into the final product.
- **No students' legal names will appear in any paper or published work.**

**APPENDIX B:**  
**ADDITIONAL STUDENT-CREATED QUESTIONS USED IN INTERVIEWS**

Note: questions are listed and translated as used, grammatical or not.

**Keiko**

1. 名前をもらって、森の池で日本語を勉強することはもっと楽しくなりましたか。 (Has getting a [Japanese] name made studying Japanese more fun?)
2. 名前をもらって、日本語がもっと習えると思いますか。 (Do you think having a [Japanese] name makes it possible to learn more Japanese?)
3. 学校で、外国語のクラスがありますか。何の外国語？ (Are there foreign language classes offered at your school? Which language[s]?)
4. 名前をもらったら、他の外国語と今習っている外国語の区別が付けやすいですか。 (Does getting a [L2] name make it easier to distinguish between languages you are learning?)

**Satoru**

1. 長い間あなたの日本語の名前をコネクションが変わりましたか。 (Has your connection to your Japanese name changed over time? [slight rewording and grammatical simplification of a sample question])

**Chieko/Aki/Sayaka**

1. あなたの名前は、キャラクタから付けましたか。 (Does your Japanese name come from a character?)
2. どうしてこのキャラクタを選びましたか。 (Why did you pick that character?)
3. あなたとこのキャラクタは同じですか。 (Are you the same as that character?)
4. このキャラクタになりたいですか。 (Do you want to become that character?)
5. どうやって\_\_\_\_\_を読み（見）始めましたか。 (How did you start reading/watching [name of book, anime, manga]?)
6. \_\_\_\_\_はあなたの一番好きなキャラクタですか。 (Is [name] your favorite character?)
7. 名前を使うことで行動が変わりますか。 (Does using a [Japanese] name change your behavior?)

**Kanae/Hideaki/Osamu**

1. キャンプで、あなたの性格は違いますか。 (Is your personality different at camp?)
2. あなたの森の池の性格は同じですか。どうやって。 (Is your Mori no Ike personality different? How so?)

**Suzume/Naoya**

1. あなたの日本語の名前が好きですか。どうして？ Do you like your Japanese name? Why?
2. あなたの英語の名前が好きですか。どうして？ Do you like your English name? Why?
3. どの名前が一番好きですか。 Which name do you like best?
4. 英語の名前は秘密ですね。好き（です）か？どうして？ [Our] English names are a secret, aren't they. Do you like that? Why?
5. 日本語の名前か英語の名前か、choiceはいいですか。 No choiceはいいですか。 Do you think it's good to have a choice between Japanese and English names? Or is it better not to have a choice?
6. 日本語の名前はあなたに自信をつけますか。 Does having a Japanese name give you confidence?
7. 日本語の名前か英語の名前より役に立つと思いますか。 (translated by the students as "Do you think having a Japanese name makes it easier to adjust than having an English name?"; literally, "Do you think Japanese names are more useful than English names?")

**APPENDIX C:**  
**FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM**

**Mori no Ike Final Project Planning Sheet**  
(One per project—groups can share)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Your Class Sensei \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

- What will your final product and presentation be? What will indicate that you have done the project well?
- What will you have learned by the end of this project? Be specific about language items, topics, vocabulary, structures, communicative modes (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational), etc.
- List each step of this project, when it must be completed, and who will be responsible for each step.
- How does your project demonstrate **some** of the following?

National Standards for Language Learning                           How?  
 Communication (in Japanese)

- Connections (between languages and other fields)
- Communities (participation in a Japanese-speaking community)
- Cultures (understanding of Japanese culture)
- Comparisons (between languages/cultures)

CLV Learner Goals—A responsible world citizen...                           How?

...understands and appreciates cultural diversity

...communicates with confidence and cultural sensitivity in more than one language

...responds creatively and critically to issues which transcend national boundaries

...expresses empathy for neighbors in the global village

...promotes a worldview of peace, justice, and sustainability for all

- List the resources/methods/materials that you plan to use. Remember: Internet sources and computer use are NOT allowed. If you have questions about resources, talk to the credit facilitator. If you will need special materials (e.g., poster board, art supplies) remember to request these here!

Proposal approved by \_\_\_\_\_ (Class Teacher) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal approved by \_\_\_\_\_ (Credit Facilitator) Date \_\_\_\_\_