

Crossing Linguistic Boundaries: When Students Use English Names in English Classes

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Abstract

国際舞台で活躍する日本人をはじめ、中国やインドなどで英語を使用して働いている人々および英語学習者の間では、実名に加え英語名を使用することがしばしばある。そこで本論文では、日本の大学の英語クラスで、自ら選んだ英語名を使用することが、日本人の英語学習者にどのような影響を与えるかを調べて分析を行った。その結果、英語の名前を使用することに関しては、取り組みを行ったクラスの学習者はあまり恥ずかしいとは感じず、当初は戸惑いがあったとしても慣れてくると特に不自然と感じなかった者が、恥ずかしいあるいは不自然と感じた者より多くいることが分かった。英語の名前が気に入った者も多く、それにより自己のアイデンティティが失われたと思わず、アクティビティとして楽しむことができたようである。また、英語のクラスでは、本来の名前以外の英語名で呼ばれてもいいと答えた者が、日本語の名前のみで呼ばれたいと答えた者より多くいた。一方、英語の名前を使うことと英語による発言のしやすさにはあまり関係がないと感じた学生がおり、英語の名前を使用しても、発言する際には文法などの間違いを気にする傾向は続いたようである。最も肯定的な意見としては、英語の名前を使用することにより異文化理解に役立ったというものがある。英語による発信力の養成という意味では、表面的に英語名を使用するだけでは十分ではない。しかし、日本の大学のEFLクラスにおける英語名の使用は、限られたクラスではあったが、L1からL2への切り換えを促す一助となり、英語で積極的に話そうとする状況を創造し、異文化に興味と理解を生み出す場を提供するものとなった。

Keywords : crossing linguistic boundaries, crossing classroom thresholds, English names, Japanese EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom communities

Introduction

A classroom-based language teacher, generally speaking, aims to create the conditions in which his or her students can learn and use the L2 to their full capacity. Whether a class aims at enhancing the students' receptive skills or improving productive skills, or to deepen their understanding of cross-cultural issues, in cases where communicating in the L2 forms an integral part of a course being taught, the teacher must focus on creating the conditions where his or her students are encouraged to speak freely in the L2. As MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels

(1998) state in their paper on learner variables, a person's willingness to communicate (WTC) is prerequisite in the spontaneous and sustained use of the L2. And WTC is especially important in an institutional foreign language classroom when students might not have opportunities to communicate in the language they are learning outside of class. In Japanese university classes where the homogeneity of the L1 users, whose linguistic backgrounds are not as diverse as ESL/EFL classes in inner circle countries,¹⁾ naturally creates conditions where students can code-switch (i.e. revert back to the L1) instead of negotiating in the L2, this is a difficult challenge. Indeed, the authors have sometimes observed confusion among Japanese students when they are instructed to discuss issues in class. Their frequent response is to ask the instructor whether they should use Japanese or English.

In a lot of EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms in Japan, where typically students talk to one another in Japanese until the bell rings, it is not easy for them to switch from L1 mode to L2 mode. Classroom practice, especially in communication classes, has long sought different ways to break speakers out of their L1 mode. For example, language teachers may arrange the desks so that students can talk easily to each other in a pair or small group, or they may play English music or English language news to create a relaxing or exciting atmosphere for learning; or they may start their class with a warm up where mistakes can be freely made and students' performance is not assessed in order to temporarily break the link to the L1. In Japan a fast switch to the L2 to help develop confidence with the language and fluency seems particularly important given the limited opportunities for communicating in English outside of the classroom.

This research is based on the previously mentioned goals of language teaching and considers whether the partial construction of an English language identity through an English name might aid students to switch into L2 mode, make it easier for them to use the L2, motivate them to actively participate in the virtual L2 classroom community, and as a result increase WTC.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Japanese People and English Names

While the use of English names in Japan is an uncommon phenomenon, there are striking examples of the practice across Asia, most noticeably in China and India where English is playing the part of a lingua franca²⁾ and has acquired a commodity value: in both countries it is seen as a passport to social and economic improvement (Kirkpatrick, 2007). In China the traditional flexibility of names that means they might be changed throughout a person's life because of significant events such as graduation, job hunting, and promotion (Lee, 2001) may be connected to the practice of adopting English names among Chinese students and some professionals seeming more prevalent. In India, on the other hand, as more jobs are being outsourced to the Asian subcontinent, the adoption of English names by call center operators and other professionals is becoming very popular.

Unlike in China and India, re-naming has not been commonly practiced in Japan except in sumo or in the show business world of dance and theatre, and also through marriage. And even though English remains a core part of the school curriculum and retains its popularity as a language to learn (Kubota, 2002), there is no culture of adopting English names or re-naming oneself inside Japan. The attachment a Japanese person has to their Japanese name, the Chinese characters giving it great significance, may be one reason not to change one's name. Moreover, in Japan while there are many fluent speakers of English, the lack of a visible English community to seek membership in and the high standard of living, which means people do not seek to emigrate for economic reasons, suggests that actually there is little practical use for an English name.

As for Japanese people overseas, the authors, through their previous work, have encountered Japanese professionals adopting English names when working within a linguistic realm where English is the L1 (Shiomi, 2007). Some reasons given for adopting an English name were the difficulty an American boss or colleagues had pronouncing Japanese names, and the probability that a Japanese name might reduce job prospects overseas (Shiomi, Silver and Durning, 2010). For example, Naoya who worked for a Major League Baseball team chose to be called Ned after he was asked to choose either Nick or Ned by his American boss, and Katsumi chose Karl when the American president of a Japanese company in the US suggested that it would be easier for native speakers to pronounce an English name. Another common practice for Japanese working with foreigners in Japan or overseas is to shorten their first name (for example, Yasu for Yasutoshi) or sometimes use a nickname (Sushi for Atsushi). This is often done as a courtesy to the foreign party who might find pronunciation of the Japanese name difficult. In educational situations in Japan, adapting names by shortening them or adding "chan" to create nicknames is common and this personalization of names often serves to strengthen the bonds between class members, something the authors hoped to exploit in this study.

1.2 Classroom Practice

As stated above, WTC is a goal of the foreign language classroom, and one of the elements of WTC is the speaker's perception of community. For Japanese students, the absence of a community within Japan in which it is necessary to communicate in the L2 could lead to a reduced WTC in general, and in the classroom that feeling can be fatal for English use.

In Japanese universities learning occurs for participants while they remain immersed in the culture of the L1 (Japanese). Moreover, the participants themselves (normally) share a homogenous L1 background. Upon entering the language classroom, how successfully students can suspend their disbelief³⁾ and pretend that they have entered an English speaking environment could have an effect on their WTC and subsequent use of the L2. However, in Japanese EFL classes the feeling that they have switched to an English environment is rarely automatic, even if the bell ringing announces that, temporally at least, they are now in an English language realm. Knowing when and being able to switch to L2 mode is a challenge students face.

The language classroom is, as Dörnyei states (Murphy, 2010), like a dynamic system composed of a multitude of factors that could have an effect on language learning, of which how names are used is one of them. Using names effectively can create strong classroom communities. While Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) emphasize the importance of a teacher knowing students' names for their constructed identity and caution that not knowing students' names in the class has a serious consequence, Senior (2006) identifies using nicknames as one way in which language teachers establish informal classroom atmospheres.

1.3 Use of English Names in Classrooms

Although there are numerous studies of the language classroom, research on the use of names in English classes is scarce. McPherron (2009) explains about the practice of English names in a Chinese university, responding to communicative language teaching reforms in China. He mentions the process by which students choose their English names and discusses the issues regarding the complication of the separation of local and global spaces as well as critical reflection on the creating of language curriculum.

Research conducted by Shirahata and Hunt (1995) investigated how teachers and students call each other and found that “most teachers are sensitive towards what they conceive as misuse of their names” but they show leniency towards students' unintentional name misuse. Their research focuses on the terms of address used between students and teachers, but not between peer students nor on the use of English names in classrooms. They acknowledge that the use of personal names forms an integral part of a communication lesson, and agree that the use of as much target language as possible in class is important, but not to the degree that the students' original names be replaced by English names (p.232). However, nowadays as more international students, especially from China, study at Japanese universities, the authors have experienced teaching Chinese students among Japanese students in English classes in Japan. And it is not uncommon that those Chinese students prefer to use their English names. For example, Feng wanted to be called *Peter*, Zheng took his name *Eric* from a dog in an American drama, and Jun got his name *Kevin* from the Hollywood movie star, Kevin Costner.

Moreover, when one of the authors let students choose the names they would like to use in English classes, out of ninety-five students, 64% chose their own Japanese first names, 16% chose short versions of their first or family names (e.g. Kazu for Kazuma, Hide for Hidetoshi, or Masa for Masaki) and 12% chose nicknames, such as Makky for Makiko, Nono for Nonomura, Icchan for Itsumi, or Daizu for Yuusuke. Only 4% chose to use their family names and surprisingly, the same 4% preferred to use English names like Michael, Tom, Johnny, and Tommy. With more international students coming to Japan and more Japanese students being exposed to English names through movies, TV dramas, magazines, the internet, as well as foreign friends and also as a result of their personal experience abroad, it is not as uncommon to hear English names in everyday life in Japan now.

Although the hearing and adoption of some English names is becoming less unusual in Japan, as the review of literature shows, there is hardly any research conducted on the use of English names in the Japanese EFL context, thus it was worth investigating how the use of English names in Japanese university English classes affects the students' perception and use of English in classrooms. Hence, in this study the authors looked at whether being part of an imagined community of L2 speakers, in which the L2 acquired the temporary status of the L1 for 90 minutes a week, could increase students' WTC and as a consequence their use of the L2. An example of how using English names in class might have helped students to speak more freely and frequently and promote communicative interaction in the L2, drawing on Shirahata and Hunt (1995), was because it could reduce students' concerns over how to use Japanese naming conventions (e.g., adding *san*, *kun*, or *sensei* to a person's family name) appropriately in English.

In this study English names were not given to students because of any difficulty in pronouncing Japanese names, as Freeman warns against doing (1985), nor because there was an external pressure to reform the language curriculum as in the case of McPherron (2009). The authors wish to emphasize that the purpose of the research was not to promote the adoption of a Western identity in the belief that it is necessary to be a successful language learner; nor were the authors interested in shaping learners' identities. Furthermore, the research did not seek to encourage subservience to inner circle (Kachru, 1985) English naming conventions or to promote a particular culture. But instead the authors sought to investigate through the students' own voices whether WTC could be usefully created by the adoption and practice of using an English name in a classroom setting, and whether or not it would make speaking English easier. We wanted to create a classroom space where students might feel it is more natural to produce English; in other words, so that they could more easily cross linguistic boundaries in the same moment as crossing the classroom threshold even while remaining in Japan. On the basis of these aims, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How would students feel if they had the chance to use English names?
2. How would students perform in class if they used their English names?
3. Would using English names help students understand other cultures?
4. Would students come to like their English names?
5. Would students feel like a different person if they were called by their English names?
6. Would male and female students have similar or different reactions to the use of English names?

2. Research Methods

2.1 The Participants

In this study, students from three classes taught by two different English instructors (one

Japanese and one British teacher) adopted English names for the duration of one semester. Two of the classes were elective cross-cultural communication classes comprising a mixed group of students from different faculties and years. In addition, one second year reading class, where business content was the focus, also adopted English names for this study. In total 37 students (18 male and 19 female) participated in classes where they were called by their English names.

2.2 Procedures and Practices

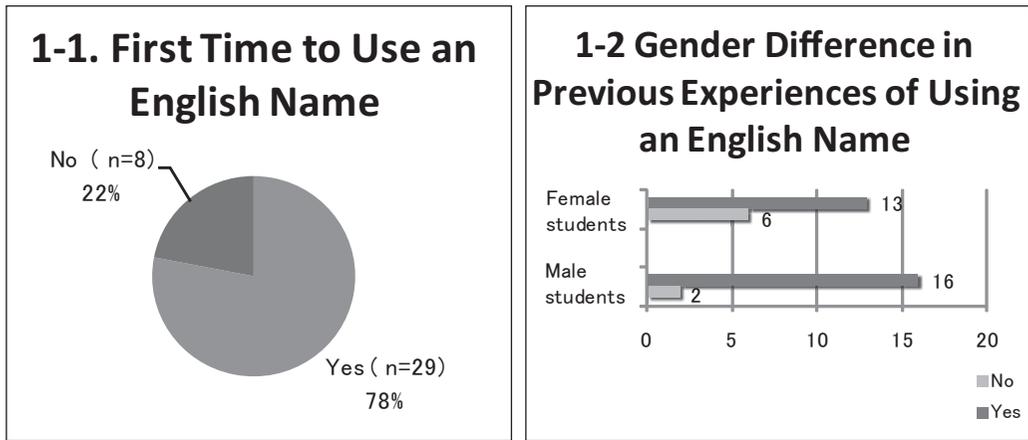
Students, after having had explained to them the intention to use English names in the class, were given time to think about names and then report them to the class. Only when students asked for help did the instructor offer them a list of possibilities. Although some students felt that the renaming of themselves was strange, others involved themselves in the funny side of reinventing themselves. As Richards (2006) points out, a name – the label – is something that normally gains meaning through a layering of meaningful actions on the part of the name holder. Our use of names was clearly an invention that without reinforcement of some kind through use and action would have remained simply a badge that our students assumed for class. Thus, we made sure that there was English name usage in the class, though it differed from class to class.

In two classes, the roll call was made using English names and in the other class English names were employed after the roll call of Japanese names was made so that students remembered each other's Japanese and English names. In addition, in the early stages of the semester, students sitting in small groups were given time to remember their names. An example of one activity that was tried in all classes was the making of business cards using the English names that then formed part of a communication exercise in class. In one of the three classes the social networking site Facebook⁴⁾ was used as a class communication tool and students joined using their English first names and Japanese surnames, thus increasing opportunities for them to “act” in their foreign identity outside of the classroom space. Throughout the semester teachers addressed students using their English names. Moreover, almost all of the open communication between class members took place in English.

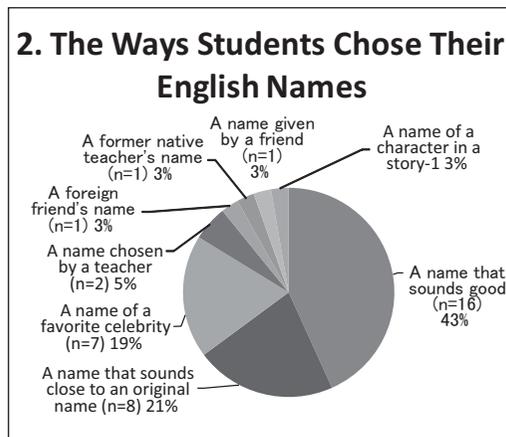
2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of a survey in Japanese consisting of 5-point Likert scale responses (i.e. agree, slightly agree, neither, slightly disagree and disagree) and blank box answers. Students were given time in class at the end of the course to complete the survey anonymously. They were also free to write comments in English or Japanese regarding the use of English names in class. The data from the closed-questions was input into Excel and the responses to each question were analyzed. The written comments were also collected and translated from Japanese into English. In addition, four participants were interviewed after the end of the course to get their feedback and reaction to using English names in class. The interviews were transcribed and summarized.

3. Findings



Graph 1-1 shows the percentage of students who had English names in the past. Out of thirty-seven students, eight students (22%) mentioned that they had used English names before. The other twenty-nine students (78%) said that they had not experienced using English names in any of the English classes they had previously taken. Graph 1-2 further shows gender differences in previous experiences of using English names. Among eight students who had had English names before, it was found that six (32%) of them were female students and two (11%) were male students. Although none of the male students mentioned when or where they used English names, three female students reported that they had used their English names when they lived abroad as elementary school children, and the other three mentioned that they had used English names when they attended ECC Junior, a popular children’s language school, when they were little.



As for the ways the students chose their English names, they pointed out several reasons. According to the survey, 43% of the students chose their English names based on the sound of the names: they decided to use English names that sounded good to them. 21% of the students chose English names that sounded close to their own names; for example, Marie chose her English name *Marie*, and Tetsutomo, *Tom*. While 19% of the students chose the names of their favorite celebrities, such as Tom (Cruise) and Michael (Jackson), other students chose names because they were influenced by their foreign friends' names, while one chose the name of his former English teacher, and another that of a character in a drama (Graph 2). While some students had no difficulty in deciding their names, there were those who found the process difficult and asked for teacher's help. This is in contrast to Chinese students who McPherron (2009) noted were willing to use any resource available, be it dictionary or the internet.

English names chosen in the three different English classes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. English Names used in three English Classes

Male students: <i>Peter, Sam, Michael, Mark, Steve, John, Tom, Ted, Jefferson, Bobby, Jack, Sugar, Alvin, Isaac, Louis, David, Stanley, Nicolas</i>
Female students: <i>Mary, Stefanie, Jenny, Ann, Emily, Marie, Lily, Nancy, Annie, Amy, Betty, Kate, Rebecca, Maggie, Stacy, Helen, Jill, Kelly, Elle</i>

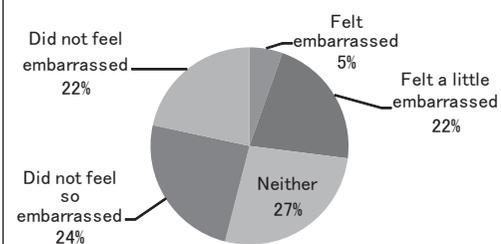
In the retrospective interviews given to some students after the classes had finished, student A said he chose the name *Tom* partly because it sounded close to his Japanese name, Tetsutomo. Student B said he chose the name *Bobby* because he liked the former head coach of the Chiba Lotte Marines, Bobby Valentine. Student C said that she chose the name *Rebecca* because she liked the sound of it while student D mentioned her teacher at ECC junior gave her the English name *Maggie* when she was an elementary school student.

The names chosen by our students were all strongly Western, though not all particularly fashionable at present, and thus from the inner circle of English, suggesting that for Japanese students English does equate to the dominant British and North American models. In addition, that many chose to name themselves after someone they admired suggests both the benefit of good L2 role models and the close connection between culture and language.

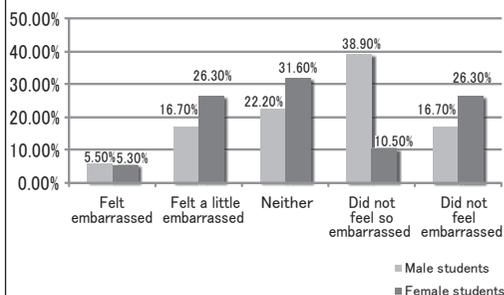
The disconnect that some students felt between their names and English names was noticeable at the beginning of the semester when the teacher called out a student's English name to no response. However, as the semester went by, we noticed that students were able to associate themselves with their English names more and more.

In the following section, the responses to eight questions regarding the use of English names in class will be analyzed.

3-1. Q1 Did you feel embarrassed to be called by your English name?

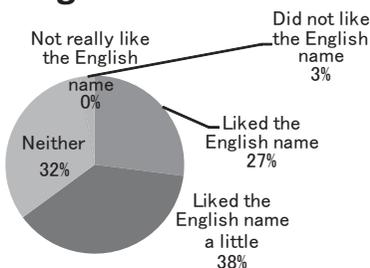


3-2. Gender differences in responses to Q1

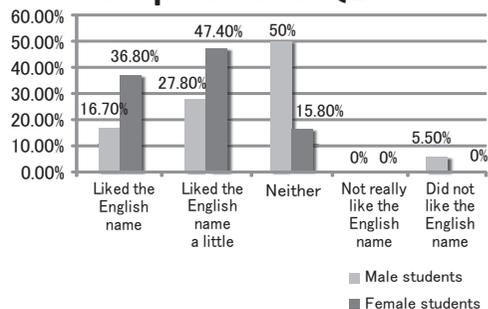


In response to the question regarding whether students felt embarrassed when they were called by their English names, almost half (46%) of the students surveyed said they were not embarrassed or they were not embarrassed much. 27% said they felt embarrassed or felt a little embarrassed, while another 27% mentioned they felt neither embarrassed nor not embarrassed (Graph 3-1). When you compare female and male students' responses, female students felt a little more embarrassed than male students when they were called by their English names. 31.6% of female students said they felt embarrassed or a little embarrassed while only 22.2% of male students said they felt embarrassed or a little embarrassed. On the other hand, more than half (55.6%) male students, compared with 36.8% female students, mentioned they did not feel embarrassed or did not feel so embarrassed (Graph 3-2). In a retrospective interview, student D mentioned that at first she felt uncomfortable with her English name, but later she came to feel really comfortable with it to the point when she felt it was easy for her to say her name is *Maggie* in class.

4-1. Q2 Did you like your English name?



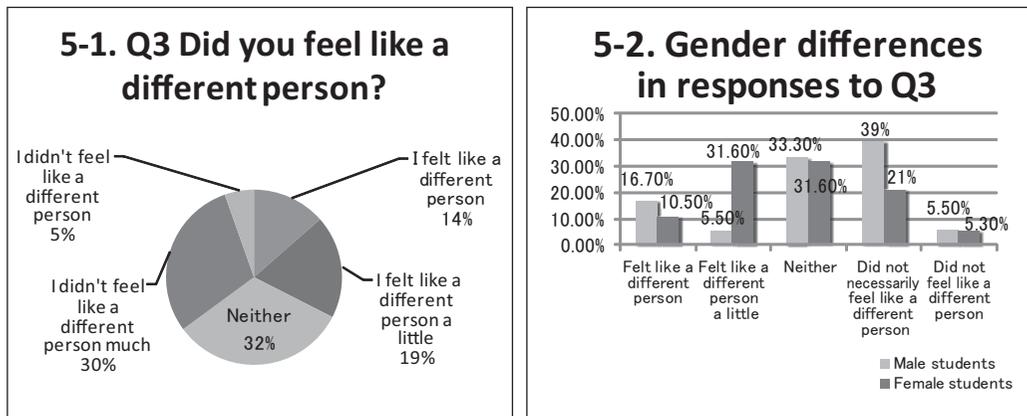
4-2. Gender differences in responses to Q2



Although more than two-third of students at first had some difficulty associating an English name with themselves, 65% of students mentioned that they liked their English name to some

degree while only 3% said they did not like their English name. 32% said they neither liked nor disliked their English name (Graph 4-1). In comparison with male students (44.5%), almost twice as many female students (84.2%) said they liked their English name and none of the female students disliked their English name. On the contrary, 50% of male students neither liked nor disliked their English name, and one male student (5.5%) mentioned he did not like his English name (Graph 4-2). There were a few students who were not able to come up with English names by themselves so they chose their English name from a list of English names handed out by the teacher. Those students may have not felt attached to the English name they chose from the list, compared with those who chose their name on their own after their favorite celebrity or those whom they felt close to (e.g. a foreign friend or a previous teacher).

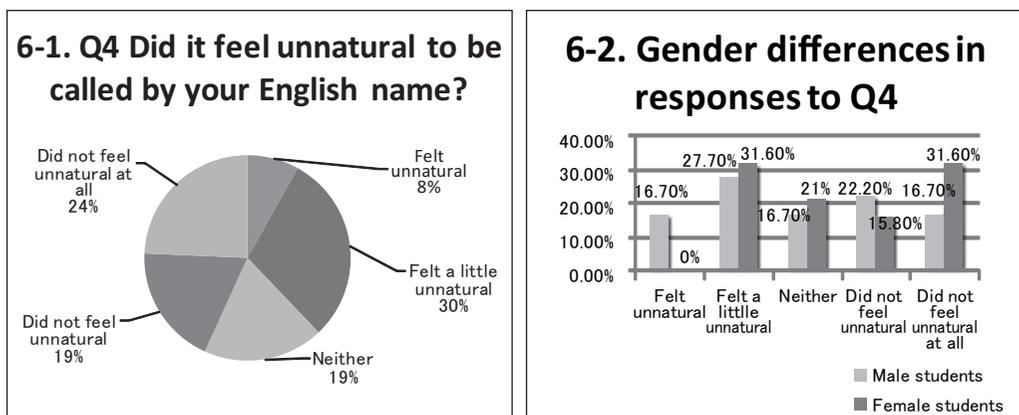
In a retrospective interview, student A commented that using an English name was a bit confusing at first because he had never been called *Tom*, but as the semester progressed he got used to his English name, *Tom*, and felt it became a part of himself. He said, “It’s strange but interesting to be called *Tom*.” He added, “Just in this class though.” However, he further mentioned that although he was not called *Tom* outside of his class, when he went into his English classroom he was able to switch and become *Tom*.



In response to the question, “Did you feel like a different person using an English name?”, about one third of students said they felt like a different person or felt a little like a different person, and about one third said they did not necessarily feel like a different person. Also, another one-third mentioned that using English names did not influence them regarding how they felt (Graph 5-1). In other words, they did not feel that they had lost their identity even when they used their English name in class. With regards to gender difference shown in Graph 5-2, more female students (42.1%) said they felt like a different person or felt a little like a different person than male students (22.2%). On the other hand, 44.5% of male students said they did not feel like a different person nor felt like they had lost their identity with English names, while 26.3% of female students mentioned English names did not make them feel like a different person nor like they had lost their

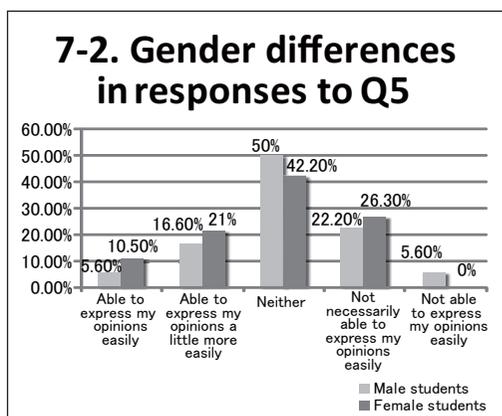
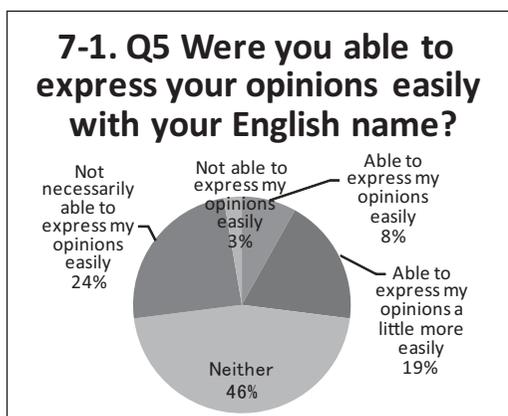
identity.

Although more female students stated that they felt a little bit like a different person, in the retrospective interviews given to student A and C, neither of them said having English name made them feel like they had lost their identity. Student C said she was comfortable with either Saori or *Rebecca*. So, it did not matter which name she used in class—using an English name did not influence how she felt about herself. Student A also mentioned that it was okay to use his English name in class. At first he was a little embarrassed, but he became comfortable, and he did not feel he lost his identity by using his English name.



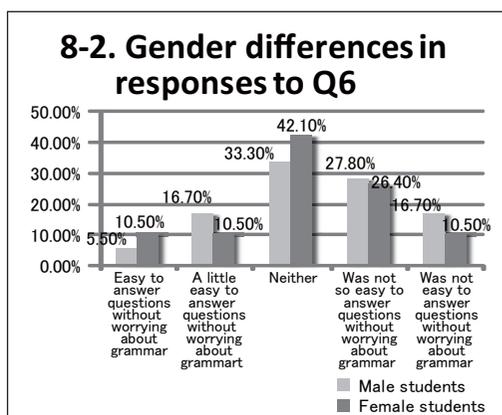
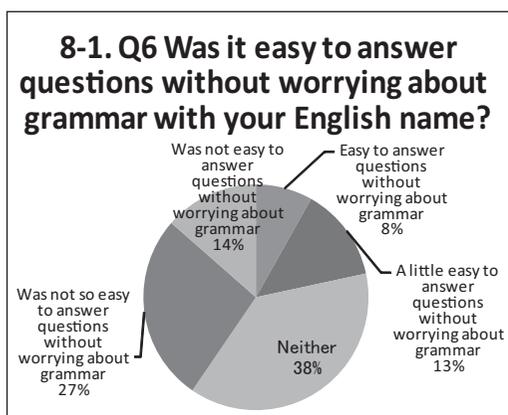
When the students were asked whether they felt it was unnatural to be called by their English name, 38% of them said they felt it either unnatural or a little unnatural. However, 43% of the students mentioned that they did not feel it was unnatural or they did not feel it was unnatural at all (Graph 6-1). When male and female students' responses were compared, it was found that more male students (44.4%) felt it was unnatural than female students (31.6%) and a few more female students than male students responded positively toward the use of English names in class—47.4% of female students said that they did not feel it was unnatural when they used English names, as opposed to 38.9% of male students (Graph 6-2).

In retrospective interviews, student C said using an English name in class was a positive thing for her. She mentioned when English speakers call her by her Japanese name, they usually have some English accent, so it does not sound right to her—it sounds rather weird to her. However, when the native English teacher called her name in English, it sounded more natural to her. Therefore, she felt it more natural and comfortable being called by her English name than her Japanese name by the native teacher. Student A also mentioned that his English name sounded natural in an English class especially when some Japanese names were hard for some native English teachers to pronounce. He felt it sounded more natural when native teachers called students by English names rather than Japanese names with an accent.

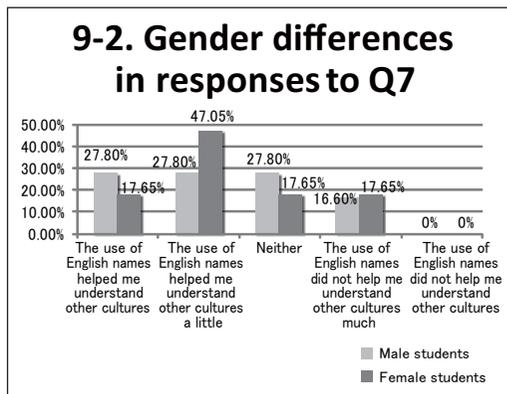
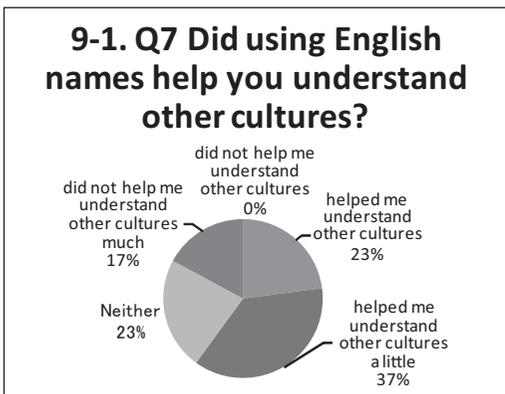


When the students were asked if they were able to express their opinions easily with their English name, 27% of them gave positive responses and said they felt they were somehow able to express their opinions more easily when they were called by their English name. However, the same number of students (27%) also said using English names did not help them express their opinions easily. Most significantly, almost half of the students stated that having English names had no effect on expressing their own opinions in English (Graph 7-1). When the responses of male and female students were compared, there were more female students (31.5%) than male students (22.2%) who said that having English names helped them express their opinions easily in English (Graph 7-2).

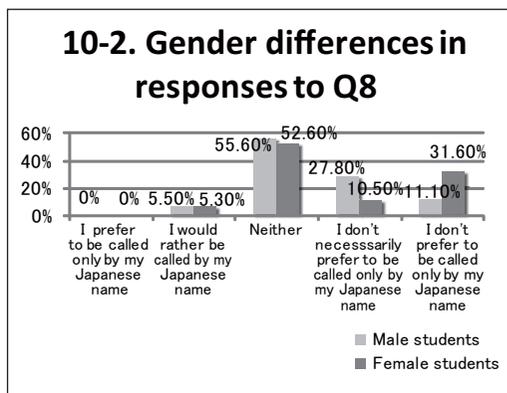
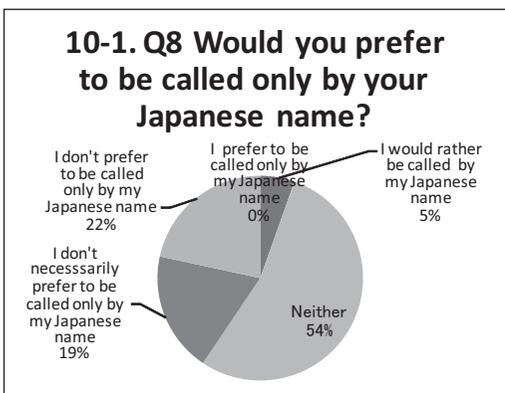
In the retrospective interviews, student C commented on the easier use of an English name than a Japanese name in discussions and presentations in English. She stated that Japanese people are sometimes very embarrassed to speak English; however, she thought with English names students in class seemed to feel more comfortable speaking in English. She further mentioned that she felt rather strange when she had to have discussions with other Japanese students in English or make presentations in English using her Japanese name. She felt having an English name made her feel less strange when she had discussions or presentations in English.



When students were asked whether it was easier for them to answer questions without worrying about grammar with their English names, 41% of students responded negatively, 38% said neither, and 21% responded positively (Graph 8-1). Twice as many students mentioned that having an English name did not necessarily help them answer questions without worrying about grammar. In other words, some students surveyed were still concerned with their grammatical accuracy in responding to English questions even with their English names. No considerable gender differences were observed in their responses (Graph 8-2). There were more students (44.5% male and 36.9% female students) who commented that having English names did not make it easy for them to answer questions without worrying about English grammar than those (22.2% male and 21% female students) who said having English names made it easier.



In response to the question regarding the use of English names and understanding of other cultures, 60% of the students mentioned that having an English name helped them understand other cultures, or at least to some degree. 23% said neither, and 17% said it did not help them understand other cultures much, but none of the students said that having English names did not help them understand other cultures (Graph 9-1). When you look at the gender difference, one can see there were more female students than male students who mentioned that having English names helped them understand other cultures or at least to some degree (Graph 9-2).



When students were asked if they would prefer to be called only by their Japanese names, 5% said they would rather be called by their Japanese names. About half of the students (54%) said they did not have any strong opinions about the names they would like to use. 41% of students mentioned that they do not have to be or not necessarily have to be called by their Japanese names (Graph 10-1). There were no significant differences in male and female students' responses to the question regarding the preference of using Japanese names in class or not. More than half of both male and female students said they did not have specific preferences regarding names used in English classes. None of the students mentioned that they preferred to be called only by their Japanese names, while about 40% of both male and female students said that they would not prefer to be or not necessarily prefer to be called only by their Japanese names in English classes (Graph10-2).

In the retrospective interviews where students were asked how they had felt about being called by their English names at a restaurant during a class social event, student A replied, "It was a bit embarrassing because we never used English names outside of class, but we feel like *Jefferson* is *Jefferson*, *Bobby* is *Bobby*, *Betty* is *Betty*, *Rebecca* is *Rebecca*." He added, "We never really called them by their real names, so if we call each other by our Japanese names, it also sounds strange to me." One female student also commented by saying, "It was a little bit embarrassing but very fun!"

In response to the question regarding the choice of names at a workplace in an English speaking country, student C mentioned that if she had a chance to study or work overseas, she would prefer to use her English name. She said, "I prefer to use my English name *Rebecca* because my name Saori is hard for English speakers to pronounce. They often say *SaOri*, *Sorry*, or *Celery*. So, my English name is much easier for them to pronounce and remember." Student B said he would like to use his Japanese name, but since his name, "Haruhisa" is difficult for English speakers to pronounce, he would like to use his nickname, "Haru" shortened from his real name. However, if English speakers would like to call him by his English name *Harry*, which is easier to pronounce and which sounds close to his Japanese nickname, he said he would accept the name *Harry*.

When students A and C were asked in the interview what name they would like to use outside of class or at a work place in the future, they said using either their Japanese name or English name would be fine if they had an opportunity to work overseas. Student A mentioned that when he studied abroad, most of his friends called him Tetsu (short for Tetsutomo) and one friend called him *Tom*. As he is used to being called Tetsu, he would introduce himself as Tetsu; however, if his boss at work preferred to call him by an English name, he would like to use *Tom*. Student D also commented that since it is not so difficult for people to say her Japanese name, Mai, she could use either her original name or English name at work overseas. From the interviews, none of the students mentioned that they would like to be called only by their Japanese names: they may either want to use the short form of their first names or English names.

In addition to the interviews, some comments were collected with the survey. Written

comments regarding the use of English names in class consisted of several positive comments, a few positive and negative comments combined, and one negative comment. Below is the list of the comments students wrote at the end of the survey.

Positive comments:

- It was good!
- It was good that my Japanese name and English name sounded close.
- Having English names in class made it easier for me to call other people in class.
- The English name I got will be the one I will never forget—It will be a memorable name for me.
- It was really interesting to have our own English names (smiley face)!
- It was refreshing to be called by my English name.
- It was fun to hear to some English names I have never heard of before.
- It was good that I felt like a native speaker.

Positive and negative comments:

- It was good but I might have felt more attached if I chose a more realistic English name. (One male student chose the name “Sugar.”)
- It was good but I did not know what to call other students outside of classroom.
- It was good but it was a bit of a pity that I was not able to remember other students’ Japanese names.
- It was good, but at first, I felt bad when I forgot other students’ English names.
- There were some easy English names to remember, but there were difficult ones, too.
- At first I did not recognize my own name when I was called by my English name, but I got used to it and my English name naturally became a part of me.

Negative comments:

- I did not understand the necessity of using an English name in class.

4. Discussion

In contrast to the unique name choice made by Chinese students that showed their individuality, playfulness, and creativity, e.g. *Medusa*, *Echo*, *Feeling*, and *Seven* (Lee, 2001), the name choices of our students were English names commonly used in English-speaking countries, such as *David*, *Michael*, *Kate*, *Jill*, etc. except the term of endearment, *Sugar*, chosen by a male student. Our Japanese students appeared to choose their English names not for uniqueness, but for the Western modes of Englishness. As for the English names used in classroom activities, students in general had positive feelings and some commented, “Having an English name in class was good because I felt like a native speaker” or “I think we should have an English family name as well as an English first name.”

The English names were given to a small number of 2nd, 3rd and 4th year university students who were in an upper-intermediate class as well as in elective classes in which students are usually more motivated than those who are in compulsory English classes. Some of them had studied abroad and others showed interest in using English at work in the future. Thus their reactions or attitudes toward the use of English names in class may not apply to less motivated students or lower level students who are not interested in professions where English is used or required.

The authors of this study also acknowledge that the language classroom is a complicated place, and the creation of a separate linguistic identity involves a far more in depth sociolinguistic understanding of patterns (e.g. turn-taking, speech acts⁵⁾ of apologizing or disagreeing, and politeness and indirectness, etc.) that cannot simply be addressed by adopting an English name. In addition, this study has not attempted to measure in any way the effect of using an English name on grammatical accuracy, agreeing with Dörnyei's suggestion that studying classroom dynamics is difficult and requires alternative methods and tools to observe the whole system, as opposed to conventional quantitative research methodology that focuses on only parts of the system (Murphy, 2010). Today, as a result of the crossover of psychology and language learning, we accept that the ability of a student to consider his or her own progress and act accordingly is also of great importance.

Although some people question the necessity of the use of English names in class, as McPherron (2009) points out, the choosing of English names could help to create a space where students can move fluidly between multiple language standards and trans-cultural identities. Self-naming can be a personal expression of choice and may provide access to English speaking communities.

Conclusion

English names were introduced into three classes to see how students would feel and perform with English names. Since most of the students had never used English names before, at first they had a little difficulty associating their English names with themselves. However, as the semester progressed, they became comfortable with their English names and felt more comfortable using them. According to the survey responses, almost half of the students mentioned that they did not feel embarrassed nor that it was that unnatural to be called by their English name as the semester progressed. More than two thirds of students actually came to like their English names.

As for the relationship between English names and identity, using English names in class did not appear to interfere with students' identities. Only one third of students mentioned that they felt like different people with English names a little, but others said using English names did not make them feel like different people nor that they lost their identity. Although some may question the necessity of Japanese students' using English names in English classes, most students surveyed in our research did not express strong negative feelings toward the use of English names in class.

While one student mentioned he did not understand the necessity of using English names in class, nobody explicitly commented that English names should not be used because using English names may make students lose their identity as Japanese. On the contrary, as the written comments or interview responses showed, most students enjoyed having English names and having an opportunity to feel a bit like native English speakers or English-speaking students.

With regards to the performance of students in class, however, the students were split into three different groups: one-third of the students felt having English names helped them express their opinions more easily and freely in English; one-third felt having English names did not affect them in any way in terms of their active participation in class; and another third felt having English names did not necessarily make it easy for them to express their opinions in English. When it came to concerns about grammatical accuracy in responding to questions in English, one-fifth of the students said having English names made them care less about grammar, but two-fifths of the students commented that even with English names they were still concerned about grammatical correctness when they responded to questions or expressed their opinions in English.

Although the students reported that their English performance was not affected that much by having English names, three-fifths of the students said that they felt having English names helped them understand other cultures more. Substantiation of how much and in what way an English name did in fact help increase students' understanding of other cultures is beyond the scope of this paper; however, as mentioned earlier, the creation of a community with an additional identity could have influenced students' attitude towards a foreign culture possibly making them more aware of it. Enjoyment might also have made students more open to learning about other cultures. Students mentioned that they enjoyed having another name besides their own name in an English as a foreign language (EFL) learning environment.

As shown, using English names in classes gave the students an opportunity to be exposed to a virtual English speaking community, which is not so often observed outside of classrooms in Japan since English is not commonly spoken in everyday life situations and does not exist as a *lingua franca*. In addition, using English names also gave students a chance to think about a possible working environment where English names may be commonly used besides their own names as some Japanese professionals from different fields of work have experienced in the international community and the global business arena.

The purpose of this paper is not to advocate the use of English names in every English class. However, our study shows that introducing English names in university EFL classes did help students break out of the L1 mode; increased their WTC, thus use of English in class; and as reported by the student body in this study, facilitated their understanding of other cultures. Therefore, using English names besides their choice of other names in university English classes was useful as one of the means to help students cross linguistic boundaries, immerse themselves in English speaking environments, and learn about other cultures and multiple English-speaking communities.

Notes

- 1) *inner circle*: the term coined by Kachru (1985) to describe countries where English is the dominant language, e.g. the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
- 2) *lingua franca*: a common language used by speakers of different languages to communicate with each other
- 3) *the "willing suspension of disbelief"*: a term originally coined by the poet and philosopher S. T. Coleridge that has since often been used to describe the experience of watching drama. Though the audience knows they are in a theater and therefore what they are seeing is not real, for the duration of the piece they make themselves believe that it is real so as to let the drama have its intended effect.
- 4) *Facebook*: One of the most popular internet social networking sites in the UK and the United States. Once a person has become a member, they can find their friends and exchange messages, photos etc.
- 5) *speech acts*: a term used in linguistics to describe the intended meaning of people's utterances

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Appendix: 英語の名前に関するアンケート

男 女

1. 英語の名前で呼ばれたのは初めてですか。 はい いいえ
いいえの場合、以前どこで英語の名前を使いましたか。
2. どのようにして英語の名前を選びましたか。
a. 好きな有名人の名前
b. 友人の名前
c. 音がいいから (好きな名前)
d. 自分の名前に近い
e. 先生がつけた
f. その他 ()

英語の名前をクラスで使用することに関して

3. Q1 英語の名前で呼ばれて恥ずかしかったですか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
4. Q2 英語の名前が気に入りましたか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
5. Q3 自分が別人のように思えましたか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
6. Q4 英語の名前で呼ばれて不自然に思いましたか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
7. Q5 英語の名前を使うと、発言しやすかったですか (積極的に発言できましたか)。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
8. Q6 英語の名前を使うと、文法 (の間違い) を気にせず質問に答えやすかったですか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
9. Q7 学んでいる言語の名前で呼ばれる (英語の名前を使う) と異文化を理解するのに役立ちましたか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない
10. Q8 クラスでは自分の本来の (日本語の) 名前で呼ばりたいですか。
1. そう思う 2. 少しそう思う 3. どちらでもない 4. あまりそう思わない 5. そう思わない

その他、英語の名前に関する感想・コメント：