


Article

“Esa no soy Yo”: Self-Image and Name Change from the Perspective of Female Immigrants

María Cecilia Ainciburu ^{1,*}  and Irene Buttazzi ²¹ Department of Applied Languages, Nebrija University 1, 28015 Madrid, Spain² Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Università di Bologna, 40124 Bologna, Italy; irene.buttazzi2@unibo.it

* Correspondence: ainciburu@unisi.it

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Abstract: The given name by which we call ourselves in our native language contains a series of phonetic, social, and cultural elements that determine its value in any given context. When people migrate, these elements change and, consequently, so does the individual's self-perception. This research consists of an analysis of focused interviews with Peruvian and Chinese migrants carried out in Spanish and Italian. The most common phenomenon identified in the interviews was the use of names that do not correspond to birth names, either because they are not pronounced correctly or because—as in the case of most of the Chinese informants—the name was changed to adapt to Western standards. We attempt to categorize the nonconformity of the version of the name used by the host population and the emotional reactions that this provokes. The results demonstrate that there is a correlation between the desire to integrate into the host country and positive reactions to the image given to them by the foreign name.

Keywords: first name; self-image; immigrants; emotional reactions; second language

1. Introduction

This research aims to investigate the phenomenon of self-perception in the appellative use of given names that do not correspond to birth names or the names people are accustomed to being called in familiar environments. This phenomenon usually occurs when people emigrate and their own names are difficult to pronounce for the host population.

A number of legal studies have been undertaken on the impact of emigration on people's names. The issue emerged when bureaucratic processes relating to the issue of certificates of permanent residence in a country led to the officers in charge misunderstanding migrants' name and misspelling them (for example in the US; (Fermaglich 2015)). Ways of registering foreign visitors and migrants are constantly being updated (passport, scanner, fingerprint reader, etc.), with the result that it is now easier to register names correctly. Consequently, the legal changing of a name has largely been reduced to cases in which national names are imposed on individuals, as in Israel and other Middle Eastern countries. In recent decades, name change has also taken on other connotations (Portolés 1998) and research has focused on ways in which individuals can voluntarily change their own names to make it easy for them to be pronounced in the language of the new community they are entering, especially in view of the need for integration and adaptation to a work environment in the host community (Arai and Skogman-Thoursie 2009).

The study is based on 71 interviews conducted with a view on analyzing the experiences of two groups—a group of immigrant women from Peru and China who currently reside in Tuscany (Italy) and a group of Chinese immigrants in Madrid. Neither of the two host countries encourages new residents to change their names. However, the difficulty encountered in pronouncing their first names

correctly could have an impact on the self-image of the immigrants—specifically, a psychological impact resulting in a feeling of alienation—which should be prioritized above the urgency to integrate into society (Aksholakova 2014; Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016; Schlote 2018).

The primary research tries to understand: (1) what relationship the immigrant has with her original given name, (2) whether she recognizes herself in the name currently used in the host country, and (3) whether the degree of positive or negative identification with her “new” name is related to the willingness to reside in the host country in the long term.

2. Name and Identity

There are various aspects of the subject of the given name that deserve attention: forename, calligraphy/orthography and alphabet, early literacy development, meanings and origins, the personal history of each name with a view on achieving individual uniqueness, multilingualism, and exchange. There is no doubt that the given name is a crucial part of identity: it evokes the expectations, omens, and future hopes of the individual’s parents who gave it. In that sense, it represents inheritance, family geography, and identity with a particular social group. The name is the metonymical “face” of the person and, as such, it defines the person in her or his uniqueness and singularity. Moreover, a person’s name is a benchmark in subjective development.

Identity (as a logical principle and complementary to noncontradiction) is a notion that has concerned Western philosophy for centuries. First, Descartes theorized about the so-called duality of mind and body (Descartes[1637] 2004, p. CXII), which he believed to be a contrast between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Locke later criticized this duality and provided one of the first definitions of identity (Locke [1690] 1956, p. 29), namely the search for “what substance individuality is, on what is founded and maintained in time, through experiences, even distant and overcome in which we may not recognize ourselves”. This paper further examines whether memory and recognition are the two factors that constitute the conceptualization of identity. For Locke, memory is the power of the mind “to revive perceptions, which it has once had, with this additional perception annexed to them, that it has had them before” (Locke [1690] 1956, p. 98)—with no memory, there is no identity. Locke’s concept of identity has been criticized; indeed, it is mental and subjective and does not necessarily encompass biological or individual corporeality. This limitation was overcome in the twentieth century when philosophers such as Hume theorized that humanity’s understanding of the world is exclusively mediated by our senses and that there is no such thing as an inherent identity. Moreover, the successive integration of new psychological models that postulate the existence of multiple personalities reduces the scope of the concept of identity. Thus, William James concludes that a person’s self is “the sum of all that he can call ‘his’, not only his body and his psychic faculties, but also his clothes and his house and also his wife, his friends, his children and his money in the bank” (James[1890] 1994, p. 67). On this basis, the elements that constitute the “self” may be presented as set out in Figure 1 below.

According to this model, the name by which a person is identified is for social use and may also be tangentially associated with all the enunciated forms of the self (body, clothes, family, house, peer recognition, preferences, desires, and memory). Many twentieth century psychologists were inspired by James’s theory, in particular by his construction of the social self, which is why he is considered as the pioneer of the more modern conceptions of the self (for a review of the works of this author, see (Fierro 2013)).

In linguistic use, the notion of the self is usually counterposed with the form “My name is . . . ” In normal interactions between natives, this may include the use of a nickname (i.e., “My name is Jerome, but everyone calls me Pepo.”) or some kind of variant of the name (for example, using the second name instead of the first or dropping part of a compounded name, as in the case of “Pilar” instead of “María del Pilar”). Social identity is the part of the self that is built and defined by/from daily interactions with members of a social community. Social identity can influence intergroup behavior, and therefore, a nickname can reflect intergroup relationships that are established within a specific reality.

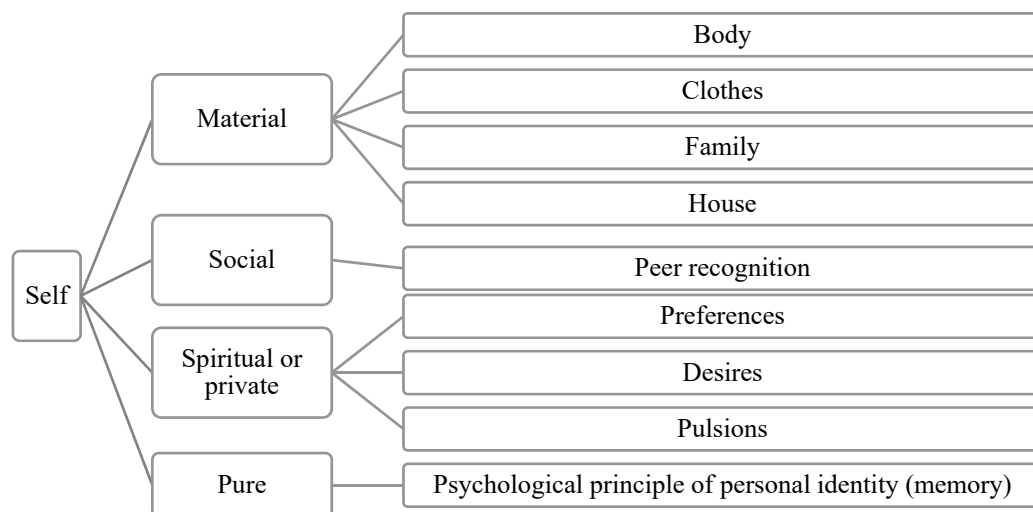


Figure 1. Structure of the self, according to William James (personal elaboration).

In twentieth century literature, the self is complemented by the perception of self. Behavioral psychology sustains the duality between a “phenomenal self”, a self of which the subject is aware, and an “inferred self”, perceived by the external observer. In this model, behavioral aspects focus on the inferred self, since the phenomenal self (the idea one has of oneself) can be altered by the unconscious. In this structure, the given name is part of the sphere of behavior because it is connected to other people’s speculation of our own identity: giving, using, or changing a name is a behavioral act.

The cognitive approach does not emphasize being in itself but rather the ideas through which we perceive ourselves, namely what we would like to be or should be when dealing with our image of ourselves (convictions, what we are capable of doing, ideas about who we are, or beliefs that dominate our decisions). Neisser (1988) defines cognition and the processes of self-perception in an ecological perspective in which the knowledge that a person has of himself or herself derives from the information he or she possesses or is able to process. He identifies a structure of five subsystems that articulate with each other, as presented in Figure 2.

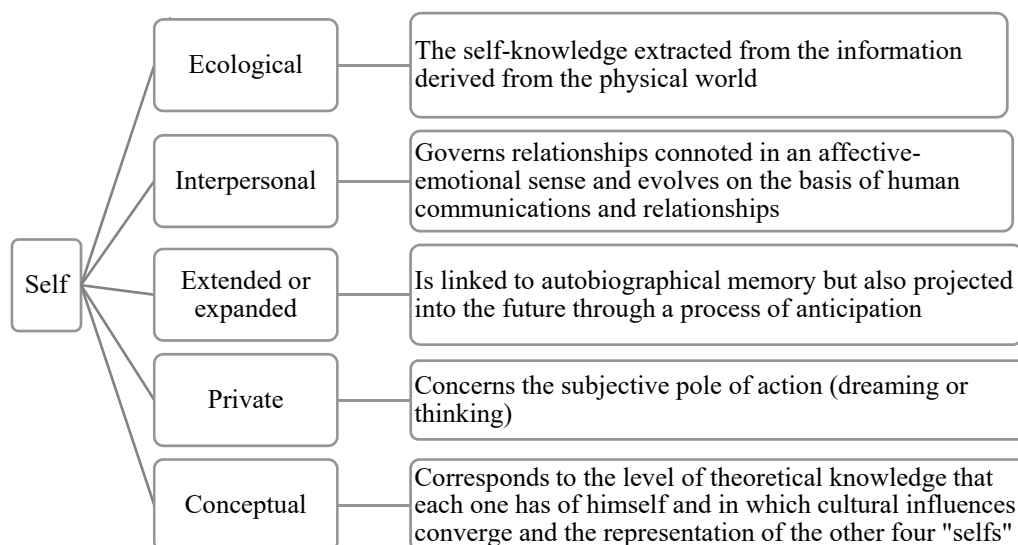


Figure 2. Structure of the self, according to Ulric Neisser (personal elaboration).

In terms of James’s theory, the use of the given name can be placed among the information coming from the interpersonal self. The finding of this cognitive model lies in linking the interpersonal

self-subsystem to the affective and emotional sphere. Thanks to these advances in the field of psychology, cognitive linguists are concerned with the concept of the self, which entails the use of personal pronouns, the grammatical indication of belonging, and the more general linguistic process of nomination.

The concepts of “current self” (online self) or “crystallized self” (offline self) that characterize Neisser’s (Neisser 1988) explanation of the expanded self coexist in the theory of “possible selves” (Markus and Nurius 1986). According to this theory, the “ideal self” (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009) channels the motivation of an individual and can, therefore, be easily connected to learning processes and, more specifically, to linguistic acquisition.

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) proposed the L2 motivational self-system that leads to differentiation between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. On the one hand, he developed the idea that the ideal L2 self is a vision of oneself in the future and promotes the personal approach of the student to study. In this way, it focuses on a more distant perspective. On the other hand, the ought-to L2 self represents the vision of one having the attributes that should be possessed, which would influence the avoidance of negative results. Thus, Dörnyei provides a tripartite model of motivation that relates to inner desires, the social pressures exerted by significant people in the environment, and the experience of learning process.

Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 954) argue that possible selves represent ideas of what individuals might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. They provide a conceptual connection between cognition and motivation and represent imaginary future states of the self, including the expected and feared results. Consequently, possible selves can function as a strong incentive in behavior regulation (Oyserman and Markus 1990, p. 113).

Thus far, we have tried to approach the concept of self by appealing to the two dimensions that characterize human beings and the attribution of meaning: an interior one, understood as self-recognition (identity), and an exterior one—our alterity—that involves either the environment in which we live and interact with a form of social self (James[1890] 1994) or the interpersonal self (Neisser 1988). It has been established that the latter may be considered the core of human emotions, since interaction with the outside world constantly modifies the psychological state of the subject. Based on this assumption, this paper investigates the dynamics between the expressions “my name is” and “they call me” (interpersonal self) and the emotional reactions these expressions elicit, with a view of being able to link them with the participants’ degree of social integration in the host population.

3. Personal Identity and Degree of Integration

Historically, the change of personal names or surnames arose either against or in accordance with the immigrant’s will. In the first case, the name is changed because of the host community’s lack of knowledge of the emigrant’s native language and, in the second, for the convenience of those who prefer to adapt quickly to the context of arrival (Fermaglich 2015). Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), for example, demonstrate that there is a negative correlation in the US labor market between African last names and the way that employers regard such job applicants, whereas this is not the case when the applicant has a typically US surname, such as Johnson or Smith. A similar situation occurs when names denote that an individual belongs to an ethnic minority; it has been demonstrated that such individuals will receive a more severe penalty from judges than others for the same offense (Bielen et al. 2018). It is therefore understandable why immigrants choose to change their names when allowed to do so by their host country. Changing one’s name can represent a form of integration. In some cases, when the new name is assigned regardless of the person’s wishes, the change consists of the original name’s graphic or phonetic adaptation to the language of the host country. When the change occurs in accordance with the person’s wishes, there are convenience factors linked to greater work possibilities, better access to bank loans, or avoidance of being socially identified as belonging to a minority group (Handri 2008; Arai and Skogman-Thoursie 2009). In this case, “intention to integrate” does not imply a positive or negative bias of the decision in moral or anthropological terms.

Studies on imposed change of name for immigrants tend to concentrate on historically massive immigrations, such as the migratory flow of Jews and Italians to the US in the early 1900s or the flow of Italians to South America in the same years (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Handri 2008). Today, these types of studies have fallen into disuse because there are more efficient techniques of identification and the correct information is retrieved electronically.

Arai and Skogman-Thoursie (2009) studied the effects of the voluntary change of surnames of immigrants in Finland for over a decade (1991–2000). The study focuses on adults between the ages of 20 and 60 who renounced the use of a surname marked by origin in favor of a typical Finnish or neutral surname; for example, changing the surname “Mohammed” or a Slavic surname ending in “-vic” to one ending in “-en” or “-nen”, which is the local patronymic, or to one from a list of Finnish “sonanan” surnames provided by the government (www.prv.se). This leads to a progressive endogeneity of names in a given community (Arai and Skogman-Thoursie 2009, p. 40). In Italy, which is the current country of residence of most of the immigrants studied for this research, there is no legislation that encourages immigrants to change their original names. Indeed, the only way that residents can have their given name or surname changed is through the intervention of a judge, who often decides such cases for reasons of decorum or for judicial protection. The situation is similar in Spain, although different when it comes to changing a first name. It is relatively easy in Spain for residents to change their first name—especially when the person is known by a name other than that which appears on the birth certificate. In Italy, by contrast, first names are seldom changed. These countries have similar laws relating to the changing of a given name, and receive few annual applications from foreigners, primarily due to very strict policies that originate from nationalist linguistic patterns instituted under Francoism and fascism (for details, see (Walkowiak 2016, p. 235)).

In specific terms, this research analyzes the names by which the people of the host country call the participants, namely Peruvian and Chinese immigrants. We are interested in the emotional reactions that are provoked by this change or mispronunciation of the individual’s birth name. The change of name is a radical response to this situation. However, what happens when it is not possible or the person has no desire to change his or her name?

Unfortunately, the scant research available relates to countries in which it is possible (or even incentivized) to change one’s name voluntarily. Nevertheless, two central factors are covered in this research, namely how the immigrants feel in relation to a wrong pronunciation of their names and their degree of social integration in the host country. It is useful to analyze the results of the existing research with a view to evaluate how they differ from those obtained in this study.

In questionnaires completed by 34 bilingual Estonians residing in Canada, 78% of the participants stated that they have to repeat their names more than three times before they are pronounced correctly (Lehiste 1975, p. 32), while the remaining 22% do not do so—not because they do not feel annoyed but because they consider it a waste of time. When an attempt was made to contrast the use of the two languages, English as the rational one and Estonian as the personal, intimate, and affective one, only one third of the group acknowledged that the sound of their mother tongue elicited emotions. The author concludes that:

A person’s identity is inextricably linked to their name. A name distortion is a violation of self-image. In that order, in order to preserve his identity, the person must keep his name—protect it against mispronunciation—, keep it inviolable. An individual can maintain his identity as long as those around him respect the integrity of his environment. (Lehiste 1975, p. 35)

Although somewhat dated, the research is still relevant because it assigns percentages to the spectrum of different reactions of bilinguals to hearing their name. These data are not easily retrievable in this type of research, probably because reactions tend to be categorized only as positive or negative, simplifying the analytical detail or even focusing exclusively on negative attitudes, as dealt with later in the article.

We agree with the authors cited above that the attention to a person's given name is a very important sign of respect and of the disposition to coexist in a foreign country. Aksholakova (2014) states that "if a name is mispronounced or misspelled, this can be considered as a distortion of identity in the sense of a man's personality" (Aksholakova 2014, p. 465). We are not sure to what extent having one's name mispronounced harms the individual's personality, but it certainly may cause some kind of humiliation. Nevertheless, the results indicate that the person's identity and integration process into the host society will be affected. Other recent studies describe this phenomenon as "microaggression", as in the context of a classroom when the teacher does not pronounce the foreign name correctly (Kohli and Solórzano 2012). When asked for their opinions, immigrants often describe their struggle between the desire to belong to a society that pressures them to assimilate and the desire to remain faithful to their own identities and to their linguistic and cultural origins. "Immigrants often express this in opposite terms: they feel that they do not belong [to the community] when their names are mispronounced, misspelled, avoided, forgotten or ridiculed" (Pennesi 2016, p. 47). de Pina-Cabral (2015, p. 183) explains that "people whose names somehow do not conform to the norm, feel significantly incomplete or absent, are likely not to feel 'normal' people, even to experience a 'stigma'" (Pennesi 2016, p. 48).

There have also been studies on the mispronunciation of names in relation to languages that are spoken in countries that were part of the former USSR. Thus, although she focuses predominantly on surnames, Aksholakova (2014) indicates that her students of Russian origin prefer the pronunciation of the first name "Laura" with the accent in the "u", while the Cossacks prefer the accent on the final "a". The results demonstrate that a wrong pronunciation elicits irritation in the students.

In cases of more recent immigration, Daniel Stojanovic-Zezovic's study on Swedish immigrants demonstrate that first names represent an important aspect of the experience of one's own identity (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016). Since names are linked to attitudes and identity, they reflect what society represents to the individuals that belong to it. Moreover, Zezovic's study also highlights, as noted above, that having a non-Swedish name can be both positive and negative: on the one hand, it may be an important sign of ethnic and cultural conservation; on the other, it can also be a form a stigma, accentuated by the fact that mispronunciation causes individuals to feel different. The analysis considers the results of 9 interviews and 11 autobiographical accounts in Swedish of young immigrants (primarily between the age of 20 and 30) from the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Bosnia), Turkey (Kurdistan), Vietnam, Greece, Poland, and Colombia. The results indicate that the majority of informants feel stigmatized by the way their name sounds in Swedish and have been able to request a name change. This step is considered very significant among immigrants and raises concerns about the risk of losing both their personal identity and their ethnic group identity. Their first names, according to their statements, are deeply rooted in their life histories and even their personal qualities. Colombian informant Camilo explains that he likes his name because it is the name of the greatest revolutionary in Cuba (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016, p. 28). He also explains that the name was very popular in his country in the 1970s, when the singer Camilo Sesto was famous (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016, p. 42). He describes what happens when Swedes try to pronounce his name:

[They] fail completely. It's supposed to be pronounced just like Camilla, which is a Swedish name, but nobody understands it, nobody. [...] It's been 10 years now, so I'm used to it, it makes me laugh sometimes because sometimes they're very close, sometimes it's completely fucked up what they say. Sometimes it doesn't make sense, but it's a problem for people who are really close to me. My closest friends get madder than me when people mispronounce my name, because everyone does it. But my identity has played an important role too, it has forced me to be flexible about it, because if I was going to fight all the time about how to pronounce my name, I would have to do it 10 times a day, it's not worth it. (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016, p. 42)

We decided to focus on the case of Camilo because he is South American and because, after 10 years, he has not decided to change his name. Moreover, he demonstrates that mispronunciation is not

always a form of microaggression, as mentioned above, and it is not always perceived as a stigma or as something painful. Thus, Camilo's interview demonstrates that he associates mispronunciation with the ignorance of his fellow citizens, and it helps him to frame people. Mispronunciation thus becomes a metaphor for how Camillo feels in Sweden: "I'm here, but I'm not completely here." (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016, p. 45).

A recent doctoral thesis in Canada, based on 19 interviews, categorizes the social phenomenon of the identification and naming of a foreign person according to thematic and ritual axes that arise spontaneously in conversations: the reaction of the immigrant and of others and aspects related to the given name itself. These criteria are further broken down into subthemes, as presented in Figure 3 below (Schlote 2018).

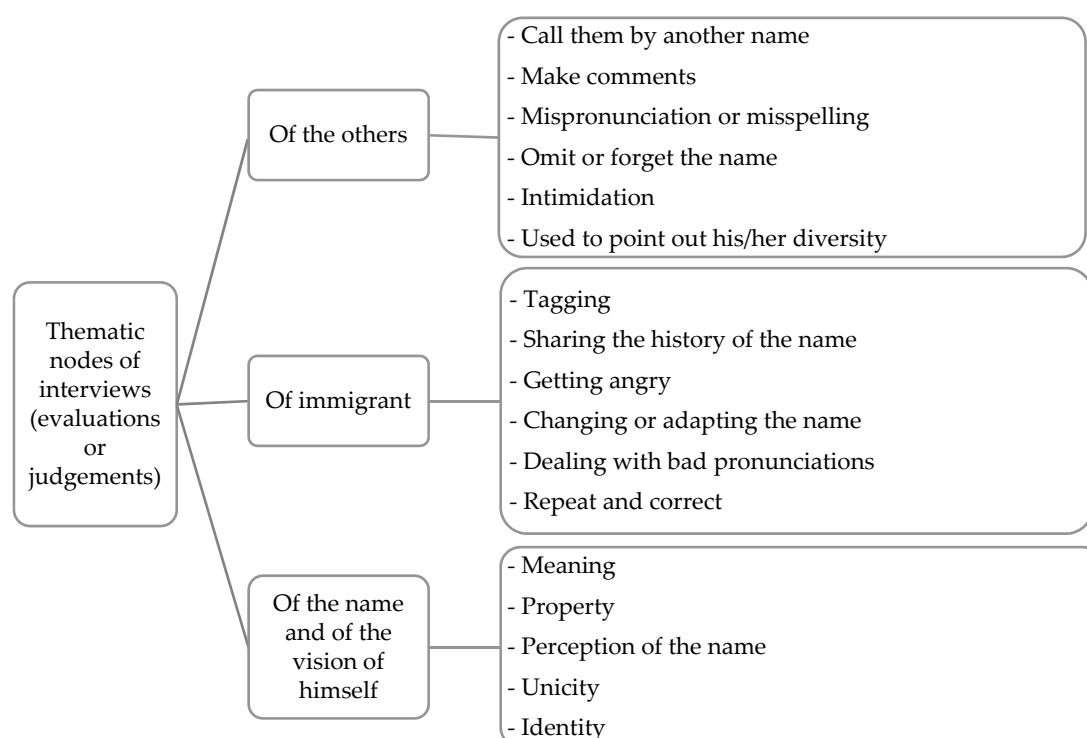


Figure 3. Thematic nodes associated with given names in immigrant interviews (based on Schlote (2018, p. 28)).

The names of the 19 interviewees are primarily marked by their origin (Godswill, Henok, Raneem, or Shiruq), but it is striking that none of the thematic options related to "the others" include positive attitudes, such as pronouncing the name correctly, making an effort to do so, or asking to be taught the right way. It is possible that the dynamics of the interview will lead to certain types of responses. The results of the research are probably biased because participants were selected among young immigrants who have decided not to change their name. The only exception that the research considers is the fact that some immigrants have chosen to alter the pronunciation of their given name. This strategy of best pronunciation as opposed to correct pronunciation demonstrates the resigned attitude of the participants, an attitude similar to Camilo's statements that were presented and transcribed earlier. Four of the 19 cases studied by Schlote (21%) are examined below.

Examining isolated items that have been used to exemplify certain subtopics (see Figure 3), the attitude towards the social group of the host country is not always negative. Indeed, when people migrate, their name can sometimes be a mark of their uniqueness. Maha, for example, says that her name is quite common in Dubai while, in Canada, "it is special" and that this is positive because in "most classes, like at home, I am the only Maha" (Schlote 2018, p. 81). We understand that the fact

of being unique is not the property of the participants but of the name. This is the same participant who has adapted the pronunciation of the vowel of her name to the “best possible pronunciation”. Although the above thesis does not contain the complete transcriptions, this example demonstrates an attitude of greater integration than in the case of other participants. It seems impossible that the “of the others” category in Figure 3 does not even contain one positive evaluation. Interestingly, in Canada, there is a paid service for teachers to learn to pronounce the name of their students (NameCoach, \$500 per year). It is therefore anomalous that there are no positive attitudes when people are willing to pay for such services.

A special phenomenon relating to the changing of names exists—both from a social and linguistic point of view—in the case of Chinese immigration. There is a consistent bibliography about the difficulties experienced by Chinese communities to integrate, associated with a distinctive phenomenon in terms of identity that we call the use of the “fictitious name” that Chinese immigrants choose when they move to Western countries. Fictitious names do not appear in documentation, so there is no legally processed change of names. This makes them similar to nicknames or aliases, which means that they are unstable in terms of lexical placement (“Anita Ling Pao”, “Ling Anita Pao”, “Anita L. Pao”, etc.). This is how one is known, but it is usually an individual choice rather than a social one (such as in the case of “Pepa”, “Tiger”, or “Skinny”). However, this is not necessarily an effect of immigration because it can be found in former Western colonies. For example, in Hong Kong, the chosen name was introduced in official documents using both modes of writing (Li 1997, p. 505).

Liao (2011) studied the experiences and perceptions of Chinese immigrants in the US in order to understand why they decided to change their birth names. Liao interviewed 10 Chinese immigrants to understand the meaning of their names in Chinese culture and the positive or negative perception that Chinese people have of Chinese and Western names. The first part of the study focuses on the family’s attitude towards the imposition of names because they are strongly symbolic and add something to a person’s characterization. In this sense, changing the given name can be seen as a lack of respect towards the family because of the negative perception of its transliteration in Latin characters. Thus, “some Chinese immigrants refuse to commit themselves and adapt to these changes, adopting a Western name to use in the English context, while keeping their Chinese names to use within the Chinese circle, seems to be a primordial option for them” (Liao 2011, p. 65). The results demonstrate that 8 out of the 10 participants feel misidentified and frustrated when they hear their name mispronounced, while the remaining two have no experience of mispronunciation with their names since they have almost exclusively used their Western names from a young age (Liao 2011, p. 67).

The positive and negative effects of perceptions of the Western and Chinese names are presented in Figure 4 below.

Recent studies on Chinese immigrants are focused primarily on the double identity of the second generation (American Chinese). The phenomenon takes a very different turn in second-generation immigrants because they have a higher degree of integration in the educational system. It is the parents or teacher of these individuals who decide what name they should go by, so the effects of their adoption or self-representation change substantially compared to the first generation. Currently, the phenomenon has extended to exchange students (Kim 2017) and to immigrants from Korea or Taiwan, who also seem to adopt the practice of taking on a local name (Chen 2016; Kim 2017).

In their analysis of immigrants’ given names, the studies reviewed thus far do not consider the linguistic differences between names, nicknames, or affective forms of family use (Portolés 1998). Moreover, these studies do not relate to Italy or Spain, the countries this research is concerned with. Therefore, this paper attempts to apply the above linguistic categories with a view on deepening the analysis of the identification of immigrants in the host society.

The present investigation involves groups of Peruvian and Chinese immigrants in Italy and Spain where, as has already been seen, it is not possible to change one’s name legally, except in serious cases in which only a judge can decide. The official data for Italy (ISTAT 2017) indicates that preferences in relation to assigning traditional names of the culture of origin depends loosely on nationality. Unlike

Arab parents who prefer to assign names belonging to their own tradition, Romanians, Albanian, and Chinese parents often choose both names frequently used in Italy and names in use in their own country. For example, the names most frequently given to children born in 2016 were Kevin, Matteo, Kimi, William, and Alessio. The most frequent girls' names were Sofia, Emily, Gioia, Angela, and Jessica.

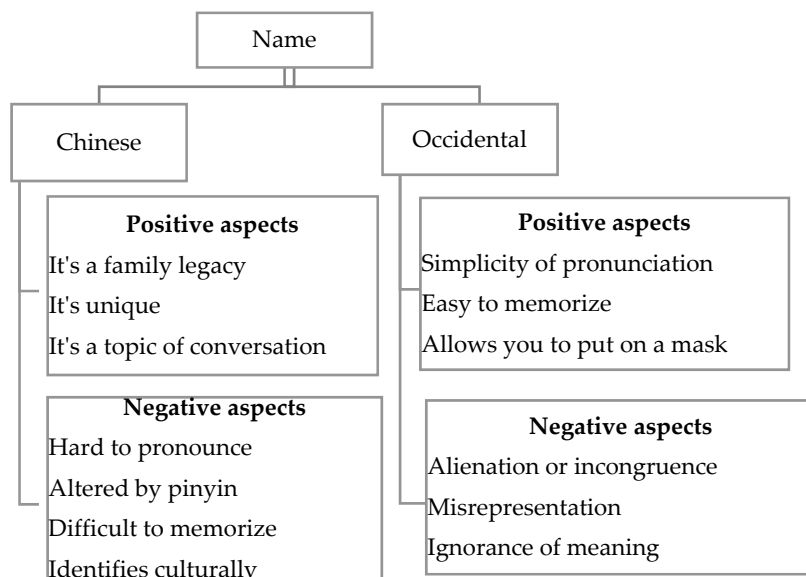


Figure 4. Reactions to the use of Western and Chinese names (from Liao 2011, pp. 92–103).

In Spain, the National Statistics Institute (INE) publishes an annual list of the most frequent names and surnames according to the local geolectal preferences of parents residing in Spain (INE 2017). It observes the frequency of names based on the province of residence, but it does not provide information on whether they are the preferences of autochthonous Spanish families or of immigrant families.

4. The Question of One's Own Name in Personal Interviews with First-Generation Immigrants

The aim of this research is to answer to the following questions:

1. Is there an explicit relationship between the immigrants' proper name and their community of origin (meaning, personal satisfaction, and family uses)?
2. Does that name correspond to the name currently used in the new host community? If not, what linguistic forms are proposed in substitution?
3. Does the degree of self-identification of immigrants with the name *de facto* assigned to them by the host community relate to their willingness to reside in the host country in the future?

The answers to these questions come from personal interviews conducted between 2017 and 2018 with two groups of women immigrants from Peru and China residing in Tuscany (Italy) and a group of Chinese women immigrants in Madrid. In Italy, the interviewees were 45 full-time Peruvian home care workers (*colf* or *badanti*, in Italian) and 14 Chinese saleswomen; in Madrid, the interviewees were 12 women who were working in Chinese shops. All subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and the protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of INMIGRA-2 [H2015/HUM-3404; Comunidad de Madrid and European Social Found]. The selection of informants does not respond to criteria of demographic and origin representativeness. According to the Tuscany regional administration, on 1 January 2018, there were 408,463 foreign residents, 191,659 of whom were men and 216,804 of whom were women. Figure 5 presents the composition of immigrants according to their origin.

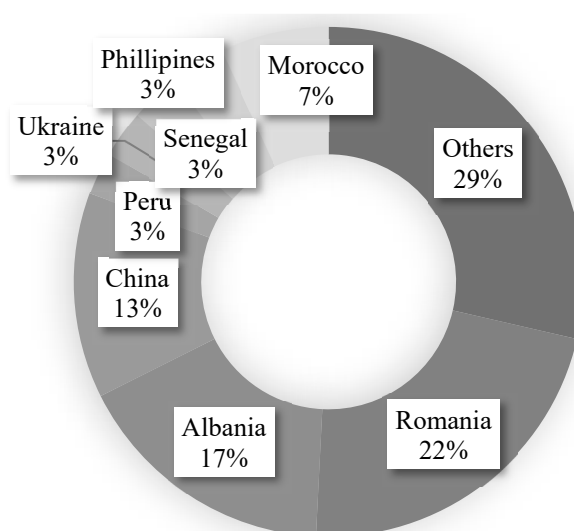


Figure 5. Origin of immigrants in Tuscany (data are taken from “Progetto PAeSI, Pubblica Amministrazione e Stranieri Immigrati”).

Therefore, the results obtained by our sample do not necessarily extend to the entire population of immigrants of the region. The same is true for the Madrid sample.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Italian or in Spanish with a view to study the influence of noninstitutional learning of these two languages. Each interview lasted between one hour and 90 min (an average of 11,614 words per sample). The present research analyzes only those fragments that answer the research questions set out above (an average of 1678 words per participant).

The first part of the interviews is divided into three sections corresponding to the two nuclei used by Schlote (2018) and an additional question: my name and myself; my name and the others; and a third question on the perspective of residence, which attempts to collect data on the future self of the informants.

- a. What does your name mean? Do you like it? Do you know why they gave it to you? Is that what they call you at home or in your family?
- b. What should I call you? What do they call you in Italy (or Spain)? Why do they call you that? Tell me about it. How does it sound to you when Italians (or Spaniards) pronounce your name? Which name do you prefer and why?
- c. Where will you live in 10 years? In Italy (or Spain)? Will you ever move back to Peru (or China)?

All the interviewees answered the above three questions. The answers to the first two questions were more extensive and were used to extract the examples analyzed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. Subsequently, in order to illustrate the relevance of the phenomenon, the responses that demonstrate emotional attitude towards the pronunciation of the name by the host population were placed on a scale of 4 positions: positive, predominantly positive, more negative than positive, and negative. The part of the third question relating to future residence in the host country received very brief answers. Therefore, since this implied a dichotomous answer, it served indirectly to assess immigrants' degree of future family integration. A statistical test was used to determine whether there were significant differences between the intention to remain in the host country and the emotional attitude towards the pronunciation of the name by the host population.

Peruvian immigrants conducted interviews half in Spanish and half in Italian, randomly alternating between one language and the other. Chinese immigrants were interviewed in Spanish or Italian according to the country in which they resided. The interviews were transcribed in the CLAN system to be integrated later in the Nebrija-INMIGRA corpus (<https://slabank.talkbank.org/access/Spanish/>

[Nebrija-INMIGRA.html](#)). To facilitate their reading, the fragments selected for the exemplification do not contain marks.

In order to avoid linguistic distortions caused by recent immigration, only informants who had been in the host country for longer than seven years were interviewed (Table 1):

Table 1. Years of residence in the (host) country of the interviewed participants.

	7–9 Years of Residence	10–14 Years of Residence	≥15 Years of Residence
Peru (Italy)	4	21	20
China (Italy)	5	8	1
China (Spain)	5	7	0

All the women (aged between 27 and 57) have children in their country of residence or in their countries of origin. Not all of them have legal residence in the host countries, and all have consented to the interviews being transcribed for the study of their linguistic output in exchange for anonymity. They were informed that, since the research involves first names, the surname and public identification information (identity document, residence, etc.) would remain anonymous. Each example contains an identification code that includes the initial sample number, the informant's acronym (P for Peru and Ch for China), and the time location of the fragment in the recording. The place of residence of Chinese immigrants is not indicated in the codes of the examples because the language in which they express themselves (Italian or Spanish) provides guidelines on which subgroups they belong to. The quantification of the analyzed phenomena always takes account the country of residence into account.

4.1. *Myself and My Name*

The first result of the analysis clearly demonstrates that all the Chinese informants know the meaning of their names, while this is not so for 70% of the Peruvian group. Examples of responses are given below.

4. *Como nació el 25 de diciembre me pusieron Nacimiento. En Brasil es de hombre, pero yo me llamo Nacimiento, de mujer* (16P, 4'2").

"Since I was born on December 25, I was called Nacimiento. In Brazil it is a man's name, but my name is Nativity, a woman's name."

5. *Sono Cori perché in "kichwa" è "d'oro", ma i documenti sono Corina perché non lasciavano.* (28P, 3'11").

"I'm Cori because, in Quechua, it means 'golden', but in the documents, I'm Corina because they did not permit [the Quechua name]."

6. *Mi nombre es Bertilde y mi madre me contó que me lo puso mi papá y que ni en el almanaque estaba ¿cómo voy a saber [qué significa]? Mis abuelas se llamaban Berta y Matilde, pero eso no es significado ¿no?* (34P, 1'8").

"My name is Bertilde, and my mother told me that my father gave it to me and that it wasn't even in the almanac ... How would I know [what it means]? My grandmothers' names were Berta and Matilde, but they don't have a meaning do they?"

7. *Ying Lián. Así [escribe 英 蓮] "flor de loto". Fácil. Ying flor, Lián, loto* (3Ch, 12'2").

"Ying Lián. Like this, [writes 英 蓮] 'lotus flower'. Easy. Ying [is] flower; Lián, [is] lotus."

8. *Jin Yin Hua è fiore. Molto bello. Non italiano, di fiori Bach 'honeysuckle'. Conosci? Tutte donne, fiori in Cina [ride]* (9Ch, 2'26").

“Jin Yin Hua is a flower. [A] very nice [one]. Not Italian, of Bach flowers ‘honeysuckle’. Do you know? All women [are] flowers in China [laughs].”

In Peru, most names are “borrowed” (from the Bible, from the almanac, or from the family) and usually come from foreign languages. Therefore, they tend not to have an obvious meaning for a Spanish speaker (e.g., from Latin, Lucia “who has light” or, from Hebrew, Daniela “God is my justice”). The situation is not homogeneous, and in some cases, there is an influence of the Quechua substrate that is transparent for the she-immigrant (example 2). On the other hand, it is not possible to ignore the meaning of the given name in Chinese because the name’s formants have meaning in Mandarin, as is the case of examples 4 and 5. The flower in example 5 is *Lonicera caprifolium*, which is used to manufacture the group of perfumes known as “Fiori di Bach”, which the interviewee mentions.

While all the interviewees in the Chinese group say that they like their name, in the Peruvian group, the answers vary and, sometimes, their tone of voice manifests a certain bewilderment, as if the question was not appropriate.

9. *Nunca me gustó. Cuando niña en la escuela la maestra me llamaba Juli y me encantaba. Judith es bien feo.* (33P, 5’16”).

“I never liked it. When I was a little girl at school, the teacher called me Juli and I loved it. Judith is really ugly.”

10. *Bueno, todas nos llamamos María y todas usamos el segundo nombre. Aquí Fiorella suena bien, pero en Perú, no. La gente no sabe de la doble ele* (22P, 4’43”).

“Well, we all call ourselves Mary and we all use the middle name. Fiorella sounds good here but not in Peru. People don’t know about the [pronunciation of the] double el.”

11. *Il nome mio regalo del padre. Molto importante. Molto buono. I nomi cinesi sono fortunati* (14Ch, 3’56”).

“My name is my father’s gift. Very important. Very good. Chinese names are lucky.”

In the Peruvian group, 45% said they did not like their name, 23% said they liked it, and 32% said they were indifferent or did not answer the question. There seems to be no correlation between whether the interviewee liked the name and whether she knows its meaning. There is a proportionately similar number of people who did not know the meaning of their name in each group. Whether an immigrant likes or dislikes her name may influence whether she wants to change it, including whether she prefers to use other forms of names such as nicknames (example 6). However, the data do not make it possible to arrive at any strong conclusions in this respect.

Nicknames (literally “additional names”) or hypocoristics (affectionate, family, or euphemistic names used to replace real names, for example, Susi for Susana and Josema for José María) affect the two groups almost equally, with a distribution of 26% in the Peruvian group and 22% in the Chinese group. Although this use is verified in other transcriptions—as in example 6, for example—an additional example is given for each group.

12. *Mi chiamo Adriana e in famiglia sono Adri per tutti. No, per li amici, no, solo en casa.* (26P, 9’55”).

“My name is Adriana, and I am Adri for everyone in the family. No, for friends, no, just at home.”

13. *Cuando pequeña mis padres llamaba Xiao Lin, ‘chuoming’ nombre pequeño (sobrenombre). Xiao es ‘pequeña’. Mi padre me llama ahora, aquí, en casa. Eso. En China un niño no tiene nombre cuando bebe. Los padres piensan y lo llaman ‘niño’ o ‘bonito’. Después miran bien, mucho, y ponen el nombre. No enseguida. 100 días para poner nombre. En la escuela no Xiao Lin, Lin-lin. Solo niña* (9Ch, 5’51”).

“When I was a little girl, my parents called me Xiao Lin—‘chuoming’, little name (nickname). Xiao is ‘little’. My father calls me that now, here, at home. That’s it. In China, a child doesn’t have a name when [it is] a baby. The parents think about [the name for a time] and [in the meantime] call him ‘boy’ or ‘pretty’. They take quite some time before actually giving the name, not right away. It takes 100 days to give a name. At school, they don’t use Xiao Lin, only Lin-lin—little girl.”

Nicknames in China change according to the age of the individual concerned, and they are also regarded as forms of respect (Liao 2011). That explains why, in example 10, they call the informant “Lin-lin” at school, which apparently is a name that is commonly used for children. We have not investigated this subject because it diverged from the objective of this research. However, this different conception in the modality of assigning different names for different ages deserves further investigation in the case of immigrants who grow up in perfectly bilingual contexts.

The data demonstrate that there is an explicit relationship between the proper name of the immigrants and their community of origin, a relationship that is different for the Peruvian and Chinese communities observed in this study. Peruvian immigrants often do not know the meaning of their name, do not like it, or regard it simply as an imposition: their identification with it is thus rather weak. By contrast, Chinese immigrants regard their name as a private gift, related to what the family was expecting for them, as it apparent from example 10. At no time do they feel free to say that their name is ugly or that they do not like it. This could explain their inclination to protect it from distorted use by the host community and to treasure it within the family and in private reality. The answers make it clear that the relationship between the original name given by the family and the immigrants’ identification with it has specific cultural traits.

While the results of the Chinese informants are consistent with the patterns indicated by Liao (2011, pp. 92–103), those of the Peruvian women—not analysed by the previous literature—can be partially associated with those obtained by Schlote (2018) for Middle Eastern and Asian (non-Chinese) populations. However, comparing Peruvian and Middle Eastern data could result in distortion because Middle Easterners are induced to evaluate their proper name as a unique identity in countries in which idioms are based on Latin.

4.2. My Name and the Others

The results demonstrate that most of the participants do not have the same perception of the difference between their name and what others call them. This discrepancy occurs in 56% of the group of Peruvian women and 100% of the group of Chinese women. There are manifestations of different entities within these figures: from the imposition of a diminutive to the acceptance of the naturalization of the foreign name, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Forms of disparity between the documented name of the immigrant and the one used in the host country.

Origin (Residence)	Participants with Name Discrepancy	Name Mispronounced	Hypocoristic or Nickname	Fictitious Name
Peru (Italy)	25	18	7	-
China (Italy)	14	-	2*	13
China (Spain)	12	-	-	12

A case of double disparity in the use of a fictitious name with truncation problems is indicated with an asterisk in Table 2 and is detailed in the transcription of example 16, which presents the qualitative analysis of the fragments of one of the two Chinese informants.

In both groups, the discrepancy between the name on the identification document and the name in social use exceeds the expected coincidence value. In the case of the two groups of immigrants from

China, one encounters the phenomenon of the Western name corresponding to the nationality of the groups rather than to that of the host country. The various types of dissimilarity require qualitative treatment and are discussed in more detail in the following three sections.

4.2.1. The Mispronounced Name

Having their names mispronounced is more common in the Peruvian than in the Chinese group. This is unexpected because we may assume that Italian has a more similar pronunciation to Spanish than Spanish to Chinese. Nevertheless, we base our conclusions on the responses that were received. This phenomenon is produced either by the complete Italianization of the name when the corresponding Italian exists (Lucía pronounced “Luchía”) or by the reading of names written in Spanish in an “Italian way” (“Iulia” for Julia and not “Giulia”, due to the custom of Italians to read the jota as “i”).

14. *Para mí es más fácil decir directamente ‘Luchía’ y se acabó. En Toscana si no terminan diciendo algo que me suena rarísimo (6P, 2’17”).*

“It’s easier for me to say ‘Luchía’ directly, and that’s it. Otherwise, in Tuscany, they end up saying something that sounds very strange to me.”

15. *La signora mi chiama Iulia e come non può dire bene ‘Julia’, io la lascio. Viviamo sola, noi due e non ci si confondono. Meglio che ‘chica’, come mi chiamavano nell’altra casa (8P, 4’8”).*

“The lady calls me “Iulia”, and as she cannot say ‘Julia’ properly, I leave her. We live alone, the two of us, and we do not get confused. It’s better than ‘chica’, as they called me in the other house.”

The habit of mispronouncing names is not detected in the group of Chinese informants because the imposition of a Western name implies *a priori* the impossibility of pronouncing the original name correctly.

16. *Mi chiamo Alice Xiao-Chen. Xiao-Chen è nome, XXXX cognome. Qua Alice, come ‘delle Meraviglie’ (ride) (7Ch, 1’22”).*

“My name is Alice Xiao-Chen. Xiao-Chen is [my Chinese] first name, XXXX surname. Here, Alice, as ‘in Wonderland’ (laughs)”.

It is obvious that the informant’s name is constantly mispronounced, even if she does not state this explicitly. Subsequently, since all informants answer the question about how they feel when their name is mispronounced, they must have tried to use it in the host country.

Mispronunciation is the factor that emerges most prominently in the interviews conducted by previous researchers (Aksholakova 2014; Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016; Schlote 2018), and one that causes the most negative reactions. Such reactions have been described as “feeling rejected”, “humiliated”, or “sad” (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016) or, on a social level, as the feeling of “being ridiculed”, “being rejected”, or “being stigmatized” (Pennesi 2016, p. 48). The fact that Chinese informants seldom comment negatively on name mispronunciations may attract attention but we believe this reveals only that mispronunciation by the host population is taken for granted, without assigning any negative evaluation to it.

4.2.2. Use of Hypocoristics or Nicknames

We have placed a range of different cases in the category of nicknames or hypocoristics—the only common element being that the subject does not decide on them, their being, rather, the results of social use (Portolés 1998). Consequently, the performative effect to which they allude and which they evoke in the real world as well as the associated idea they activate do not depend on the choice of the subject (Walkowiak 2016). Indeed, the subject has no control over the intention with which these

names are assigned. A shortened name may have a different second meaning in the mother tongue or in a foreign language, and awareness of the connotations can be crucial in interpreting or ignoring that meaning. We therefore consider examples in which the hypocoristic can be derogatory and unpleasant for the receiver:

a. the reduction of compound names to the first name

17. *Cuando le dieron mi pasaporte a mi señora para que el hijo escribiera los datos el hijo le dijo ‘es María de los Anjiles [aŋ ‘xi les]’, es más fácil María, María como la señora anterior’ (4P, 3’11”).*

“When they gave my passport to my lady employer so that her son could write down the information, the son told her ‘it’s María de los Anjiles [aŋ ‘xi les]’, [only] Mary is easier. Mary like the previous maid.”

b. hypocoristic forms, with shortening of given names

18. *Mi chiamo Lorena ma la mi signora mi chiama ‘Lori’*

- *E non ti chiamavano così in Perú? in Argentina si fa . . .*

- *No. A casa mi chiamano Lili come la pellicola e a scuola ‘Lorena’ (12P, 9’34”)*

My name is Lorena, but my lady [employer] calls me ‘Lori’.

- *And they didn’t call you that in Peru? In Argentina, they do it . . .*

- *No, they didn’t. At home, they call me Lili, as in the film, and, at school, ‘Lorena’.”*

c. truncations of given names that are considered too long, with elimination of syllables (initial, final, or both)

19. *Se dico ‘Bing-Qing’ dicono ‘Bin’ e mi chiama ‘Bin’ o ‘King’ come re, d’uomo. ‘Bing-Qing’ è come ‘giacchio bianco’ o ‘Biancaneve’, ma ‘Bin’ è come ‘spiaggia’. Bello, ma non tanto bello per me. (4ChIt, 6’)*

“If I say ‘Bing-Qing,’ they say ‘Bin’ and they call me ‘Bin’ or ‘King,’ as king of man. ‘Bing-Qing’ is like ‘white ice’ or ‘Snow White’, but ‘Bin’ is like ‘beach’. Nice, but not so nice for me.”

d. the imposition of unused nicknames in the country of origin.

20. *Y el niño me dijo ‘Tati’ y como Lidovina era complicado para ellos, todos me llaman ‘Tati’ (11P, 8’12”).*

“And the kid called me ‘Tati’, and since Lidovina was complicated for them, they all call me ‘Tati’.”

In the corpus as a whole, there are other examples of the use of nicknames that have not been considered because they were already used in the country of origin. This is the case of the following informant:

21. Adelina, who is called “Lina” both in Peru and in Italy.

Given the above analysis, it is likely that—from a pragmatic point of view—the category needs to be specified in more detail. Human beings create and attribute meaning from the model of representation they have of the world and from the information that constantly updates this model. Thought systems are interiorized representations of reality and of the outside world. Hypocoristics constitute a re-elaboration of given names used by native speakers, with predominantly affectionate intentions, as is probably the case in example 15. They refer to images and evoke memories that are

associated with the person in question. Nicknames, on the other hand, can be perceived as positive or negative (Portolés 1998), especially in the case of immigrants or foreigners because they can be based on stereotypes. In terms of the cause–effect relationship, it is possible to explain the reasoning by the connection that always exists between an action and the feelings that it elicits. Thus, “Tati” can be positive and affectionate or negative, since it limits the individual to the occupation for which she is hired (the interviewee considers it positive). Something similar can happen with the use of the double or simple name, which is generally quite neutral, but, in the case of example 14, is negative. Although the immigrant is not fluent in the host language, it is evident that she was irritated. Indeed, in Italy, the association between Chinese nationality and “beach” carries a negative connotation that automatically activates the stereotypical idea of a Chinese immigrant working illegally, doing massages on the beach, and consequently reduces social prestige. Moreover, this amplifies a stereotype of nationality that people are constantly fighting to eradicate. Cultural stereotypes come from the tendency that human beings must assume that reality is determined by their subjective experience, which creates their biased expectation.

This category was not assessed by the authors of the reviewed literature. The quantitative relevance of the phenomenon is contained in our analysis, and it was therefore not considered appropriate to examine it in greater detail for the purposes of this research.

4.2.3. Fictitious Names

Fictitious names or Western names (as defined in Section 3) are present for all the Chinese informants who have a Western name and use it on authorization forms as their first name (67%) or as a middle name (33%). In 56% of cases, fictitious names were chosen during childhood (for example, by the mother, father, or teacher), while the remaining 44% chose it for themselves. When required to justify this second “Western baptism”, all responses resemble example 16. Such a baptism prevents the effects of mispronunciation and, as already mentioned, is consistent with the results found by Li (1997) in Hong Kong and by Liao (2011) in the US.

The three previous sections indicate that the bad pronunciation emphasized by Lehiste (1975), Aksholakova (2014), or Schlote (2018) is not the only aspect that should be analyzed because of the relevance of the phenomena described in Section 4.2.2, which refer both to the name in its original version (in the population of origin) and to the one that the immigrant uses in the host country. As the following section argues, these aspects should be studied in relation to the reactions that they may provoke in the immigrant population.

5. Reaction to Different Ways of Being Called and Perspectives of Permanent Residence: Incidence of Language

The question concerning the emotions or reactions of immigrants was quite general: “How does it sound to you when the Italians (or Spaniards) say your name?” This question overlooks the fact that Chinese informants call themselves by their fictitious name. Considering the fragments that have been studied, the results demonstrate that a good pronunciation of the name causes positive reactions, while—as expected—a bad pronunciation is associated with negative emotions. These results coincide with those reported by Pennesi (2016) and Schlote (2018) for other immigrant groups from different countries (see Section 3).

Each reaction has been classified on a scale of four possibilities (positive, predominantly positive, more negative than positive, and negative). Table 3 below presents the different reactions linked to their forms of disparity and nomination pointed out in the previous section (P is Peruvian and CH is Chinese group). The two Chinese groups are not separated because both use Western names.

Table 3. Reaction to different ways of being called.

	Correct Name		Mispronounced Name		Hypocoristic or Nickname		Western Name	
	P	CH	P	CH	P	CH	P	CH
Positive	20							20
Prevalently positive					2	2		
More negative than positive			10	4	2			
Negative			10		1			

As presented in Table 3 above, the people who react positively are those who are called by their own name—either the birth name or the Western name—while bad pronunciation generates the highest degree of negativity, followed by the imposition of nicknames or hypocoristics.

When asked about the possibility of maintaining their residence in 10 years' time, all the Chinese interviewees hoped to continue living in the host country—Italy or Spain—while 60% of the Peruvian women thought of returning to Peru and did not consider the possibility of reuniting their family in Italy, which was allowed by the existing law. Combining the information from the participants' personal records with the data collected in the interview, it appears that the family situation of the two immigrant groups is diametrically different. Chinese immigrants reside with husbands and children, while 83% of Peruvian women share a domicile with the elders that they care for and 72% live separately from their children who are in Peru in the safekeeping of the rest of the family.

We investigated whether temporary immigration and the use of their own language for the Peruvian women (of the 45 interviews, 23 Peruvian women completed this first fragment in Spanish and 22 in Italian), could have influenced the outcome of the research. Combining the data demonstrates that, although there was no difference in the case of well-pronounced names, the negative attitudes of the group with “name differentiation” indicated a sensitivity to the use of the language. In other words, if the analyzed segment of the interview was carried out in Spanish, the negative attitudes towards bad pronunciation were strengthened. Conversely, when it was carried out in a foreign language (Italian), the subjects seemed to be more tolerant towards the attitudes of the host population. We compared the proportions between groups divided by language (independent groups) and by positive or negative attitudes (dichotomous variable), and applying the Fisher test, the difference is significant (2×2 , $p = 0.023$). Since this research is conducted on a small sample, the results should be regarded with caution. However, the incidence of language in the expression of feelings has been confirmed by studies with larger samples, and this assumption may generally be regarded as accurate: the immigrant tends to judge the attitude of the host population more harshly in the case of Spanish speakers than Italian speakers.

6. Concluding Remarks

This research was carried out with the objective of obtaining data about the perception that Peruvian and Chinese immigrant women have of their own name. For this purpose, three questions were presented as part of a broader interview, relating to three thematic areas: the relationship of the name with the culture of origin, with the host culture, and with the intention of residing in the host country in the future (Schlote 2018). In terms of perception, emotional reactions to different ways of “being called” are underlined, especially when these do not coincide with the name given by the parents.

The results of the first thematic focus, “Myself and my name”, demonstrate that the relationship with one's own name is different according to one's culture of origin. Half of the Peruvian immigrants do not like their name of origin, while all the Chinese women are happy with their Chinese name. The ritual imposition of the name, characteristic of the culture of origin, seems to skew the result of the Chinese sample regardless of their residence in Madrid or in Prato. In fact, for reasons of linguistic transparency, Chinese names often represent the aspirations of the parents and they are often given to the child as a good omen (Liao 2011, p. 65). Therefore, consistently, none of the Chinese immigrant

women have expressed disagreement with her name. This contrast brings consideration of the identity of given names from the category of “social use” (James[1890] 1994) or “interpersonal use” (Neisser 1988; Fierro 2013) to a more elaborate one of “cultural use” (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009) that does not appear clearly in the studies on the name of immigrants.

As far as the first research question is concerned, i.e., whether there is a manifest relationship between the use of the immigrants’ given name in the host country, the results suggest that the significant relationship is related to nationality rather than to the perspective of roots and place of origin. It is possible to observe a remarkable difference between the attitudes of the two groups (see Section 4.1). In fact, among the Peruvians, there is a general acceptance of the bad pronunciation or foreignization of the own name, which does, however, produce a negative attitude when the distortion implies a negative connotation. For the Chinese group, the adoption of a new Westernized or fictitious name implies a positive attitude because it signals their will to integrate into the host community.

In relation to the second research question concerning the name that immigrants receive in the host country (see Section 4.2), two phenomena are prevalent: the mispronunciation of the original name (the “Italianization” of the pronunciation for 56% of Peruvian names) and the use of Western “new” names (the Western baptism of all Chinese immigrants). These two categories are also present in previous research, although these studies examined the same phenomenon in other countries (Handri 2008; Costa-Scottini 2011). An intermediate category of given names—hypocoristic names or nicknames—which has been previously studied but only in relation to their native use in Spain and Italy (Portolés 1998), has been created in order to group phenomena that cannot be included in the two main categories of mispronunciation and Westernization. The results of previous qualitative analyses of the native use of nicknames have been confirmed by our quantitative analysis for immigrants. From a pragmatic point of view and given the spectrum of reactions it elicits—positive or negative depending on the reaction of each immigrant—hypocoristics might deserve to be investigated further by asking different questions in the interviews. The present research indicates that it is possible to observe hypocoristics within the framework of cultural stereotypes and the attitudes of host communities towards immigrants based on the effects they produce and the causes that generate them.

With regard to the reactions of immigrants upon hearing their own names as spoken by foreigners (third research question), the majority of informants whose names are pronounced correctly or who use fictitious names, manifested positive attitudes, while bad pronunciation tended to be the more irritating (see Table 3). The intermediate category of shortened names presents a diversified landscape, with a tendency to negative rather than positive reactions, which are not excluded, however. In some cases, it is possible that the interpretation of a nickname requires a linguistic competence that the immigrant does not have. Therefore, P39 does not feel annoyed if her employer, who knows a bit of Spanish, sometimes calls her “Cari” and sometimes “Caracol”, without understanding that calling someone a snail has a different illocutive force in Italian (metaphorically in Italian, “very slow”).

Just as has been demonstrated that the degree of the immigrant’s competence in the second language has an impact when interpreting her host’s discourse (P39), it is possible that the language chosen for the interview also has an impact on the results. In fact, Peruvian immigrants had more positive reactions when the interviews were in Italian and were more severe when the interviews were in Spanish. The results could be in line with the conclusions that were reached by other authors, taking into account, however, that our interviews were not conducted in the mother tongue (Li 1997; Liao 2011; Aksholakova 2014) or in languages other than Spanish or Italian (Costa-Scottini 2011; Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016; Schlote 2018). The results show that, from a linguistic point of view, “bad pronunciation” (Schlote 2018) is not the only phenomenon that should be studied and that a study of other phenomena such as nicknames or hypocoristics should be extended to host populations with non-Latin linguistic uses. On the other hand, from the methodological point of view, it would be hard to obtain more useful information, given the difficulty that would be entailed in conducting the interview in a bilingual format or in repeating the same questions after a long period of time.

Although the results obtained from questions that are akin to those asked by Schlote (2018) confirm the existence of similarities in the response possibilities for the three thematic nodes, our two groups show different preferences and evaluations (see Figure 3). Specifically, Chinese immigrants made judgments and assessments about the use of their name from the perspective of “Of the name” and “Of the vision of himself”, that is, guided by the categories “Meaning”, “Property”, “Unicity”, or “Identity”. Differently, Peruvian immigrants expressed evaluations guided by judgments based on the subcategory “To others” (“Mispronunciation or misspelling”, “Omit or forget the name”, “Intimidation”, and “Used to point out his/her diversity”) or the subcategory “Of immigrant” (“Get angry” and “Dealing with bad pronunciations”). The difference in the choice of the arguments by the two groups in the first two questions seems directly related to the emotional reaction and to immigrants’ expectations about their future (Oyserman and Markus 1990). Unfortunately, the research on the immigrants’ given names obtain results on multiethnic groups with up to 12 different nationalities (Stojanovic-Zezovic 2016; Schlote 2018) or of a single nationality (Lehiste 1975; Aksholakova 2014; Li 1997; Liao 2011). In order to obtain more solid results, it would be interesting for future research to consider at least three groups of immigrants of different nationalities.

The question about the possibility of stable residence in the host country demonstrates the same difference in behavior with respect to the social use of the name: 60% of Peruvian immigrants want to return to their country within ten years, while Chinese immigrants have come to stay. The phenomenon shows an almost dichotomous behavior, since it is not clear whether the remaining 40% who answer that they wish to stay in Italy for the next ten years are young and intend to stay only until retirement age. This representation of the possible selves, if we accept the proposals of Markus and Nurius (1986) and of Oyserman and Markus (1990) as a conceptual connection between cognition and motivation, could function as a strong incentive in the regulation of present behavior: imagining oneself back in one’s own country within 10 years could diminish the desire to integrate into the host country and increase the impact of “microaggressions” (Kohli and Solórzano 2012). Clearly the perception of one’s own name cannot be the cause of the lack of integration of a group of immigrant women, since this is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon (Handri 2008; Arai and Skogman-Thoursie 2009). It could be a symptom of a situation of marginalization and should influence the motivation to learn the language of the host country (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009).

In conclusion, the results seem to indicate that, when the sound and meaning of one’s own name used by the host community is related to family use and to the community of origin (as in the case of the new European proper names used daily in Chinese families), it gives rise to a favorable attitude that provokes identification and personal satisfaction with the new environment. By contrast, when the pronunciation of the proper name sounds foreign or the meaning is associated with a negative self-image or stereotype, an alteration of the self-image and a lack of identification may result, producing demotivation and personal dissatisfaction.

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