

## **“Learning-shop” of the KODOMO Project**

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This paper illustrates our current project, “Learning-shop” by introducing the purpose, general background, pre-history and future plans. The project has just started and therefore any suggestions and comments are welcome.

### 1. Learning-shop

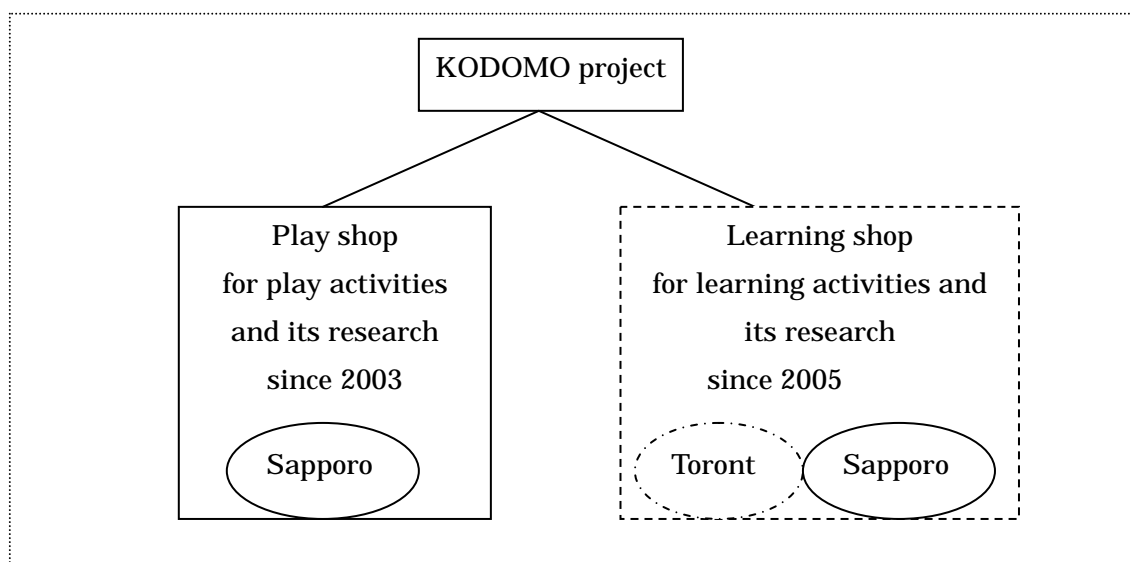
Our project, “Learning-shop” has developed as an after-school activity which designed for the language minority students in Japan where often lacks the appropriate educational resource for them. The project now tries to enhance the options of activities, and learning possibilities by collaboration with the project for language minority students and their family in Canada. In this paper, we will describe backgrounds, history, and future plans for this project.

#### 1-1.the KODOMO project and the Learning-shop

Learning-shop has started as one of workshops of the KODOMO project (Ishiguro, 2004). Ishiguro Laboratory of the Graduate School of Education, Hokkaido University has conducted KODOMO project, an after-school activity for children, in Sapporo, Japan, since 2003. The project has two workshops including Play-shop and Learning-shop as seen in figure 1. The Play-shop is designed for the kindergarten children to provide an appropriate learning environment for children’s development by organizing play activities. The Learning-shop is now exploring learning activities for the school age students who are living in the border of more than two languages both in Japan and Canada. The participants in Learning-shop, Sapporo, Japan is high school students who were born and grown up in China, and recently came back to Japan as the home country of their parents/grandparents. Their social and historical context will be further explained in the section 2 of this paper. The participants in Learning-shop,

Toronto, Canada will be the offspring of Japanese permanent immigrants in Canada, whose situation will be described in the section 5 of this paper.

Figure 1: Organization of the KODOMO project



## 1-2. The purposes of the Learning shop

Our goal is to make an environment which participants' language and culture in Learning-shop themselves could work as resources for literacy development of the participants including language minority students. By emphasizing the role of participants' cultural knowledge and experiences in the daily practices, we plan to optimize their literacy development in the connection of more than two linguistic environments.

The Learning shop will contribute to two major issues of language minority students in Japan, namely, (a) identity crises, sense of lacking their place of belonging, and (b) difficulties in academic achievements which will be further explained in relation to the prehistory of Learning-shop.

First, Learning-shop plans to assure the place of belonging for participants as well as language learning environment. In relation to identity positioning of language minority students, many of the language minority students can hardly find the learning environment which their linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge are acknowledged. Further, as their limited language proficiency of Japanese, the dominant language of Japanese society often works as barrier to making friends in the community

and belonging after-school activities. Therefore, designing the place which they can feel belongings to there, in addition to normal language learning activity, are important.

Second, improvements of academic achievement which is closely intertwined with their identities, are also the goal of Learning-shop. As the resource for academic success which is sensitive to language minority students' linguistic and cultural potential, the language minority students often face difficulties in academic achievement in Japanese education. Therefore, we have tried to provide language minority students with cognitive tools for their academic language learning and networks of information.

## 2. The situation of Language minority students in Japan

### 2.1. The number of the registered foreigners in Japan

The number of the registered foreigners in Japan at the end of 2004 was over 1,970,000, which equaled to 1.55% of the total population of Japan. The number of the registered foreigners was only 8,000,000 until 1980, and 60% of them were Korean residents and Chinese residents who came to Japan during WW , as seen in figure 2.

The number of the registered foreigners has dramatically increased after the revision of "Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act", in June 1990. This revised law allowed the second and the third generation of Japanese extractions (particularly in the South America) and their families to stay and work for three years in Japan. Therefore, they came back to Japan with their spouses and children, either settling down in Japan or frequently re-visiting to work. We call these population of (a) Japanese extractions from Brazil and Peru, and (b) workers from Philippine including the Indochina refugees and (c) the returnees from China, as "the New Comers" to distinguish them from "the Old Comers" who already settled down in Japan for many years.

### 2.2. Education for language minority students in Japan

The number of the school age children (5 to 14 years old) who are registered as foreigners in Japan, was over 120,000 at the end of 2004, as seen in figure 3. Despite the fact the number of those children has been increasing in Japan, a free, compulsory education under the 6-3 school system is institutionalized only for the Japanese national

citizens, thus foreign children receive “de gratia” to go to public schools in Japan. As a result of this unestablished educational system for language minority students, not-going/unregistered to school of them have been problematic in the area which many New Comers live. To understand this problem further, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has conducted a survey on the actual conditions of the New Comers’ students in the major 12 cities, from June 2005.

Figure 4 shows that, of all registered New Comers’ students, approximately 17,000 students, equivalent to 14 percent are identified as the population required “Japanese language orientation” provided by the Agency of Cultural Affairs. However, this number would possibly be doubled or tripled according to MEXT. This is because the number is based on the reports of each school through the local school boards, without any objective criteria.

### 2.3. The situation of language minority students in Sapporo, Hokkaido

There are approximately 18,000 foreigners registered in Hokkaido, and 8,000 in Sapporo. This is a very modest number, compared with other government ordinance cities. Due to the historical fact that many went over from Sapporo area to Manchuria, China (the north east part in China) before and during the WW II, the New Comers in Hokkaido are occupied by the high rate of Chinese Returnees.

Chinese Returnees are those who had left behind at Manchuria, China after the WW II and returned to Japan after 1972 when the diplomatic relations between Japan and China was normalized. The number of these returnees themselves is over 20,000 people up to now, and more than 100,000 including their spouses, families and relatives.

The number of the children who are regarded to need a “Japanese language orientation” is 68 in Hokkaido, and the mother language of more than half of them is Chinese [Figure 5].

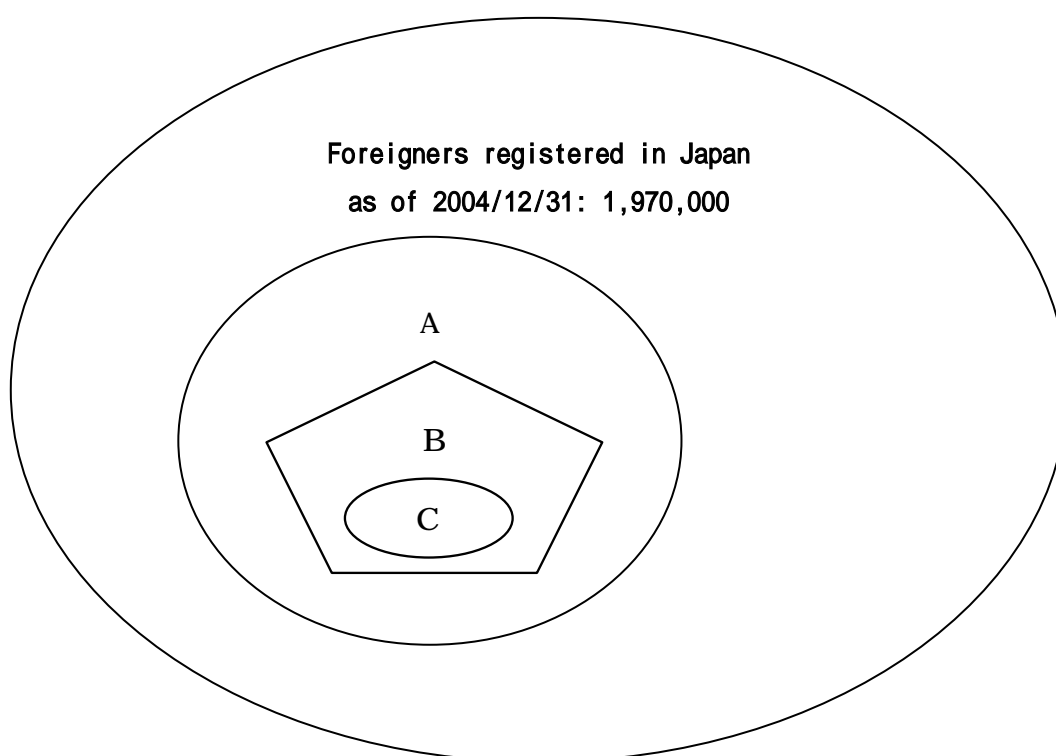
**Figure5. Foreigners registered in Japan as of 2004/12/31: 1,970,000**

**A Foreign children (4 to 15) as of 2004/12/31 : 120,000**

**B Children go to school: not reported**

**C Children regarded to need Japanese language orientations as of 2004/9/1;  
17,000**

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#### 4. Pre-history of the Learning shop, Sapporo

##### 4.1. Language instruction by a semi-institutional volunteer group

In order to supply the lack of public resource for language minority students, the first volunteer group to support Japanese as a second language (JSL) students was established in 1970s. Along the rapid increase of the registered foreigners in Japan since 1990, a number of volunteer groups for language minority students' second language learning have been established over Japan, as well as in Hokkaido.

One of these volunteer groups, Sapporo Kodomo Nihon-go Club (SKNC: i.e., the Japanese language support club for children) was established in August 2001, to continuously support for Chinese Returnee students who are learning JSL in the city of Sapporo. SKNC has now over 30 volunteer staffs and they provide Japanese language instruction for about 20 children in elementary schools and in junior high schools, by making use of after school hours.

The fieldwork done by Sugiyama (2004) describes the contradictions and developmental change of this volunteer organization, SKNC for three years. Based on the findings of this study, we identified problems of the existed volunteer organization as (a) the traditional language instruction which often ignores students' lives and actual needs, and (b) the limited support which is beyond the scope of identity issue of language minority students. In next section, we will further discuss about this by introducing two case studies of Chinese Returnee students, HH (a female student) and TS (a male student).

##### 4.2. The case study of HH and TS

We introduce two students of Chinese Returnee, HH (a female student) and TS (a male student). As seen in the following Table 2, after arriving at Japan, both students were enrolled in public education which was for the lower level to their actual age. Noteworthy, both of them were obliged to be transferred schools in the first 3 years.

Table 2: Educational Backgrounds of HH and TS in Japan

HH		TS	
Oct.1999	Arrived, 12 years old. Entered to K elementary school.	Jun.2002	Arrived, 15 years old. Entered to M junior high school.
Aug.2000	Transferred to M elementary school.	Apr.2004	Transferred to N junior high school.
Apr.2002	Entered to M junior high school.	Apr.2005	Entered to Z high school.
Apr.2005	Entered to N high school.		

#### 4.2.1. A case of HH (a female student)

HH came to Japan with her family in October 1999 and entered in K elementary school, at the fourth grade, though she was two years older than her classmates. Then she was transferred to M elementary school due to moving. She started to learn Japanese language in SKNC in 2001, two years after her arrival and continued until her graduation from the junior high school. She was “plenty of energy but hard to concentrate on to study”, said the volunteer staffs who supported her at the elementary school.

Volunteer staffs in SKNC identified her as “a trouble maker” when she entered to M junior high school, April 2002. She kept attending SKNC and learning Japanese after school, but without school uniform and with make-ups on- her behavior was often against the school norms which were shared by volunteer staff. Because of these outstanding behaviors, one of the volunteer staff, K tried to prohibit her attendance to SKNC activity. However, after that, HH tried to concentrate on to studies for a while, and her action was evaluated as her “grown-up” by the volunteer staffs.

In the second year, HH had troubles with F, a volunteer staff in charge of her and F gave up supporting her. The head of the volunteer group finally prohibited HH’s participation in SKNC for a while as a punishment. When the head told her about the punishment, she left the classroom slamming the door shut.

Two volunteer staffs decided to take care of her. At the end of the second year, HH and another male student TS and two volunteer staffs discussed about alternative activity which was outside of regular SKNC and decided to write essays in order to keep their memories.

HH did all her best and passed the entrance exam to a high school that matched her academic transcript and has a tour guide course where her bilingual background proved to be an advantage. However, we cannot deny it was the only choice for her to continue studying even though the school was away from home and had to divide to live in a dormitory.

#### 4.2.2 A case of TS, a male student

TS came to Sapporo, Japan in August, 2002 with his father and his grandmother who was a returnee from China. He entered M junior high school, at the first grade though he was two years older than his classmates. In 2003, his mother-in-law also came from China, and then his brother-in-law came in 2004.

TS started to Japanese language learning in SKNC at the junior high school and continued for three years. Volunteer staffs of SKNC evaluated him as “good and hard-working boy”. TS enjoyed Japanese language learning as well as spending time with volunteer staffs and the other Chinese returnee students. He was eager to talk about Chinese language and culture to the volunteer staffs.

In the third year, TS started to prepare for the high school entrance exam. While he understood that he had to devote himself to studies, he could not concentrate on to it. However, he kept attending SKNC and finally passed the entrance exam to a public high school in Sapporo, Hokkaido.

At the TS’s graduation from junior high school, and SKNC, he and other students planed a farewell party by themselves with the help of volunteer staffs. TS strongly wished that he could keep in touch with the volunteer stuffs and other students even after graduation.

TS is now a public high school student and keeps connection with the members of SKNC, at a room of his apartment complexes. He is now into playing the guitar and recently performed to play music with other former SKNC members at an event called International Festival, Sapporo.

TS has a desire to continue playing guitar and sing songs both in Japanese and Chinese. TS’s future goal is to go on to college and work as a bridge over Japan and China in the future.

#### 4.3. The problems in language learning support in a volunteer organization, SKNC

The two case studies of HH and TS show problems of a volunteer organization, SKNC. First, the volunteer group functioned as if it were an affiliated organization of



schools, and the volunteer staffs behaved like “school teachers” to supply classes outside regular class hours. This is partially because the volunteer organizations were not totally independent from schools. Second, in relation to the first point, the language instruction were traditional style of teaching and learning which often ignore the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students. Even though the volunteer teachers were well prepared and offered instruction that they believed to be good for the students, they failed to optimize students’ development beyond existed public school education.

After HH and TS had graduated junior high schools and went on to high schools, we reexamined the whole data of Sugiyama (2004) with the questions: (a) what did they really want to learn? (b) what did they expect to do after school?, and (c) how adult could facilitate to optimize child’s development? By examining these questions, we are now planning to design new learning environment for language minority students as Learning-shop. We share the norms that we do not have to follow a traditional school curriculum, rather we can organize various activities that are most optimal for children’s development.

Sugiyama’s case study of HH and TS shows that language minority students experienced difficulties of academic achievement and identity crises at the same time. They have followed their families to live in Japan, in unexpected circumstances, and suffered from loss of the place where they can feel belonging. Therefore, the alternative support which can cover these two aspects of language minority students’ needs is necessary. These issues have not enough investigated in previous study of Japanese language minority students, and the practice of JSL classrooms. Our future goal is to combine these two fundamental supports well. We are now developing concrete curricular to maximize development of language minority students living in unique linguistic and cultural environment. In this regard, we have strong interests in the activities of La Clase Magica and TEATRO, expecting suggestions for the Learning shop.

#### 4.4. The plans of the Learning-shop

##### 4.4.1. Regular activities

TS and Learning shop members gather at a meeting room of his apartment complexes in a new town, where many of Chinese returnee families live, then our meeting is opened to any of the children living in this town. HH and SS, the brother of TS join whenever they come back from dormitories. Learning shop members also flexibly consists of graduate school students and undergraduate students in and around Sapporo city. Currently our major activity is playing music. Our resources are guitars, harmonica, CDs of Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Asian singers, etc. We also have networks of each members including musicians, PC specialists, international students from Asian countries, Chinese people working in Japan. Learning shop plans to open another site in Toronto, Canada in near future, with the high school students of Japanese-Canadian community. We are supposed to have exchanges of ideas, discussions and performances mainly through electronic media.

##### 4.4.2. Special events.

TS, SS and members are often requested to play songs at festival events, introduction of bilingual students and so on. Sapporo city has some annual festivals for tourists, many from East Asia area. We keep rehearsing for those occasions to play concerts.

#### 5. Collaboration with Learning-Shop in Canada

We are also planning to organize one site of Learning-shop in Toronto, Canada with the collaboration of a community-based language school which is run by a Japanese-Canadian community in Toronto. The participants will be the offspring of Japanese immigrants who are learning Japanese, a minority language in Canada. The collaborative net-working between Canada and Japan shares the two contexts, namely, (a) language learning for bilingual students in school age, and (b) activity out of regular school hours. This collaboration can enhance activity options for Learning-Shop.

## 5.1. Japanese-Canadian Community in Toronto, Canada and their language school

### **Japanese-Canadian communities**

To describe the participants of Learning-shop site in Canada, we will begin with the overview of Japanese-Canadian community in Toronto, their language school, and official Heritage Language program in Canada. The Japanese-Canadian communities in Toronto, Canada are mainly divided into the following three categories: (a) “*Nikkei* (Japanese-Canadian/ Canadian-Japanese)”: Japanese immigrants before Word War (WW ) and their offspring, (b) “*Shin-Ijyusha* (the New immigrants)”: Japanese immigrants post WW for the reason of seeking business opportunities, inter-marriage, and so forth, and (c) workers of international corporation who are transferred to Canada for a certain period of time and their families (Noro, 1997). Each of the communities has developed their own language schools which satisfies own needs. In 2001, the population of Japanese was 73,315 which is about 2 percent of visible minority population in Canada (Statistics of Canada, retrieved 2005).

### **The language school and Heritage Language program**

The language school which we will corroborate with is especially for the children from Japanese ethnic community of (a) “*Nikkei* (Japanese-Canadian)” and (b) “*New Immigrants*”, and the second, third, and fourth generations of Japanese permanent immigrants. So, the school has a characteristic as “Heritage Language”<sup>1</sup> program, which aims at maintaining non-official minority languages among immigrants, and preventing language loss over generations.

This Heritage Language program has been institutionalized within public school system in Ontario, Canada from 1977, and providing full funding for heritage language instruction outside the regular five-hour school day for up to two and a half hours a week in the context which a school board agreed to establish such a program to meet with ethnic community’s needs. However, considering the linguistic variety of mother tongue in a classroom, in a multicultural city like Toronto, establishing heritage language program in school curricular to satisfy every linguistic group’s needs is difficult. Therefore, ethnic groups themselves often run their own community-based language schools outside the regular school hours. They are often held on Saturdays.

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<sup>1</sup> “Heritage Language” refers to all languages other than the aboriginal languages of Native and Inuit peoples and the “official” Canadian languages (English and French). (Cummins & Danesi, 1990: p8)

### **Power relations between minority and official languages**

Even though Heritage Language programs are offered to minority language maintenance, succession of first languages of permanent immigrant families to their children is jeopardized. Difficulties of maintaining heritage languages lie in limited amount of instruction through heritage languages (cf. two or two and a half hour per week in Ontario) and less legitimacy of minority languages compared with a school language, and the view of immigrant language as a barrier to social unity (Helms-Park, 2000; Goldstein, 2003). Cummins (1991) shows that when a child starts to enroll in an elementary school, the language the child use rapidly shifts from his/her home language (e.g., Portuguese) to the school language (e.g., English). This children's language shift is partially explained by the assimilative pressure experienced by immigrant parents as shown in a case study of Latino family in Toronto (Pacini-Kerehabaw et al., 2001). As the role of the dominant language is often emphasized in school and immigrant ethnic languages are viewed as obstruction to acquire it, parents start to doubt the use of their home language even though they recognize the merits of bilingualism.

To challenge this linguistic assimilative pressure, the community-based language school tries to often define a context which a minority language is privileged to maximize the amount of use of the language. In my observation of Japanese language school, the teachers and parents attempted to establish Japanese monolingualism within the school. Children are encouraged to speak only Japanese which is not privileged outside of the language school.

### **Why of Japanese Maintenance**

Why immigrant families to Canada try to maintain their ethnic language over generations? Or why the children of Canadian-born Japanese immigrant family learn Japanese within the context which the dominant language is other than Japanese? In the case of permanent Japanese immigrants to Canada, previous study discusses the motivation for Japanese maintenance by parents as following four ways: (a) as a medium of childrearing, (b) as a way to Japanese ethnic identity maintenance, (c) as a medium of communication with their grand parents, and (d) socio linguistic value and children's future resource (Oketani, 1995; Noro, 1997; Sakamoto, 2000). Different from the case of Japanese temporal visitors, to connect Japanese maintenance with academic success for children's future is less discussed among Japanese permanent immigrants. Rather, Japanese maintenance is often discussed in relation to family bonding and cultural and ethnic identity succession. However, as these studies are based on the view of language as static and closed system (Ishiguro, 2000), the critical investigation toward participants' view of language and actual language practice are not done enough.

In addition, how perspective towards the language practice differs between the parents' generation and children's generation is also not investigated. These themes are important to examine the issue of social and cultural environment of language acquisition, the definition of "first language" and "cultural knowledge" of immigrants, and therefore within the scope of our research.

## 5.2. Learning-shop in Canada

Learning-shop in Toronto, Canada will collaborate with one class of Japanese community school held every Saturdays. The participants will be parent-teachers, the students aged 13 to 20, and researcher. In this project, considering the social context which surrounds Japanese permanent residents and the children in Canada, to cultivate participants' critical inquiry into their "languages" and "cultural knowledge" will be emphasized.

### **Collaborative project with Japanese Learning-shop**

Although the collaborative project between Canadian Learning-shop site and Japanese Learning-shop site have not officially started yet, we are expecting it as a way to enhance the opportunities of language learning by introducing various tools including information and communication technology (ICT). First, since the participants in both sites are learning Japanese as their "second language" in different settings summarized in the following table 2, the interests toward each other will work as a trigger for the communication between them by using Japanese language learning, and Japanese as their common tools. Second, from the necessity to communicate each other between Japan and Canada, we are expecting the use of ICT including e-mails, shared web-site, and audio-visual recordings as their communication tools. These are important for the students who are learning Japanese in Canada because (a) they often lack the opportunity to communicate with the same generations in Japanese, and (b) they have less opportunity to use their biliteracy.

The draft of the paper presented on Nov 3

		Canada: Japanese Saturday School	Japan: Japanese After-School
Language	Official	English and French	Japanese
	Heritage	Japanese	Chinese
	L1	English/Japanese	Chinese
	L2	Japanese/English	Japanese
	School	English	Japanese
	Home	Japanese/English	Chinese/Japanese
	Project	Japanese/English	Japanese/Chinese

Table 2. Linguistic background of participants in a collaborative project