

The Power of Speaking English : Preliminary analysis of survey results of English learning

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The Japanese people have realized the importance of fostering communication abilities and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has reformed the educational system so as to focus on building the practical communication skills of students. The Ministry of Education has shown its strong intention and has taken some actions to improve English communication skills of the Japanese people and also the Japanese students.

As one of the efforts, The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program started in 1987, with the goal of 'promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations'. This program also aims to 'promote internationalization in Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education and developing international exchange at the community level'. This program is administered by local authorities in cooperation with other related Ministries, such as the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

One of the types of positions in this program is the Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). An ALT provides language instruction in junior and senior high schools and gives English instruction in a team-teaching class with a Japanese English Teacher. Official definition for team-teaching (TT) offered by the Ministry of Education is "a concerted endeavour made jointly by the Japanese teacher (JTE) and the assistant language teacher (ALT) to create a foreign language classroom in which students are engaged in communicative activities." TT has been accepted as one of the main methodologies of teaching English since the first 848 native speakers started teaching English as an ALT in 1987.

It also has been said that TT has not been as successful as it was hoped because of the low amount of TT classes, high ratio of students to an ALT, and personality of ALTs, and so on. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology hasn't set quantifiable goals, but anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that communication skills of junior and senior high school students haven't improved much.

This paper discusses survey results which were conducted to find out what junior and

senior high school students think of English learning, especially of TT.

Method

The participants of this survey were 94 junior high school students and 349 senior high school students in Oita prefecture. The junior high school students consisted of 62 the second year students and 32 the third year students. The senior high school students consisted of 240 the first year students and 109 the second year students. One junior high school and five senior high schools in Oita participated in this survey in 2003 and 2004.

A questionnaire includes 26 statements and the participants were asked to choose one answer from the following selections: 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neutral, 4. Disagree, and 5. Strongly disagree. The questionnaires were delivered to various schools and were distributed to students by JTEs. The same form of questionnaire was used for both the junior and the senior high school students.

Analysis and Discussion of Survey Results of the Senior High School Students

The junior and senior high school students answered the same questionnaires, with the results analyzed separately. The questionnaire consisted of 26 statements and those statements are divided into three groups: motivation for studying English, attitudes toward TT, and English activity preferences. Each group is analyzed separately.

Answers “strongly agree” and “agree” are compiled together as “agree” and answers “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are compiled together as “disagree”. Answers “neutral” are not analyzed in the paper.

Motivation for Studying English

In statements no. 1 through 9, the students are asked about their motivation for studying English. About 84% of the students answered that they need to study English to pass entrance exams. This indicates that English education in high schools is focused on entrance exams and the students get high pressure from entrance exams. There are other key factors that motivate students to study English, such as the desire to communicate in English, an interest in song lyrics, and preparation in future jobs. 56% of the students answered that English is necessary for future jobs, and about 64% said that they want to understand English song lyrics. It seems that many students are exposed to English by listening to English songs and they are interested in them. About 64% of the students answered they want to communicate with foreign people in English. About 44% of them answered they are interested in learning cultures and customs of other countries.

Figure 1 Motivation for Studying English

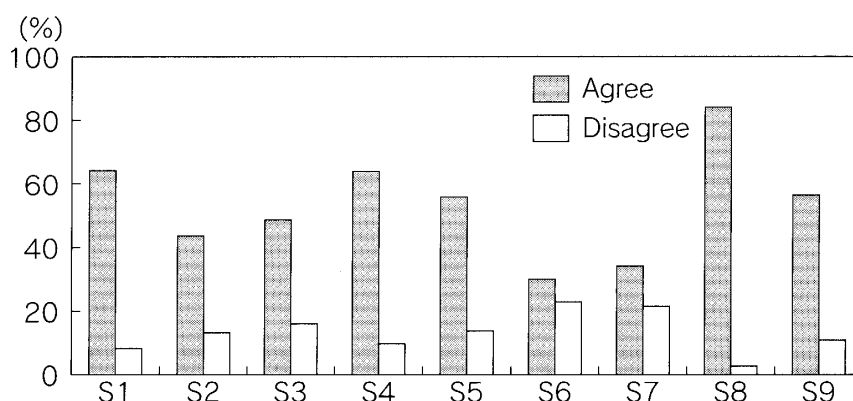


Table 1
Questionnaire (Motivation for Studying English)

Statement 1	I study English to communicate with foreign people in English
Statement 2	I study English to understand cultures and customs of foreign countries
Statement 3	I study English to read English books and magazines
Statement 4	I study English to understand English song lyrics
Statement 5	I study English to enjoy English movies without sub-titles
Statement 6	I study English to understand English news
Statement 7	I study English to enjoy English drama
Statement 8	I study English to pass entrance examinations
Statement 9	I study English for future jobs

Attitudes toward a JTE and an ALT Team-teaching

Statements no. 10 through no 18 are related to attitudes toward TT. About 66% of the students think it's important to speak perfect English, although 76% of them also admit it's important to get their point across even with a few grammatical mistakes. It seems that the students are afraid of making mistakes and, at the same time, they realize the true goal of learning English is to communicate. Their attitude seems to be contradictory, but other complicated factors may affect their attitude toward learning English.

A great number of students answered the following three statements in the negative: "I learn to express my own opinion in English because I take lessons with an ALT", "My pronunciation becomes better because of lessons with an ALT", and "I get accustomed to speaking English because of TT classes". This implies that TT is not so effective to make the students feel comfortable in speaking English and there is scope for improvement with TT. About 25% of the students indicated they feel shy when speaking English although about 30% of them answered they don't feel shy to speak it.

Figure 2 Attitudes toward a JTE and an ALT Team-teaching

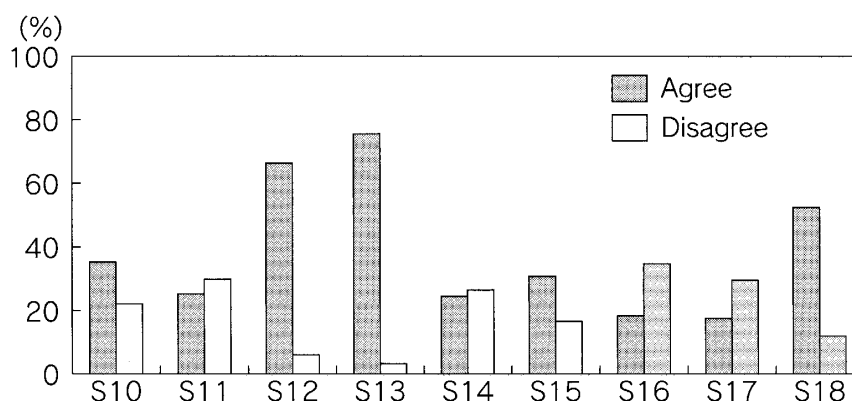


Table 2
Questionnaire (Attitudes toward a JTE and an ALT Team-teaching)

Statement 10	I try to speak as much English as possible in TT classes
Statement 11	I feel shy when I speak English in TT classes
Statement 12	I want to speak perfect English
Statement 13	It's important to get my point across even with a few grammatical mistakes
Statement 14	I'm less nervous to speak English because I take TT classes
Statement 15	I've come to like speaking English because I take TT classes
Statement 16	I'm able to express my own opinion in English because I take TT classes
Statement 17	My pronunciation has gotten better because I take TT classes
Statement 18	I've learned about different cultures and customs in TT classes

English Activity Preferences

Statements no. 19 through 24 involve preference for English activities. The students are asked what they want to learn and their activity preferences. The survey shows that over 70% of the students answered that they like to play games and take quizzes in class. Over 60% of them answered they like to listen to English songs. It seems that the students think TT classes are relaxing and an enjoyable time, unlike regular lessons in which they are usually forced to read English sentences and memorize English words and phrases. It also implies that it's necessary for us to think how to make lessons more communicative and enjoyable by using games, quizzes, and songs.

Figure 3 English Activity Preferences

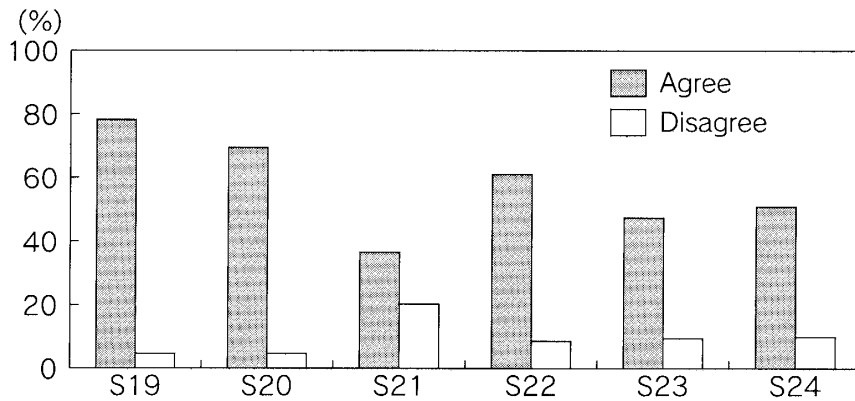


Table 3
Questionnaire (English Activity Preferences)

Statement 19	I like playing games in TT classes
Statement 20	I like doing quizzes in TT classes
Statement 21	I like singing English songs
Statement 22	I like listening to English songs
Statement 23	I like listening to the ALT's
Statement 24	I want to know more about the cultures and customs of foreign countries

Others

Statement no. 25 asks whether the students prefer TT classes to regular English classes. About 62% of the students answered they prefer TT to regular English classes. Only about 10% of them answered that they like the regular classes.

Statement no. 26 asks whether they study English for more than an hour at home per day. About 54% of the students answered in the negative. Only about 17% of them

Figure 4 Others

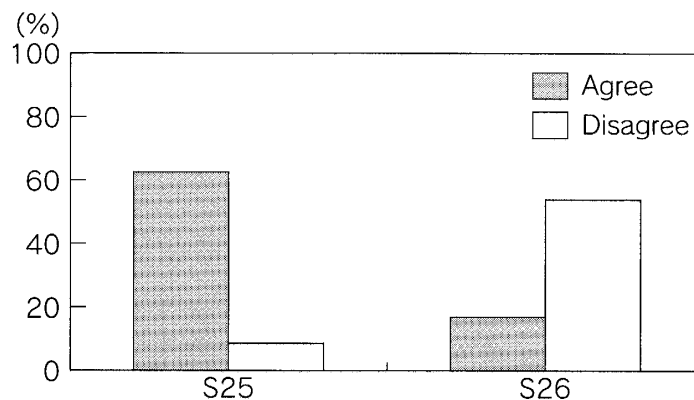


Table 4
Questionnaire (Others)

Statement 25	I prefer TT classes to regular classes
Statement 26	I usually study English for more than one hour per day at home

answered they study English more than an hour at home per day.

Analysis and Discussion of Survey Results of the Junior High School Students

Since the second year and the third year students from one junior high school participated in this survey, both the results of the survey of two grades and the difference between the two grades are analyzed together.

Motivation for English learning

About 85% of all the students think that they need to study English to pass entrance exams. About 90% of the third year students answered they study English to communicate in English, in contrast with 58% of the second year students. Both the second and the third year students are interested in understanding English song lyrics. Over 60% of the third year students answered they study English to understand different cultures and customs, to read English books and magazines, and to understand English movies without subtitles.

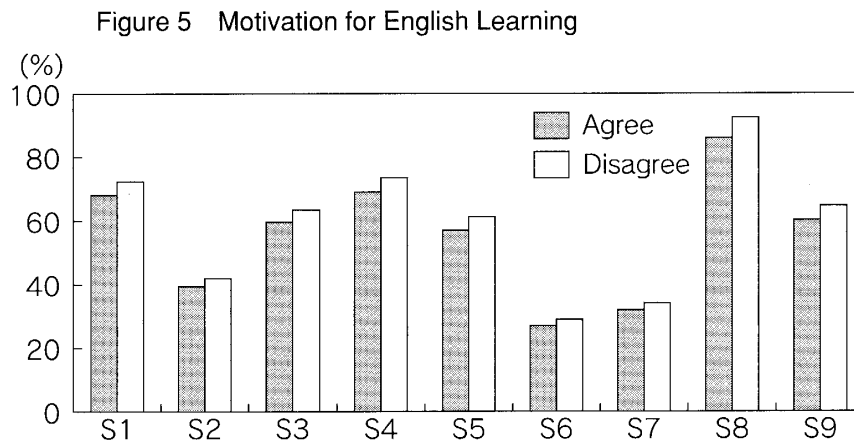


Table 5
Questionnaire (Motivation for English Learning)

Statement 1	I study English to communicate with foreign people in English
Statement 2	I study English to understand cultures and customs of foreign countries
Statement 3	I study English to read English books and magazines
Statement 4	I study English to understand English song lyrics
Statement 5	I study English to enjoy English movies without sub-titles
Statement 6	I study English to understand English news
Statement 7	I study English to enjoy English drama
Statement 8	I study English to pass entrance examinations
Statement 9	I study English for future jobs

Attitude toward a JTE and ALT Team-teachinng

While about 70% of all the students think that it's important to express their own opinion even with a few mistakes, 68% of them want to speak perfect English. About 40% of the second year students and about 30% of the third year students think their pronunciation is getting better because of TT classes. As to their English abilities, about 30% of the students answered they are able to express their own opinion, though about 32% of them think they can't express their own opinion in English. About 35% of the students answered they've got used to speaking English, and like speaking English.

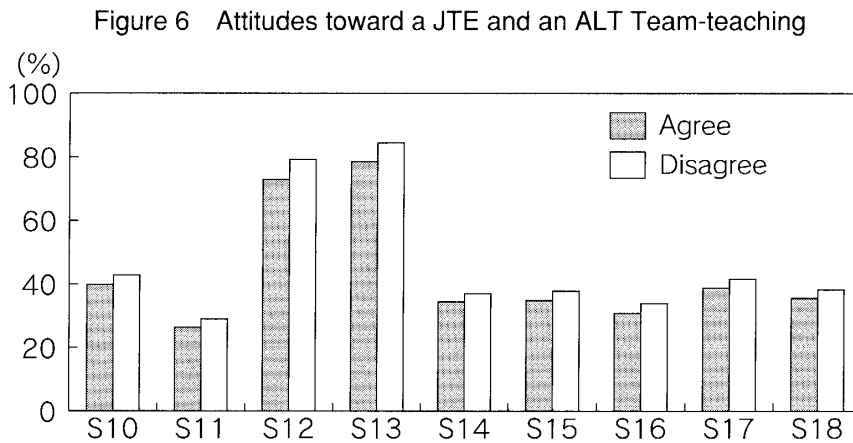


Table 6
Questionnaire (Attitudes toward a JTE and an ALT Team-teaching)

Statement 10	I try to speak as much English as possible in TT classes
Statement 11	I feel shy when I speak English in TT classes
Statement 12	I want to speak perfect English
Statement 13	It's important to get my point across even with a few grammatical mistakes
Statement 14	I'm less nervous to speak English because I take TT classes
Statement 15	I've come to like speaking English because I take TT classes
Statement 16	I'm able to express my own opinion in English because I take TT classes
Statement 17	My pronunciation becomes better because I take TT classes
Statement 18	I've learned about different cultures and customs in TT classes

English Activity Preferences

Overwhelmingly, both the second and the third year students like games. They also like quizzes and listening to English songs. About 58% of the third year students want to learn more about cultures and customs of different countries, while 36% of the second year students agreed. 36% of the second year students like listening to ALTs, compared with only 27% of the third year students.

Figure 7 English Activity Preferences

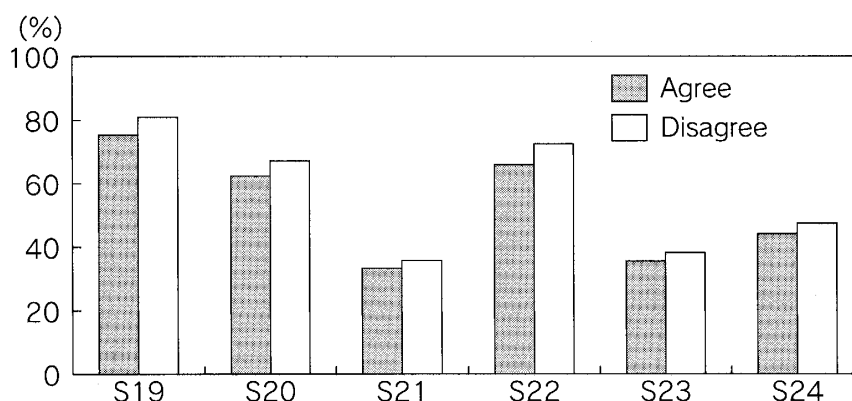


Table 7
Questionnaire (English Activity Preferences)

Statement 19	I like playing games in TT classes
Statement 20	I like doing quizzes in TT classes
Statement 21	I like singing English songs
Statement 22	I like listening to English songs
Statement 23	I like listening to the ALT's
Statement 24	I want to know more about the cultures and customs of foreign countries

Others

About 45% of the second year students prefer TT to regular English classes, and 15% of them prefer regular English classes to TT. On the other hand, 30% of the third year students prefer regular classes to TT, and 27% of them prefer TT to regular English classes. As to the amount of time of studying English at home, 42% of the third year students answered they don't study English for more than an hour per day, while 34% of the second year students study English for less than an hour per day.

Figure 8 Others

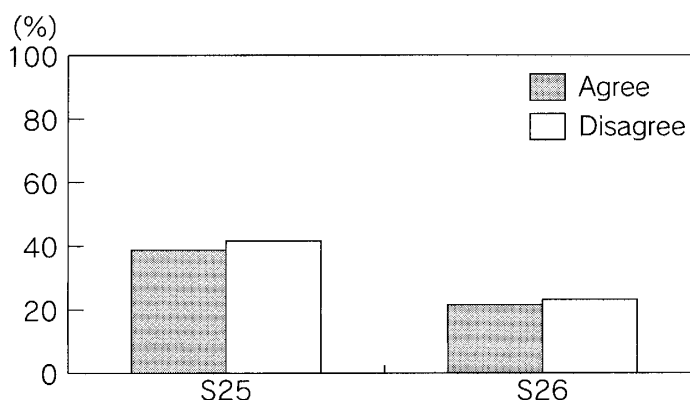


Table 8
Questionnaire (Others)

Statement 25	I prefer TT classes to regular classes
Statement 26	I usually study English for more than one hour per day at home

Pedagogical Implications and Conclusions

According to this survey, it seems that both the junior and the senior high school students recognize the importance of learning English, even though they are extremely preoccupied with entrance exams. They also admit that they need to study English to communicate and for their future jobs. They feel they can improve their communicative abilities if they have a more English rich environment where students are encouraged to communicate in English even with such pressures as entrance exams. They also need to have real purpose to communicate.

They have a low interest in writing and reading while having a high interest in playing games and listening to English songs. Only 17% of the high school students study English for more than 1 hour per day at home. This fact could imply that they are not highly motivated to study English. Less than 20% of the high school students feel their speaking abilities are not improved even though they take TT classes. It seems that there are several reasons for that: the amount of TT classes, class size, students' motivation to learn, and so on.

There are some interesting differences between the junior and the senior high school students. About 33% of the junior high school students feel they've improved their speaking abilities because they take TT classes while 19% of the senior high feel they have.

Although there seem to be many barriers for students to improve their communicative abilities, TT is one of the effective ways to improve students' communicative skills, and JTEs as well as ALTs play a very important role. It's crucial for JTEs to teach in English in order to provide students with as much comprehensible input as possible. TT will work if they cooperate for making good lesson plans and teach together in class.

Appendix A

英語に関するアンケート

この調査は高校生の英語に対する考え方を調べるためのものです。学力をためすものではありませんし、学校の成績ともまったく関係がありません。

何が正しく、何がまちがっているということはありませんから、他の人と相談しないで、思ったとおり、感じたままを正直に書いてください。記入もれのないように注意して、1つ1つの問い全部に答えてください。

次のアンダーラインの引いてあるところに当てはまる答えを、また、() 内では、当てはまる方に○印をつけてください。

記入日 2004年 ____ 月 ____ 日
 _____ 高等学校 (1・2・3) 年

- 1) 中学校に入学する前に英語を習ったことがありますか。 (ある ・ ない)
- 2) 1) であると答えた人は、どんな所で、どれくらいの期間習っていましたか。
英語を習った場所 _____ 期間 _____
- 3) 高校に入学してから、英語の塾に行ったことがありますか。または現在通っていますか。
(はい ・ いいえ)

これからの質問はあなたの外国渡航、滞在経験を聞いていますが、高校での行事で行った経験は除いてください。

- 4) 外国に行ったことがありますか。 (ある ・ ない)
- 5) 4) であると答えた人は、どこの国へ行ったことがありますか。行ったことのある国名を全部答えてください。
国名 _____
- 6) 外国に滞在したことがありますか。 (ある ・ ない)
- 7) 6) であると答えた人は、どこの国に、どれくらいの期間滞在したことがあるのですか。
国名 _____ 期間 _____

次の質問は、あなたの英語学習に関する今の気持ちをたずねるものです。例にならって、最もよく当てはまる番号に○印をつけてください。あまり深く考えずに、感じたままを答えてください。記入もれのないように注意して、1つ1つの問い全部に答えてください。

<記入例>

	まったく賛成	どちらかと 言えば賛成	どちらとも 言えない	どちらかと 言えば反対	まったく 反対
携帯電話は私の生活になくてはならないものだ。 それではここから始めてください。	1	2	3	4	5
1) 私は、英語を使って外国の人と話してみたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
2) 私は、外国の文化や習慣を知りたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
3) 私は、英語の本や雑誌が読めるようになりたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
4) 私は、英語の曲の歌詞がわかるようになりたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
5) 私は、アメリカやイギリスの映画を字幕なしで理解できるようになりたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
6) 私は、英語のニュースを理解できるようになりたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
7) 私は、英語のドラマを理解できるようになりたいので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5

	まったく賛成	どちらかと 言えば賛成	どちらとも 言えない	どちらかと 言えば反対	まったく 反対
8) 私は、将来大学を受験する時に英語が必要なので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
9) 私は、将来仕事をする時に英語が必要になると思うので、英語を勉強しようと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
10) 私は、ALTのいる授業で積極的に英語を話すようにしている。	1	2	3	4	5
11) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、英語で話すことが恥ずかしい。	1	2	3	4	5
12) 私は、ALTのいる授業で正しい英語を話したいと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
13) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、英語が少しくらい間違っている、思っていることを伝えることが大事だと思う。	1	2	3	4	5
14) 私は、ALTのいる授業を受けて、英語で話すことに慣れた。	1	2	3	4	5
15) 私は、ALTのいる授業を受けて、英語で話すことが好きになった。	1	2	3	4	5
16) 私は、ALTのいる授業を受けて、英語で思っていることを言えるようになった。	1	2	3	4	5
17) 私は、ALTのいる授業を受けて、自分の英語の発音が良くなった。	1	2	3	4	5
18) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、外国の文化や習慣を学んだ。	1	2	3	4	5

	まったく賛成	どちらかと 言えば賛成	どちらとも 言えない	どちらかと 言えば反対	まったく 反対
19) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、ゲームをするのが好きだ。	1	2	3	4	5
20) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、英語のクイズをするのが好きだ。	1	2	3	4	5
21) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、英語の歌を歌うのが好きだ。	1	2	3	4	5
22) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、英語の歌を聞くのが好きだ。	1	2	3	3	5
23) 私は、ALTのいる授業で、ALTの話す英語を聞くのが好きだ。	1	2	3	4	5
24) 私は、ALTのいる授業でもっと外国の文化や習慣などを学びたい。	1	2	3	4	5
25) 私は、ALTのいる授業の方が、普通の英語の授業より好きだ。	1	2	3	4	5
26) 私は、家庭で英語を1時間以上勉強している。	1	2	3	4	5

ALTのいる授業についてあなたが感じていることを自由に書いてください。

Appendix B

英語に関するアンケート

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国名 _____

- 6) 外国に滞在したことがありますか。 (ある ・ ない)
- 7) 6) であると答えた人は、どこの国に、どれくらいの期間滞在したことがありますか。
国名 _____ 期間 _____

2ページからの質問事項は高校生対象の「英語に関するアンケート」と同じです。