

**The Present State  
of  
English Teaching for Children in Miyazaki**

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**宮崎市の早期英語教育の現状**

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〈要約〉

現在、英語教育を受けている、中学生以下の子供たちが、全国に250万人もいると言われている。年毎にその数は増え、英語教育の開始年齢も低くなっている。早期英語教育の是非については多くの議論がなされているが、まだ断定的な結論は出ていないようである。そこで筆者は、早期英語教育の是非について考察するために、宮崎市内の中学・高校生にアンケートを行い、早期英語教育を受けた者がそれによってどのような結果を得たかを調査した。このアンケート調査では、かなり多くの、“早期英語教育によって悪影響を受けた”または、“何の影響も受けなかった”という解答を得た。そこでこの原因を、宮崎市内で行われている早期英語教育の内容、方法、指導目標の実際を紹介し、それを発達心理学的見地から考察することによって次のように指摘した。(1)早期学習者が増加している現状にもかかわらず、中学・高校ではその現実を考慮に入れた英語教育を行っていないために、早期学習者は既に学習したことを何度も学習しなければならなくなり、そのうちに英語に対する興味を失ってしまうことがある。(2)早期英語教育では通常、音声面の指導が主になっているが、中学・高校では文法や翻訳中心の授業がなされているために、早期学習者が、その実力を示す、または自覚する場面が少ない。(3)早期英語教育の現場では、ひらがなも満足に読み書きできない2・3歳児にアルファベットを教えるなど、子供の発達段階を考慮に入れない教育がなされている。(4)早期英語教育の実際は、週に1度、50分位の授業しか行われておらず、子供の記憶時間が短いことに対処していない。以上のことから、早期英語教育の是非を問う以前にその指導法、教材の研究が必要であること、また、早期学習者が益々増加すれば、高等英語教育の改革も不可欠なることを指摘した。

**Introduction**

*Sohki Eigo Kyoiku* (SEK) -- teaching English in early childhood -- generally refers to pre-junior high school instruction. ( In Japan foreign language study, almost always English, officially begins in junior high. ) Though few public elementary schools offer English instruction, many private elementary schools and those

attached to some public universities do (Gotoh, 1978:14). Moreover, many publishers, education companies, private conversation schools and *juku*<sup>1</sup> are involved in SEK.

Ogawa *et al* (1982 : 594 ) report that over 2,500,000 pre-JHS pupils, including pre-kindergarten children, are now studying English.

Many Japanese educational bodies<sup>2</sup> have become interested in SEK is because the need for Japanese to be proficient in foreign languages (especially English) has become more urgent with Japan's increased international role. This inturn has led to making English proficiency more important to senior high school and university entrance examinations. Thus many parents have become interested in SEK for purely selfish reasons: in order to give their children an "edge" on these exams.

Though it has been discussed for a long time, the published evidence on the advantages and disadvantages of SEK is varied and somewhat contradictory. It is the purpose of this thesis to help alleviate this confusion through an examination of the principal literature relevant to SEK and partly through a personal study done by the author at two private conversation schools in Miyazaki city where SEK is offered.

## I Intellectual and Linguistic Development of Children

### For and Against an Early Start

The case for teaching English in early childhood can be summed up as follows. Since language acquisition takes a long time, the earlier one starts the better. Moreover, children have a special talent for acquiring languages and have relatively few cultural prejudices which obstruct language learning (Macaulay, 1980: 47-49).

Intensive courses aside, language teaching in Japanese junior and senior high schools accounts for three to six hours per week and up to forty weeks per year. One year of classroom study is the equivalent of from one to three weeks contact in first language acquisition. Shirasa (1983: 63) says that it takes from three to four years for a child to become reasonable proficient in the mother tongue ; therefore it would take an astronomical length of time for second language learning to reach the same level if it were based on the same kinds of largely random exposure to the target language. Many psychologists and language teachers, therefore, recommend that English be taught from early childhood.

Nogami (1975: 26-28) bases her support for SEK from her experiences in teaching English to pupils of a private elementary school in Tokyo. She argues: (1) younger children are good at mimicry, (2) the general physical condition, vocal organs, and auditory sense of younger children are flexible, and (3) young children never get tired of repetition. Scovel (1969: 245) says that "Almost everyone learns the sound pattern of a language perfectly as an adult."

The belief that younger children are better at language learning than adults is sup-

ported by Lenneberg (1967), who hypothesized that the development of specialization of functions in the left and the right sides of the brain ("cerebral dominance" or "lateralization") begins in childhood and is completed at puberty. Krashen (1972) claims that brain lateralization occurs by age five, much earlier than even Lenneberg suggested. It has been argued that the adult is more self-conscious than the child, is less able to identify with other groups, and is, in general, less able to achieve the open mental state necessary for language acquisition to occur. Krashen claims that this explains children's ultimately superior performance.

Some scholars, however, hold that older children are faster learners of foreign languages because they have more insight into the system of language and intellectual maturity which helps them to learn structures and vocabulary faster (Mirajana, 1979 : 13-20). Dulay *et al* (1982: 95) suggest that adults progress faster than children in the areas of syntax and morphology, at least in early stages. Freudenstein (1982: 15) argues that an early start in teaching foreign languages could create motivational problems, namely that long time required for language learning would kill the learners' enthusiasm for the target language.

#### Developmental Studies of Children

Piaget (1970) suggests that cognitive development follows a sequential order such that each of its stages is necessary to the construction of the next. The fact that a young child cannot learn to add or subtract is not necessarily the fault of inadequate teaching strategies but results from the child's level of development which precludes his being able to assimilate the necessary information with which to do arithmetic.

Shirasa (1983) asserts that by age three most children can distinguish size and location (big, small, up, down, front, back, etc.). Four-year-old children understand "morning" and "night" but they cannot understand the concept of past, present, and future such as yesterday, today, tomorrow, until they become six years old.

Concept formation is the process by which one learns to sort specific experiences into general rules or classes. Most children can count by age two or three, but they cannot remember how many things there were after they count them, before age five or six. By age four, children learn the sequence of time, such as which things happen earlier and which later. Usually children learn how to tell time by age six to nine; however, many six- and seven-year-olds think they can quicken the time by moving the hands of the clock.

Shirasa argues that young children's memory spans are so short that two-year-olds might forget their own mothers if they did not see them for a week. Memory spans become longer by age three to five. Shirasa reports a number of studies demonstrating a steady increase in the memory span for numbers up to the age of 22, when nine numbers could be memorized.

Piaget proposed five stages of cognitive development: (1) the Sensorimotor Period

(ages 0 to 2), (2) the Preoperational Period (ages 2 to 4), (3) the Instiutive Period (ages 7 to 11), and (4) the Formal Operational Period (ages 11-) . The following section uses Holt *et al* (1977), and we look at SEK period (ages about 2 to 12) .

In the course of the Sensorimotor and the Preperational Periods of growth, the child becomes increasingly aware that objects exist independent of the self, that ideas can be represented mentally, and be presented in language. Children change within these periods in relation to objects as they become capable of representing these actions mentally; they become more economical in dealing with problems. However, they are not as efficient as they will be when they are able to engage in operational thought, because of their limited ability to remember, the inability to disengage from what they see, and their problems in coordinating various experiences. The adult can talk about the color and the size of objects to particularize some objects in contrast to others. The activity of combining two elements into one is a complex intellectual achievement which enables one to combine events and therefore be more precise. At the same time, the adult is able to disengage the color from the size and treat the attributes as separate. The child in the Preoperational Period is not able to do this 'combinative thinking'. A child can talk about the color or size of the object. But he cannot use his reasoning to combine the concepts of color and size.

Gradually (but especially around the ages of four to six) the child becomes to appear more capable of understanding. This understanding can be misleading because the child may intuitively solve problems but cannot consciously and deliberately explain how.

The Concrete Operational Period is characterized by thinking patterns and operations which are still in the process of developing. The children in this period need concrete observable objects with which to interact. They begin to perform operations of reversibility (returning to the original starting point of their thoughts), reciprocity (the principle of compensation), classification, and seriation (formation into a series). The reason they can perform these actions is their increasingly decentralizes and is able to take another point of view. These operations and decentralization enable the child in this period to decide crucial transition-solving conservation judgements. Conservation is vital to subsequent logical thought.

The transformation from the Concrete Operational Stage into the Formal Operational Period begins at about eleven or twelve years of age. Formal operations are expressed in the child's ability to think in logical adult terms. During this period, the adolescent engages in logical thought, uses propositional thought in solving problems, and can transform these propositions into the appropriate logical symbol system. The adolescent is able to do combinative thinking, and to combine diverse operations into a single system.

The cognitive apparatus of adolescents interacts with the social personality aspects

of their lives. Adolescents have developed the ability to employ propositional logic, use symbols, and create the coherent system of ideas, and so they are able to engage in ideological and philosophical argument. These changes involve the cognitive system as well as the adolescent's orientation toward the self as a social organism and toward future social roles and career choices.

The following section uses Shirasa (1983: 62-65) for his discussion on the relation between age and language capacity in first language. According to him, the ages 2-2½ are called the Enumeration Period. In this period, children enumerate a few words to signify their intentions, e.g., "*Mama koko*" (Mom here) might be used instead of "*Mama koko ni kite*" (Mom, come here). The average vocabulary of a 2-year-old is about 100 words.

Ages 2½-3 are the Imitative Period. The children in this period are very interested in speaking, and they often imitate their parents and peers. They also like to ask "naze" (why) because they have become aware of causal sequences, and this allows the children to learn more words and structures. The average vocabulary at this period is about 1000 words.

Ages 3-4 are referred to as the Maturity Period. In this period, vocabulary and structures increase, and most of the children acquire almost all the language. Many of them, however, have not acquire accurate pronunciation.

Ages 4-5 are called the Talkative Period. Making an addition to the maturation of language base, the children have passed through varied experiences, so that they become talkative. In step with the development of abstract thinking, the children become interested in listening to stories. The average vocabulary at this period is about 2000 to 2500 words.

The period after 5 years of age is called the Adaptation Period. Children's attention spans are so short that they are not able to listen to others attentively prior to age 5, but subsequently, they can listen to the speaker and can act on the information they receive. Moreover, children's pronunciation becomes good, before they enter elementary school.

Children begin to be interested in story books or picture books when they are about 2 years old, but they are not able to read. At age 4 or 5, some children begin to read a few *kana*. Shirasa says, however, that there are big differences in reading abilities among children. Usually, first grade children learn all the *kana* during the school year.<sup>3</sup> Many of the children in the first and second grades read aloud and most of them will be able to read silently by the third grade. Shirasa claims that if you push children to write too early, they may write backwards (see also Section III of this paper).

## II Objective for Teaching English in Early Childhood

Learners of English as a second language in early childhood can be divided into two groups: those who learn English "naturally" because a parent is a native speaker of English or because they live for some time in English-speaking countries and those who do not necessarily need English in their daily lives. Most children in Japan fall into the latter category. Their exposure to English is limited to a maximum of an hour a day at school.

Nogami (1979: 23) required all the pupils in her school (where English is taught from the first grade) to write essays on why they were studying English. She found that most of the children below the fifth grade did not understand why they were studying English. The fifth and sixth graders, on the other hand, thought they were studying English to become familiar with a foreign language or to expand length of their English studies.

Gotoh (1982: 6) summarized the objectives proposed by a number of linguists: (1) to understand the importance of language in a community, (2) to understand that all the world's people share common ideas and behavior in spite of the existence of many languages, (3) to have a wide range of ideas by learning about a culture through a foreign language, (4) to make children aware they will need English because it is an international languages, (5) to understand foreign children and become friends with them, (6) to acquire English effectively by starting to learn it early, and (7) to establish a solid basis for language learning in high schools.

Fuji *et al* (1983: 120) classified the objectives into three areas: linguistic, cultural and educational.

Many SEK teachers insist on similar objectives. But there are no standardized ones like those in "Course of Study"<sup>4</sup> for high schools. Each public or private kindergarten and schools and companies taking part in SEK have their own objectives (Matsue *et al*, 1983: 126). To give but one example, teachers interviewed at two schools teaching English in early childhood in Miyazaki City said they aim at only one or two objectives. One school aims at building fundamental abilities in listening and speaking, while the other aims at building interest in English and forming a base for later English studies emphasizing the spoken and written aspect of English. (See Appendix I).

### III Teaching Methods and Materials

Some schools and publishing companies taking part in SEK think much of establishing a solid basis for pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language. Others emphasize the establishing of positive attitudes toward language learning in general, and make much of playing games.

In order to understand current practice in SEK, I observed classes in English

conversation schools in Miyazaki City. School A is a small English conversation center which teaches children as well as adults. School B is a branch of a middle-scale English education company taking part in SEK only. I observed pre-school classes at School A and junior course classes at School B. The outline comparison between the schools is in Appendix I. The information comes from the observations and from interviews with teachers of each school in June 1984.

### Pupils and Materials

Both schools have three courses. In School A, pupils who enter at older ages do not take the same classes as those who started earlier, but all beginners use the same materials. On the other hand, School B has 6 kinds of materials, 3 for the junior course (these differ according to the age of admission, more sophisticated materials being used for older children), 2 for the senior and 1 for the master course.

### Class Organization

The size of classes and length of lessons are in Appendix I. Both schools employ American instructors and Japanese specialists in English; School B also employs Japanese English specialists and Japanese kindergarten nurses as assistants.

The teachers of both schools say that although children like to play within a group, the children still wish to be listened to, praised, and encouraged individually. Thus a group should not be too small nor too large. The teachers of School A think that up to five pre-school and 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade children, and up to ten 4th, 5th, 6th grade children in a class are manageable. The teachers of School B said that more than eight pre-school children in a class seemed too many to handle, even they have assistants.

### Materials

Both schools use picture cards or realia to simplify learning words associate with objects. School B uses picture books to help children understand story tapes which are used to improve listening comprehension. School B also uses picture dictionaries for the purpose of teaching children how to use a dictionary as well as offering them visual aids. Since young children are not good at abstract thinking, visual aids are very important for them. Especially in School B, the instructors and assistants use English almost all the time, so visual aids are very necessary part of any lesson.

School B also uses story tapes and music tapes to increase the children's interest and to teach English effectively. The story tapes for young children have English description for the pictures in the books teaching colors, fruits, vehicles, animals, etc. Each section of the tapes has a part for repetition practice of new words and sentences.

### Content and Procedure: Classes Observed

#### 1 School A

The class was made up of 3- and 4-year-old boys. Both children had studied English

for a year. An American teacher taught them using English during most of the lessons.

(1) Greetings (3 minutes)

The greetings were as follows:

Teacher: Hello, everyone

Pupils : Hello, Mr Smith.

Teacher: How are you ?

Pupils : I'm fine, thank you. How are you ?

Teacher: I'm fine, too, thank you.

(2) Attendance (2 minutes)

The teacher took the attendance in English. Both names were called: given name first and then family name as attendance would be called in western countries. Pupils answered in English as well saying "Here" while raising their hands.

(3) Date and Weather (5 minutes)

The teacher asked, "What's the date today?", and the class answered, "It's Monday, June 6th." The teacher asked, "What's the weather like today?", and the class replied, "It's fine."

(4) Introducing Vocabulary (10 minutes)

Cards and realia were used as visual aids for the children. The teacher was trying to teach words for several kinds of fruit animals, and bugs so that the children were able to answer questions like, "What is this?" or "What is that?" The teacher translated the words into Japanese to help children understand first, and they were asked to repeat the words several times.

(5) Introducing Structures (10 minutes)

The teacher gave some sentence like "It is a hippo", or "I want a snake" using vocabulary introduced before, and translated them into Japanese. The children were asked to repeat the sentences several times. They were not be able to memorize the patterns of the sentences, but could only pronounce the words and repeat the sentences after the teacher.

(6) Game (10 minutes)

The teacher asked each child, "What is this?" The pupils were not be able to answer at first, so the teacher asked the children the same question in Japanese, "*Kore wa nan desuka?*", and one of them answered, "Hippo." The teacher repeated the answer, "Yes it is a hippo", and asked the children to repeat the sentence. The teacher used a token system to reinforce the children, giving them a one point card when they behaved desirably, or pronounced the words right, or got the answer right. This seemed to increase the children's competitive spirit a little to hold their interest. While the children had trouble in producing sentences, they seemed very interested in models of fruits and animals, and in getting points, so they remembered the words for fruits and animals very quickly.



(7) Alphabet (5 minutes)

The teacher asked the children to print some capital letters which they had practiced at home. They printed almost all the letters backwards, so the teacher promised to teach the children the letters next time.

(8) Counting Points (3 minutes)

The children were asked to count the points they got during the lesson: "How many points do you have?" They did not have any trouble in counting cards, but they were not able to remember the numbers, and they had some difficulties in distinguishing between cards and points.

(9) Farewell

The end to the lesson was:

Teacher: Good-bye, class.

Pupils : Good-bye, Mr Smith.

Teacher: See you next Monday.

Pupils : See you next Monday.

(10) Evaluation

The exam held in July for this class consisted of vocabulary test. The pupils were asked to translate orally 20 Japanese words such as *kangofu*(nurse), *isha*(doctor), *omawarisan* (policeman) into English equivalents. The teacher found that more review work was needed.

## 2 School B

The class I observed was made up of two 3-year-old girls, two 4-year-old girls, two 4-year-old boys and three 5-year-old girls and a boy. They had just entered the school a month before. There were an American instructor and a Japanese kindergarten nurse in the class. Both of them used English during most of the lessons to get the children used to the target language.

(1) Greetings (2 minutes)

The greetings were as follows:

Instructor: Hello, everyone.

Pupils : Hello, Mr Black.

Instructor: How are you ?

Pupils : I'm fine, thank you, and you ?

Instructor: I'm fine, thank you.

Then the pupils took the instructor's role to greet the assistant.

(2) Attendance (3 minutes)

The leader-of-the-day was selected to take the role in the same way as the teacher did in School A. Since the children were not able to read the alphabet yet, they read *kana* to take the role.

(3) Date and Weather (5 minutes)

The leader asked the date and the weather in the same way as in School A. She also asked the season. "What season is it?" and the class answered, "It's summer".

(4) Warm up (5 minutes)

The same warm-up is done for at least two consecutive weeks and at intervals thereafter for review. The warm-up for that week was "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes". The children made a circle and touched their heads, shoulders, knees, and toes with their hands, while singing the song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes". This seemed to be relax them.

(5) Introducing Vocabulary (5 minutes)

Cards were used as visual aids for the pupils, who were asked to listen to the instructor pronouncing the words. The instructor never forced children to pronounce the words, but most of the children repeated the words unconsciously. The teachers were trying to teach colors using colored paper. The children did not have any difficulties learning colors using the colored paper.

(6) Listening to Tapes (5 minutes)

Each child uses his or her picture book simultaneously with the tape. The picture book had colored pictures but no story. The pupils looked at the pictures while listening to the tape which described each picture. The instructor then asked the children to point to the correct picture. The children did not have any difficulties in telling the color; however, some of the pupils had difficulties in distinguishing color from thing (see below). The teachers did not translate the words into Japanese, just showed the colored paper to help the pupils understand. I asked one of the 'slower' children (a 3-year old girl) some questions in Japanese. Pointing to the sky in the picture, I asked, "*kore wa nani iro desuka?*" (What color is this?) The child answered, "Sora" (sky). I also asked the child the color of the blue paper. She answered, "Ao" (blue). This reflected that the possibilities that she was not old enough to distinguish the color from the thing. The children who had that difficulty were a 3-year-old girl and two 4-year-old boys.

(7) Game (10 minutes)

The class is usually separated into two teams. The teachers said that this gave each child a chance to participate in the game before time ran out, and add competitive spirit to hold their interest. The game for that day was the *Karutatori* game. The pupils made a circle around some colored paper. The teachers said a color in English and the class picked the right color. Each team counted the number of colored papers they had picked up, helped by the instructor or the assistant, and then decided which team had won the game.

(8) Phonics (10 minutes)

The children were learning /p/ and /t/ sounds that week. The instructor

introduced the sounds using rhymes. He asked the children to repeat after him several times. The children seemed very interested in rhyme and sounds, which the children found very strange, and they memorize the rhymes very easily. They did not have any difficulties in pronouncing /p/ and /t/.

After finishing all the sounds the class will be given a sheet of paper on which they copy the printed forms of the capital and small letters, copy their names from printed name cards which they are asked to bring each week, and on the reverse side of the paper, draw pictures of things starting with the letter. The teachers said that this enabled the children to begin reading.

(9) Review (5 minutes)

If any time remains at the end of the lesson, the time is used for a quick review of past lesson activities. This time the teachers showed some colored pictures to the children and asked them to say the color of the paper quickly.

(10) Farewell

The end of the lesson was the same as School A.

(11) Evaluation

Once every four month the children have a test to determine their ability in terms of listening comprehension and individual concentration spans.

The test for this class will be separated into two sections. The first section will be a series of six pictures: apple, tree, chair, carrot, horse, and orange. The children will be asked to, "Color the tree green", and so on. The second test will consist of two questions; (1) "How old are you?"; and "What is it?". No Japanese will be used, but some hand signals such as pointing to the pictures will be employed for the more nervous children. The teachers will give "a" ratings to children who have no difficulty, "b" ratings to children who have difficulty without the use of hand signals, and "c" ratings to children who do not understand at all, who will be given special attention.

#### IV Effects of Teaching English in Early Childhood

"Are there any differences between SEK children and non-SEK children after they enter junior high school?" The available research comparing SEK children and non-SEK children is of two types: (1) that which compares English scores in high schools; and (2) that which compares the attitudes toward English, English-speaking people, and cultures.

Most of the research which investigated English test scores in high schools concluded that SEK children are superior to non-SEK children in speaking and listening as well as in reading and writing (Higuchi *et al*, 1981: 8-9). Yamasaki (1973: 26-29) and other researchers, however, found that while SEK children are superior

to non-SEK children in the first year of junior high school, the difference gradually gets smaller; there is no difference between them after they become second year S.H.S. pupils.

Some studies of attitudes toward English have found that SEK children have more positive attitudes than non-SEK children (Mori *et al.*, 1978: 37). Others (Higuchi *et al.*, 8) concluded that SEK children have more negative attitudes. Higuchi concluded that this was because SEK children might come to dislike English before they enter junior high school or because they might be bored to be taught what they already know.

Since the results of the information on test scores and attitude differences between SEK children and non-SEK children were somewhat contradictory, I constructed a questionnaire to try to learn the situation in Miyazaki City. I focused on the differences in attitudes toward English between junior and senior high school pupils who received SEK and those who did not.

#### Methods and Procedure

The questionnaire was composed of the questions in Japanese (see Appendix II). Some parts come from the Illinois Foreign Language Attitude Questionnaire.<sup>5</sup> The following is a brief explanation of the factors the questions are intended to look at and their potential significance.

Questions 1-8: Interest in English study and degree of personal involvement in it. These questions attempted to extract factors of direct motivation (e.g., enjoyment, importance, etc)

Questions 9A-B: These questions measure feelings of social dissatisfaction or social uncertainty. Gardner and Lambert (1969) suggested two reasons for measuring feelings. First, certain pupils with an integrative orientation toward another cultural group might have developed along the way a basic dissatisfaction with their own society and were thus perceiving language study as a way of examining a potentially better way of life. Second, regardless of pupils attitudes toward society at the start of the language learning process, the more advanced pupils of language might well find that their new skills permitted them to leave their own cultural group and become members of the new group whose language they had nearly mastered. Thus, the new option opened to them might create disillusionment from a feeling of being lost somewhere between two cultures. Agreement with both statement in question 9 indicates the presence of anomie,<sup>6</sup> the pupil experiencing feelings of doubt and conflict in English learning. Savignon (1972) says that the presence of anomie may be a source of resistance to progress in English study, but if it is successfully resolved, it may be the source of positive motivational drive since it indicates the pupil is "involved".

Questions 10 A1-6: Question 10 attempted to find out who received SEK and who did not. Question 10 A1-6 were designed to elicit some details of SEK, e.g., where

the pupils received it, what he or she studied. Questions 10 B1-2 were set to learn if a pupil who had not received SEK thought he or she should have received it, and if so, which skills he or she wanted to improve.

The questionnaire was completed in November 1984 by 168 third year pupils (88 male, 80 female) of Miyazaki University Fuzoku Junior High School, and 88 third year pupils (60 male, 28 female) of Omiya prefectural Senior High School. The senior high school pupils came from two 'good' classes. Both schools are located in Miyazaki City, and most pupils are from upper or middle classes.

According to a questionnaire completed by pupils in Fuzoku Junior High School in May 1983, 89% of them went to Juku schools or had tutors. This fact may affect their attitudes toward learning English. In addition, pupils in both the Fuzoku and Omiya are preparing for entrance examinations for high schools, colleges, or universities, and so this might affect the difference in attitudes between SEK and non-SEK pupils.

Analyses of the results of the questionnaire showed, (1) what portion of the student body received SEK, (2) what portion of the SEK pupils and non-SEK pupils have positive attitudes toward learning English, and (3) how many SEK pupils learned grammar, conversation, and a combination of grammar and conversation (which includes the NHK TV or radio programs), and English songs and poems.

### Results and Discussion

#### (1) Attitudes toward English in General

According to Q1, 61% of the Fuzoku Junior High School pupils (Group A) and 53% of Omiya Senior High School pupils (Group B) answered they like English, and 18% of Group A and 22% of Group B answered they do not (Table 4-1). The ratio of pupils who think they are good at English and those who do not are 35%: 30% of Group A and 33%: 26% in Group B (Table 4-2). Questions 3 and 4 indicate that many of the pupils wish to speak English fluently (Group A, B, 89%), and think learning English is important for the Japanese (Group A, 79%, Group B, 90%) (see Table 4-3, 4). In addition, a large numbers of pupils wish to go abroad (Group A, 69%, Group B, 71%), and think the Japanese lack of knowledge of foreign languages account for many of their political difficulties abroad (Group A, 69%, Group B, 71%) (Tables 4-5, 4-13).

Table 4-7 shows that pupils in both groups think they are good at reading and writing,<sup>7</sup> and they do not think they are good at speaking. Table 4-8 indicates that many of the pupils are interested in speaking.

#### (2) The Present Condition of SEK

Question 10 indicates 48% of the junior high school and 33% of the senior high school pupils received SEK (Table 4-15). Question 10 A1 found that fifty-three percent of Group A and 38% of Group B were made to receive SEK by par-

ents. Question 10 A2 found that thirty to forty percent of both groups learned English at Juku-schools and about the same proportion of both groups learned it at English conversation schools (Table 4-17) . Question 10 A3 determined that 49% of Group A and 59% of Group B learned English for more than one year before they entered junior high school, and 12% of Group A and 14% of Group B learned it more than three years (Table 4-18) . Question 10 A4 found that conversation was the most common subject learned (Group A, 33%, Group B, 52%).

Table 4-20 shows that 50% of Group A and 65% of Group B think that SEK had a good influence on them and 49% of Group A and 34% of Group B say it had a bad influence. Table 4-21 indicates that 57% of non-SEK pupils in Group A and 33% of Group B regret not learning English in early childhood.

### (3) Comparison between SEK pupils and non SEK pupils

Tables 4-24 and 4-25 show the comparison between SEK pupils (Group 1) and non-SEK pupils (Group 2) in fondness for English, performance in English, etc. A higher percentage of SEK children answered they liked English and they were good at English than did non-SEK pupils (Table 4-24). These figures were statistically significant. Question 7, which investigated the possibility that pupils thought they were going to be able to speak English fluently, found that significantly larger numbers of SEK children answered that it would be possible than non-SEK pupils (Table 4-25). Question 8 studied how many of the pupils wanted to get a job which uses English, and indicated that there was no significant difference between SEK and non-SEK pupils (Table 4-15) .

Question 9A and 9B found that more than 70% of the pupils agreed that the Japanese lack of knowledge of foreign languages accounts for many of Japan's political difficulties abroad. On the other hand, about half of the pupils showed their agreement with the statement that a whole-hearted commitment to the study of a foreign language and culture of its people endangers their own cultural identity.

These results significantly characterize Japan's social attitudes toward learning English according to Honna (1980). He points out that most of the Japanese think it essential to know English on account of learning advanced technology and industry abroad, establishing good diplomatic relations with foreign countries and maintaining world peace. Nevertheless, many Japanese are still persistently suspicious about foreign language learning as a means and a process of intercultural understanding. They are afraid that the Japanese sense of national identity will be diluted, weakened, or destroyed by exposure to influential foreign culture.

Gardner's (1979) social psychological model of second language acquisition suggests that the social milieu in which the target language is learned has a great influence on the other factors involved in successful language acquisition such as language aptitude, motivation, and situational anxiety. The pupils' social environment influences the

pupils so that they experience feelings of doubt and conflict in learning English, and it might affect the pupils so that they resist progress in English study.

### Summary

Many of the pupils at these above-average school think that they are good at reading but not good at speaking, and a large number of pupils think that it is important for the Japanese to learn English, wish to go abroad and to speak English like a native speaker although few of them say they are good at English or that they like it. There were more pupils who like English and who think they are good at it among SEK pupils than among non-SEK pupils. In addition, more of the SEK pupils than non-SEK pupils indicated a higher possibility for them to be fluent speakers of English.

### Conclusion

In the last section, we found that more than 30% of SEK pupils thought that they obtained either nothing or bad results from SEK. Why do so many feel this way?

Since English is taught in only 1% of elementary schools (Nogami, 1981: 154), English lessons in junior high school are taught under the assumption that none of the pupils has received English before. Consequently, some of the pupils who have already learned English might get bored and lose the incentive to study English.

The pupils who completed the questionnaire might also be too young to understand or justify the real effects of SEK, because might not have had the chance to use their English abilities. Most of the school work in English in high schools is grammar translation and little time is used for practicing listening and speaking. Pupils who have studied the phonetic system in SEK might never have a chance to use their ability in English classes and they might never realize that they are good at pronunciation.

Section III discussed the current state of SEK in Miyazaki City and found that even 3-year-old boys are taught the alphabet. In section I, however, we found that 3-year-old children are not able to write kana properly. The 3-year-old boys wrote some English letters backwards. In Piaget's terms, the children might not have reached the level at which they *can* learn the alphabet. A similar thing may have happened to the pupils who answered the questionnaire, so that they experienced frustrations, and it may have caused them to feel they got no results or bad results.

Section I discussed the shortness of children's memory spans. Most of the children receiving SEK, however, study English only once or twice a week. How much can they accomplish with one or two 50-minute periods a week?

Since some pupils feel they obtained good results from SEK, we cannot say SEK is bad in itself. It may be that the problems lie in the way SEK is taught, in the materials, and in the time at which certain materials are presented. The most severe limitation may be the absolute shortage of time.

Section IV discussed the presence of anomie in the Japanese. The contradictory opinions that it is necessary for the Japanese to study English and that they should not study it because it endangers their cultural identity, not uncommonly held by the same person, may have caused pupils to feel doubt and conflict in learning English.

Companies which publish textbooks and reference materials, as well as audio-visual aids for pre-JHS children, are yearly reporting growing profits. It may well turn out that there will be an increase in the number of people who start studying English in early childhood. In addition, the beginning age is likely to be lowered.

Unfortunately, research on SEK has not matched the growth of the SEK business. In order not to spoil childhood and not to produce any results except a life-long aversion to English, large scale research is necessary to find the most effective materials and methods for SEK. Furthermore, if SEK is adopted in elementary schools, a big rearrangement of the curricula in high schools would be needed. Finally, in order to solve the problem of anomie in studying English in Japan we should also have a correct understanding of attitudes in language learning.

(1986年9月30日受理)

#### Notes

1 Private tutoring schools run by licensed or unlicensed teachers.

2 For example, see the 1984 report of the Conference on Culture and Education which proposed teaching English to elementary school pupils in public schools.

3 Nowadays, many Japanese kindergartens teach *kana*, and some even teach a few Chinese characters.

4 Based on the Suggested Course of Study (1943), produced by American linguists. It recommends the Palmer method used by his institute in prewar Japan.

5 This questionnaire, completed in October of 1969, was undertaken upon request of Committee 1 of the 1970 Northeast Conference on the Teaching Foreign Languages: "The Relevant Curriculum".

6 The concept of anomie is French sociologist Emile Durkheim's, it means being without norms or social ties.

7 In the questionnaire, reading and writing are translated into "*eigo o yomu koto*" and "*eigo o kaku koto*". It is possible that the pupils misunderstood them to mean translation from English to Japanese and Japanese to English respectively.

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## APPENDIX I

## Comparison between Schools A and B

	School A	School B
Objectives of SEK	-to build fundamental ability in listening and speaking English	-to build readiness and interest in English -to form a base for later English studies which enable them to acquire better understanding of the spoken and written aspects of English
Levels	Pre-school children's class 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade class 4th, 5th 6th grade class	Junior course A (ages 3-6) B (ages 7-9) C (ages 10-12) Senior course D (ages 5-8) E (ages 9-12) Master course F (ages 9-12)
Class Size	One foreign or Japanese teacher in a class	A Japanese or foreign instructor and a Japanese assistant in a class
Class size	2 to 7 children in a class 50 minutes per lesson (once or twice a week)	6 to 10 children in a class 50 minutes per lesson (once or twice a week)
Instructional media used to teach the lesson	Original materials made by a classroom teacher -picture cards -workbooks -models of real things (fruits, buds, animals, etc)	Original materials developed in the company -picture cards -workbooks -story books -story tapes and music tapes -cards -picture dictionary -grammar books (only for the Master Course)

Content	-lexical items -structural items	-lexical items -phonics -dialogue
Procedure (for pre-school children class in School A and for junior course in School B)	1 Greetings 2 Attendance 3 Date and Weather 4 Introducing Vocabulary 5 Introducing Structures 6 Counting Points 7 Farewell	1 Greetings 2 Attendance 3 Warm-up, song with activities 4 Date and Weather 5 Introducing Vocabulary 6 Listening to Tapes 7 Game utilizing vocabulary 8 Phonics 9 Review 10 Farewell
Evaluation	Final exams in each 3 sessions -vocabulary tests -translation tests (Japanese to English) -comprehension tests	Once every four months -comprehension tests

School A = a small English conversation center in Miyazaki

School B = a branch of a middle-scale English-education company

## APPENDIX II

### Results of the Questionnaire

Table 4-1 Answers to the question 1: "Do you like English?"

1=like very much

2= like

3=neither like nor dislike

4= dislike

5=great dislike

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	21 (13)	81 (48)	36 (21)	23 (14)	7 (4)	168 (100)
Group B	13 (15)	34 (38)	22 (25)	14 (16)	6 (7)	89 (100)
Total	12 (5)	77 (30)	94 (37)	41 (16)	33 (13)	257 (100)

Table 4-3 Q3 Do you wish you could speak English like a native speaker?

1 = very much so

2 = yes

3 = may be

4 = no

	1	2	3	4	Total
Group A	80 (48)	68 (41)	18 (11)	2 (1)	168 (100)
Group B	53 (60)	26 (29)	9 (10)	1 (1)	89 (100)
Total	133 (52)	94 (37)	27 (11)	3 (1)	257 (100)

Table 4-4 Q4 How important is it for Japanese to learn English ?

1 = extremely important

2 = important

3 = not so important

	1	2	3	Total
Group A	41 (24)	92 (55)	35 (21)	168 (100)
Group B	35 (39)	45 (51)	9 (10)	89 (100)
Total	76 (30)	137 (53)	44 (17)	257 (100)

Table 4-5 Q5 Would you like to visit or live in an English-speaking country ?

1 = yes

2 = no

3 = maybe

	1	2	3	Total
Group A	116 (69)	15 (9)	37 (22)	168 (100)
Group B	63 (71)	14 (16)	12 (14)	89 (100)
Total	179 (70)	29 (11)	49 (19)	257 (100)

Table 4-6 Q6-A Which of the following skills do you like best:

(1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, or (4) writing ?

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Group A	(1) listening	38 (23)	38 (23)	45 (27)	47 (28)
	(2) speaking	45 (27)	27 (16)	53 (32)	43 (26)
	(3) reading	48 (29)	68 (41)	37 (22)	15 (8)
	(4) writing	37 (22)	35 (21)	33 (20)	63 (38)
	Total	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)
Group B	(1) listening	12 (14)	26 (29)	24 (27)	27 (30)
	(2) speaking	25 (28)	18 (20)	23 (26)	22 (25)
	(3) reading	33 (37)	30 (34)	19 (21)	8 (9)
	(4) writing	19 (21)	15 (17)	23 (26)	32 (36)
	Total	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)

Table 4-7 Q6 B Which of the following skills are you good at:

(1) listening (2) speaking, (3) reading or (4) writing ?

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Group A	(1) listening	37 (22)	39 (23)	41 (24)	51 (30)
	(2) speaking	11 (7)	22 (13)	60 (35)	74 (45)
	(3) reading	53 (32)	74 (44)	37 (22)	4 (2)
	(4) writing	67 (40)	33 (20)	30 (18)	38 (23)
	Total	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)
Group B	(1) listening	6 (7)	17 (19)	33 (37)	33 (37)
	(2) speaking	3 (3)	16 (18)	29 (33)	41 (46)
	(3) reading	42 (47)	35 (39)	9 (10)	3 (3)
	(4) writing	38 (43)	21 (24)	18 (20)	12 (14)
	Total	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)

Table 4-8 Q6-C Which of the following skills are you most interested in:

(1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, or (4) writing ?

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Group A	(1) listening	21 (13)	56 (33)	37 (22)	54 (32)
	(2) speaking	114 (68)	22 (13)	18 (11)	16 (10)
	(3) reading	17 (10)	54 (32)	69 (41)	27 (16)
	(4) writing	16 (10)	36 (21)	44 (26)	71 (42)
	Total	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)	168 (100)

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Group B	(1) listening	15 (17)	42 (47)	17 (19)	15 (17)
	(2) speaking	54 (61)	17 (19)	11 (12)	7 (8)
	(3) reading	14 (16)	24 (27)	37 (42)	14 (16)
	(4) writing	6 (8)	6 (8)	24 (27)	53 (60)
	Total	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)	89 (100)

Table 4-9 Q7 How probable is it, do you think, that you will one day be a fluent speaker of English?

Place the numbers "0" (completely improbable) to "5" (completely probable) to indicate your belief.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	14 (8)	18 (11)	28 (17)	72 (43)	28 (17)	8 (5)	168 (100)
Group B	11 (12)	15 (17)	11 (12)	25 (28)	15 (17)	12 (14)	89 (100)
Total	25 (10)	33 (13)	39 (15)	97 (38)	43 (17)	20 (8)	257 (100)

Table 4-10 Q8 Do you want to get a job using English?

1 = yes

2 = no

3 = don't know

	1	2	3	Total
Group A	28 (17)	62 (37)	78 (46)	168 (100)
Group B	18 (20)	36 (40)	35 (39)	89 (100)

Table 4-11 Q8-A Why do you want to get a job using English?

1 = because parents recommend it

2 = because I'm interested in English

3 = because I'm interested in such a job

	1	2	3	Total
Group A	18 (60)	12 (40)	0	30 (100)
Group B	0	10 (56)	8 (44)	18 (100)

Table 4-12 Q8-B Why don't you want to get a job using English ?

1 = because I'm not good at English

2 = because I'm not interested in such a job

	1	2	Total
Group A	7 (12)	50 (88)	57 (100)
Group B	8 (23)	27 (77)	35 (100)

Table 4-13 Q9 Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by circling one of the five numbers as follows:

4 = strongly agree

3 = agree

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

0 = no opinion

Q9-A The Japanese lack of knowledge of foreign languages accounts for many of Japan's political difficulties abroad: 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

	4	3	2	1	0	Total
Group A	41 (24)	84 (50)	9 (5)	3 (2)	31 (19)	168 (100)
Group B	33 (37)	44 (47)	7 (8)	3 (3)	2 (2)	89 (100)
Total	74 (29)	128 (50)	16 (6)	6 (2)	33 (13)	257 (100)

Table 4-14 Q9-B A whole-hearted commitment to the study of a foreign language and the culture of its people endangers one's own cultural identity: 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

	4	3	2	1	0	Total
Group A	39 (23)	54 (32)	28 (17)	4 (2)	43 (26)	168 (100)
Group B	10 (11)	31 (35)	26 (29)	13 (15)	9 (10)	89 (100)
Total	49 (19)	85 (33)	54 (21)	17 (7)	52 (20)	257 (100)

Table 4-15 Q10 Did you ever study English before you entered junior high school ?

	Group 1=SEK pupils	Group 2=non SEK pupils	
	Group 1	Group 2	Total
Group A	81 (48)	87 (52)	168 (100)
Group B	29 (33)	60 (67)	89 (100)
Total	110 (43)	147 (57)	257 (100)

Table 4-16 Q10-A (1) Who influenced you to study English ? (Group 1 )

- 1=your parents  
 2=your relatives  
 3=your teachers  
 4=your friends  
 5=yourself

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	43 (53)	10 (12)	1 (1)	4 (5)	23 (28)	81 (100)
Group B	11 (38)	3 (10)	0	6 (21)	9 (31)	29 (100)
Total	54 (49)	13 (12)	1 (1)	10 (9)	32 (29)	110 (100)

Table 4-17 Q10-A (2) Where did you study ? (Group 1 )

- 1=Juku school  
 2=Conversation school  
 3=tutor  
 4=radio or TV  
 5=self-study

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	24 (30)	36 (44)	5 (6)	11 (14)	5 (6)	81 (100)
Group B	11 (38)	9 (31)	1 (3)	5 (17)	3 (10)	29 (100)
Total	35 (32)	45 (41)	6 (5)	16 (15)	8 (7)	110 (100)

Table 4-18 Q10-A (3) How long did you study ? (Grpup 1 )

- 1=less than a month  
 2=one month - 6 months  
 3=6 months - 1 year  
 4=1 year - 2 years  
 5=2 years - 3 years  
 6=more than 3 years



	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Group A	8 (10)	11 (14)	22 (27)	18 (22)	12 (15)	10 (12)	81 (100)
Group B	0 (0)	7 (24)	5 (17)	10 (34)	3 (10)	4 (14)	29 (100)
Total	8 (7)	18 (16)	27 (25)	28 (26)	15 (14)	14 (13)	110 (100)

Table 4-19 Q10-A (4) What did you learn ? (Group 1 )

- 1=grammar  
 2= conversation  
 3=grammar and conversation  
 4=English songs, poems, etc.  
 5= other

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	14 (17)	27 (33)	8 (10)	2 (2)	30 (37)	81 (100)
Group B	3 (10)	15 (52)	7 (24)	1 (3)	3 (10)	29 (100)
Total	17 (16)	42 (38)	15 (14)	3 (2)	33 (30)	110 (100)

Table 4-20 Q10-A (5) Do you think it was good to study English before entering junior high school ? (Group 1 )

- 1=very much so  
 2=yes  
 3=no  
 4=definitely not  
 5=don't know

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	14 (17)	27 (33)	8 (10)	2 (2)	30 (37)	81 (100)
Group B	5 (17)	14 (48)	2 (7)	1 (3)	7 (24)	29 (100)
Total	19 (17)	41 (37)	10 (9)	3 (3)	37 (34)	110 (100)

Table 4-21 Q10-A (6) Do you think you obtained good results from SEK ?  
Indicate your agreement with each of the following items by circling one of the five numbers as follows:

- 5=obtained very good results  
 4=obtained good results  
 3=no influence  
 2=obtained bad results  
 1=obtained very bad results

		5	4	3	2	1	Total
Group 1	1 feel at ease	18 (22)	31 (38)	30 (37)	1 (1)	1 (1)	81 (100)
	2 interest	22 (27)	28 (35)	24 (30)	6 (7)	1 (1)	81 (100)
	3 listening	17 (21)	32 (40)	30 (30)	2 (2)	0 (0)	81 (100)
	4 speaking	12 (15)	38 (47)	30 (37)	1 (1)	0 (0)	81 (100)
	5 reading	15 (19)	36 (44)	28 (35)	2 (2)	0 (0)	81 (100)
	6 writing	13 (16)	24 (30)	37 (47)	3 (4)	2 (3)	79 (100)
	Total	97 (20)	189 (39)	179 (37)	15 (3)	4 (1)	484 (100)

		5	4	3	2	1	Total
Group 2	1 feel at ease	11 (38)	10 (34)	7 (24)	1 (3)	0 (0)	29 (100)
	2 interest	10 (34)	11 (38)	7 (24)	1 (3)	0 (0)	29 (100)
	3 listening	5 (17)	4 (14)	17 (59)	3 (10)	0 (0)	29 (100)
	4 speaking	4 (14)	5 (17)	17 (59)	3 (10)	0 (0)	29 (100)
	5 reading	4 (14)	6 (21)	17 (59)	2 (7)	0 (0)	29 (100)
	6 writing	4 (14)	3 (10)	18 (62)	3 (10)	1 (3)	29 (100)
	Total	38 (22)	39 (22)	83 (48)	13 (7)	1 (1)	174 (100)

Table 4-22 Q10-B (1) Do you think you could have studied English before you entered junior high school ? (Group 2 )

	Yes	No	Total
Group A	50 (57)	37 (43)	87 (100)
Group B	20 (33)	40 (67)	60 (100)
Total	70 (48)	77 (52)	147 (100)

Table 4-23 Q10-B (2) What do you wish you had studied ?

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Group A	(1) listening	1 (2)	14 (34)	12 (24)	20 (40)
	(2) speaking	23 (46)	15 (30)	8 (16)	4 (8)
	(3) reading	4 (8)	11 (22)	22 (44)	13 (26)
	(4) writing	22 (44)	7 (14)	8 (16)	13 (26)
	Total	50 (100)	50 (100)	50 (100)	50 (100)

Group B	(1) listening	5 (25)	8 (40)	3 (15)	4 (20)
	(2) speaking	13 (65)	4 (20)	2 (10)	1 (5)
	(3) reading	2 (10)	3 (15)	13 (65)	2 (10)
	(4) writing	0 (0)	5 (25)	2 (10)	13 (65)
	Total	20 (100)	20 (100)	20 (100)	20(100)

Table 4-24 Comparison Between Groups 1 and 2 for Q1 and Q2

Q1  
 1=like very much  
 2= like  
 3=neither like nor dislike  
 4= dislike  
 5= great dislike

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	Group 1	11 (14)	44 (54)	12 (15)	9 (11)	5 (6)	81 (48)
	Group 2	10 (12)	37 (42)	24 (28)	14 (16)	2 (2)	87 (52)
Group B	Group 1	6 (21)	13 (45)	3 (10)	4 (14)	3 (10)	29 (33)
	Group 2	7 (12)	21 (35)	19 (32)	10 (17)	3 (5)	60 (67)

Q2  
 1=very good  
 2=good  
 3=neither good nor bad  
 4=not good  
 5= bad

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	Group 1	8 (10)	28 (35)	22 (27)	10 (12)	13 (16)	81 (48)
	Group 2	1 (1)	22 (25)	36 (41)	17 (20)	11 (13)	87 (52)
Group B	Group 1	3 (10)	8 (28)	10 (35)	4 (14)	4 (14)	29 (33)
	Group 2	0 (0)	19 (32)	26 (43)	10 (17)	5 (8)	60 (67)

Table 4-25 Comparison Between Groups 1 and 2 for Q7 and Q8  
Q7

		0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Group A	Group 1	4 (5)	8 (10)	13 (16)	34 (42)	17 (21)	5 (6)	81 (48)
	Group 2	10 (12)	10 (12)	15 (17)	38 (44)	11 (13)	3 (3)	87 (52)
Group B	Group 1	4 (14)	3 (10)	2 (7)	6 (21)	10 (35)	4 (14)	29 (33)
	Group 2	7 (12)	12 (20)	9 (15)	19 (32)	5 (8)	8 (13)	60 (67)

Q8  
1=yes  
2=no  
3=don't know

		1	2	3	Total
Group A	Group 1	14 (17)	33 (41)	34 (42)	81 (48)
	Group 2	14 (16)	29 (33)	44 (51)	87 (52)
Group B	Group 1	6 (21)	11 (38)	12 (41)	29 (33)
	Group 2	12 (20)	25 (42)	23 (38)	60 (67)