

## Chapter 3

# The Children' s Life in Preschool

# 1. Adjustment to Preschool

## **1. Children' s period of stay and its effect on their attitude in preschool (Figure 3-1)**

Regarding the length of attendance, 13.6% of the children had been attending preschool for less than 3 months, 11.4% for 4~6 months, 6.1% for 7~11 months, 28.3% for 1~2 years and 40.6% for over 2 years. Thus, 68.9% of the children had attended preschool for over a year.

72.6% of the parents replied that their children were "very well accustomed to preschool," while 24.7% were "fairly accustomed" and 2.4% were "not so well accustomed to preschool."

We also looked at how long a child needed to attend preschool in order to be accustomed. Approximately half of the children attending preschool for less than 3 months were "very well accustomed to preschool" but the percentage of children who had been attending for 7~11 months only increased to 58.8%, which was not a significant increase (see figure 3-1). This shows that it is necessary for a child to attend preschool for a considerable time in order to get accustomed to preschool life.

## **2. Children' s age and the attitude in preschool (Figure 3-2)**

We found that the older the children were, the better they were accustomed to preschool.

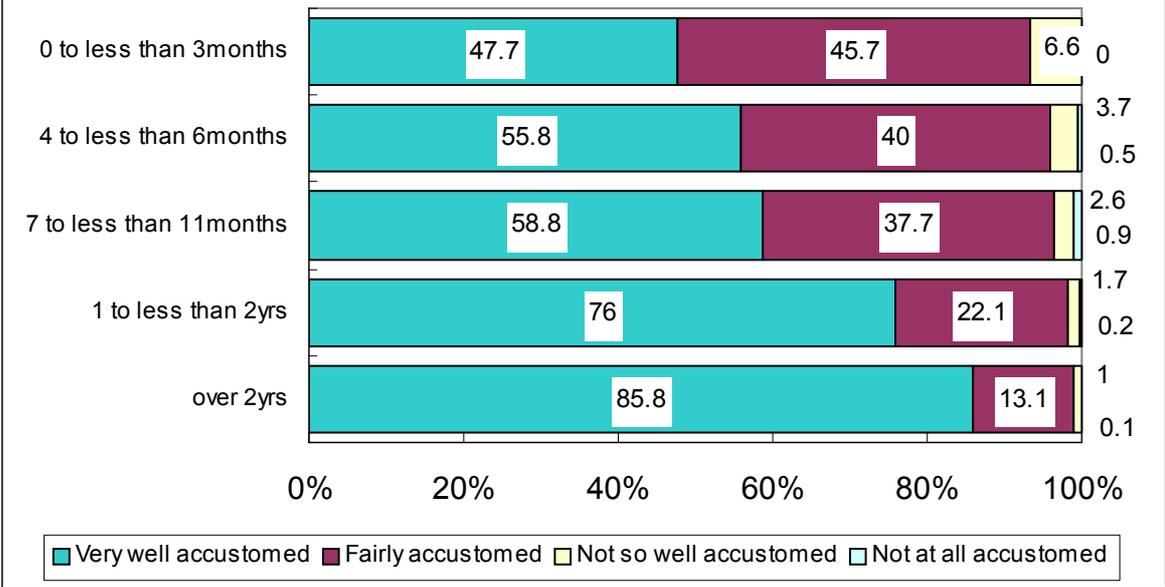
Out of the 0-year olds, only 44.0% of them were "very well accustomed to preschool."

Since the older children had been attending preschool for longer periods, we feel that in order for the children to get used to preschool, both their age and their length of attendance are influencing factors.

## **3. Children' s Japanese language ability and the attitude in preschool (Figure 3-3)**

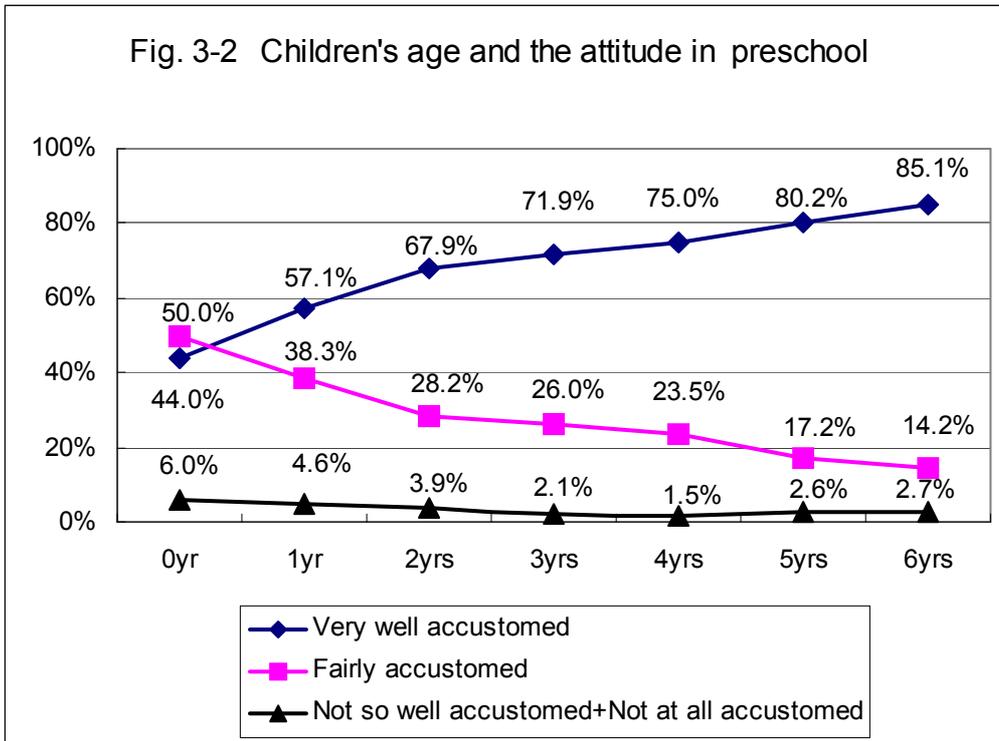
We looked at the relationship between the Japanese ability of the children who were over 2 years old and their adjustment to preschool. 85.8% of the children whose Japanese ability was excellent replied that they were "very well accustomed to preschool." However, over 50% of the children who had fair or poor understanding also replied they were "very well accustomed". On the other hand, 62.5% of the children with very poor understanding were "fairly accustomed to preschool," while 37.5% were "not adjusting well." None of the children felt that they were "not adjusting at all"

Fig. 3-1 Children's period of stay and its effect on their attitude in preschool



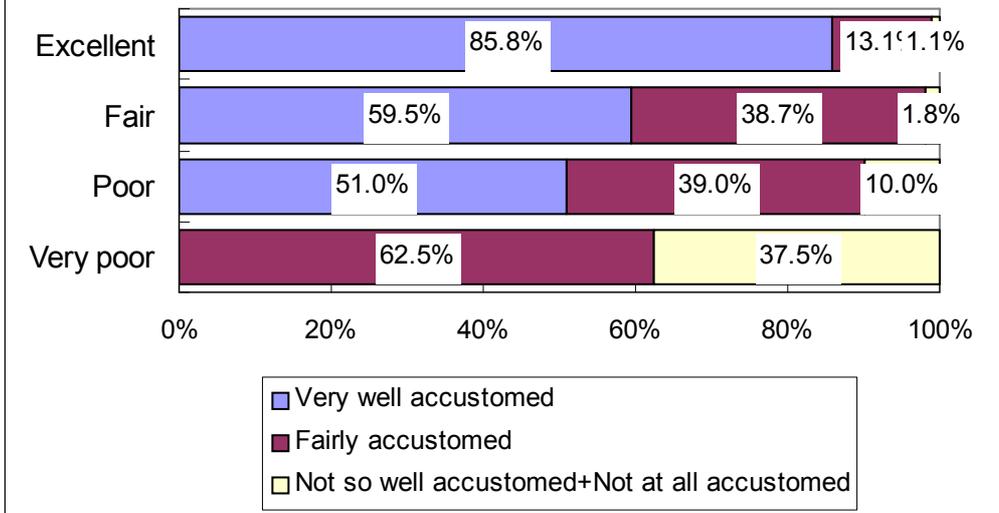
N=1956

Fig. 3-2 Children's age and the attitude in preschool



N=1907

Fig.3-3 Children's Japanese language ability and preschool life



N=1592

## 2. Useful Factors when Adjusting to Preschool

### 1. Useful factors when adjusting to preschool (Figure 3-4)

Every parent wants their child to adjust to preschool as soon as possible and to be friends with other children. What can the preschools and people around the children do in order for them to be able to adjust quickly? Here, we present some of the comments from parents concerning what was useful for their child to adjust to preschool. Many of the parents commented on the child's ability to adjust. On one hand the parents themselves tried hard for their children to get accustomed, while on the other, 41.5% said that the teachers gave kind consideration for the child to get accustomed and 32.1% said that the teachers frequently contacted the parents. We can see from this that the parents feel it is important for the preschools to take kind consideration towards the children and parents in order for the children to adjust. It also seems that taking the time to talk to the Japanese parents and children is considered a big factor for the children to adjust well. "Teachers giving kind consideration" was a comment from parents of children in all age groups, and it can be said that the consideration of the preschool was recognized by the parents and it stimulated the children to be accustomed at a faster speed. Also, some of the parents gave the factor that the preschools showed understanding of their culture. 5.2% of parents replied that the teachers made an effort to learn their language and 6.3% answered that the teachers spoke to their children in their own language, giving a total exceeding 10%. 5.1% of the parents replied that the teachers provided an opportunity to introduce the children's culture and 3.5% said that the teachers introduced their country or culture. This is important in the sense that it helps the children feel proud of their own culture, and it also shows that this raises the trust the parents feel toward the preschool.

### 2. Duration of residence in Japan and useful factors when adjusting to preschool (Table 3-1)

We looked at the useful factors for adjusting to preschool and the years lived in Japan.

The factor given by the highest number of parents was, "the children's ability to adjust" and this was valued the most among all parents.

The factor "the teachers gave kind consideration" was given most by parents who had been in Japan for 0~3 years. Parents with a short residential duration and those who are trying to raise their children in an unfamiliar country, must feel a great sense of relief when the teachers take special care, since 60.7% said that this was a useful factor. There is a big difference between parents whose residential duration is less than 20 years and those whose is over 20 years. Parents who have lived in Japan for 10~20 years still feel that this is an important factor for their children to adjust to their preschool.

"Teachers frequently contacted the parents" was given by parents regardless of their children's age, and showed that this is important for the preschool and parents to have a close relationship.

"Parents made efforts in order for their children to adjust" was given by parents who have been in Japan for less than 20 years. From this, we can picture the parents making efforts in a somewhat tense life, living in an unknown country. "The teachers made an effort

to learn their language” was another factor that was given by many of the parents with a short residential duration.

We can assume that in order to communicate with parents who do not have a high understanding of Japanese, it is necessary for the teachers to learn the parents’ native language. For the parents that have a short residential duration, the preschool’s attitude of respecting the parents’ culture resulted in the parents trusting the preschools and raising their own sense of belonging.

### **3. Duration of 0~10 years and useful factors when adjusting to preschool (Figure 3-5)**

We then focused our study on 2 factors given by parents who have been in Japan for 0~10 years. One factor was that given by the highest percentage of parents, “teachers kind consideration,” and the other one was that which directly connects parents and teachers, “teachers frequently contacted the parents.” During this 10 year span, the number of responses did not vary for “teachers frequently contacted the parents,” but we feel that the difference in their ability to speak Japanese according to their length of stay in Japan must affect this. (See chapter 3-5 communication)

On the other hand, 56.4% of the parents who had been in Japan for less than a year replied with “teachers taking special care”, as did 67.9% of parents in their second year. The number was especially high for parents in their second year but gradually declined afterwards.

### **4. Children’ s Japanese ability and useful factors when adjusting to preschool (Figure 3-6)**

When we looked at the relation between the Japanese ability of children over the age of 2 and the useful factors, we found that “special care from the teachers” was needed more for children who had a lower level of understanding than those who were excellent in Japanese. Also, “teachers frequently contacted the parents” was more important for parents who had children with poor understanding of Japanese. Parents who had children with very poor understanding of Japanese did not give high scores to the factor “teachers frequently contacted the parents”, since these parents also tend to have a relatively low understanding of Japanese and it was difficult for them to communicate with the preschool teachers.

### **5. Other factors for children to get accustomed**

Below are the comments we received the most

#### **Having other people from their home country**

Useful factors were “having other children from my home country close by” (day-care center 3yrs girl/ Mother 32 yrs / Korea / 7yrs) and “having brothers and sisters in the same preschool”(day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 35 yrs / Korea / 7 yrs). “The preschools were used to dealing with foreign children” was probably an important factor as well.

#### **Time it took until they get accustomed**

“Since my child did not understand Japanese and did not want to go to preschool during the first 2 weeks, it was very difficult to get her to go”(day-care center 5 girl / father 35 / Korea / 1 yr). There were also examples where the children accustomed after 3 to 4 months and ones where we could see the parents trying hard from the comment, “we taught our child Japanese so they would not be isolated“

### **Parents accompanying their children**

In more detail, there were comments such as, "in order for the child to adjust to preschool, the schools allowed the mothers to accompany their child for a certain period of time. They also allowed us to attend the events so my child was able to adjust with ease" (kindergarten boy / mother 36 / Korea / 0 yrs). These are examples where the flexible approaches of the preschools were effective.

### **Teachers' considerations and characteristics**

Another comment that was popular was that "the children were able to adjust to the preschool since the teachers took special consideration." Special consideration is important as we can see from the comment, "the teachers were very thoughtful so we had no worries. They treated my child in the same way they would treat Japanese children" (day-care center 5 boy / mother 38 yrs / Brazil / 8 yrs). However, there were parents that commented, "the teachers never showed special consideration. I liked the fact that they treated my child as if she was Japanese." (day-care center 1 girl / mother 33 yrs / Korea / 8 yrs). Many of the parents gave comments regarding the basic humanity of the teachers and their love towards the children. An example of such a comment is, "all of the teachers at the preschools are very kind and friendly." Although the characteristics are explained in different words such as kindness, warmth, effort and consideration, many of the parents feel that these are all important in order to speed up the children getting accustomed to the preschools.

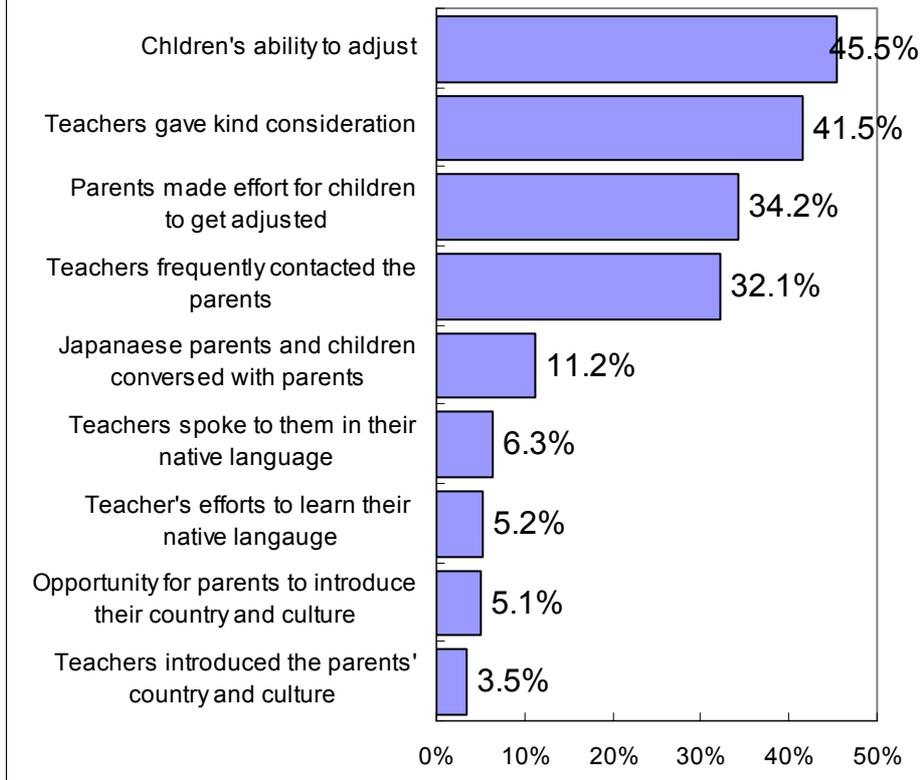
On the other hand, for those parents with children who do not have a high Japanese level, some want "better understanding from the teachers and for them to be more sensitive. If they could be a little more caring for a certain period of time, such as the first 3 months, the children would get accustomed better" (preschool 3 boy / Mother / 32 yrs / 0yrs)

The characteristics of the teachers are also described in 3-4 Concerns about preschool life

### **The Japanese are criticized that they lack Internationalism**

Some parents gave a comment about Japanese in general, criticizing that "Japanese people are not interested in foreigners at all" and they would, "appreciate it if they could be a little more caring" (day-care center 3 boy / 32 yrs / 0 yrs). Also, it is necessary to remember that some people regard it as natural that, "it would be better if there was a teacher that could communicate in Spanish" (day-care center 1 boy / mother 31 yrs / Colombia, 6 yrs), "if there was at least one teacher who could speak another language, it would be nice. I could talk to that person" and "since I am from Brazil, please speak to me in Portuguese" (day-care center 5 yrs boy / mother 29 yrs Brazil 4 yrs)

Fig. 3-4 Useful factors when adjusting to preschool

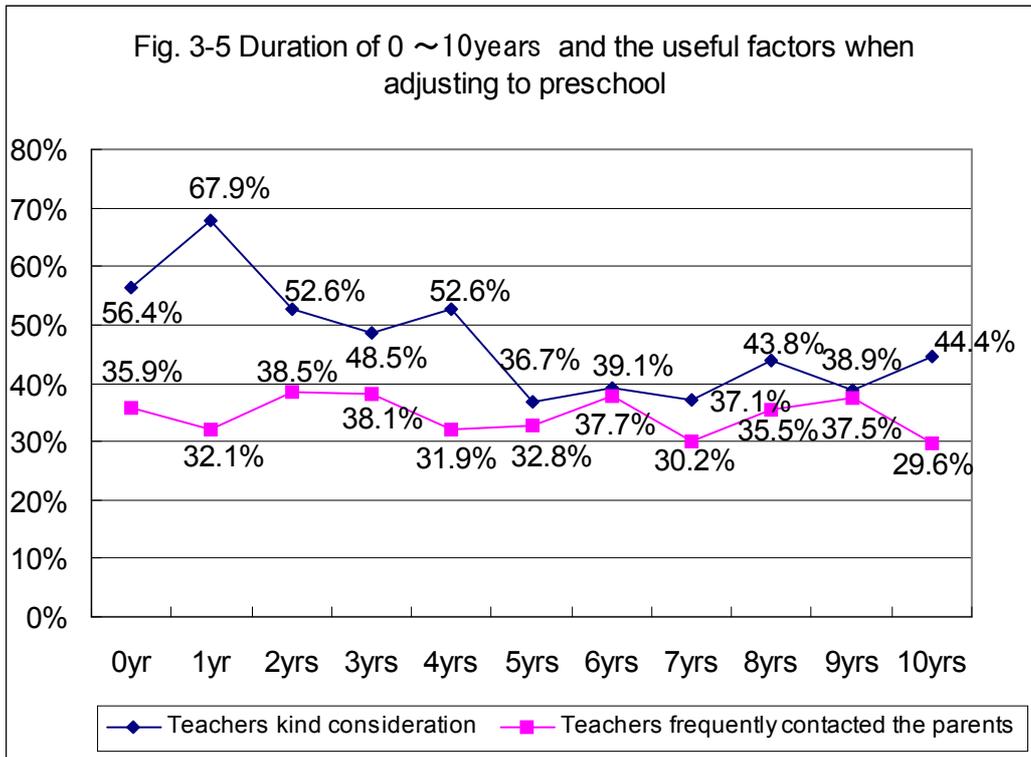


N=1956

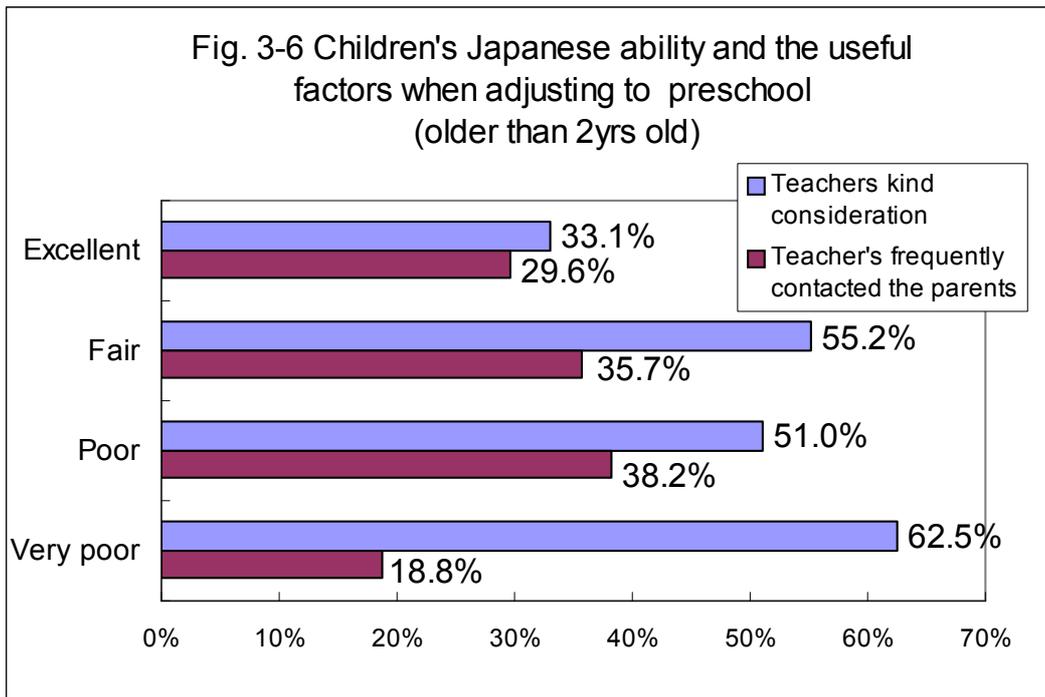
Table 3-1 Duration of residence in Japan and the useful factors when adjusting to preschool

	0 to less than 3 yrs	than 10 yrs	than 20 yrs	over 20 yrs
Teachers spoke to them in their native language	4.2%	8.1%	5.9%	5.1%
Teachers gave kind consideration	60.7%	44.3%	45.8%	26.4%
Teachers frequently contacted the parents	36.1%	36.7%	31.6%	29.8%
Teachers introduced the parents' country and culture	7.9%	2.6%	3.6%	6.2%
Opportunity for parents to introduce their country and	5.8%	6.5%	5.2%	1.1%
Japanese parents and children conversed with parents	13.6%	13.0%	11.7%	6.2%
Teachers efforts to learn their native language	12.6%	5.2%	3.2%	5.6%
Children's ability to adjust	50.8%	47.9%	47.4%	57.3%
Parents made effort for children to get adjusted	39.8%	41.2%	35.7%	14.6%

N=1842



N=1335



N=1621

### 3. Benefits that Parents get form Preschool

#### 1. Benefits that parents get form their children going to preschool (Figure 3-7)

The reply “my child can play with other children who are the same age” ranked first with 86.4%. Following this, 69.3% of the parents answered, “I can have time to work / study” and 61.1% replied “My child enjoys preschool, activities and the programs.” All of these comments had a high rating. Other comments that ranked high were, “my child can learn Japanese” and “I am able to learn how the Japanese raise their children,” but these are related to the years the parents have lived in Japan.

#### 2. Duration of residence in Japan and the benefits that parents get from their children going to preschool (Table 3-2)

The comment, “my child can play with other children of the same age” was a comment that came from parents regardless of how many years they had been in Japan. The comments “being able to work / study” and “enjoy preschool and activities” were found to have a similar trend.

On the other hand, parents who have only been in Japan for a short period seem to rank “learning Japanese” as an important factor. Although the number of parents that feel this factor is important decreases as the years they have lived in Japan increases, 1 out of every 2 parents who have been in Japan for 10~20 years also chose this factor. For parents who have lived in Japan for less than 20 years, we can see that having their children attend preschool is a good opportunity for them to understand how children are raised in Japan. “I can consult with the teachers” is a factor that increases as the years they live in Japan increases, up until 20 years. From this, we can see that the parents depend upon the teachers. 34.6% of the parents who have been in Japan for 10 to 20 years are consulting with the teachers. The factor “Parents have an opportunity to know other Japanese parents” increases with the years they live in Japan.

#### 3. Children’ s period of stay and the benefits that parents get from their children going to preschool (Table 3-3)

Regarding the relationship between the length of time a child has attended preschool and the benefits, we found that factors such as “we can consult with the teachers” and “parents have an opportunity to know each other” tend to increase as the years their children attending preschool increases. We assume that the factor “consulting with teachers” was ranked low by parents of children attending for 1~2 years since they have gotten used to child rearing, but increases again after the second year since new topics occur. Other than this factor, we did not see a big difference among the different groups.

#### 4. Japanese ability of parents and the benefits that parents get form their children going to preschool (Table 3-4)

Regarding the relationship between the parents’ Japanese ability and the benefits, the

better they were at Japanese, the more they consulted with the teachers. “Parents have an opportunity to get to know each other” was ranked highly among parents who were fluent in Japanese, but 25.7% of the parents who had no understanding of Japanese also said it was a good factor. We assume that it is important to get accustomed to other parents.

## **5. Other Comments**

### **Learn the Japanese culture and social life / behavior**

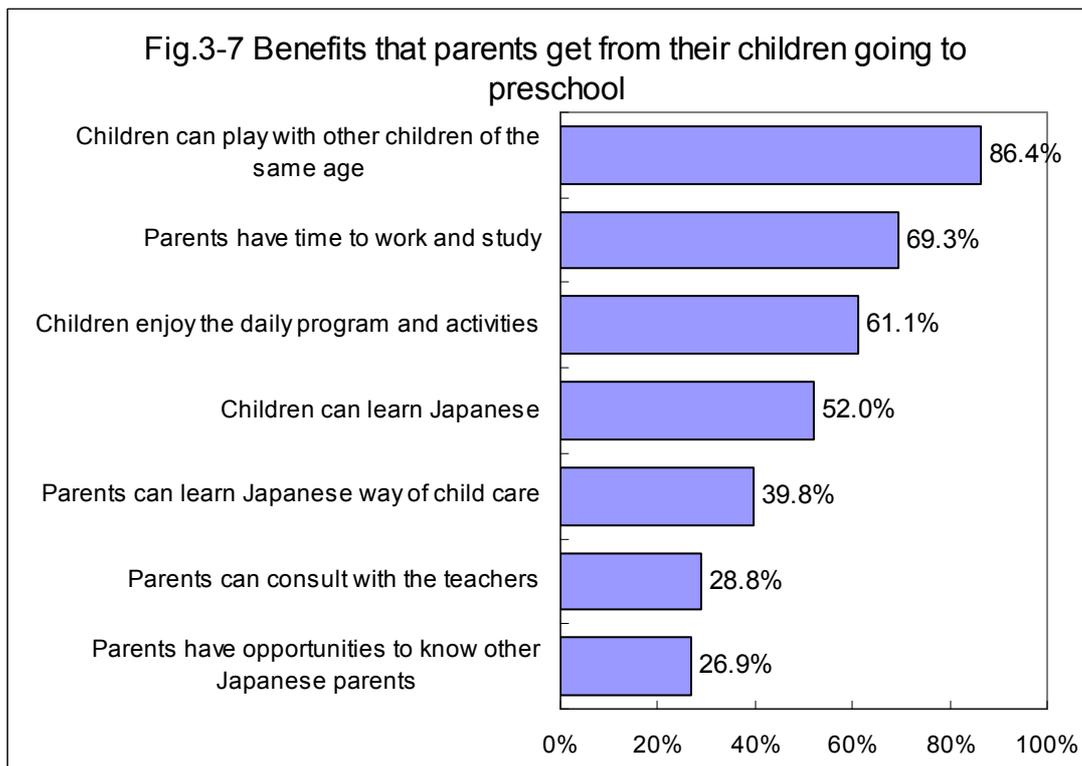
Parents wrote that “Of course the children can learn the Japanese language, but they can also gain the Japanese way of life”(day-care center 1yr boy / mother 27 yrs / Brazil 5 yrs), “My child was able to learn correct Japanese culture from the teacher”(day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 35 yrs / Thailand / 8 years), and “I want my child to learn the Japanese language, culture and customs for their future”(day-care center 0 yrs boy / mother Laos)

### **Consulting with day-care center teachers**

“The reason I put my child in day-care center was to teach her good practices and the ability to cooperate with others—break— I do not have any experience in child rearing, I am grateful that I can discuss my concerns with the teachers. Also, I am able to study and work when my child is in day-care center, enabling me to experience many things and get accustomed to the Japanese society. I feel that both reasons will be beneficial for my child’s education.(day-care center 4 yrs girl / mother 35 yrs / China / 5 yrs)

### **Relieving the parents’ stress**

“Raising a child on your own is very difficult. Since I do not know anyone and do not understand Japanese, I am unable to communicate in Japanese. To me the day-care center is a very important place since I am able to work and this relieves my stress. I think I have become nicer to my child.”(day-care center 2 yrs girl / mother 37 yrs / Brazil / 6 yrs) We can assume that it must be very stressful raising a child in a foreign country. There were many mothers that commented on the relationship between enrolling their children in preschool and the relief of stress.



N=1956

**Table 3-2 Duration of residence in Japan and the benefits that parents get from children's going to preschool**

	0 to less than 3 yrs	3 to less than 10 yrs	10 to less than 20 yrs	over 20 yrs
Children can learn Japanese	71.3%	59.9%	47.3%	8.9%
Children can play with other children of the same age	87.7%	83.8%	84.6%	90.2%
Children can enjoy the daily program and activity	64.1%	61.0%	61.8%	50.9%
Parents have time to work and study	74.9%	68.9%	64.7%	67.3%
Parents can learn Japanese way of child-care	44.6%	45.8%	39.6%	6.5%
Parents have an opportunity to know other Japanese parents	21.0%	25.0%	28.2%	34.1%
Parents can consult with the teacher	22.1%	27.4%	34.6%	25.7%

N=1842

Table 3-3 Children's period of stay and the benefits that parents get from preschool (%)

Benefits	0 to less than 3months	4 to less than 6months	7 to less than 11months	1 to less than 2yrs	over 2yrs
Parents can consult with the teachers	24.7	25.0	31.0	24.7	33.0
Parents have opportunities to know other Japanese parents	15.8	21.3	25.9	24.1	32.8

N=1902

Table 3-4 Japanese ability of parents and the benefits that parents get from their children going to preschool (%)

	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Parents can consult with the teachers	30.5	27.5	25.9	17.1
opportunities to know other Japanese parents	30.7	24.6	21.9	25.7

N=1873

## 4. Concerns about Preschool Life

### 1. Concerns about preschool life (Figure 3-8)

The biggest concerns of preschool life were “bullying,” (32.0%) and “bare feet and light clothing”(27.5%). Following these, the most common concerns were “my child is adjusting too well to the Japanese language and food (more than their native language and food)” (17.5%), “there are too many activities to participate in” (17.4%), “there are too many things we need to prepare” (17.0%), “socializing with other Japanese parents” (14.9%).

“Preparation” and “too many activities to participate in” are factors that Japanese parents also find difficult, but when the parents do not understand the Japanese language and culture, they tend to regard these separately and with more significance. (Please see “Other comments”)

### 2. Duration of residence and concerns about preschool life (Table 3-5)

Here, we found that “bullying” was the concern found most often for those parents who had been in Japan for 10 years or less, but 28.6% of the parents who had been in Japan for 10~20 years also felt this was a concern. Not many parents who had lived in Japan for more than 20years thought so. The concern about bare feet and light clothing was also seen the most for those with less than 20 years residence, but all groups felt this was something they could not easily get used to. Many of the parents living in Japan for 3~10 years chose “too many activities to participate in” and “socializing with other Japanese parents,” but as a whole, these were mainly chosen by parents who had lived in Japan for less than 20 years. “Too many items to prepare” was a common concern among all groups and it must be regarded as troublesome. “Adjusting too well to the Japanese language and food” and “the ingredients and flavor of the meals are different” are factors that decline as the years of living in Japan increases.

### 3. Birth order / children’ s gender and concerns

Regarding the birth order, concerns about bullying were highest for the eldest child (35.7%) and declined for the second child (26.0%). Bare feet and light clothing were also higher for the eldest child (30.2%) compared to the second (23.1%). Aside from “too many things to prepare,” concerns about the eldest child were always greater than for the second born. Concerning gender, parents seemed more concerned for girls in bare feet and light clothing, but for other factors, there was not a big difference.

### 4. Children’ s duration of residence in Japan and concerns

When we looked at the factors “bullying” and “bare feet and light clothing” according to the length of time lived in Japan, we found that 44.0% of the parents with children who had lived in Japan for 6 years gave “bullying” as their concern. This was not significantly different for parents with children living in Japan for 0~5 years (no graph available). But bare feet and light clothing was a factor that declined as the children’s residential years increased, but seemed to be a big concern in every group.

## **5. Parents' and children's Japanese ability and concerns (Table 3-6)**

We looked at whether there was a difference in the level of concern about “bullying” and “socialization with Japanese parents”, depending on the parents' Japanese ability. Parents who had little understanding of Japanese were most worried about “bullying”, whereas parents who had no understanding did not rank this highly, presumably since they had other concerns. It seems that the lower the Japanese level, the more concerned they are about “socializing with other Japanese parents”.

We found that the parents of the children who had a lower level of Japanese ability were especially worried about bullying. 52.5% of the parents of children who have poor ability and 68.8% of the parents with children who have very poor ability are worried. They probably are worried that if the children cannot speak Japanese, other children will not play with them and they will be left out.

## **6. Concerns in preschool (Nationality and area (Table 3-7, 3-8))**

We listed the top 10 concerns of preschool life by nationality and area. Every country except North Korea ranked “bullying” as either number 1 or 2. More than half of the parents from Brazil, Vietnam and Peru, and more than 30% of the parents from China and the Philippines chose this factor. The Philippines and Korea were the only countries that did not choose “bare feet and light clothing” in their top three choices. The parents who chose this were from Brazil, Peru, China, Vietnam, Thailand and Japan, in this order. In the free comments, many had written about the different customs of dressing lightly and heavily, along with the coldness of winter and the different way each country spends winter.

The comment, “there are too many items to prepare,” was mostly chosen by American parents, followed by those from China, Japan, and Korea. We assume this is due to the difference in the preschool and kindergarten systems of the countries. Approximately 30% of the parents from Thailand and the Philippines feel that “the socializing with Japanese parents is troublesome.” Parents from the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Brazil and Taiwan gave, “there are too many activities to participate in” as their main concern, and they commented that “it is difficult to take a day off work, but I would like to attend for my child.” People from other countries commented, “there are foods we cannot eat for religious reasons.” These parents were of Japanese, Pakistani, Egyptian, Bangladeshi, and Indonesian nationalities.

## **7. Free Comments on concerns in preschool**

### **Bare feet and light Clothing**

Most comments were about bare feet and light clothing. I understand that strengthening the children is good, but please make an environment where our children will not catch cold. Please dress them warmly during the winter. They often get sick, but please keep in mind that we cannot take too many days off (day-care center 4 yrs / mother 33 yrs / 8 yrs). These comments were mainly from parents who were from countries that did not have the same customs or those that were from warm countries. Many comments we received were, “their cold may get worse” and “it may delay them getting better.” From this, we can see that they feel this connects to “having to take days off work.” Although the original purpose of bare feet and light clothing is to strengthen their bodies, the comments from the parents should be taken into consideration as well.

### **Please teach at day-care center**

There are many parents, especially those from China, who would like day-care centers to teach basic knowledge, as we can see in the following comment. “The Japanese education for children concentrates mainly on teaching them independency and creativeness and does not regard education seriously” (kindergarten girl / mother 30 yrs / China / 9 yrs). A typical example is “There is a big difference between the day-care centers and kindergarten in Japan. At the kindergartens, they teach the Japanese language and mathematics but at day-care center, they do not teach the children although they are the same age as those in kindergarten. Teaching them many things in day-care center, as in Chinese day-care centers, can overload the children, but when they do not teach them anything, as in Japanese day-care centers, I am worried about how this will affect their future studying abilities. When they start going to elementary school, they may not be able to learn at the same speed as the children who have gone to kindergarten. Education before children enter school is also regarded important in Japan, but why isn't it so at the day-care centers?” (day-care center 4 yrs boy / mother / 40 yrs / China / 9 yrs). It is necessary for the teachers to explain to the parents so they will understand.

### **Difference among Religion and Culture**

“It is very difficult for Christian foreigners to adjust to Japanese day-care centers since we are forced to participate in ceremonies for other religions. For example, “tanabata (star festival)” and “mamemaki (festival to drive out evil spirits)” Perhaps the teachers do not explain the ceremonies in much detail but it is important to acknowledge the fact that there are many parents who feel this way and that in these activities there are old Japanese tales and legends that have religious meanings, although we may not realize it.

On one hand there are parents who say these activities “show the traditional Japanese culture and should be encouraged,” while on the other, there are many parents who are worried about “having my child participate in religious activities that are not in my religion” (day-care center 1 boy / mother / 27yrs / Brazil). The teachers should explain to parents who have a definite view on religion. Also, the same parents commented, “it feels strange because our cultures are different,” giving an example that “when the children are hit on the head at school, my son imitates that and I don't like it”

### **Lack in the kind consideration of the teachers**

As we can see from the following comment, “I have no worries since there is a very capable and trustworthy teacher (day-care center 4 yrs girl / father 45 yrs/ Cambodia / 10 yrs), the “depth and kindness of the teachers' consideration” was a factor that was useful when getting used to the day-care centers. However, when this factor is lacking, parents feel it is a big “concern.” They feel that when “the children cannot communicate with others, teachers and children will ignore what they want and they will be isolated” (day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother / 34 yrs / 2 yrs) .

Some parents wrote that they are unhappy with teachers who are not kind. This can be seen from the comment “it is not difficult to prepare the items we need, but we cannot always confirm every time. I understand that they are tired, but since they play the most important role, I wish the teachers could take more consideration.”(day-care center 6 yrs boy / mother 34 yrs / 0 yrs). Many parents know that the “teachers are too busy” and “that they are too tired,” but at the same time, they wish that the teachers could be more caring.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is a factor that is deep down in every parent's conscience. They feel that "Japanese mothers and children look at foreigners in a strange way"(day-care center 5 yrs boy / mother / 33 yrs / 5 yrs)(please see column 3)

### **Problem between activities parents need to participate in and work**

Many parents are wondering, "Why can't the activities be held on Saturdays? Since the activities are always held during the weekdays, I cannot participate due to work." Other comments are: "I understand the meaning of having the activities during nap time, but please have the activities late at night or on the weekends. Otherwise, please have them early in the morning or in the late evening so that I can work half day." (day-care center 1 yr girl / mother 35yrs / France / 3 yrs). "Having to participate in the activities is a problem. If I don't go, the teachers and my child will get upset, and if I participate by taking a day off, I will get fired." (day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother 28 yrs / 3 yrs). These comments reflect the rigid Japanese society and how difficult it is for the parents to take a day off for their children.

### **Longer operating hours**

There are many wishes related to this factor, such as "the operating hours of the day-care center are too limited. When my work is busy and I need to work overtime, I cannot extend the hours for the day-care center to look after my child. (day-care center 2 yrs girl / mother 35yrs / Japan / 9 yrs), "only if the hours the kindergarten are opened are longer, if there was a kindergarten bus, if they could provide lunch, if they could have various programs during vacations..."(kindergarten boy / mother 36 yrs / Korea / 0 yrs)

### **Worries regarding the schools and equipment**

"worries about earthquakes: When an earthquake occurs, I am worried how they are going to protect the children and help the wounded. Are the preschools earthquake proof? (day-care center 3 yrs girl / other 33 yrs / Canada / 2yrs). "How are the gates secured in order to stop others from coming in?"(day-care center 1 boy / mother 27 yrs / Japan / 0yrs)

### **Others**

The following are from the many concerns we received, covering a wide variety of topics.

**Sexual discrimination:** "The Japanese regard the boys and girls very differently. The girls are always put aside where as the boys are always in the center of things"

**Sanitation:** "My child can catch a cold from other children and teachers. I am also concerned that the diaper changing areas are not sterilized after use. They should cover the area with plastic sheets or sterilize with alcohol"

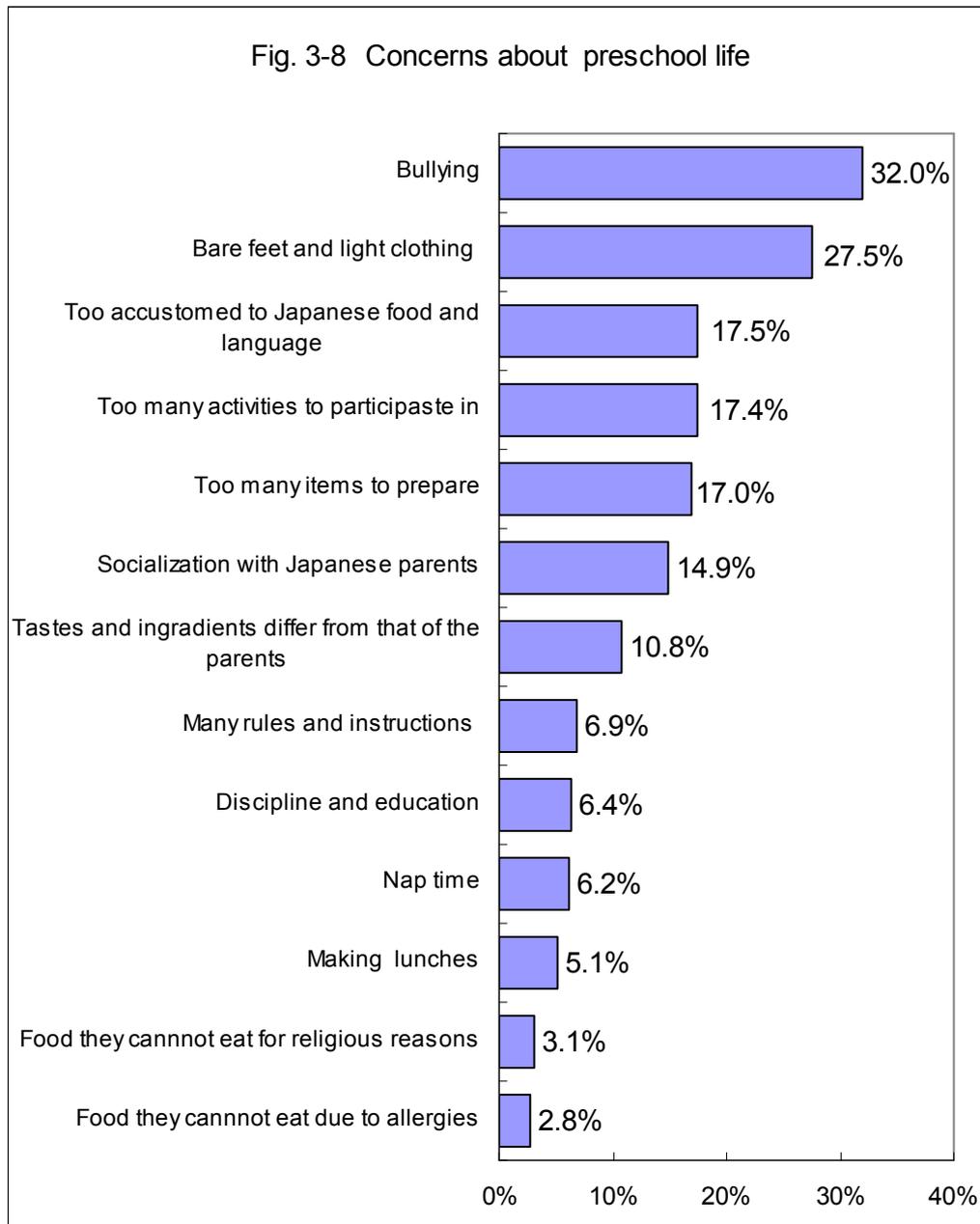
**Nap time:** "my child does not take long naps, so the teachers take my child out of the room saying that this disturbs the other children." It may be a good idea for the teachers to read to children who do not take naps.

**Care for sick children;**"When children are sick, the preschool does not give medication to the children. When the children do not take medication at the designated times, it takes longer for them to get better, and frequently the children are left with a fever. When we cannot leave the children at the day-care centers, this causes a problem."

**Simplicity!** "I wish they could make things simpler at the preschools. For example, the choice of paper diapers and the amount of clothes we need to bring. The preschools in Japan request that we prepare too many things, so it can be a nuisance.

Water shortage during the summer; Many parents commented, "I am worried my child may not get enough to drink during the summer"

**Toys;** “Concern about children’s all time favorite of playing with mud and on playing with old equipment”



N=1956

Table3-5 Duration of residence in Japan and the concerns about preschool life (%)

Problems	0 to less than 3 yrs	3 to less than 10 yrs	10 to less than 20 yrs	over 20 yrs
Tastes and ingredients deffer from that of parents	16.4%	13.1%	8.9%	2.8%
Food they cannot eat for religious reason	6.7%	2.1%	3.3%	3.3%
Food they cannot eat due to allergies	2.1%	2.8%	3.9%	1.4%
Make lunches	6.2%	5.8%	6.0%	0.5%
Nap time	5.6%	6.8%	5.6%	4.2%
Bare feet and light clothing	33.3%	30.7%	31.5%	6.1%
Too many items to prepare	17.9%	16.6%	20.1%	15.0%
Too many events to participate in	15.9%	20.1%	18.7%	6.5%
Many rules and instructions	7.7%	7.3%	7.3%	5.1%
Taste and ingredients differ from that of parents	22.1%	21.6%	14.3%	6.5%
Discipline and education are different	5.6%	7.8%	6.2%	2.3%
Bullying	37.9%	39.1%	28.6%	7.0%
Socialization with Japanese parents	15.4%	18.5%	13.9%	5.1%

N=1842

Table 3-6 Parents' and children's Japanese ability and the concerns in preschool life (%)

		Excellet	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Parent	Bullying	22.8	35.1	48.1	31.4
	Socialization with Japanese parents	11.4	17.2	17.8	22.9
Child	Bullying	27.9	41.7	52.0	68.8

Parents N=1873, Children N=1621

Table3-7 Concerns in preschool (Nationality and area)

(%)

Ranking	Japan	China	Taiwan	South Korea	North Korea	Thailand
①	Bullying 28.8	Bare feet and light clothing 42.8	Bullying 29.0	Bullying 24.3	Many things to prepare 17.5	Socialization with Japanese parents 34.0
②	Bare feet and light clothing 23.7	Bullying 42.0	Bare feet and light clothing 21.0	Bare feet and light clothing 20.5	Events and meeting 12.5	Bullying 28.0
③	Many things to prepare 17.9	Too accustomed to Japan 22.7	Socialization with Japanese parents 21.0	Too accustomed to Japan 18.2	Many rules 5.0	Bare feet and light clothing 24.0
④	Too accustomed to Japan 16.8		Events and meeting 22.7	Events and meeting 17.7	Many things to prepare 15.8	Too accustomed to Japan 5.0
⑤	Events and meeting 14.6	Many things to prepare 21.5	Many things to prepare 14.5	Socialization with Japanese parents 14.9	Nap time 2.5	Events and meeting 16.0
⑥	Socialization with Japanese parents 8.8	Differences in food 17.5	Too accustomed to Japan 14.5	Events and meeting 14.2		Make lunches 2.5
⑦	Differences in food 8.0	Socialization with Japanese parents 13.8	Differences in food 8.1	Nap time 8.9	Discipline and education 2.5	Differences in food 12.0
⑧	Discipline and education 6.2	Make lunches 9.7	Many rules 4.8	Many rules 8.3		Allergies 2.5
⑨	Nap time 5.5	Nap time 5.4	Discipline and education 4.8	Discipline and education 5.9		Allergies 8.0
⑩	Make lunches 5.1	Discipline and education 5.0	Nap time 3.2	Make lunches 3.6		Nap time 6.0

Table3-8 Concerns in preschool (Nationality and area)

(%)

Ranking	Philippines	Vietnam	Brasil	Peru	U.S.A	others
①	Bullying 34.7	Bullying 52.8	Bullying 53.3	Bullying 51.4	Many things to prepare 33.3	Bare feet and light clothing 27.1
②	Socialization with Japanese parents 29.6	Too accustomed to Japan 36.1	Bare feet and light clothing 43.3	Bare feet and light clothing 43.3	Bullying 22.1	Bullying 25.4
③	Events and meeting 23.0	Bare feet and light clothing 25.0	Too accustomed to Japan 20.0	Too accustomed to Japan 27.0	Bare feet and light clothing 14.8	Too accustomed to Japan 23.7
④	Bare feet and light clothing 17.3	Events and meeting 19.4	Events and meeting 18.3	Differences in food 18.9	Events and meeting 14.8	Many things to prepare 20.3
⑤	Many things to prepare 11.2	Many things to prepare 8.3	Socialization with Japanese parents 16.7	Events and meeting 10.8	Discipline and education 14.8	Food and religion 19.8
⑥	Nap time 9.2	Many rules 8.3	Many rules 13.3	Discipline and education 10.8	Too accustomed to Japan 14.8	Socialization with Japanese parents 15.3
⑦	Discipline and education 7.1	Socialization with Japanese parents 8.3	Discipline and education 13.3	Socialization with Japanese parents 10.8	Socialization with Japanese parents 14.8	Events and meeting 15.3
⑧	Differences in food 7.1	Allergies 2.8	Differences in food 11.8	Many things to prepare 8.1	Allergies 7.4	Differences in food 14.7
⑨	Allergies 5.1		Differences in food 2.8	Many things to prepare 10.0		Many rules 5.4
⑩	Make lunches 4.6	Nap time 2.8	Allergies 3.3	Allergies 2.7	Nap time 3.7	Nap time 9.6
⑩						Many rules 9.6

(note) See page 2 in detail about the nationality or district

## 5. Communication with Preschool Teachers

### 1. Methods for the communication between parents and teacher

(Figures 3-9,3-10)

When the numbers of children with parents not speaking Japanese as their native tongue first began to increase at the preschools, teachers and parents were confused since communication among them was hampered by the difference of language and culture. Recently, improvement has been made thanks to the efforts of the preschool and governmental support. In this report, we looked at exactly how much communication is being made.

28.0% of the parents said that communication with the teachers was “very good,” 44.0% said it was “fairly good,” giving a total of over 70% of the parents feeling their communication was good. Looking at the method of communication, we found that 66.2% of the parents who felt they had good communication answered that “the teachers come up to them and start the communication,” 56.2% replied that “they go up to the teachers and start a conversation.” Other methods noted were, “write it down in the notebooks” and “participate in the activities.” 5% of the parents replied that they “find someone to translate for them.”

On the other hand, parents who felt they did not have good communication gave reasons that were based on their Japanese comprehension level and the parents and teachers both being too busy. Also, it was written in the free comment section that “the teachers seem to be purposely avoiding speaking to the parents”

### 2. Duration of residence and the communication methods with teachers

(Table 3-9)

When we studied the method of communication of the parents who felt they had good communication, the most popular answer was that “the teachers came up to them and started the conversation,” regardless of the years they had resided in Japan. As the years they had resided increased, so did the frequency of this reply. “Speaking to teachers” was the most popular choice among parents who had lived in Japan for 10~20 years. The choices, “through notebooks” and “participating in activities” did not differ regardless of the years of residence. “Translators” were used by 15.6% of the parents who had lived in Japan for less than 3 years and answered that they had good communication.

Among the parents who do not think they are communicating well, the number of parents who answered “I cannot speak to them in Japanese” and “I cannot read the notebooks”, decreased as the years of residence increased. But 43.5% of the parents who have lived in Japan for 10~20 years still replied “I cannot read the notebooks.” The replies, “I am too busy” or “the teachers are too busy” seemed to increase as the years of residence increased.

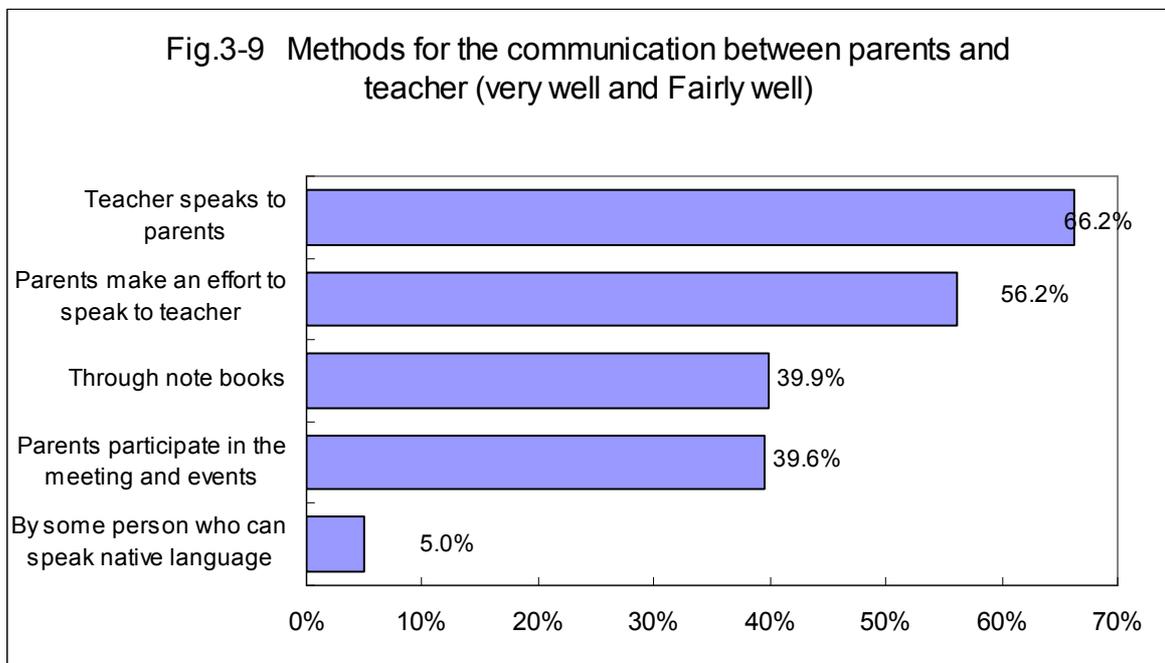
### 3. Japanese ability and communication methods with teachers

(Table 3-10)

Among the parents who thought they had good communication, the comment, “teachers speak to parents” was ranked high, regardless of the parents’ Japanese ability. We found that parents with poor Japanese ability also feel they have good communication when the teachers

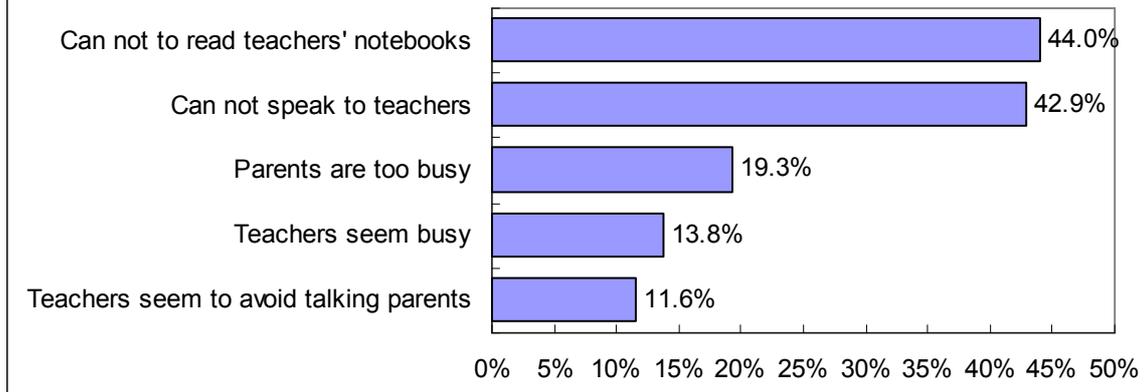
come up to them. “Speaking to the teachers,” “through notebooks” and “participating in activities” were ranked highly by parents who had a high ability of Japanese, but approximately 30% of the parents who had a low to no Japanese ability also ranked these highly; indicating that they are making strong efforts. 58% of the parents who do not have any understanding of Japanese but replied they had good communication, used a translator.

On the other hand, amongst those who felt that they did not have good communication, many of the parents with high Japanese ability replied “the teachers seem busy”, “I am busy” or “the teacher is avoiding me.” 37.4% of the parents who can understand a little Japanese replied that they cannot go up to speak to the teachers in Japanese. It seems that it is difficult to be the one starting the conversation. 12.5% of the parents who are fluent in Japanese said that the reason their communication was not good was because they “could not read the notebooks,” similarly, 41.1% of parents with some Japanese ability, 57.5% of parents with little ability and 0.8% with no ability gave this reason for communication being not good. Thus, there may be a need for some kind of consideration regarding the notebooks.



N=1611

Fig. 3-10 Methods for the communication between parents and teacher (Not so well and absolutely not)



N=275

Table 3-9 Duration of residence in Japan and the communication methods with teachers

		0 to less than 3 yrs	3 to less than 10 yrs	10 to less than 20 yrs	over 20 yrs
Very well, Fairly well	Parents make an effort to speak to teacher	40.7%	55.6%	62.5%	57.4%
	Teacher speaks to parents	65.0%	64.5%	67.7%	73.6%
	Parents participate in the meeting and activities	39.0%	40.0%	40.2%	42.1%
	by some person who can speak native language	15.6%	6.1%	1.4%	0.0%
	Through notebooks	38.6%	39.7%	39.4%	45.7%
Not so well, absolutely not	Can not not speak to teachers in Japanese	67.3%	43.6%	23.9%	0.0%
	Can not read teacher's notebooks	64.0%	40.4%	43.5%	9.1%
	Parents are busy	2.0%	16.7%	37.0%	45.5%
	Teachers seem to be busy	10.2%	14.7%	15.2%	18.2%
	Teachers seem to avoid talkig parents	8.2%	10.3%	19.6%	9.1%

Very well, Fairly well N=1535, Not so well, Absolutely not N=261

Table 3-10 Parents Japanese ability and the communication method with teachers

		Excellet	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Very well, Fairly well	Teacher speaks to parents	69.0%	64.2%	66.0%	62.5%
	Parents m ake an effort to speak to teacher	60.6%	56.1%	46.2%	37.5%
	Parents participate in the meeting and activities	50.7%	33.0%	29.2%	31.3%
	By som e person who can speak native language	43.8%	38.3%	32.5%	29.4%
	Through notebooksParents write letter to teacher	0.7%	5.3%	15.1%	58.8%
Not so well, absolutely not	Can not speak to teachers in Japanese	0.0%	37.4%	62.6%	64.3%
	Can not read teachers notebooks	12.5%	41.1%	57.6%	80.8%
	Parents are busy	40.0%	21.5%	12.1%	0.0%
	Teachers seem to be busy	25.0%	13.0%	13.1%	0.0%
	Teachers seem to avoid taking parents	22.5%	9.3%	7.1%	7.1%

Very well, Fairly well N=1561 Not so well, Absolutely not N=259

## 6. Free Comments on Communication

At the day-care centers, communication between people with different languages and culture is the most critical issue among the teachers and parents. Below are some comments we received from the parents regarding communication.

### **Language barriers**

#### **Not being able to speak well**

The following comment represents what all of the parents who do not have a high understanding of Japanese feel: “We would like to discuss in more detail with the teachers regarding our children but are unable to do so because of the language barrier or because we cannot read Japanese well. This results in short conversations since we cannot express ourselves very well. We cannot communicate the way we want” (day-care center 0 boy / father / 30 yrs / Bolivia / 1yr)

“I cannot communicate with the teacher since I cannot speak, read, or write Japanese. My child brings home letters from the day-care center, but I cannot read or understand them. I am worried about what the children and teachers feel are problems.”(day-care center 5 yrs boy / mother 27 yrs, / Thailand / 2yrs

Another comment that we often received was that “when we tell the teachers we cannot read what is written, they read it out loud to us but we do not understand what they are saying.”

#### **Conversation is OK but I cannot read the letters and notebooks**

There are many parents who can hold a conversation but cannot read and write Japanese. “Since I cannot read the letters and notebooks, I do not understand if there is anything that needs my attention. If the teachers could tell me directly, I would understand.” Writing things down in a notebook also needs to be reviewed.

#### **Print “kana” next to the Chinese Characters**

“I do not understand kanji (Chinese characters) well”(day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother 29 yrs / Philippines / 8 yrs). “I understand what the teachers are saying, but I cannot express my own feelings. I can read hiragana and katakana so I can understand what is written to a certain degree, but when it comes to kanji, I do not understand at all, and I am having trouble with this.”(day-care center 5 yrs / boy / mother 31 yrs / Peru / 9 yrs)

As we can see from the next comment, there are parents who cannot read the handwritten kanjis although they know how to read them. I can read most of what is written in the notebooks, but the handwriting can be difficult to read. It would help if the teacher could write kana next to the new characters” (day-care center 3 boy / 29 yrs / China / 8 yrs)

This study highlighted that although there are many parents who feel that notebooks are useful tools, it is necessary to deal with the various needs of the parents

#### **Although I understand Japanese**

“It’s not that I don’t want to speak with the teachers...if the teachers seem willing to talk, I may speak with the teacher.”(kindergarten boy / mother 20 yrs / 8 yrs)

Some parents point out that “one teacher has a prejudice against foreign children and I feel that the language problem is one of the reasons. Moreover, the culture and social environment differs so there are times when we cannot understand each other.” Or “they do not listen to our requests since we have different cultural backgrounds and do not give definite answers”(day-care center 3 girl / 35 yrs / 9yrs). It is necessary for the day-care centers to show that they are on the side of the parents and to find ways to come to mutual understanding.

Some of the parents are waiting for the teachers to approach them: “one of the teachers may dislike me. That person seems very cold.” (day-care center 1 boy / mother 27yrs/5 yrs) or “The teacher only speaks to me when I start the conversation. I get worried that maybe there are things that are not getting across to me, although the teacher writes something in the notebook”

### **Limited time**

One comment was: “there are lots of things I would like to discuss, but the language barrier and limited time hinders our communication, although the teacher tries to speak English” (day-care center 4 yrs girl, / father / 40 yrs / America / 0yrs) Another parent wrote “Working at day-care center. I do not want to burden the teachers ” (day-care center / mother 41yrs / 11yrs)

### **Different cultural background**

Communication can be difficult as we can see from the following comment: “when I ask the teachers how my child is doing, they reply, ‘they are getting along fine, they are doing well.’ However, when I ask my child or see how they act, it doesn’t seem that way. I do not understand the nuance of the Japanese language” (day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 37 yrs / 2yrs)

### **Communicate patiently and without haste**

The next comment is from a professional in this field regarding “a good method for communicating”. This comment was also written as something that is necessary for the children to get accustomed to in the day-care centers.

“When educating children, it is an important and basic factor for the parents and teachers to cooperate—break— and we need to understand that many of the children were born and raised in Japan, therefore this is the only culture they know. They do not think of themselves as having foreign parents, and this is something that the Japanese children are not familiar with. What is important here is not the difference in customs and culture, but to continue having good communication between the teachers and parents (preferably daily)” When having a conversation, reading and writing is not very important. When the teachers want to communicate with the children, we would like them to be patient and educational. I would be happy to support the communication between the children and the teachers, and would like to propose the following:

1. Give information that is easy to understand
2. Make an effort to communicate

(day-care center 4 yrs boy / father 43 yrs / Latin America / 10 yrs)

## **Summary on Communication with the teachers**

### **–Be patient and have a big heart**

The comment “I cannot speak Japanese at all, but the teachers are very kind. This is a great help.” shows that when the teachers are kind to them, many of the parents feel they have good communication with the teachers although their Japanese level may be low. This can also be seen from the high number of parents with a low ability of Japanese who replied that they have good communication.

Of course it is necessary to have conversation charts written in different languages and interpreters, but the parents point out the importance of the teachers’ kindness reaching them.

As mentioned above, two of the qualities that are necessary for teachers to have, when dealing with parents who have different languages and cultures, are “kindness” and an “internationalized way of thinking,” but at the same time, it is important them to have a “relaxed mind.” From this, ideal communication will start.

From the free comments, we can also gather that the parents feel that even when communication can be difficult due to the difference in culture and language, being patient and calm will relax the other party and lead to communication. This may be very difficult, with the day-care centers being so busy, but having a relaxed atmosphere is one of the most important factors at the day-care centers

- \* Day-care center or Kindergarten, years of attendance, gender, relationship of the person replying, age, nationality, residential duration are shown in parenthesis.

## **Column: Bullying in preschool and education on mutual understanding**

There are various child-care and child-education problems around foreign children, or those with foreign cultural backgrounds. One might think that the teachers' earnest efforts would solve the problems relatively soon on the surface. However, teachers have learned through their experiences that their problems (lack of mutual understanding) would never stop unless they understand and respect the different cultures. Yet the Japanese general tendency to exclude different elements is greatly influential to children. In the free-description answers in this survey, many parents insisted on the necessity of education on mutual understanding. They felt the biased views and discrimination toward foreigners, while dealing with Japanese teachers, children, and parents in their daily life, and they worried about bullying of their children. Education on mutual understanding would enable us to overcome the linguistic and cultural differences, and establish a desirable symbiotic society. We would like to point out the problems that are related to the stem of multi-cultural understanding education with the free opinions from parents.

**"Don't play with that kid! S/he is a foreigner!" Children learn what adults say and do. Both children who discriminate, and children who are discriminated, will suffer from mental wounds:**

"Don't play with that kid, because s/he is a foreigner," someone said. I am not the only one who has heard this kind of comment. Discrimination against foreigners is a bad influence to children. I am worried, as my child was hurt by this comment." "I wonder if Japanese people take it for granted that foreign children will be bullied." No matter what countries they are from, parents wrote similar opinions. "Bullying and discrimination" is passed on from Japanese parents to their children, "bullying and discrimination" hurt the children, and it will hinder the growth of the children as whole persons, unless parents and educators take appropriate actions. At the same time, bullying children think that they could "bully and discriminate" in this society and behave accordingly, which might lead them to grow up to be inconsiderate adults lacking in humane feelings.

**Be firm to face bullying – for mutual understanding education at preschool:**

"Teachers should not allow children to be mean and bully others. It's important for other children to grow up." "My son is bullied, and often has fights. In my country, adults have strict discipline for this kind of behavior." Educators should show strict attitude toward bullying, even if the bullying doesn't seem to be based on linguistic or cultural differences. "If there is a foreign pupil in a kindergarten, teachers should introduce the culture of the country the child is from. If the children were made more aware of the cultural ways of foreign countries, discrimination would be reduced." These are valuable suggestions toward mutual understanding.

**Multi-cultural understanding education toward teachers and parents:**

"I would like Japanese people to be kind and respectful toward foreigners. Everyone has the right to be treated as an equal human-being. Please do not discriminate us because of the color of our skin, or cultural or linguistic differences." Thus one parent wrote his opinion directly to the point, and "I strongly hope that every municipal and

school would educate people on racial discrimination." Multi-cultural education is a required subject for everyone who resides in Japan.