

Question 2006

In recent years Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has been encouraging public elementary schools to provide English conversation lessons during the periods devoted to General Studies. This had to widespread discussion on concerning whether English should be made a compulsory subject at the elementary level. What is YOUR opinion?

Do you think that English should be made a compulsory subject from the first grade of elementary school in Japan?

Or, do you think that English should not be taught in elementary school at all?

Or, is your opinion somewhere between these two Extremes?

Write a paragraph defending ONE of these three positions, giving at least one appropriate reason to support your opinion.

Answer:

I think English should be taught to every ~~grade~~-student in elementary school. ~~B~~ because Japanese isn't so difficult a language when compared to Chinese or French, ~~which~~ children there where these languages are spoken have to learn the mother tongue's vocabulary in elementary school. Almost all children can write and speak by elementary school age. ~~So~~ Therefore, I don't think they're at a bad age to absorb an other language. In addition to this reason, I feel that this ~~has good effect~~ is beneficial according to my real experience. My brother, who is in the 4th grade, has learned English ~~from~~ since the 1st grade at school and now he can express ~~easy~~ his feelings easily and explain ~~the~~ his thoughts in English. ~~So~~ Thus, ~~in the view~~ because of my ~~of my~~ real experience, I also strongly believe that English should be taught from an early age.

< 和訳 >

近年、日本の文部科学省は小学校の総合学習の時間に、英会話の授業を行うことを推奨している。これにより、小学校の段階で英語を必修科目とするか否かについての議論が起きている。あなたの意見は？

英語は小学校1年から必修であるべきか？

小学校では教えられるべきではないか？

上記2つの中間であるべきか？

自分の意見を裏付ける理由を少なくとも1つ挙げ、上記3つの意見のうち、1つの立場を擁護する英文を書け。

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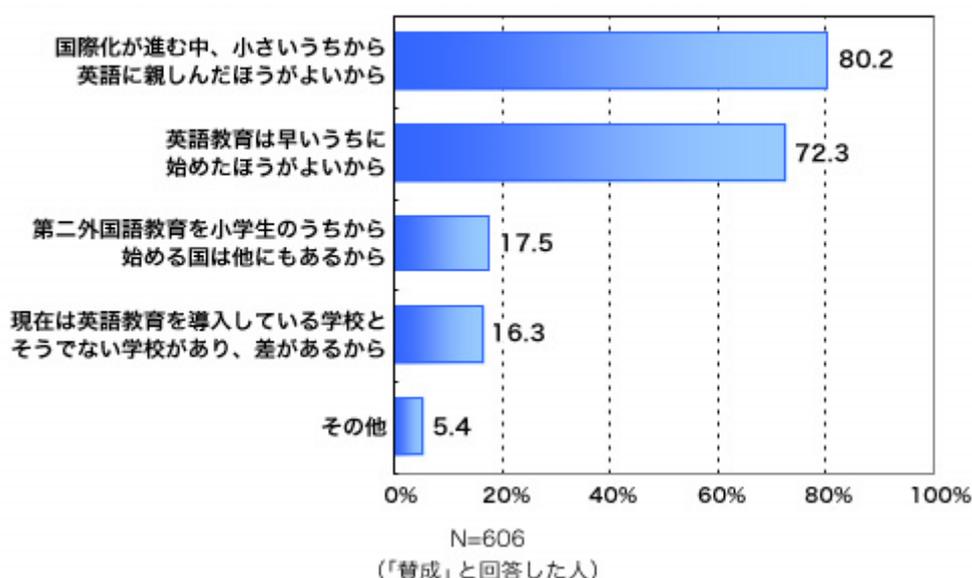
今年度の問題は前年度に似ており、社会科学的な知識を問う問題が出題されています。また2004,2005年度に続き、「どの程度認められるべきか」という「程度」を問う問題になっています。このように「程度」を答えることは、どの問題でも使えるものですので、ぜひ自分のものにしておきたいところです。

また、この問題では特定の議論が出題されていますが、「議論」に対する意見を答える際に注意すべき点は、議論に正解はなく、あくまでもそれぞれの立場を尊重しつつ、自分の立場を述べるということです。

さて、小学校での英語教育義務化に関しては、意見が非常に割れるものです。賛成意見としては、早期に始めることで、語学習得が容易になること、外国文化に触れる機会が増えること、国際化社会に対応できること、などが挙げられます。また反対意見としては、母国語の習得段階で外国語を学ばせるべきではない、他教科の学習時間が減少してしまう、英語をきちんと教えられる環境が整っていない、などです。

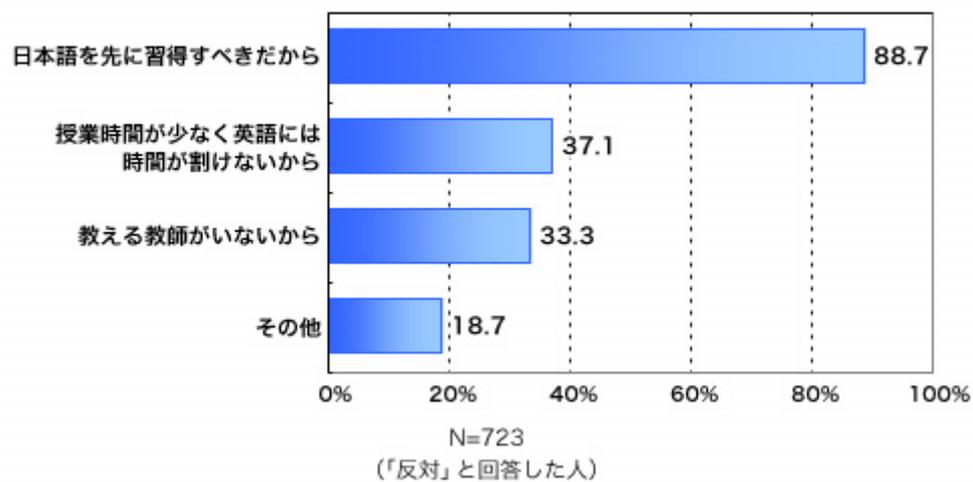
問題では賛成、反対、部分的賛成(反対)のいずれかの立場を取ることが求められていますので、自分の答案の立場を明確にし、また上記のような理由をきちんと述べるのが大切です。

●【小学校での英語教育必修「賛成」と回答した人対象】
賛成する理由は何ですか。あてはまるものをすべてお選びください。(いくつでも)



●【小学校での英語教育必修「反対」と回答した人対象】

反対する理由は何ですか。あてはまるものをすべてお選びください。(いくつでも)



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< 解答例 >

1

This is a difficult and controversial topic because what children should be taught in the early stages of their education is critical. I believe that children should learn English from the first grade of elementary school as a compulsory subject. English is a de facto international language and it will take long time for Japanese students to learn it. By starting from the first grade, children can learn English more naturally and efficiently. Because of the current ambiguous standards of English class, some schools are offering these classes, and some aren't. As a result, not every child can learn English, and also the quality and content of classes differs. By making English classes standardized, schools can offer formal and decent classes of English. On the other hand, we need to take into account the balance between English classes and current classes. In addition, longer prospects and continual efforts are required to sustain those classes because learning a language is a long and difficult process.

2

I agree with the opinion that English should be taught from the first grade of elementary school in Japan, but only on the condition that the students would not be graded or have to take any exams for it.

English is of course becoming more and more important in the world today and, as studies show, the earlier children begin studying it, the easier it is. However, students today already have many subjects to study, and it would be too much for them to study English as well. Also, I believe that if they were made to study English, they would just hate it. Therefore, I think it would be ideal if they could have an opportunity to learn English just for fun.

3

I think that English should not be taught in elementary schools at all. It is true that English is taught in elementary school in many countries, but in Japan there is no need to do so. There are two reasons: one is that in elementary school we should learn the skills of speaking, thinking, writing, and reading in Japanese. For kids to have to study English would only make things confusing. The other reason is that, under the current circumstances, some Japanese people certainly have adequate English skills to make themselves understood in the language to foreigners.