

Designing Foreign Language Activities Classes to Help Pupils Feel the Enjoyment of Interaction: Focusing on the use of “Fixed Expressions”

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1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate whether children felt the “enjoyment of interaction” by using the “fixed expressions”. In this study, we organized the fixed expressions that children in middle grades can use to help maintain interaction. The first author presented them to the children in class, and the effect was analyzed quantitatively. It is suggested that for children, learning the diverse function of “fixed expressions” can help them feel a “enjoying a sense of accomplishment”. In addition, sharing the function and merits of “fixed expressions” which children can lead to “enjoying interaction with one another” and “enjoying understanding each other”.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Importance of Interaction

Foreign language education is now increasingly required to develop the ability to interact with others. The course of study announced by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) , in 2017, the area of ‘speaking’ was divided into ‘presentation’ and ‘interaction’. ‘Speaking (interaction)’ was defined “a viewpoint that emphasizes interactive language activities that convey each other’s thought and feelings” (MEXT, 2017, p.9). According to Long (1981), second language acquisition (SLA hereafter) is facilitated by mutually confirming comprehension and requesting clarification of what the other person wants to convey through ‘interaction’. In addition, according to the results of an English proficiency survey for third-year junior high school (JHS) students (MEXT, 2017c), students with high scores for ‘speaking’ are more likely to answer “I like learning English”, and they also tend to have higher goal for using English. It can be said that ‘speaking (interaction)’ is an area that promotes language acquisition and raises the motivation toward foreign language learning and foreign language

acquisition.

2.2 Enjoyment of Interaction in Foreign Language Activities Classes

Regarding 'speaking (interaction)' in foreign language activities (FLA), the Course of Study (MEXT, 2017a) describes the emotional aspect, such as realizing "the importance and enjoyment of interaction" (p.21), and giving a sense of accomplishment that "I was able to ask a question and was able to answer the question" (p.22). Foreign language acquisition is thought to be deeply connected emotions, and there are many studies investigating motivation, efficacy, and anxiety. Tsukuda (2007) conducted an awareness survey on learning English for first-year junior high school (JHS hereafter) students, and found that "enjoyment" in elementary school (ES hereafter) is likely to lead to 'enjoyment' in JHS. In addition, it was clarified that approximately 50% of the students who had given negative response to learning English in ES also gave negative response to learning English in JHS. The unpleasant factor was "conversation in English". It can be said that an awareness of the emotional aspect of children is important in the 'interaction' of FLA. However, not many years have passed since FLA was introduced in the middle grade level in ES, and there have not been enough studies focusing on the enjoyment of 'interaction' middle grades pupils in ES feel in FLA classes. Therefore, Ito, Ogawa, Hall, and Yamamoto (in press) conducted a survey targeting middle grades pupils in ES, and created a 'scale for enjoyment of interaction' (Appendix). She discovered that there are three different kinds of enjoyment. They are: enjoying interacting with one another, enjoying a sense of accomplishment, and enjoying understanding each other. A questionnaire to investigate whether the enjoyment of interaction was felt in class was created to discover the nature of enjoyment of 'interaction' the pupils felt, and to measure and assess the sense of enjoyment.

2.3 Significance of Using Fixed Expressions in FLA

Murahata (2017) believes that it is necessary to get used to using English in an environment where English is learned as a "foreign language". She also thinks that if children feel that they are speaking English by acquiring and using fixed expressions, which lead to confidence in using English. Murahata and Murahata (2017) argue that meaning and functions of 'fixed expressions'

are limited, and they reduced the cognitive load of learners in the early stages of learning who have not acquired sufficient grammatical knowledge. Izumi (2017) proposes that in order for ES students with insufficient vocabulary and skills to convey their thoughts and understand the feelings of the other person, it is important to have an 'aizuchi', meaning a reaction, a response, and a confirmation. In addition, she claims that it should be cultivated in ES. In the course of study (MEXT, 2017a), the importance of children being able to communicate using simple words and basic expressions, checking and sensing the reaction of the person in front of them is stated. In this paper, the 'fixed expressions' that enable pupils to have 'interactions' are called 'fixed expressions that help maintain interactions'.

2.4 Prior Practice

There are some prior practices that taught children such fixed expressions. are all called "classroom English", which is similar to the "fixed expressions that connect interactions" in this paper

There are some prior studies that research the use of classroom English. Uchiyama & Someya (2020) taught eight expressions such as "Are you OK?" "Me?" "Here you are." to pupils, and qualitatively analyzed their educational effects. Then, they discovered that if children used these expressions, children had an interest, a good feeling, and a sense of security, and they actively tried to use the expressions to express themselves. The Saga Prefectural Education Center (2017) tried to promote the use of classroom English for 'communication', and has concluded from the results of the questionnaire that more pupils could show reactions verbally and using body language after the project. This means more pupils tried to express their thoughts and ideas in English, which gave them confidence, and enjoying communicating in English. However, none of the above-mentioned studies focused on how to teach fixed expressions in FLA classes as a whole, and target students in those studies were upper elementary school students. In addition, Uchiyama and Someya (2020) state that analysis using another research method is necessary in order to examine the certainty of the effect. The Saga Prefectural Education Center validated the educational effect based on the results of a questionnaire. However, the rationale for question selection remains unclear. These are the

reasons why in this paper, we aim to quantitatively validate the educational effect of teaching ‘fixed expressions that maintain interactions’ by using a ‘scale for enjoyment of interaction’ targeting third and fourth graders of ES.

3. The Purpose of This Research

The purpose of this research is to quantitatively clarify whether children in the middle grades of ES felt the enjoyment of interaction by using ‘fixed expressions that help maintain interactions’. The research contents are as follows:

- Research I Categorizing ‘fixed expressions that help maintain interactions’, and creating handouts (for children in middle grades)
- Research II Verification of the effect on the ‘enjoyment of interaction’ by using ‘fixed expressions that maintain interactions’

3.1 Research I: Categorizing ‘Fixed Expressions that Help Maintain Interactions’ and Creating Handouts (For Middle Grades)

The purpose of this study was to categorize the ‘fixed expressions that maintain the interactions’, and to create handouts to be used in middle grades FLA classes.

3.1.2 Method

First, the expressions were classified into three areas of fixed expressions by Murahata & Murahata. (2017). The three areas are from each function as a “building and maintaining good relationships”, “learning rules and manners” and “enhancing learning content” (Appendix). The expressions classified are shown as language materials in the guidance book and teaching plan sheet of *Let's Try 1* and *2* (MEXT website), and they are included in Chants, and Songs and the Classroom English.

Next, expressions with similar functions were summarized in simple phrases that can be shared with children, such as “greetings” and “aizuchi”. We then created Handout (Figure 1) based on the list of ‘fixed expressions that maintain interactions’, which shows the prospect of expanding interactions starting from nonverbal expressions.

In addition, a handout was made for each of the four scenes so that children could have clues for utterances regarding “the fixed expressions that maintain

interactions". There are handouts for greetings & manners (Figure 2), questioning (Figure 3), shopping (Figure 4), and quiz (Figure 5). Illustrations were added to the sheet to make it easier for children to understand and judge the situations in which expressions are used. The illustrations are basically from the website "Trasutoya-san", and some of them are quoted from the illustrations introduced on the website of the elementary school attached to the Faculty of Education Oita University.

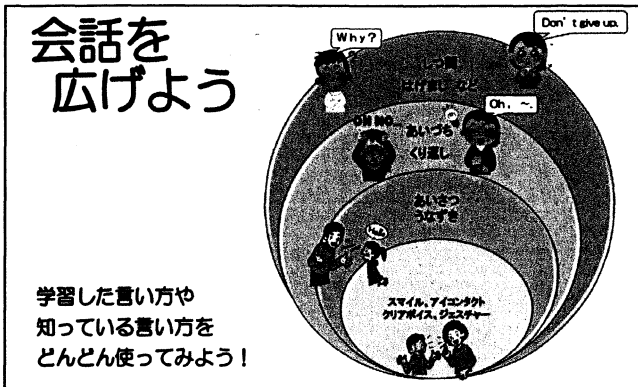


Figure 1: Handout which shows the prospect of expanding interactions (Handout A)



Figure 2: Handouts for greetings & manners (Handout B)

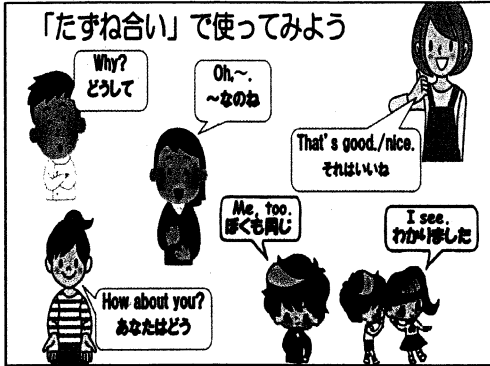


Figure 3: Handouts for questioning (Handout C)



Figure 4: Handouts for shopping

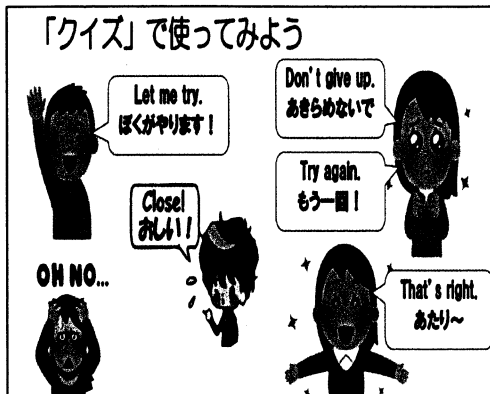


Figure 5: Handouts for quiz

3.1.3 Results and discussion

In the area of "building and maintaining good relationships," there were many expressions such as greetings to facilitate "communication." In the area of "learning rules and etiquette," there were many expressions such as instructions that were exchanged between instructors and pupils. Many questions and their responses were included in the area of "enhancement of content learning". In addition, in the specific example shown by Murahata and Murahata (2017), there were no expressions corresponding to "worried" or "requesting permission". On the other hand, "Sorry" was put in the "謝る" category, "Here you are." and "This is for you" were put in the "渡す" category, "You're welcome" "Thank you" and "It's very kind of you" were added in the "お礼する" category. Furthermore, in the FLA classes, there are many opportunities for children to talk about their feelings rather than their opinions. Therefore, "asking for opinions" has been changed to "asking for opinions / asking how they feelings". There are five simple words to share with children that have similar functions: "greetings", "repetitions", "aizuchi", "questions", and "invitations". At the author's discretion, "nodding" was added. The above classification overlaps with the example of "言語の働き" described in the Course of Study (MEXT, 2017a), while "Repeat" is shown only in Foreign Language Education in the Course of Study.

As mentioned above, the 'fixed expressions that help maintain interactions' are summarized, but words such as "greetings" and "aizuchi" may be understood differently depending on the individual. In each class, it is necessary to confirm which expression corresponds to what. Whether or not to use the expression depends on the purpose, scene, and situation of the interaction. Handouts shared with children should be modified appropriately for each class.

3.2 Research II Verification of the Effect on the 'Enjoyment of interactions' by Utilizing 'Fixed Expressions That Help Maintain Interactions'

The purpose of Research II was to investigate what kind of effect using the handout made to teach 'fixed expressions to help maintain interactions' would have on fourth grade children.

3.2.1 Methods: Period, Procedures, and Materials

This research was conducted on fourth grade children at Elementary School A. There were two classes consisting of a total 53 children. This research was conducted a total of three hours from the last week of May to the first week of June in 2021. For this research, *Let's Try! 2* (MEXT, 2019) was used. The first author gave children instruction covering Unit 3 "I like Mondays" of the textbook. The goal of this unit is "enjoy asking favorite days of the week to find out what your friends like and why, and answering the question". The unit structure starts with "listening" and "speaking(interaction)" exercises. It is a standard structure for FLA.

3.2.2 Intervention

The interventions involved in this research are as follows. In the first period, the instructor (the first author) presented Sheet A so that children could have the prospect of continuing interaction. In addition, the instructor used a lot of expressions written on Sheets B and C so that the children could understand how to use each expression. In the second period, the children decided on which element they wanted to focus on and drew a star on Sheet A. The instructor also used the expressions on Sheets B and C to show a model of interaction so that the children could have a perspective on the activities of the third period. In the third period, the children set the time for interaction while referring to Sheets B and C.

3.2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

(1) Questionnaire Survey Using the "Enjoyment Scale of Interaction"

A questionnaire survey of 25 points (5 items×5-point scale) for each subscale was conducted before the unit was taught, and after the second and the third periods were taught. Because there was no 'interaction' activity in the first period, the questionnaire survey was not conducted after the first period. The first author performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA hereafter) with one factor and three levels and compared the mean values for each subscale. The significance level was set to 5%.

(2) Questionnaire Survey Asking How Often Children Uttered 'Fixed Expressions that Help maintain Interactions'

We conducted another questionnaire survey to investigate whether the magnitude of 'degree of speaking' affect the 'enjoyment of interaction'. After the unit was taught, the questionnaire was given. It used a five-point scale for the "degree of speaking" of "the fixed expressions that help maintain interactions". The first author conducted a two-factor repeated measures ANOVA on the conditions. The significance level was set to 5%.

3.2.4 Results

(1) Enjoyment Scale of Interaction

Data of 52 respondents was analyzed. The average and standard deviation of the three following subscales is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis results of the enjoyment of interaction

	n	Pre		After 2nd period		After 3rd period	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Enjoying interacting with one another	52	18.58	4.52	18.5	5.18	18.85	5.71
Enjoying a sense of accomplishment	52	20.38	4.68	21.02	4.9	21.66	4.64
Enjoying understanding each other	52	19.67	5.7	19.75	5.81	19.81	6.2

The effect on 'enjoying interacting with one another' did not show any significant difference ($F(2,102) = 0.15, n.s.$). The effect on 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment' did not show any significant difference at the significance level of 5%, but a significant tendency ($F(2,102) = 2.00, .05 < p < .10$) was observed at the effect size of 0.24. According to multiple comparisons, the magnitude relationship of the average of each level is "Pre = After second period", "Pre < After third period", "After second period = After third period". Moreover, a significant tendency was seen only when comparing the average on enjoyment Pre-Test and after the third period was taught. The effect on "enjoying understanding each other" did not show any significant difference (F

(2,102) = 0.02, n.s.).

(2) About the Degree of Uttering Fixed Expressions and 'Enjoying Interactions'

The "degree of speaking" was analyzed by dividing it into a high group (answered 5 in the 5-point scale) and a low group (answered 1 to 4 in the 5-point scale). Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of each condition. The factor of "degree of speaking" × "The factor of "repeat" was not significant in any of the subscales. 'enjoying interacting with one another' was (F (2,100) = 0.60, ns), 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment' was (F (2,100) = 1.81, ns), and 'enjoying understanding each other' was (F (2,100) = 1.33), ns).

Table 2. Analysis results of the enjoyment of interaction depending on the degree of speaking

	degree	n	Pre		After 2nd period		After 3rd period	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Enjoying interacting with one another	high	30	18.5	4.64	19.03	5.56	19.3	5.71
	low	22	18.6	4.35	17.77	4.51	18.2	5.8
Enjoying a sense of accomplishment	high	30	20.8	4.38	22.27	3.36	22.4	4.05
	low	22	19.8	5.01	19.32	6.02	20.6	5.18
Enjoying understanding each other	high	30	19.2	6.34	20.03	6.45	20.3	6.32
	low	22	20.4	4.61	19.36	4.79	19.2	5.96

3.2.5 Discussion

The results of the questionnaire survey on enjoyment of interaction showed only a significant tendency to improve 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment', and there was no significant difference between 'enjoying interacting with one another' and 'enjoying understanding each other'. In class records using VTRs and microphones, children used "fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" such as "Why?" and "Me, too." while looking at the handout and checking the expressions on the handout with friends. On the reflection handout, there were many children who wrote about whether or not they used "fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" such as "I

was able to ask questions and greetings" or "I could speak words such as 'I see.' and 'Me, too.'". In this way, it is thought that the main purpose turned out to be use expressions rather than to convey their thoughts, which influenced only the 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment'.

In order to improve 'enjoying interacting with one another' and 'enjoying understanding each other', It was necessary to fully share with the children the purpose of the unit such as "know more about what your friends like" and "communicate what you like", and with the functions and merits of the 'fixed expressions that help maintain interactions'. Considering this, it is better to present 'fixed expressions that help maintain interactions' not all at once. Rather, they should be presented to children depending on their communicative purposes.

In addition, it became clear that there is no causal relationship between the degree of speaking "fixed expression that help maintain interactions" and "enjoyment of interaction". For this reason, it turned out that it is important for each child to select the necessary expression that best suits the purpose.

3.3 Lesson Practice and Verification for Third Graders

The purpose of the intervention was to demonstrate the children how to use "the fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" while sharing the purpose of interaction and the functions and merits, and investigate the lesson effect using the "enjoyment scale of interaction".

3.3.1 Method: Period, Procedures, and Materials

This research was conducted on 3rd grade children at Elementary School A. There were 30 children. This research was conducted over two units, for a total of seven hours from the last week of June to the first week of September (including summer vacation) in 2021. For this research, *Let's Try! 1* (MEXT, 2019) was used. It is suggested that Unit 4 "I like blue" takes four hours and the goal of the unit is "Communicate about your favorite things such as colors, sports, and food". Unit 5 "What do you like?" is supposed to take four hours and the goal is "Ask about your friends favorite colors, sports, and food. Find out what you like one another.". However, due to the schedule, the first author taught only three hours and did not teach the fourth lesson. The unit

structure starts with "listening" and "speaking(interaction)". It is a standard structure for FLA.

3.3.2 Intervention

During the first period of Unit5, we present Handout A was presented. Using the expressions made it possible for children to keep? and enjoy interactions with their friends. Moreover, the instructor wanted to use the expressions on Handout B. During the second period of Unit5, the instructor showed a model of interaction using the expressions on Handout B. During the third period of Unit5, the teacher and students confirmed the fixed expressions they wanted to use in order to enjoy interaction with their friends. During the fourth period of Unit5, the children decided on which element they wanted to focus on and drew a star on Sheet A. Then, children interacted with one another while looking at the illustrations on Handout A and the blackboard when necessary. They adjusted their goals during the activity, and continued interacting.

3.3.3 Data collection and analysis

Questionnaire survey using the "Enjoyment Scale of Interaction"

A questionnaire survey of 25 points (5 items×5-point scale) for each subscale was conducted before the unit was taught, and after Unit4, and After Unit5 were taught. The first author performed an ANOVA with one factor and three levels and compared the mean values for each subscale. The significance level was set to 5%.

3.3.4 Results

(1) Enjoyment Scale of Interaction

As a result of analyzing the data of 29 respondents. The average and standard deviation of the three subscales of "enjoying interacting with one another", "enjoying a sense of accomplishment", and "enjoying understanding each other" are shown in Table 3.

The effect on "enjoying interacting with one another" showed a significant difference with an effect size of 0.39 ($F(2,56) = 4.30, p < .05$). According to multiple comparisons, the magnitude relationship of each level was "Pre <

After Unit4", "Pre < After Unit5", and "After Unit4 = After Unit5". The effect on "enjoying a sense of accomplishment" showed a significant difference with an effect size of 0.41 ($F(2,56) = 4.64, p < .05$). According to multiple comparisons, the average magnitude relationship of each level was "Pre = After Unit4", "Pre < After Unit5", and "After Unit4 = After Unit5". The effect on "enjoying understanding each other" showed a significant difference with an effect size of 0.53 ($F(2,56) = 7.91, p < .05$). According to multiple comparisons, the magnitude relationship of each level was "Pre = After Unit4", "Pre < After Unit5", and "After Unit4 = After Unit5".

Table 3. Analysis results of the enjoyment of interaction

	n	Pre		After Unit4		After Unit5	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Enjoying interacting with one another	29	19.41	5.58	21.17	5.06	21.3	5.15
Enjoying a sense of accomplishment	29	20.14	6.13	21.45	5.19	22.3	4.2
Enjoying understanding each other	29	19.97	4.9	21.21	4.51	22.7	3.5

3.3.5 Discussion

'Enjoying interacting with one another', 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment', and 'enjoying understanding each other' have all improved. In the VTR lesson records, we were not able to confirm if the children were pointing or looking at the illustrations of "the fixed expressions that help maintain interactions". It was observed that they said "Oh, ~." and "See you." while waving their hands to greet each other. In the reflective handout, there were many descriptions about the attitude and contents of interaction such as "Smiles and reactions helped me to get along well with my friends." and "My friend's favorite thing was unexpected". Furthermore, when the instructor asked "How do you want to interact?", the children answered "Greetings are important to get along with friends." and "Reactions are important to make interaction pleasant.". From these facts, it is considered that the sharing the purpose of the

unit and the sharing the function and good points of using the expressions with children affected on elements that have to do not only with the children's linguistic expressions.

In addition, after the two units were taught, 'enjoying a sense of accomplishment' and 'enjoying understanding each other' significantly improved. It was found that it was necessary for teachers to design classes where children always interact with one another, in order to increase the sense of enjoyment.

On the other hand, in Unit4, whose main topic was non-verbal expression, 'enjoying interacting with one another' improved. In other words, it turned out that the children responded well to what was mainly dealt with in the unit. Therefore, both non-verbal and linguistic expressions need to be taught repeatedly.

It is desirable to use "the fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" while sharing their functions and good points according to the unit of study and purpose. In addition, ideally, "enjoyment of interaction" should be evaluated over a long period of time.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Achievements

The following three educational suggestions were obtained:

First, children understanding the diverse function of "fixed expressions" can lead to their "enjoying sense of accomplishment".

Second, only presenting "the fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" does neither lead to their "enjoying interacting with one another" nor "enjoying understanding each other". To help pupils feel the enjoyment, it is important that teachers share the functions and merits of using "fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" by teaching more than two units.

Third, the degree to which children speak "fixed expressions that help maintain interactions" does not affect the enjoyment of interaction.

4.2. Future Issues

There are two issues to be solved in the future.

- As for the verification of the lesson effect, the comparative verification

between the experimental group and the control group was not performed. It is possible that factors other than the use of “fixed expressions that help maintain interactions” were in play.

- “The fixed expressions that help maintain interactions” cannot be generalized. This is because the meaning of ‘fixed expression’ is understood differently on different contexts. The similarities and differences in their classification differ depending on the annual teaching plan of each school and the actual situation of the lessons.

Based on the above, future tasks will be to compare, verify and re-examine reliability and validity, and the expressions to be taught should be classified into categories that are easy for teachers in the field to use.

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APPENDIX: Questionnaire from "scale for enjoyment of interaction."

【外国語活動についてのアンケート】		4年	学級 名前							
(1) 今日の学習で友達と話すことが楽しいと感じたとき、その理由として次のことはどのくらいあてはまりますか。										
自分の気持ちに1番近いものを選んで、数字に○をつけてください。										
		と	あ	ど	あ	全				
		て	て	ち	て	く				
		も	は	ら	は	あ				
		あ	ま	と	ま	て				
		て	る	も	ら	は				
		は		言	い	ま				
		ま		え		ら				
		る		い		い				
1	表情がゆたかになるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
2	大きい声を出せるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
3	はずかしがらずに話せるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
4	えがおになるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
5	気持ちをすなおに話せるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
6	英語ができるようになるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
7	もっと英語をおぼえなくなるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
8	おぼえた英語を使えるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
9	英語でたくさん話せるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
10	英語で話している相手の話がわかるようになるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
11	友達の好みが変わるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
12	友達の気持ちが知れるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
13	友達が自分と同じものが好きだとわかるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
14	自分が話したことに反応してもらえるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5
15	自分のことを伝えられるから	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5

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