



## **IMPACT EVALUATION STUDY REPORT**

### **Stepping Stones Henan Volunteering Tour – April 2013**

#### *Background*

Every semester, Stepping Stones organizes rural volunteering tours to Henan Province. In these tours, around 12 to 16 volunteers stay in the Zhecheng County of Henan to teach English at local primary schools for a week.

In April 2013, Stepping Stones led a team of volunteers to teach at the Zhao Zhuang (ZZ) and Tian Fu Yuan (TFY) Primary Schools. While it was the first time for Stepping Stones to take volunteers to Tian Fu Yuan, it was the second time for Zhao Zhuang to accommodate volunteers. Grades 3 to 5 and Grades 3 to 6 were taught at Tian Fu Yuan and Zhao Zhuang respectively.

#### *Method, Scope and Limitations*

During the April 2013 volunteering tour, Stepping Stones piloted an impact study evaluating the effect of the volunteering tour on the interest and confidence of the students in English. The students were asked to answer a questionnaire before meeting their volunteer teachers. A similar questionnaire was administered at the end of the week, allowing the comparison of student responses before and after the program, the results of which is contained in this report.

The questionnaire covered the students' perceptions about the following:

1. English as a favorite subject
2. English as a least favorite subject
3. Going to school
4. Learning English
5. English difficulty
6. English importance
7. Confidence in the following areas:
  - a. Talking in English during English class at their school
  - b. Talking to a foreigner in English
  - c. Improving their grade for English

The total number of respondents from each school, broken down by grade level, is as follows:

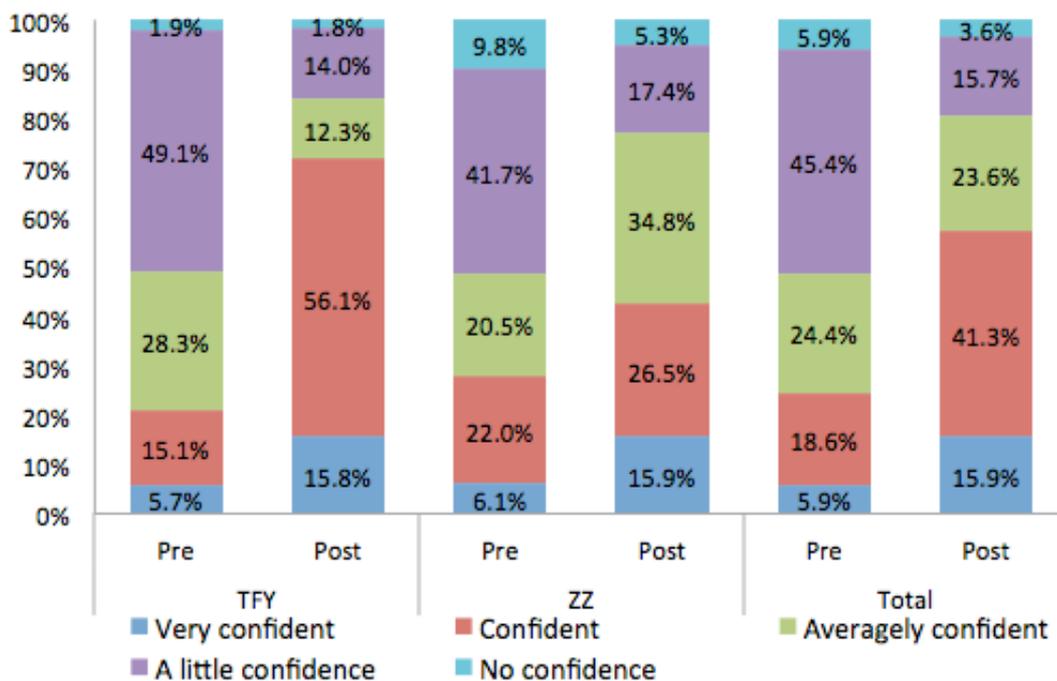
SCHOOL	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	TOTAL
Zhao Zhuang	34	35	34	31	134
Tian Fu Yuan	14	23	20	0	57

*Highlights – Favorable Responses*

1. The item with the most dramatic result pertains to the students’ confidence to talk to a foreigner in English. Prior to the tour, 24.5% of the students from both schools were confident to talk to a foreigner in English. The percentage grew by 133.5% to 57.2% of the students after the tour (Table 1).

Table 1

**The confidence to talk to a foreigner in English**



The surge among students who are confident to talk to a foreigner in English is particularly striking in Tian Fu Yuan, increasing by 245.7% from 20.8% of the students at the start to 71.9% at the end.

2. For the two schools, the percentage of students considering English as their favorite subject and least favorite subject both registered positive changes. On the one hand, the percentage of students considering English their favorite subject increased from 42.1% to 46.8% (Table 2). On the other hand, the percentage of students considering English their least favorite subject decreased from 14.5% to 10.2% (Table 3).

Table 2

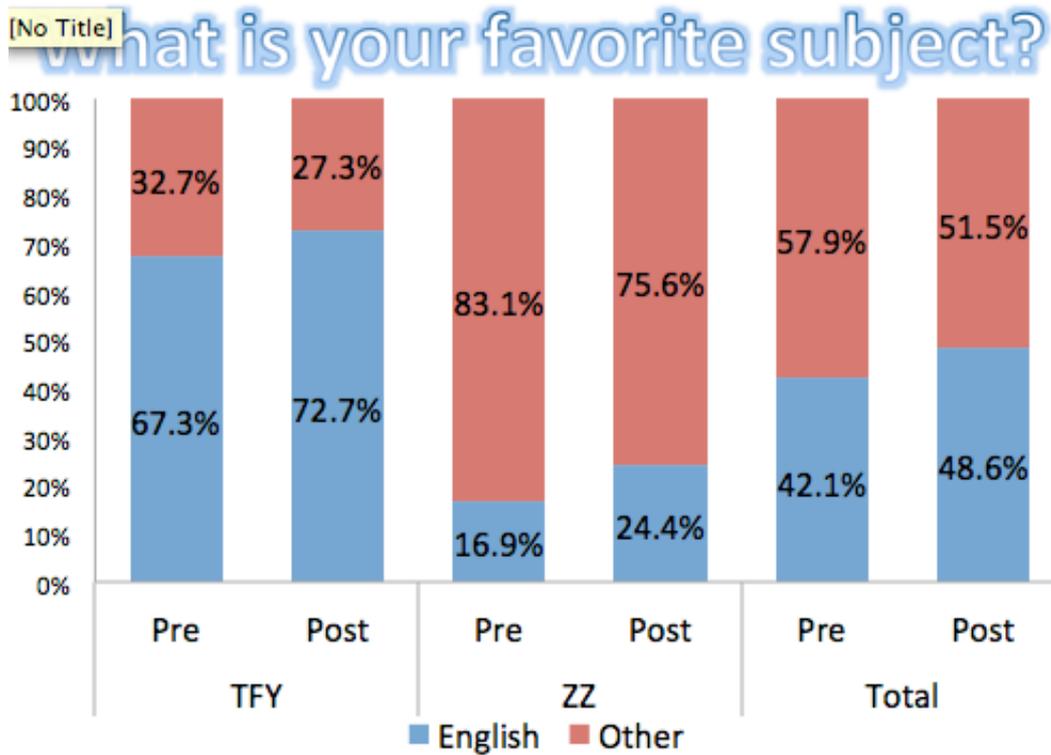
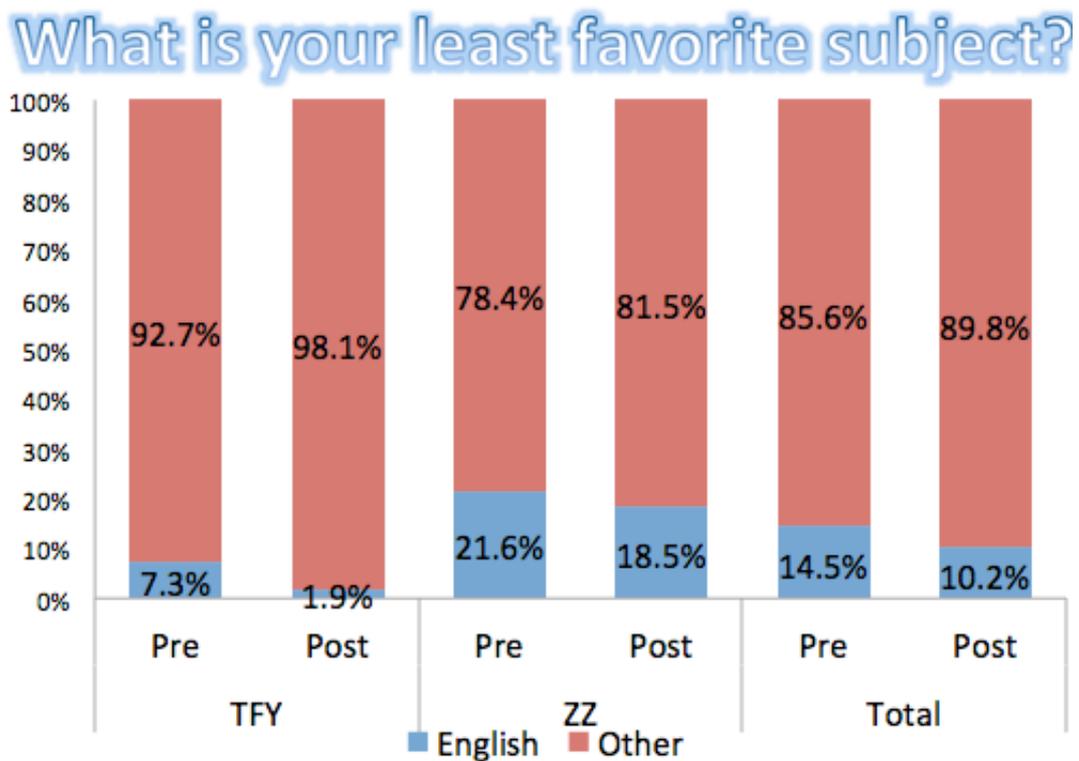


Table 3



3. Other items on confidence also posted positive changes. The percentage of students that are confident to talk in English during English class moved up by 26% from 58.1%

to 73.2% (Table 4). In terms of the percentage of students that are confident to improve their English grade, the figure grew from 81.4% to 83.5% (Table 5).

Table 4

### The confidence to talk in English during English class

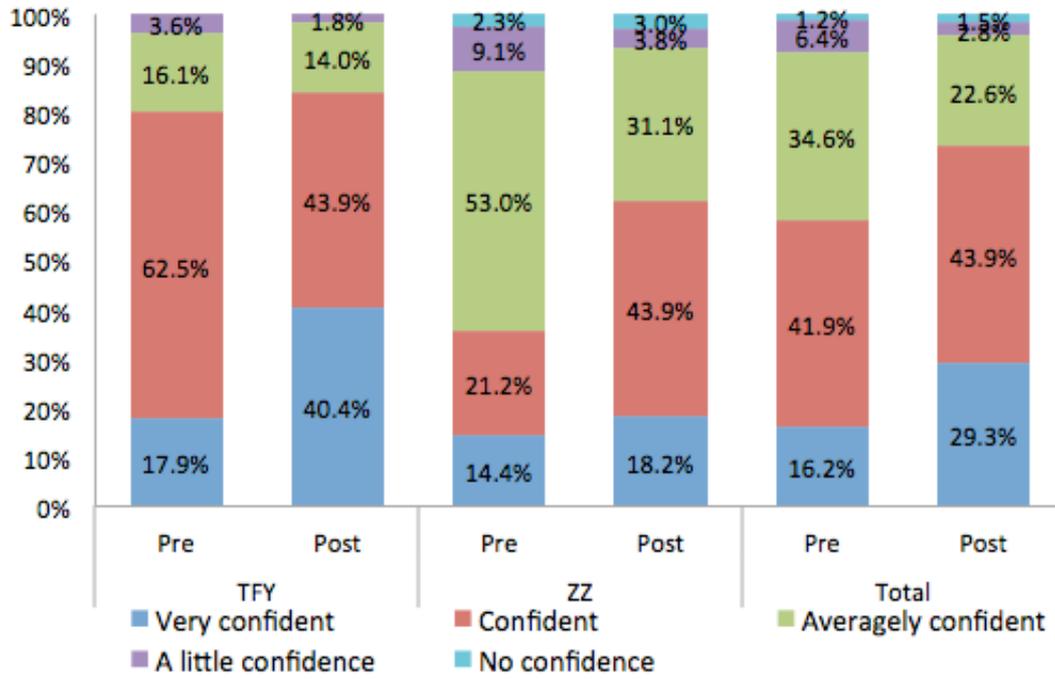
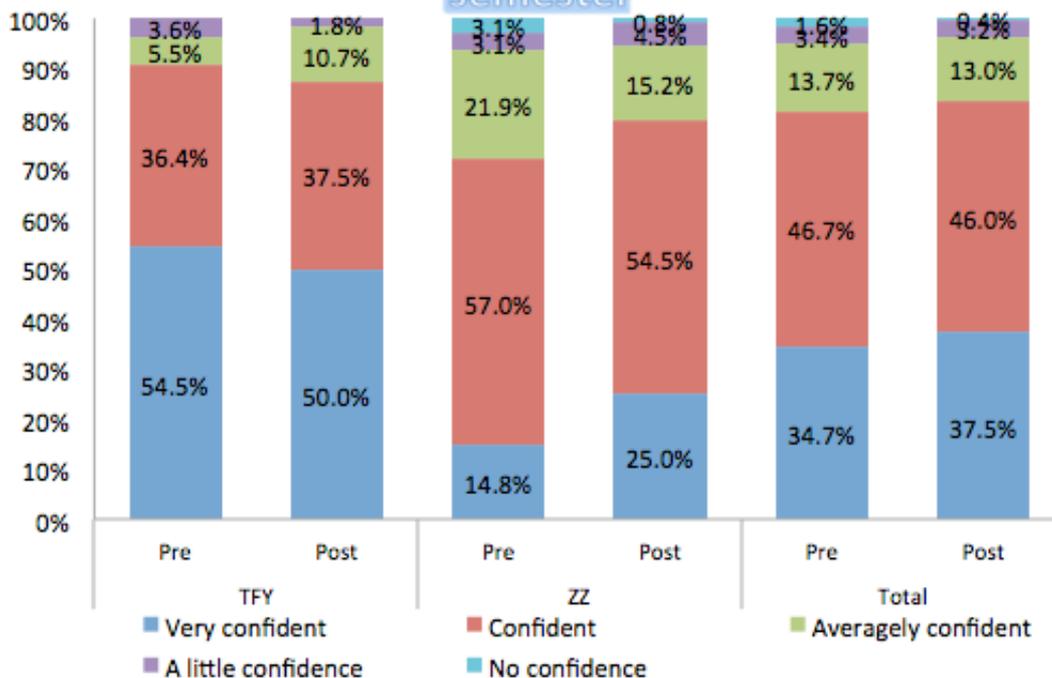


Table 5

### The confidence to improve your English grade this semester



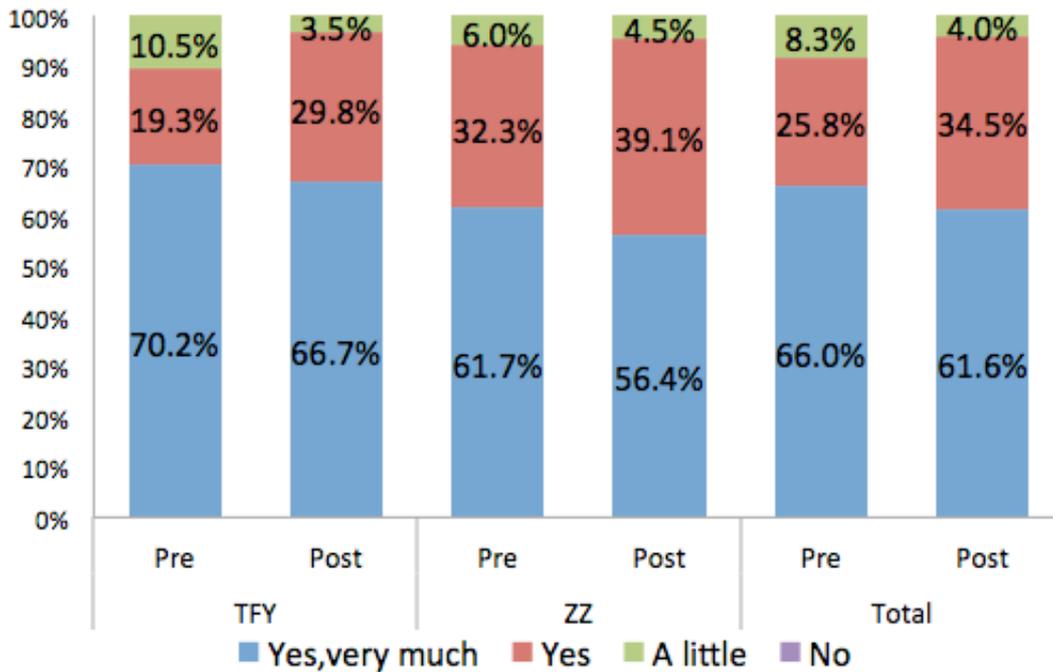
The increase in the percentage of students confident to talk in English during English class is sharper in Zhao Zhuang, compared to Tian Fu Yuan. In Zhao Zhuang, the percentage increase is 74.4% from 35.6% to 62.1%, in comparison to Tian Fu Yuan's 4.9% increase, from 80.4% to 84.3%.

It is of interest to note that the percentage of students confident to improve their English grade slightly went down at Tian Fu Yuan, from 90.9% to 87.5%.

4. The percentage of students from both schools, who like going to school, was already at a high level of 91.8%, even prior to the tour. After the tour, the percentage increased some more by 4.7% to 96.1% (Table 6)

Table 6

## Do you like going to school?



*Highlights – Points of Improvement*

1. The percentage of students that say they like learning English went down a little from 84.4% to 84% (Table 7). The same is true for the percentage of students that consider English important, marginally decreasing to 92.1% from 95.4% (Table 8).

Table 7

## Do you like learning English?

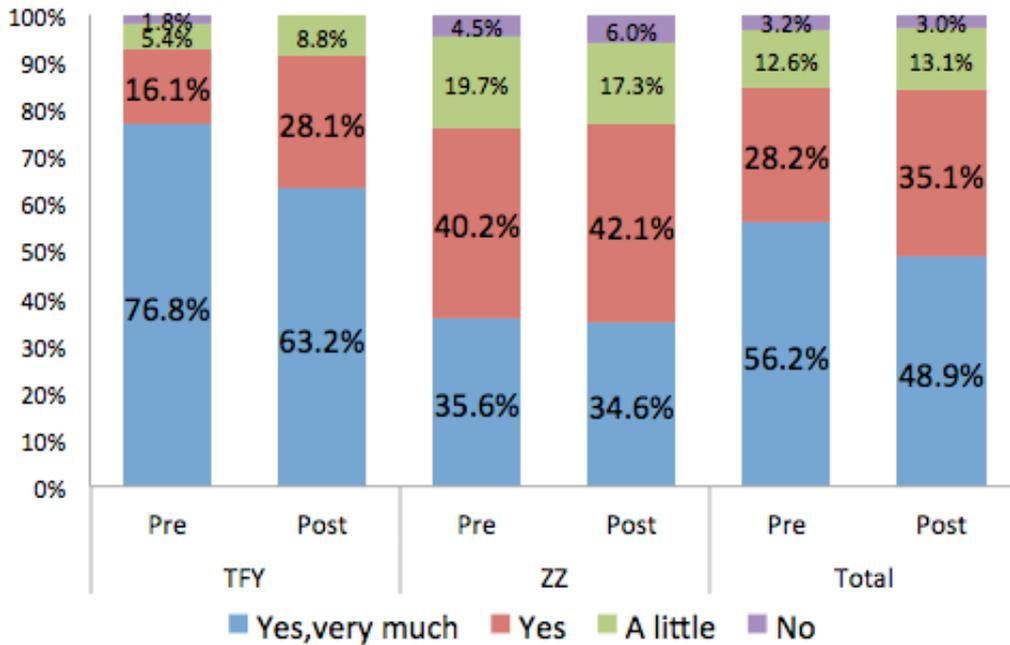
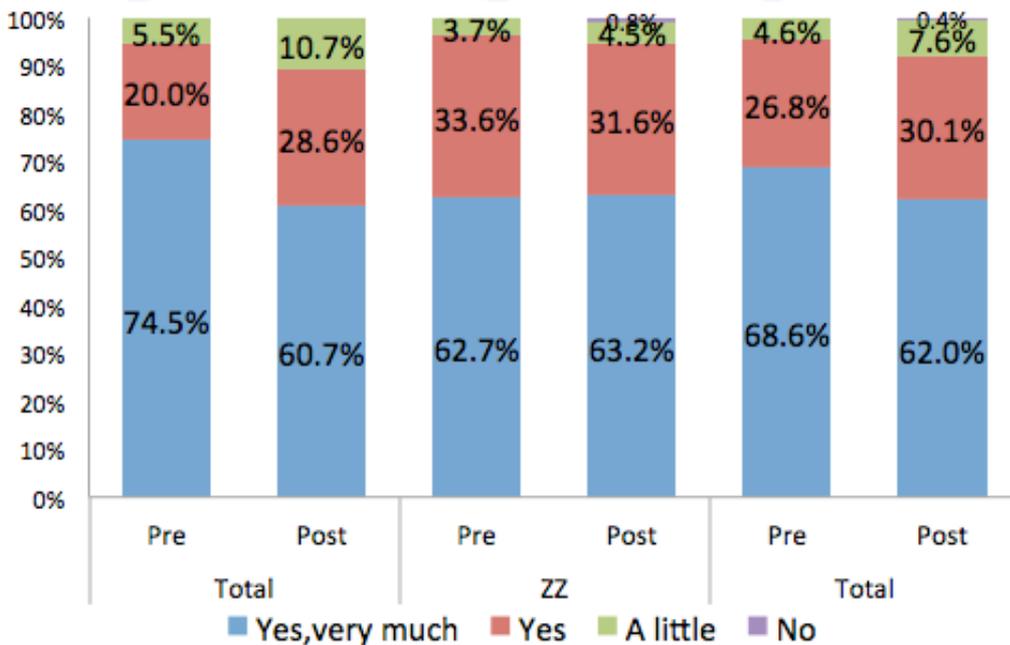


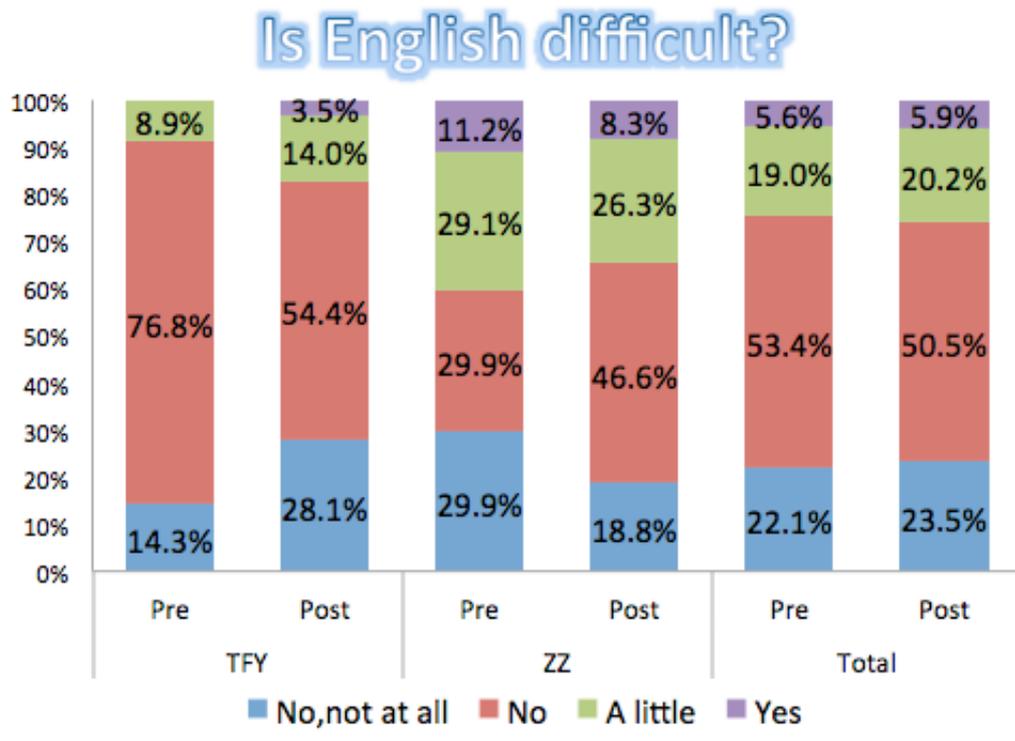
Table 8

## Do you think English is important?



2. On average, the percentage of students who find English difficult increased slightly by 6.1% from 24.6% to 26.1% (Table 9).

Table 9



Taken alone, the results from Zhao Zhuang actually show a decrease in the percentage of students that find English difficult, from 40.3% at the start compared to 34.6% at the end.

### *Implications for Further Study*

Piloting the integration of an impact evaluation component to the volunteering tours has yielded interesting results showing the tours' positive effect on the interest and confidence of the students in English. Positive results were observed, even if the intervention is for a shorter period compared to the regular programs that Stepping Stones runs in Shanghai.

In keeping with the direction to return to the same schools during each volunteering tour, similar questionnaires can be administered to the students in succeeding tours. This will allow Stepping Stones to compare student responses over time in the span of one academic year. It will be especially interesting to note how the post data from a previous trip compares with the pre data in a succeeding trip to the same school, which can provide insight regarding whether the students' increased interest and confidence in English are sustained after the tour.