

Just this afternoon I welcomed some of this year's new ALTs outside the Education Center. I can't believe that it's already been a year since I was one of the new ALTs coming to the Education Center to meet my new co-workers. Time goes by so fast! This week I want to write about the wedding that I went to with my brother a few weeks ago.

Like I mentioned in my last journal, my brother came back to Mie with me after I visited Hokkaido—so that he could see where I live, but mainly so that we could go his old host sister's wedding together. When my brother lived with a host family in Japan a few years ago, he had three host "sisters." One of them was married when he lived here, and conveniently, another one got married this summer while he was in Hokkaido. Everyone was so happy (myself included) that he could make the trip!

I was excited to go to my first Japanese wedding, especially since we are so close with this family. Even though we are not actually part of the family, we were treated as if we were, and even sat with their immediate family at the ceremony. It is especially interesting to take part in things with them, because I never feel like an outsider, but rather someone who is really part of what is going on. To my surprise, the wedding was a very western ceremony. It seemed strange to me, having been raised going to Catholic mass every Sunday, that the wedding of two non-Christians would be held in a fake chapel! There was a foreigner who "played" the priest, and a lot of the ceremony was actually in English. Although it was very similar to a Christian wedding at home, it had a very different feeling to it. I think it's really interesting that a lot of young people would rather have a wedding like this than something that seems more Japanese.

The wedding reception was also different from wedding receptions at home. At this reception, I couldn't believe how many speeches there were! Several people who knew the bride, and several people who knew the groom all got up to give speeches (which seemed much longer than they needed to be), and then they went around to each table, asking one person from each table to spontaneously give a speech, too. I got a little nervous when they got to our table, but luckily they called my brother, not me. Then there was karaoke where people sang songs that had a special meaning or gave a special message to the new couple. I couldn't believe it! Usually American weddings have a few short speeches, the meal, and then dancing. There was no dancing at this wedding, though—just lots of speeches and karaoke while we ate our delicious meal.

Something else that surprised me at the wedding was the fact that the bride and groom changed clothes a few times. While the bride only wore three different dresses, my brother told me that at some weddings there are even more than that.

This seemed so unusual to me, because at an American wedding the bride and groom stay in the same clothes the whole time.

Although it was really different from any wedding I've ever seen at home, it was very interesting and beautiful at the same time. I might never have the chance to see a wedding in Japan again, so I was happy that I could go and share this experience with my Japanese "family" and my brother.