

ERC NEWS LETTER

No.1

ERC Christmas party in 2019

Last year on December 20, we had an ERC Christmas party. First we decorated ERC room for the Christmas party. And then many students and teachers got together and enjoyed chatting and eating! There were many kinds of sweets, foods and drinks. Some of them were made by teachers or a student. All of them were so delicious. Especially, I loved a cake made by Mr. Campbell so much. I hope you guys can try it next time. We also did a gift exchange. It was really fun! I'm really sorry, we can't hold an ERC Christmas party this year because of COVID-19. I hope to see you next year at an ERC Christmas party.

(Written by student Ayano Ito)

ERC and COVID-19 in 2020

The year 2020 caused many students and teachers to suffer with the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Students could not come to Obihiro University right away in the spring, and many stayed at their family's home all year instead of coming to the campus.

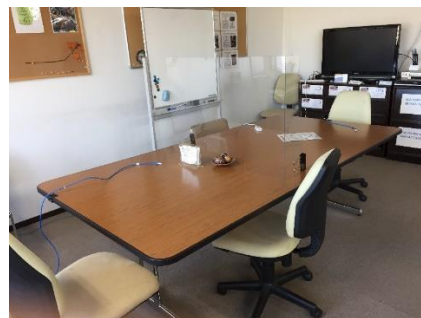
Teachers and students could not go to classrooms, so lessons were given online using Zoom or Moodle BigBlueButton video programs. This caused many problems and stress. Everyone had to learn how to use new technology including software, cameras, and microphones. The university increased the power of the wifi server in the dormitory, but it was often

DECEMBER/2020

not strong enough, so online lessons had communication problems. Students living in apartments in Obihiro or in homes with family had connection troubles, too.

The university allowed students to use classrooms for stronger wifi. Some students didn't want to go because of the risk of coronavirus. The ERC could not be open to lend books for the extensive reading program. But it made space for a few students to use wifi or LAN cables. This was needed because they could not speak in classrooms; their activities for English courses would make too much noise for other students in the room. The ERC was their only good connection.

You can see how the main table in the ERC provided 2 LAN cables and a plastic barrier for protection against infection. Any student coming to the ERC had to clean their hands with alcohol, and the tables were cleaned with disinfectant.



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Interview with Prof. Izumi Chuma

Please describe your English learning experience after high school.

When I was Chikudai 1st grade student, I didn't study hard. After entrance into Koike-sensei's laboratory, I realized that my brain didn't work well for reading English papers. I wanted to move to graduate school at Kobe University, so I had to study English again for the entrance exam. Koike-sensei suggested to read an English textbook of plant pathology. I translated it into Japanese in every morning. This experience reminded me that English learning is fun for me.

The lab at Kobe University had many international students from Asian countries, Africa, and South America. I taught them experimental techniques and they taught me English communication. So, I got familiar with talking English and thought of going abroad for my research.

I stayed at Hohenheim University in Germany only a half year, but I learnt how wonderful English communications were. I visited many European countries. People in every country spoke English. It was not easy for me, but you don't have to worry; they understand what you say.

How do you use English for your work? And, how often?

I speak in English to my colleague about

DECEMBER/2020

my research, write my scientific papers, listen to presentations of researchers, and read books or papers about science. I use English for science every day.

Which English skill do you use more?

I think it's reading now—journals and books about my research topic, and manuscripts written by other scientists which I have to review. I sometimes read after my child sleeps.

What is the most difficult part of English for you? How do you try to overcome that?

It's vocabulary. I often forget words that I want to say. When I find good words, I try to use them as often as I could.

How often do you use English for personal reasons, not work reasons?

Once or twice a week with friends. Recently, my daughter made friends with Bangladeshi boy. His father works at Chikudai. As the parents cannot speak Japanese, I sometimes help them.

What are the differences in English that Chikudai undergraduate students and graduate students should learn?

If you are an undergraduate, just talk to English speakers, and you can find the best way to learn more about English. If you are a graduate student, read scientific papers, present your research at conferences, and make friends who can discuss common field interests.

What advice do you want to give to any Chikudai students about learning English?

If you want to speak English fluently, try to stay in a foreign country for months. You can select several types of English learning course, or stay for your research.