



# TAKING OFF

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Emi (left) with a friend from Poland



## Linnaeus University Emi Mizukawa (4th year, Foreign Language Major)

Hello from Karmar, Sweden! I have been studying at Linnaeus University since last September. I was interested in the Swedish welfare system and wished to study at a place where there weren't so many Japanese students, so I chose this university. It has already been six months (as of March) since I came here, so I would like to look back on my life up to now.

Right after the semester started at Linnaeus University, I was in the classroom with local Swedish students. There was only one Japanese student on campus besides me. It was hard enough to just get used to living here in the first couple of months, but in addition to that, I had to study with Swedish students who were fluent in English and who could express themselves quite well. All classes were of course instructed in English. In the beginning, I did not understand what my teachers were saying, what I needed to do, and even what my assignments were. Not only classes, but also daily life itself was challenging. I was not fluent in English enough to mingle easily with other students and did not have good skills to continue conversations. It was exciting to meet new people, but at the same time, I sometimes felt depressed to face the reality that I could not be who I wanted to be in terms of language ability and interpersonal skills. But I never gave up and I continued trying to cope with the challenges. Because of this, I started to feel comfortable living and studying here by the end of the first semester.

I am the only Japanese student on campus this semester. I truly believe this is the best environment to acquire a language, but I sometimes feel lonely. I tend to spend



Emi (left) with friends living in the same apartment building

more time with my friends. When they ask me to go out for *Fuka* (Swedish tea time!), dinner, and to parties, I am so happy and excited. Each of these events is important for me now.

Here is what I have learned through my study abroad experience. When you live and study overseas, you experience things you never expect to happen in Japan. Feelings and thoughts you rarely had before fill up your mind. However, you have a lot of time to reflect upon your feelings and to learn about yourself. When you face a difficult and hard situation, you may not be able to think of anything else because you tend to focus only on what is happening in front of you. But I learned it is important that you never give up and I believe what you do now will lead you to a whole new world. When you move a step forward, you can always find something new.

You may wonder whether you should try something new or not. You may also wonder whether you can grow up and be successful in the future. I would say you are the only one who can find the answer to that. But, I also know that nothing happens unless you move forward, unless you move on!



## OGU's Service Learning Class

Students working in pairs are a natural component of the language classroom. However, the students enrolled in Osaka Gakuin University's Service Learning class take that pair work to another, greater level.

Osaka Gakuin started offering the Service Learning Class in 2012. The class is taught by Stephen Dalton, and focuses on global issues while helping students improve their confidence in English and serving the community in the bargain.

The class uniquely pairs each foreign exchange student in the course with a Japanese OGU student. While learning about global challenges, each pair forms a service learning team and works together to help meet those challenges through problem solving and volunteering. This past year, the students assisted community groups such as a Fukushima evacuee NPO and local elderly care facilities.

"Here at OGU, we teachers are always thinking about how to create meaningful exchanges between our foreign exchange and Japanese students. In the Service Learning course, Japanese and foreign students teach each other their language and culture as they work together to serve a community need," Dalton said.

During the semester course, students learn in detail about global issues through lectures and guest speakers. Discussions and working to find solutions to some of the global and local challenges are important parts of the course. Students cap it off by writ-



Helping the Christmas party for Fukushima evacuee children

ing in a reflection journal every week.

One guest speaker this year was Yuko Nishiyama, a Fukushima mother and activist who talked about her personal experiences and the challenges that evacuees face after leaving Fukushima to live in Kyoto following the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and resulting nuclear disaster.

Students in the class were moved by Nishiyama's stories about the evacuees who decided to leave Fukushima for the safety of their children and families. Nishiyama's Minna no Te project reaches out to hundreds of evacuees now living in Kyoto. Working with Minna no Te, students visited the temporary housing and created interactive events to support the evacuee children spiritually and educationally.

In one event in December, students in the class including one Japanese Santa and Canadian Mrs. Claus joined a community Christmas event and handed out presents to the delight of the children.

"Every time after the volunteer work, we really feel happy," said Di Zhang, a student from China. "We learned to work together."

Another recent project involved collecting used books for a program that turns those books into much needed classroom textbooks for students in the Tohoku disaster hit area. Led by Kent Nakamura, one of the students in the class, the project clearly shows the impact the course is having on both the Japanese and foreign students.

Nakamura volunteered to lead the book drive. He made posters in both English and Japanese, got approval from the university administration, and went around campus with some of his classmates to promote the project and get people to donate their unwanted books.

He "stepped up to the plate" as a leader for this project," Dalton said. "It took some perseverance and political skills to get everyone on board."

Nakamura collected more than 3



Students collected books to help the Fukushima area

boxes of used Japanese and English books which were then shipped to the sponsoring book store in Tokyo. Proceeds from selling those books will be used to purchase new textbooks for schools in the Fukushima area.

Nakamura said he felt strongly about taking on this cause after a guest speaker in the Service Learning class talked about the project.

"I wanted to try this program because this is going to help students still living in Fukushima," he said. "I feel it's very good. Not everyone can leave the area and we can't forget those who are still there."

Dalton is already looking ahead to the next semester.

"Creating this course has been a real team effort of everyone in the Kokusai Center, but the effort has been more than worth it. We look forward to adding new components like feeding the homeless this coming Fall," Dalton said.

## “Living English” at the I-Chat Lounge

I-Chat's “Living English” is back by popular demand! “Living English” is a feature of I-Chat where students can experience a natural conversational setting to further develop their English communication skills. This “at home” feeling is unique to I-Chat and helps students to feel that they truly are in an international environment right here on the OGU campus. Comfortable chairs are placed in a circle, in a relaxed living room style arrangement, which is often found in many places throughout the world, to help individuals connect in various social settings.

The idea of “Living English” fosters an immersion community of learners in which everyone feels at ease communicating with one another in English. As a result, the emphasis is placed on the patterns of language and not simply

the rules and the form of speaking. Students know, once they enter the doorway into I-Chat, they are in a “safe zone” where they can feel “at home” and without fear of making mistakes. Learning English becomes fun!

The topics of conversation at “Living English” vary, yet often you will find students comparing their travel experiences, asking questions, listening and broadening their knowledge of other cultures and their worldview. Discussing current world events, expressing opinions and listening to others are just a few of the English skills being practiced each day.

I-Chat's native English speakers encourage all OGU students to try this process. From beginners to advanced speakers, “Living English” facilitates easier communication for all. From job



interviews to traveling abroad, Students can develop the English necessary to successfully meet new challenges in their future.

One of I-Chat's goals is to equip students with the tools necessary to become better communicators in everyday real-life situations in English. At I-Chat, we are confident that “Living English” is a one-of-a-kind tool that will allow students to do just that. Won't you give it a try? Everyone is welcome! Please come visit “Living English” at I-Chat today!

## I-Chat's Drink Bar

Come and visit the all-new International “Drink Bar!” at I-Chat. You can see drinks from all around the world while you make new friends and level up your English!



I-Chat offers a unique experience for OGU students to meet teachers, students and visitors from all over the world and learn about their different cultures. Several I-Chat students have studied abroad and experienced new drinks, new foods and made new friends. The newly restyled “Drink Bar” is a chance for all students to showcase a drink they enjoyed in another country or to bring one from their home country for other students to enjoy.

As always at I-Chat, our focus is for

students to make new connections to others, to the native English-speaking staff, and to other cultures that might be unfamiliar to them. The “Drink Bar” is another feature of I-Chat that can jump-start conversations and foster connections between people of the world.

Drop into I-Chat today to check out the new “Drink Bar,” level up your English and make some new friends! Hope to see you soon!

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