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To All Press Members,

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Cooperative Agreement with Matsusaka City, Mie Prefecture

Bridging Theory and Practice in English Education

## **Teacher Certification Program Students Conduct an English Workshop at Ureshino Junior High School in Matsusaka**

On February 2nd, ICU Association of Fieldwork in Language Teaching, a voluntary student organization of International Christian University (ICU: Mitaka City, Tokyo; President: Shoichiro Iwakiri), held an English workshop for about 160 second-year junior high school students (5 classes) at Ureshino Junior High School in Matsusaka City. This is the first collaboration between ICU and Matsusaka City in the field of English education since the signing of the cooperation agreement\*<sup>1</sup> in October 2022.

### **Key Points**

- During the COVID pandemic, students in the Teacher Certificate Program exhibited interest in contributing to the local community and launched numerous activities that would become the foundation of their association.
- The English workshop implemented above was designed by ICU students based on a task-based approach—a method which has attracted widespread attention in the field of foreign language education.
- The content of the class was designed with career guidance in mind. Students who participated made comments such as , “I had fun learning about the experiences of university students” and “it made me want to study harder with my friends”, and were glad to have been provided an opportunity to be re-inspired to learn English and think about their future.



### **Background**

The [ICU Association of Fieldwork in Language Teaching \(ICU AFLT\)](#) is a student organization (approx. 20 members) mainly involving students interested in teaching and language education and is advised by [Associate Professor Akiko Fujii](#) and [Associate Professor Mari Tsujita](#), both specialists in the field of English education. This organization was formed during a time when the COVID pandemic restricted students from participating in extracurricular activities and overseas programs, and students turned their attention towards contributions they could make to the local community. In 2021 and 2022, students organized and conducted English workshops at public elementary and junior high schools as part of the university's lifelong learning program. The student leader, Kou Numano (Language Education/Education major, at the time a third-year student in the College of Liberal Arts), felt the need to formally organize and host these activities collaboratively, and upon consulting Associate Professor Fujii, launched AFLT in the fall of 2022.

Based on three fundamental pillars: university education, social contribution, and academic research, the organization currently plans and conducts English workshops and volunteers at English proficiency exam (Eiken) preparation classes at junior high schools in Mitaka City and Chofu City. The group has conducted over 12 English workshops and Eiken preparation sessions thus far, for more than 300 elementary and junior high school students. Additionally, the group has presented a research study which analyzed the process of developing their teaching materials.

In April 2023, AFLT's leader, Kou Numano, introduced the group's activities to President Iwakiri, which led to the ICU AFLT English Workshop at Matsusaka, an English workshop at Ureshino Junior High School in Matsusaka City.

The purpose of this workshop was to

1. deepen university students' learning and contribute to the community through the real-world application of knowledge learned in university courses on English teaching ;
2. provide opportunities for junior high school students to interact in English in small groups during the workshops to increase their motivation to learn English; and
3. help junior high school students consider future career paths by having university students share their experiences of studying English and choosing career paths, as well as their experiences of living and traveling abroad.

### **Class Content**

On the day of the workshop, six AFLT members (one first-year master's student, three fourth-year undergraduate students, and two third-year undergraduate students) taught classes under the supervision of Associate Professor Fujii, using a task-based teaching method that has attracted much attention in the field of foreign language education. Approximately 160 second-year junior high school students (across 5 classes) from Ureshino Junior High School attended the class. The day was divided into two parts. During Part I, activities were conducted in English in each class from first to fifth period. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions to university students in English and then communicate amongst themselves in small groups. They were also given time

to think about their future and the future as envisioned by university students. By using English in small groups with university students of relatively close age, junior high school students were challenged to communicate in English and by providing experiences of successful English communication, they were further motivated to learn English.

During Part II, university students gave a series of mini-talks. By sharing their own diverse experiences from junior high school to university, including growing up overseas, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and living away from home, this program aimed to inspire students to think about their own circumstances and future.



Regarding the preparation leading up to the implementation of this workshop, project leader Nakamura and member Aiguchi observed classes at Ureshino Junior High School in November and designed the lesson plan based on their first-hand observations of the junior high school students. At the end of January, university students assigned junior high school students the task of creating and submitting questions and made final preparations for the lesson plan based on these submissions.

### Comments from Participants

The junior high school students who attended the class gave comments about English such as, "It was fun", "I got a chance to speak a lot of English for the first time", "I want to talk more and more with English speakers", "Their English pronunciation is beautiful," and about their future, such as, "Hearing about university life made me think about my future", "It made me want to work overseas in the future", and "It made me want to study harder with my friends." They also commented about studying, such as "I want to work abroad in the future"; "I'm going to study hard with my friends"; and about the teaching method, "Because I experienced it, it seemed real and I could imagine it easily. Their explanations were effective and easy to understand," showing that the workshop fulfilled their expectations.

### Comments and insights from the Organization Members

- I was glad to be able to make use of the knowledge I gained through university classes and

practical training. There were a lot of things that I felt were effective based on students' responses such as trying to use easy sentences, providing frequent demonstrations and/or examples, and supporting comprehension with visual information.

- Because I had experience facilitating numerous workshops, I was able to ask questions in a way that was easy for each student to understand, and was able to provide small steps to get them to participate more actively. The workshop was pretty long, lasting from first to sixth period, but the students' were so energetic throughout that it actually gave me energy.
- The students' attitude toward learning English was simply remarkable. In a span of just 50 minutes, they were reserved at first about speaking English but I was impressed to see them actively speaking with one another towards the end. We university students also focused on thinking about how we could support the junior high school students in their use of English, and we had a short meeting after each class to improve as we repeated the class. We would like to thank the Matsusaka City Board of Education, Ureshino Junior High School, ICU Administration Group, Lifelong Learning Program, and the Japan ICU Foundation for providing the opportunity and support prior to running the workshop<sup>\*2</sup>.

### Future Work

By conducting English workshops based on the latest theories of English language education for "public" elementary and junior high school students who have limited exposure and access to English education resources, we aim to expand access to such resources and, as English speakers, ensure educational equity and diversity and inclusion in English education.

### Notes

<sup>\*1</sup> Matsusaka City and ICU collaborated on the reproduction of a full-scale model of the "Ichijojiki," a one-tatami-mat study room (still exists in ICU) built by Takeshiro Matsuura, the "godfather of Hokkaido" who was born in Matsusaka City, in his final years. For more information, please see the press release (in Japanese):

[https://www.icu.ac.jp/about/press/docs/ICUPressRelease221005\\_J.pdf](https://www.icu.ac.jp/about/press/docs/ICUPressRelease221005_J.pdf)

<sup>\*2</sup> ICU AFLT in Matsusaka project has applied for a grant (100,000 yen) from Matsusaka City—

"Comprehensive Collaborative Agreement University Activity Support Grant". The project is also supported by a grant from the Japan ICU Foundation (JICUF; New York, USA) given to the project leader Miku Nakamura.

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