

Preliminary Research about the Impact of English Private Lesson to the Well-being and Academic Motivation in English of Students Across the Departments of Kansai University of International Studies

英語プライベートレッスンが関西国際大学全学部の学生の幸福感と英語の学習意欲に与える影響についての予備的研究

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Abstract

The English Private Lesson (EPL), introduced in 2021 at Kansai University of International Studies (KUIS), was established as a supplementary activity to enhance students' engagement with English language learning. By providing personalized guidance, the program has continuously supported students in fostering a deeper commitment to developing their language skills. This study examines the broader impact of EPL sessions on the well-being and academic motivation of students across various departments at KUIS, highlighting its role as an innovative approach to language education and its potential contributions to student success within higher education. Additionally, these sessions have been found to reduce anxiety, increase self-confidence, and foster a more positive attitude toward language learning. This study offers valuable insights into the role of extracurricular language programs in promoting holistic student development and provides implications for improving language education strategies in university settings. Well-being and academic motivation are closely correlated and have a significant impact on Japanese students' performance in class and English programs. Enhancing emotional and social support, reducing anxiety, and fostering intrinsic motivation can lead to improved academic outcomes. Addressing these factors within the cultural context of Japanese education is essential for creating effective learning programs.

Key Words: English Private Lesson (EPL), Face-to-Face, Online, Group Sessions, Individual Sessions, Well-being, Academic Motivation

I. Introduction

The English Private Lesson (EPL) program, introduced in 2021 at Kansai University of International Studies (KUIS), was designed to support students with varying levels of motivation and proficiency. Initially offered to students within the Faculty of Global Communication, the program sought to engage not only highly motivated learners but also those who were less confident or more reserved, providing an opportunity for all students to improve their English language skills. By 2022, the program expanded to all three KUIS campuses—Kobe-Yamate, Amagasaki, and Miki—driven by significant demand. To accommodate this growing interest, the reservation system was modified to increase the number of available slots, facilitating broader participation.

The expansion of the program has led to notable improvements in participation across multiple departments, reflecting the program's growing significance within the university.

The well-being and academic motivation of Japanese university students in English language classes remain pivotal areas of research and practice. These aspects are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including

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extrinsic motivations, teacher influence, cultural dynamics, and the psychological challenges associated with language learning. As English continues to hold significant importance in Japan for career advancement and global communication, understanding the factors that drive, or hinder student engagement is critical.

Extrinsic motivators, such as career aspirations and societal expectations, play a significant role in students' drive to learn English. This aligns with studies highlighting the importance of external factors in motivating Japanese learners (Dörnyei and Ushioda 21). Additionally, cultural values like perseverance (*gaman*) and group harmony (*wa*) deeply influence student attitudes and approaches to language learning (Kubota 345). However, language anxiety and stress remain notable challenges, often hindering academic performance and overall well-being (Horwitz 123).

This analysis delves into these factors, drawing on insights from scholarly literature, including the critical role of teachers in shaping motivation and the benefits of fostering supportive learning environments. By addressing challenges like anxiety and promoting culturally relevant and engaging content, educators can align their strategies with students' needs, ultimately enhancing both motivation and academic outcomes (Ryan and Deci 56).

II. Purpose of this Practice Report

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of this supplementary English conversation program on the well-being and academic motivation of university students. Specifically, the study aims to explore how participation in such programs influences emotional, social, and mental well-being, alongside its effects on engagement, growth mindset, and academic performance.

In the context of emotional well-being, the study investigates how reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence foster a supportive learning environment. Horwitz et al. argue that reducing language anxiety significantly enhances learners' emotional well-being (125), while Bandura highlights the link between self-confidence, a sense of achievement, and well-being (63). Social well-being factors such as enhanced interactions, cultural awareness, and inclusivity are also explored, with Ryan and Deci emphasizing the importance of belonging (71) and Byram discussing the development of cultural competence through conversational exposure (98). Mental health benefits, including cognitive stimulation and stress relief, are examined in light of findings by Kroll et al. and Oxford, who highlight the positive impact of engaging and enjoyable language activities (45; 123).

In terms of academic motivation, the study explores how English conversation programs enhance engagement, goal orientation, and academic success. Gardner underscores the motivational role of language proficiency in achieving academic and career goals (89), while Dweck explains the importance of fostering a growth mindset in learning environments (120). Additionally, Cummins links improved fluency to better comprehension and academic performance, while Zwiers emphasizes the development of critical thinking and communication skills (45; 76).

Finally, the research addresses the synergistic effects of improved well-being and motivation, highlighting the role of self-efficacy, resilience, and global competence. Bandura identifies self-efficacy as a predictor of academic persistence (74), and Gu and Day discuss resilience as a key factor in overcoming linguistic and social barriers (112). Deardorff further emphasizes the importance of global competence for academic and professional advancement (54).

By integrating theoretical insights and empirical evidence, this study aims to provide actionable recommendations for implementing effective English conversation programs that enhance both well-being and academic outcomes.

III. Background

1. The correlation between well-being and academic motivation of Japanese Students: Implications for Class and English Program Performance

1.1 Well-Being and Academic Motivation: Conceptual Foundations

a. Well-Being

Well-being, particularly in educational contexts, includes emotional, psychological, and social dimensions (Ryan and Deci 68). For Japanese students, cultural values such as harmony (*wa*) and perseverance (*gaman*) influence their experiences of well-being in education (Markus and Kitayama 227). English conversation programs, by reducing stress and improving self-confidence, can enhance emotional and mental stability, which are critical for learning.

b. Academic Motivation

Motivation is typically classified as intrinsic—driven by internal interest—or extrinsic—driven by external rewards or pressures (Deci and Ryan 50). In Japan, English is perceived as a tool for global competitiveness, making extrinsic motivation a significant factor (Kikuchi and Browne 5). However, fostering intrinsic motivation, such as through engaging and supportive programs, can lead to better academic outcomes.

1.2. Correlation Between Well-Being and Academic Motivation

a. Positive Feedback Loop

Improved well-being enhances academic motivation, creating a reinforcing cycle.

b. Emotional Stability: Programs that reduce anxiety foster higher intrinsic motivation. Horwitz et al. highlight that lowering foreign language anxiety enhances performance and engagement (126).

c. Social Connectedness: English programs encourage peer collaboration, which supports emotional well-being and builds motivation. This aligns with the collectivist values in Japanese culture (Markus and Kitayama 232).

2. Cultural Context

In Japan, students face high societal expectations for academic success, particularly in English education. Students with higher well-being are better equipped to balance these pressures, sustaining motivation even in challenging learning environments (Kikuchi and Browne 6).

3. Impact on Classroom and English Program Performance

3.1 English Program Performance

Students with higher well-being and motivation demonstrate better outcomes in English programs:

a. Reduced Anxiety: Programs that create a low-pressure environment improve students' willingness to participate in activities like speaking and group discussions (Horwitz et al. 127).

b. Self-Efficacy: Belief in one's ability to succeed correlates with greater effort and persistence, leading to higher proficiency (Bandura 38).

3.2 Classroom Performance

a. Engagement: Emotional and social well-being increases participation in class discussions and collaborative tasks, which are crucial for learning (Skinner et al. 498).

b. Achievement: Motivated students set clearer academic goals and invest more effort, resulting in better performance on assignments and tests (Gardner 45).

4. Empirical Evidence

Empirical studies illustrate the connection between well-being, motivation, and academic performance:

a. Takahashi found that Japanese students with higher emotional well-being were more motivated and performed better in English proficiency tests (52).

b. Kikuchi and Browne observed that anxiety and demotivation negatively affected students' engagement and performance in English programs (8).

- c. Deci and Ryan emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, which thrives in environments that support well-being and autonomy (70).

IV. Results and Discussion : Analysis of Participant Data Across Categories (2022–2024)

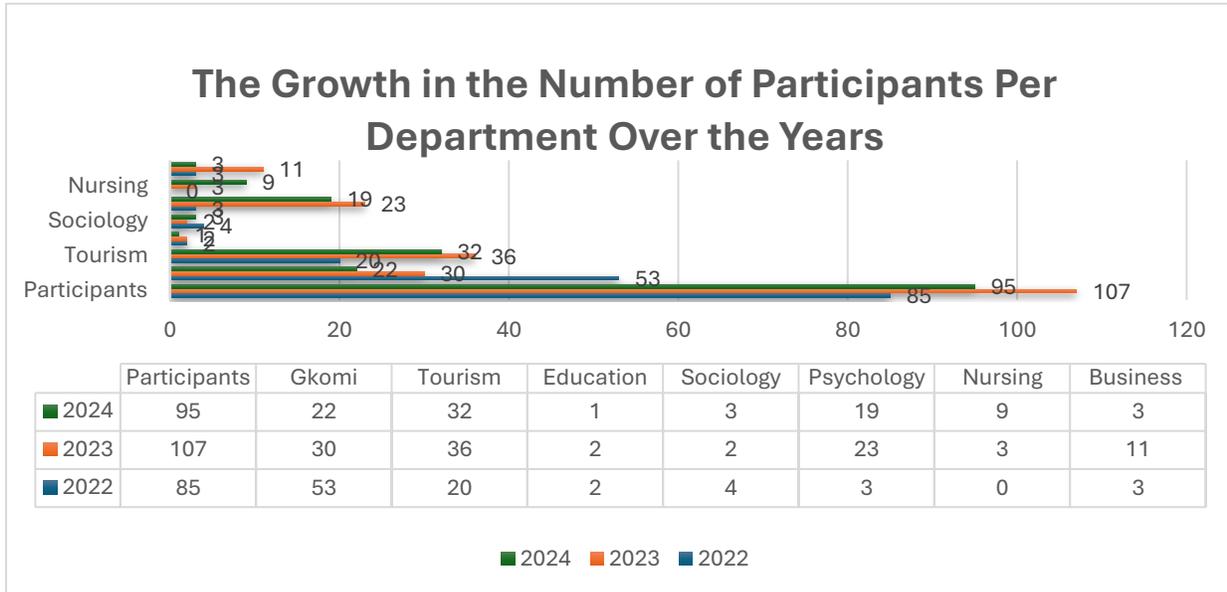


Figure 1: The Growth in the Number of Participants Per Department Over the Years

The data presented in Figure 1 reflects the growth in participant numbers across various departments at Kansai University of International Studies over three years (2022–2024). The total number of participants increased from 85 in 2022 to 107 in 2023, followed by a slight decline to 95 in 2024, indicating a general upward trend with some fluctuations.

Department-specific trends reveal varying participation patterns. The Tourism department experienced significant growth, increasing from 20 participants in 2022 to 36 in 2023, before slightly declining to 32 in 2024. Similarly, the Gkomi department peaked at 30 participants in 2023, compared to 22 in both 2022 and 2024. The Psychology department exhibited steady growth, rising from 3 participants in 2022 to 23 in 2023, followed by a slight decrease to 19 in 2024. Participation in the Business department remained minimal but spiked from 3 participants in 2022 to 11 in 2023, leveling off again to 3 in 2024. The Nursing department had no participants in 2022 but saw modest participation of 3 students in both 2023 and 2024. Departments like Sociology and Education remained small, with slight variations over the years.

The data suggests that while the program's overall impact has been positive, the spike in participation in 2023 may reflect heightened awareness or program expansion. However, the slight decline in 2024 in certain departments, such as Tourism and Gkomi, may indicate the need for targeted interventions to sustain and enhance engagement further.

1. Face-to-face and Online Sessions

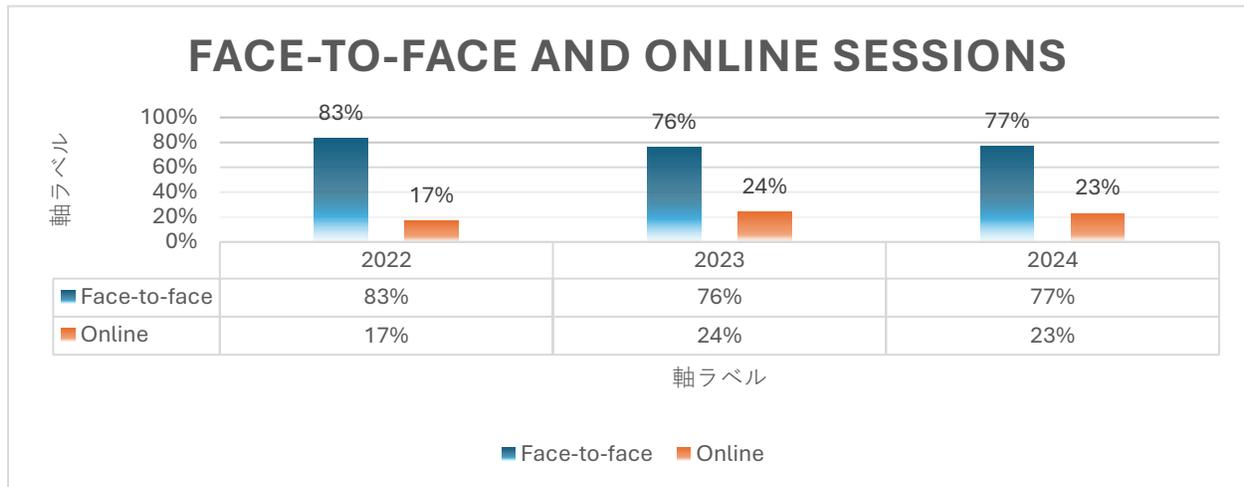


Figure 2: Face-to-face and Online Sessions over the years

The data in Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of face-to-face and online sessions from 2022 to 2024, showcasing shifts in the mode of delivery for educational sessions over time. Face-to-face sessions consistently dominated throughout the years, constituting **83%** of the total in 2022, decreasing to **76%** in 2023, and slightly rebounding to **77%** in 2024. In contrast, online sessions accounted for **17%** of the total in 2022, increased to **24%** in 2023, and marginally declined to **23%** in 2024.

The predominance of face-to-face sessions in 2022 suggests a strong preference for traditional in-person learning, likely as institutions adjusted to the easing of pandemic restrictions. The rise in online sessions in 2023 reflects efforts to accommodate diverse learning preferences, enhance accessibility, and support flexible schedules. However, the slight decrease in online participation in 2024, coupled with the resurgence of face-to-face sessions, indicates a gradual re-emphasis on in-person interactions.

This trend highlights the evolving dynamics of educational delivery, where hybrid models balance traditional and digital methods to address varied student needs. Future strategies should aim to optimize this balance, ensuring effective engagement and equitable access to learning opportunities.

2. Group Face-to-Face Session

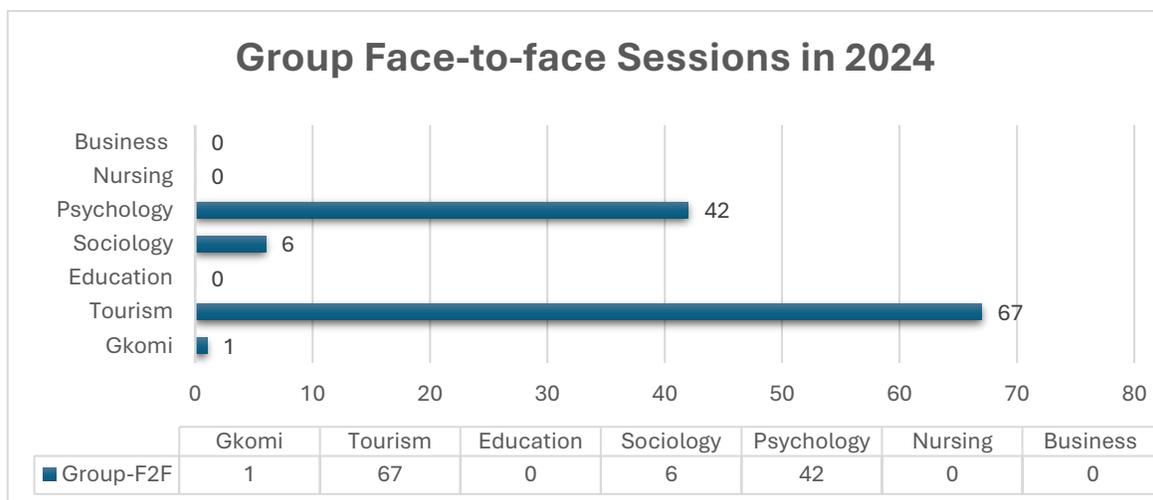


Figure 3 Group Face-to-face Sessions in 2024

The chart in Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of group face-to-face (F2F) sessions across various departments at Kansai University of International Studies (KUIS) in 2024. The Tourism department conducted the highest number of sessions, totaling **67**, followed by the Psychology department with **42** sessions. The Sociology department reported a modest **6** sessions, while Gkomi had only **1** session. Notably, the Education, Business, and Nursing departments reported no group face-to-face sessions.

The high participation in the Tourism and Psychology departments suggests that students in these fields benefit from and value in-person, collaborative interactions, possibly due to the applied and interpersonal skills emphasized in these disciplines. In contrast, the lack of sessions in the Education, Business, and Nursing departments may reflect a reliance on alternative instructional methods, such as online sessions, or differing departmental priorities. The minimal engagement in Gkomi suggests challenges such as limited interest or insufficient resources for group face-to-face activities.

This data highlights the importance of aligning session offerings with departmental needs and student preferences. While sustaining the high participation in Tourism and Psychology will require ongoing resource allocation, expanding opportunities for underrepresented departments could improve overall engagement and inclusivity in group learning experiences.

3. Face-to-face-Individual sessions

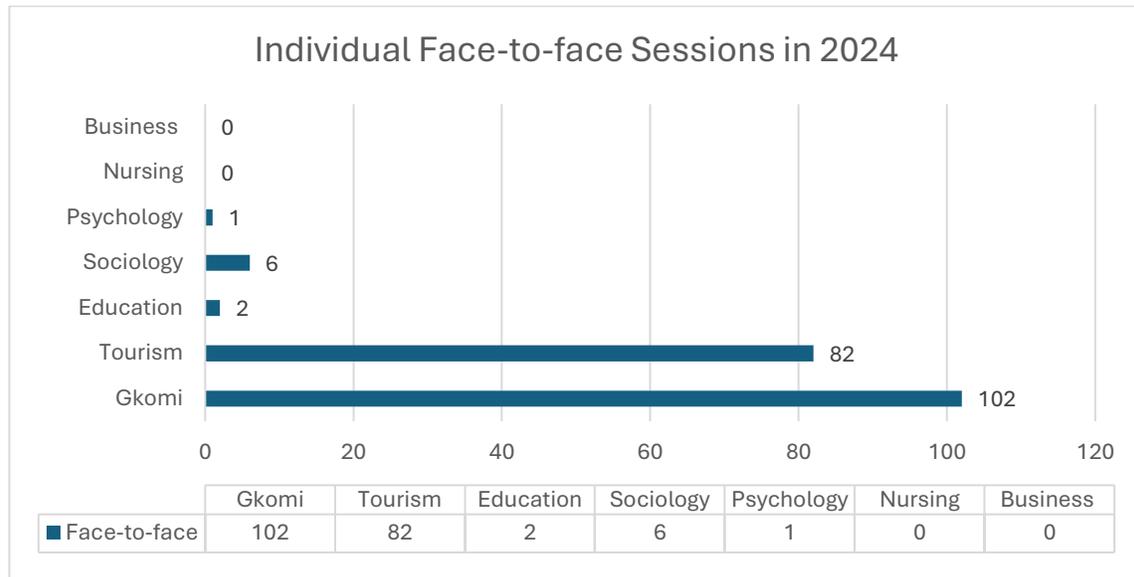


Figure 4 Individual Face-to-face Sessions in 2024

The distribution of face-to-face sessions across departments at Kansai University of International Studies (KUIS) highlights varying levels of participation and engagement. In Figure 4 the Gkomi department recorded the highest number of sessions at 102, followed by the Tourism department with 82 sessions, indicating a strong emphasis on in-person interaction within these fields. In contrast, Sociology conducted 6 sessions, and Education hosted only 2 sessions, reflecting relatively low engagement. Meanwhile, Psychology recorded a single session, and no face-to-face sessions were reported for the Nursing and Business departments.

The significant participation in Gkomi and Tourism suggests that these departments prioritize face-to-face

interactions, likely due to their curriculum’s focus on hands-on, interactive learning. Conversely, the low or absent engagement in Sociology, Education, Psychology, Nursing, and Business could result from departmental preferences for alternative teaching methods, resource limitations, or a lack of student demand for in-person sessions. The minimal participation in Psychology and the complete absence of sessions in Nursing and Business warrant further investigation to determine potential barriers, such as resource constraints or low interest.

Efforts to address these disparities should include reallocating resources to underrepresented departments, such as Sociology and Education, and exploring strategies to encourage greater participation. For Nursing and Business, identifying and mitigating barriers to face-to-face sessions could promote more inclusive and equitable access. Meanwhile, high-performing departments like Gkomi and Tourism should continue leveraging their current strategies to sustain engagement while ensuring resources are sufficient to meet demand.

This analysis underscores the need for a balanced approach to resource distribution and program design to foster equitable access to face-to-face learning opportunities across all departments at KUIS. Promoting such equity would enhance the overall effectiveness of educational strategies and ensure all students benefit from diverse learning environments.

4. Online sessions

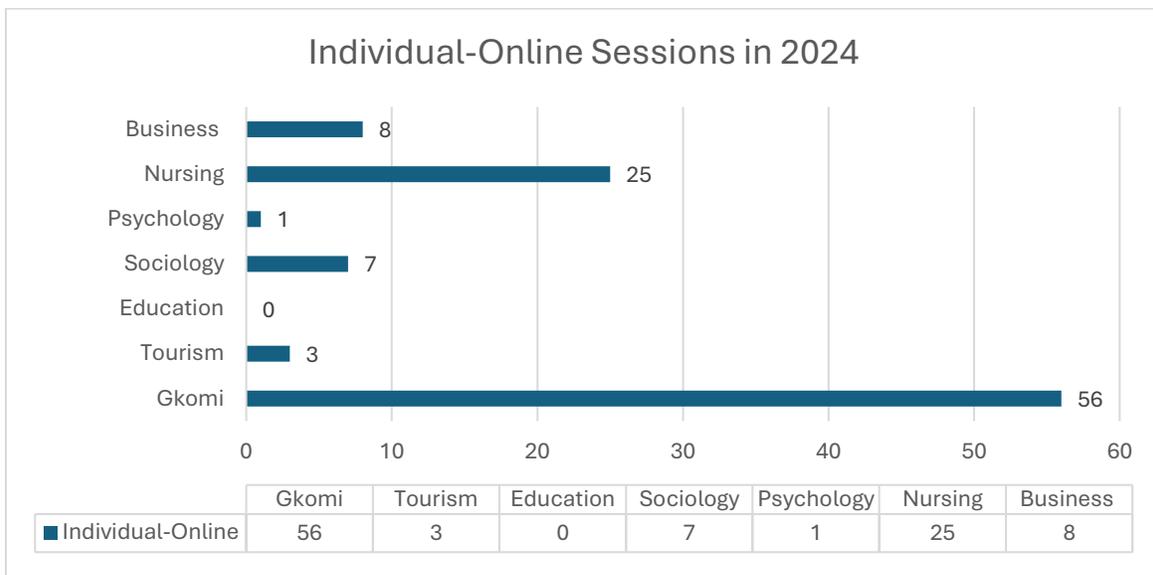


Figure 5 Individual Online Sessions in 2024

The provided data in Figure 5 shows department counts for individual online sessions in EPL and reveals significant disparities among the seven listed departments. The total number across all departments is 100. The department of Gkomi leads with 56, contributing a substantial 56% of the total. In contrast, Education has the lowest count, with zero entries, and Psychology follows closely with only one. Nursing stands out as the second-largest contributor, with 25 entries, accounting for 25% of the total. The remaining departments—Tourism, Sociology, and Business—collectively account for less than 20% of the overall entries. On average, each department contributes approximately 14.29 entries. This analysis highlights the dominance of Gkomi and Nursing, which together constitute the majority of the total count, while other departments, such as Education and Psychology, may warrant further investigation to ensure more balanced representation or engagement.

V. Implications and Recommendations:

1. Addressing the Decline in Gkomi:
 - Conduct a detailed review of the Gkomi program to identify factors contributing to its decline and develop strategies to rejuvenate interest.
2. Capitalizing on Emerging Categories:
 - Allocate resources to support and expand programs in Psychology and Nursing, given their growing popularity.
3. Enhancing Engagement in Underperforming Categories:
 - For Education, Sociology, and Business, targeted marketing efforts and program redesigns could attract more participants.
4. Sustaining Growth in Tourism:
 - Strengthen Tourism offers to capitalize on its steady performance and ensure sustained interest.

This analysis highlights shifting participant preferences and the evolving relevance of different categories over time. Continued monitoring and strategic interventions will be essential to optimize engagement and address areas of decline effectively.

VI. Recommendations

- a. Foster Supportive Learning Environments
Designing programs that minimize competition and emphasize collaboration can reduce stress and improve motivation. Group activities that align with Japanese values of harmony and collective success are particularly effective.
- b. Encourage a Growth Mindset
Promoting a growth mindset helps students view challenges as opportunities for learning rather than threats to success (Dweck 20).
- c. Incorporate Stress-Relief Practices
Mindfulness activities and positive reinforcement in English programs can improve mental health and focus, leading to better outcomes (Oxford 15).
- d. Align English Learning with Goals
Relating English proficiency to students' personal and career aspirations can increase motivation, particularly when tied to global opportunities (Deardorff 66).

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This practice report is a testament to our collective efforts, and I am truly thankful for each of your contributions.

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IX. Appendix

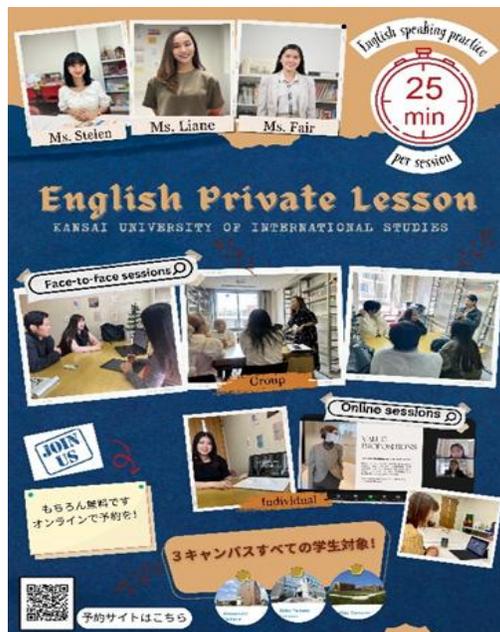
English Private Lesson flyers 2021-present (2024)



2021



2022



2023



2024

抄 録

関西国際大学 (KUIS) において 2021 年に導入された「イングリッシュ・プライベート・レッスン (EPL)」は、学生の英語学習への主体的な取り組みを促進するための補完的な活動として設立された。本プログラムは、個別指導を通じて学生の言語スキル向上を支援し、英語学習に対する継続的な関与を促す役割を果たしている。

本研究は、KUIS の複数の学部に所属する学生を対象に、EPL セッションの受講が学生の幸福感および学習意欲に及ぼす影響を包括的に検討し、高等教育における英語教育の革新的な手法としての意義を明らかにすることを目的とする。

EPL セッションは学習に対する不安の軽減や自己効力感の向上に寄与し、言語学習に対する肯定的な態度を醸成することが示唆されている。本研究は、課外英語プログラムが学生の全人的な発達を促進する役割について貴重な洞察を提供し、大学における語学教育戦略の改善に対する示唆を提供するものでもある。

幸福感と学習意欲は日本の学生の授業や英語プログラムでの成績と密接に関連し、大きな影響を与えている。情緒的・社会的支援の強化、不安の軽減、内発的動機の向上は、学習成果の向上に不可欠であり、これらの要素を日本の教育文化の枠組みの中で適切に取り入れることは、効果的な語学教育プログラムの構築に際しきわめて重要であるといえるだろう。

キーワード: イングリッシュ・プライベート・レッスン (EPL)、対面授業、オンライン授業、グループセッション、個別セッション、幸福感、学習意欲