

Young 'OB' Returns to Kochi University to Advise Students about Graduate Studies Abroad

By Shinichiro Hoshida

This is a story about Mr. Daisuke Kanamori who graduated from Kochi University four years ago. On July 2nd, 2014, I took part in a small presentation, which was sponsored by teachers at the Department of International Studies, and encountered Mr. Kanamori there. My first impression of him was that he a quite an ordinary Japanese guy, but when I heard the story of his life after graduating from KU, I realised that he was not at all a typical Japanese.



During his years at KU, Mr. Kanamori studied Intercultural Communication in Prof. Lingley's seminar and studied English in the EPIC Program (English Programme for International Communication). With his great interest in international relationships, his undergraduate thesis was on a topic related to intercultural management issues. In addition to his studies, he was active in other ways too. He played on the first team in the KU soccer club during his 4th year, and later extended his athletic interests to volunteer work by taking children from the Fukushima disaster area to England on an exchange soccer program that he organized by himself.

Mr. Kanamori has worked extremely hard... to fulfil his dream of doing graduate studies in the UK.

Mr. Kanamori has worked extremely hard since graduating from KU. He worked in an English-speaking context at a US naval base for three years to save money, and continued to study to achieve higher scores

in the IELTS exam to fulfil his dream of doing graduate studies in the UK. I still remember that he mentioned during his presentation that although working at a military base was extremely hard and included dangerous operations, it was worth it because he could interact with people from different countries, and he learned many things aside from English skills. In September 2013, he was accepted to the pre-Master Foundations in Diplomacy course at Oxford University, and there he continued to build a strong academic base in diplomacy, international relations, and academic English in preparation for regular graduate studies. After successfully completing the Oxford pre-Master course in the spring of 2014, Mr. Kanamori was accepted to do the M. Litt in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, which will be starting from this September.

During his talk aimed at encouraging students to consider graduate studies abroad, I asked him a question; "What did your parents say when you decided to attempt these challenges?" He answered, "Well, they accepted what I wanted to do. They let me do



whatever I wanted, but they pointed out that I had to take responsibility for everything I do." This was impressive. A large number of university students are overwhelmed until they finally get their jobs. Their parents also feel anxious and worried. Many Japanese parents want their children to get a job as soon as they can after graduating from university. However, Mr. Kanamori's parents are different in encouraging him to do anything as long as he can manage it. This is a key element for experiencing unique things, and this situation, along with his hard work, made it possible for him to reach his dream of being a grad student in a foreign country.

Another striking feature of his story is that even though he did not have enough savings, he didn't give up his dream of doing graduate studies. He tried hard to earn money by himself and didn't let financial considerations control his educational aspirations. This part of his story made me think that students, including me, should not make money an excuse for not going to graduate school.

"Graduate school should be the place that people deepen their particular study... not an extension of undergraduate studies."

-Daisuke Kanamori-

In the evening after his presentation, I thankfully had a chance to talk more with Mr. Kanamori in person and he gave me even more hints for my future. In fact, I have been wondering about whether I should go to the graduate school or become an English teacher, though I've been dreaming of doing the latter for some time. So, I asked him which he would choose if he were in the same circumstance. His answer was quite simple: "It depends on how much you want to study at graduate school." Also, he added, "Graduate school should be the place that people deepen their particular study, yet many students enrol without any consideration as if they think of it as an extension of undergraduate studies." Indeed, this tendency can be seen all over Japan. But if students strongly hope to acquire deeper knowledge, there is no reason to hesitate to take graduate courses even if they do not have sufficient money.

My Challenge to Establish a KU English Conversation Club

By Shinichiro Hoshida

Last year, I took advantage of the exchange program at KU and studied English for about a year at the University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, to get exposed to different cultures. While I was striving to complete assignments, I participated in an English conversation club run by UQ students. This conversation club was designed for mainly non-native English speakers in order to brush up their spoken English skills as well as interact with people from different countries. The style was quite simple; participants come along every Thursday afternoon and discussed whatever topic that was suggested by the club leader. Even though some students had difficulty speaking English, the group leader or other native English speaking students kindly helped them out by paraphrasing sentences or providing useful phrases so that even beginning English learners seemed to enjoy this club.

Currently, we have more than 30 members, including five international students, in this club.

After I came back to KU in December 2013, I talked about this experience to the OASIS staff. OASIS is a study facility in the Humanities and Economics building. One of the OASIS staff members said, "Actually there was that kind of club before, but they don't meet anymore. So, why don't you make a new one?" I determined to create the English conversation club on my own. First of all, I made some small posters and told my friends about the club. But despite my efforts, we had only five students at our first meeting. So, I asked the participants to invite their friends along and spread more posters around the campus. Currently, we have more than 30 members, including five international



students, in this club.

What we are doing in the club is a little bit different from the conversation club at UQ. At the beginning of the club, we make pairs or small groups of three students and talk about lifestyle, study, or hobbies. After 10 to 20 minutes, we discuss a certain topic in a larger group which includes one or two international students. Since we have many first-year students in this club, I carefully decide the topics which are not so difficult. Finally, we wrap up the club by playing a couple of games. These games are things like a "Shiritori" race in English words or playing "Sugoroku" which I made into an original English version. Even though it takes a lot of time to invent new games, I cannot leave this activity out due to its high popularity. As a feedback from participants, they overall enjoy this club and spend a wonderful time getting to know new people from different faculties, age groups, and nations. On the other hand, some people would like me to implement more discussion or make different levels of groups like beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Considering those comments, I will resume the club from October of 2014. I hope this club will not disappear after I graduate, and I encourage students who want to join to come and see what we do.

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The *K.U. Campus News* aims to provide an English language forum for sharing university related news, profiling students and faculty members involved in unique endeavours, promoting a sense of pride in our university, and highlighting the international aspects of Kochi University.

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