

徳島大学のイングリッシュ・サポート・ルームについて

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1. Abstract

This presentation is about the the English Support Room'(ESR), an English learning facility established by Tokushima University's Centre for General Education'. This presentation describes the philosophy and strategies used to create an environment in which not only students with already functional English skills can improve these, but where students who have problems in coping up with acquiring the necessary level of English demanded by Tokushima University are led to loosing their fears of the seemingly unlearnable 'language English'. Finally this presentation will give an outlook on future programs to be held at the 'ESR' in order to implement the 'English Support Room' not only as a place of studying and supporting students, but also as a support of Tokushima University's English teaching staff.

2. Creating an 'English Speaking Environment'- 'English Only Policy'

The 'ESR' has an 'English Only' policy: Visitors and users have to speak only English in the 'ESR'. This policy serves not only to give users the chance to actively use their English, but also to help students on a weaker English level to work on their listening skills. The idea behind this strategy is analogue to the language acquisition of small children: Before uttering his first understandable sentence a child spends time with listening to his environment. This also counts for newcomers to the 'ESR' who spend their first few visits usually silently, reading the books, comics and magazines which are provided in the 'ESR' before they start communicating with other users.

Implementing the 'English Only' policy has shown itself as astonishingly easy as users usually take

extreme care of not using Japanese.

3. Extra-Curricular Programs And Peer Teaching

While the consequent use of English in the 'ESR' results in obvious improvement of the users, it also has to be noted that this does not necessarily mean that students acquire a 'feeling' for English which is important to reach a 'native' or 'near native' English level. Another problem is the fact that only weaker students show improvement in their English skills, while those students with a better grasp of English usually keep on the same level.

In order to avoid that the 'ESR' turns into an 'English Conversation Room' and to help students to improve their skills in other fields like writing, reading and 'English communication strategies' the 'ESR' offers supporting 'mini courses'. Here the idea was to offer students interesting programs which are not found in the syllabus of regular university courses. The 'ESR' offers since September two hours of 'Daily Just Talk'. This is a program where students have the chance to practice their English with a native speaking teacher by talking about any subject they want to. In order to expose students to a variety of English, every day two teachers from different English speaking countries are in charge of these 'Daily Just Talk Sessions'. As a side result, some English teachers of Tokushima University have started to send their students as a homework to participate in these 'Just Talk Sessions'. Another of these extra curricular programs, which has been established after a short and successful trial during summer semester, is 'Creative Writing', a program consisting of thirteen units, where students can write their own short stories which will be published after the end of the program. Further offerings of the 'ESR' are programs in

‘Pronunciation’, ‘Polite English Communication Strategies’, ‘Reading Understanding’ and ‘Writing Official Letters’.

These extra programs were not only initiated by the teacher in charge of the ‘ESR’ feeling the need for improvement in these fields, but were also founded on requests from students and in consultation with an English teacher from another faculty of Tokushima University. Here a rather astonishing fact was that in spite of the assessment of several English teaching colleagues that ‘students do not like writing in English’ the idea for the ‘Writing Official Letters’ program was based on several requests from students. Another important ingredient for an efficient and relaxed learning atmosphere in the ‘ESR’ is peer teaching. A program intended to help preparing ‘ESR’ users for the TOEIC test as suggested by the teacher in charge of ‘ESR’ was rejected by students with the reason ‘we don’t need this course as we help each other’.

This willingness of students to teach each other has also become an important trademark of the ‘ESR’: In the ‘ESR’ there is no *kouhai/senpai* system, all users come with the same goal of learning English and there is no rivalry among users. Newcomers are welcome and introduced to the ‘ESR’s’ facilities by regular visitors or the ‘ESR’ student staff, who take care that shy newcomers feel comfortable. All this leads to a very relaxed and efficient learning atmosphere without any pressure, which shows its positive results in the daily number of visitors of the ‘ESR’.

4. Conclusion: A Future Outlook – Liaising With Tokushima University’s English Teaching Staff.

In order to make the ‘ESR’ even more efficient, its future role should also be to support Tokushima University’s English teaching staff in their work. Here it is of great importance to establish a stronger working relationship between the teacher in charge of the ‘ESR’ and Tokushima University’s English

teaching staff. With the establishing of the extra curricular programs mentioned above and the fact that these courses are being promoted among students by their teachers an important first step has been taken. Also, that some teachers send their students as a homework to the ‘ESR’ shows that teachers start to use the ‘ESR’ in their classes. It is now hoped, that with a stronger cooperation teaching staff will also suggest future programs to be held at the ‘ESR’ in order to further students’ English skills.