

Interview @ KIZUNA

On January 31, 2022, Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA had a chance to interview one of our international students, Hsin-Hua Chiang, about her student life at Kyoto University. Ms. Chiang is a PhD candidate majoring in rural planning, and has been working as a tutor at KIZUNA for many years.

This interview was conducted in Japanese by her tutor colleagues, Tamami san and Arin san. The interview was conducted in-person in accordance with the university's COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Hsin-Hua Chiang. I was born and raised in Taipei City, Taiwan, and I am a doctoral student enrolled in the Graduate School of Agriculture of Kyoto University.

2. What brought you to Japan?

One of the reasons I chose Japan is that I can travel here from Taiwan in a relatively short time. You can fly from Japan to Taiwan in about three hours and thirty minutes, so it has the advantage that I can easily go home. Another reason is that I have always been fond of Japanese culture and language, and was especially interested in Kyoto.



3. Can you explain to us what you are studying for your doctoral program in the Division of Environmental Science and Technology in the Graduate School of Agriculture?

I am studying the relationship between institutions, science and technology, and civil society in water resource management.

For reference: Kyoto University Faculty/Graduate School of Agriculture

<https://www.kais.kyoto-u.ac.jp/english/>

4. What do you like about Kyoto?

Kyoto is easy to live in. The size of the city is perfect for living. You can easily travel around by bicycle, and the trains are not as crowded as those in large cities. I like visiting temples and shrines, and there are many such historical heritage in Kyoto.

5. What motivated you to become a tutor at KIZUNA?

When looking for a part-time job on campus, I found a tutor recruitment leaflet for KIZUNA. The role and activities of the tutor seemed to suit me. Besides, the position paid a high hourly wage compared to other part-time jobs, so I decided to give it a try. I was fortunate to be hired, considering that I had never attended a KIZUNA event before signing up. I started working as a tutor in October, six months after I enrolled at KU in April. Among my colleagues, I have the longest tutoring history.

6. What is your most recommended KIZUNA monthly event?



The introductory class in Japanese traditional dance, which was held face-to-face before the COVID-19 pandemic. The teachers enthusiastically taught the participants the postures and movements. Most of the participants were beginners, but they enjoyed learning very much, following the teachers' step-by-step instructions. I would also like to recommend craft workshops. You can take the items you make home and display them, and everyone has fun together at the workshop.

For reference: Kyoto University Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA

<https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/education-campus/facilities/student-lounge-kizuna/events>

7. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of KIZUNA's monthly events are being carried out online. Would you share your thoughts about how the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic compares with now?

During a face-to-face event, it is easy to pick up non-verbal signals from participants, for example when someone wants to ask a question. On the other hand, with online events, I find it difficult to read what the participants are thinking, and I am still learning how to establish a good connection with the participants through the screen.

8. What are the best things about KIZUNA? Please give a message to Kyoto University students who do not know KIZUNA yet.

Friendly staff are waiting for your visit in a homely atmosphere. Our mission is to create a comfortable atmosphere for everyone—not just for frequent users, but also for newcomers. Have you ever had trouble finding a toilet or classroom on campus? Even such simple questions are welcomed at KIZUNA. Please don't hesitate to come and join us!

For reference: Kyoto University Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA

<https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/education-campus/facilities/student-lounge-kizuna>



9. Can you tell us your plans after graduating from the university?

I will work as a researcher at the university, although I might end up going abroad again soon (laughs). My supervisor and senior lab members advised me to go as far as possible before I settle down and have a family, so I am thinking of working somewhere far away from here in my early thirties. However, the destination will depend on what happens in the future and my feelings at that time.

10. What do you think students should do before graduating?

Especially for undergraduates, get involved in all classes and extracurricular activities you are interested in. You are young enough to absorb all intellectual stimulation. Besides, no matter how many classes you register for, the tuition fee is the same.

11. You are learning Korean, Spanish, and Indonesian in addition to Japanese and English. Please tell us your motivation for language learning and efficient learning methods.

My tip is to continue studying little by little. For example, let's say you study while drying your hair for 15 minutes every day. If you can do that for months or years, your language skills will definitely improve to some extent. When I cram a language, I often give up quickly. I started to study Japanese when I was in junior high school, but I started to take lectures after entering university. The experience of working part-time as a translator or interpreter helped

me to sharpen my Japanese skills. The first thing I did to study Japanese was to include Japanese language in my daily life. For instance, I switched the system language of my smartphone and computer to Japanese. In my opinion, watching Japanese anime is also effective for learning pronunciation as the pronunciation is clear and easy to understand.

12. Would you give some advice to students who are interested in interacting with others in a language other than the mother tongue(s) but do not have the courage?

Don't be afraid of mispronunciation or grammatical mistakes. You don't need perfect expression to understand each other. Talking to someone you meet for the first time is not easy for everyone. All you need is a little courage to start a conversation.

Comments from the KIZUNA tutors

Tamami san

This interview was certainly a precious opportunity for me to get to know Ms. Chiang better, especially her views on study, as well as life and career. Many thanks and good luck!

Arin san

At KIZUNA, Ms. Chiang is a cheerful and friendly tutor, but in the interview, I was inspired to hear about her as a doctoral student. While I am an undergraduate student, I would like to follow her advice and learn about what I am interested in, not only in my major but also in other fields.

