



Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

神戸市外国語大学

Citizens' Chat Café 2025

Final Report



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Greetings from Organizers

Prof. Montserrat Sanz

I am deeply honored to have worked closely with Assoc. Prof. Singh for the second year in a row in organizing what has become a valuable opportunity for the university to connect with the citizens of Kobe. The Citizens Chat Café has grown into a truly intergenerational and international exchange. There are very few spaces where junior and senior high school students, middle-aged adults, university students, and even octogenarians can sit at the same table to discuss their goals, experiences, opinions, and aspirations—while practicing their English at the same time.



Moreover, there are not many opportunities on campus where interactions between our undergraduate students and international students are as productive and enjoyable as those fostered through this program. Week after week, Kobe Gaidai students build closer relationships with international students who are here to improve their Japanese, creating bonds that go well beyond the classroom. The café also offers an excellent opportunity for our student manager and sub-manager to gain organizational experience and to work closely with faculty members and administrative staff.

My impression this year is that participants have become increasingly confident in sharing their thoughts in English in a public setting. Notably, over time, a new participant has joined our conversations: humor. Participants joke in English and laugh together, a genuine reflection of the lively and welcoming atmosphere that characterizes Kobe Gaidai. Our campus is vibrant, our students are witty and open-minded, and the overall environment encourages growth and learning in a relaxed and supportive setting.

Much like the two professors in charge of this event, we value openness, tolerance, and respect for diverse perspectives and approaches, while at the same time maintaining high standards and clear expectations. We are delighted to provide opportunities for our students to *HAMIDASU*—to step forward with courage and to recognize their own worth. The Citizens' Chat Café is a place where they can do exactly that.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the student facilitators and to all the participants this year. I look forward to another year of meaningful encounters and shared conversations.

Assoc. Prof. Rajeev Kumar Singh

We are delighted to have successfully organized the Citizens' Chat Café (CCC) events at KCUFS this year. CCC continues to serve as a meaningful platform that connects our students with members of the local community, allowing everyone to exchange knowledge, culture, and experiences in English while learning from one another. This year, we welcomed many new participants, including international residents and children, alongside a growing number of regular attendees. Compared to last year, we also observed a noticeable improvement in participants' confidence and expressiveness when sharing their ideas in English, which was very encouraging to see.



Participants gained valuable insights from student presentations introducing different countries, hometowns, and overseas experiences. At the same time, lively table discussions brought together diverse perspectives from participants and student staff. Our students, in turn, learned a great deal from community members ranging from high school students to retirees, many of whom shared rich experiences from their professional lives and travels. These exchanges helped students better understand the wider world, including different working environments and life paths. Another positive development this year was the increase in child participation. By designating a special table for children, supported by student staff, we created a welcoming space where they could enjoy simple English conversations and games such as Scrabble. It was especially rewarding to see children confidently sharing their thoughts during the closing session when each table reflected on their discussions.

CCC has truly become a place where people of all ages from young children to seniors can enjoy meaningful conversations in English at the same table, guided by the energetic and supportive student facilitators of Kobe Gaidai. We are proud to offer this opportunity to both our students and the local community, helping to build connections and expand networks through dialogue.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the university for its understanding and continued support, to Professor Sanz for co-organizing these events with great enthusiasm and dedication, and to all the student facilitators and participants who made CCC such a success this year. We look forward to your continued and enthusiastic participation in the coming year.

What is CCC?

Citizens' Chat Café (CCC) is an international exchange event hosted by Kobe City University of Foreign Studies (KCUFS). With the slogan "Let's chat with Kobe Gaidai students in English!", CCC provides a welcoming space where residents and KCUFS students, including international students, can enjoy communicating in English. Launched in September 2024, CCC attracted a total of 192 participants in its first year. This year, participants have grown significantly, with over 400 people taking part across eight events.

Background of CCC

This event began last year as part of KCUFS's initiative to promote the university's appeal and strengthen ties with local community. The idea was introduced by Associate Professor Singh, inspired by his experience participating in the City Chat Café held at the University of Tsukuba. With the cooperation of Professor Sanz, the event was successfully launched at KCUFS. In today's society, where opportunities for face-to-face English conversation and interaction between local residents and students are limited, CCC quickly received a large number of participants from the very beginning. This strong response enabled the event to continue into its second year. Open to participants of all ages and backgrounds, CCC has welcomed everyone from kindergarten children and university students to seniors over the age of 70.

Purpose

The purpose of CCC is to strengthen connections between the university, its Japanese and international students, and the local community, while fostering mutual cultural understanding. In addition, it provides local residents with opportunities to engage in English conversations with international students, helping them practice their English skills and participate in meaningful cultural exchange.

Event Overview

At each CCC event, participants are seated at tables of five to seven people. Upon arrival, participants are randomly assigned to tables with at least one university student as a facilitator at each table. Discussions typically begin with self-introductions, followed by conversations in English based on prepared themes where participants share personal experiences and opinions. The session is divided into two parts with a 10-minute break in between, during which seating is rearranged. The second half is more open-ended, allowing participants to enjoy free conversation on any topic. Before the closing remarks, time is set aside for sharing highlights from each table's discussion with the entire group. This segment is particularly engaging, as not only student facilitators but also participants themselves are encouraged to speak, creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere.

New Initiatives

Since October, we have also introduced several new approaches. These initiatives proved effective in accommodating repeat participants and creating more meaningful opportunities for students.

1. Student Presentation

To serve as icebreakers, we scheduled short presentations by students before table discussions. In October, we had the cooperation of Nicolò, an Italian JLP student, and in December, Miki, a fourth-year English Literature student. Nicolò shared the history and culture of his hometown, while Miki talked about her experiences in Zambia during overseas volunteer activities. Including the Q&A session with participants, these presentations were lively and engaging.

2. Bringing Theme-Related Photos/Images

Starting in October, we asked staff to select one photo or image related to the topic of the CCC session and prepare it for display, either printed or on a tablet. Feedback indicated that this helped visually focus attention at the start of conversations and made it easier for everyone to begin talking.

Date

The CCC sessions were held once a month on Saturdays, with two sessions held in June. The event dates were as follows:

2025: June 7, June 28, July 5th, September 20, October 11, November 8, December 6

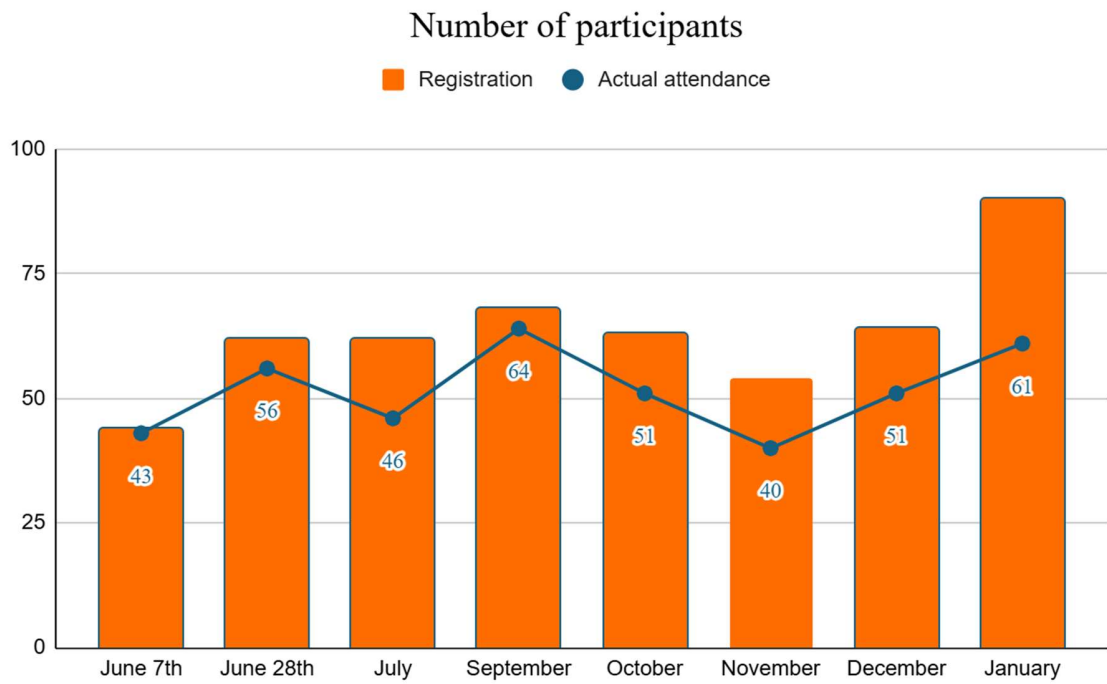
2026: January 24

Location & Time

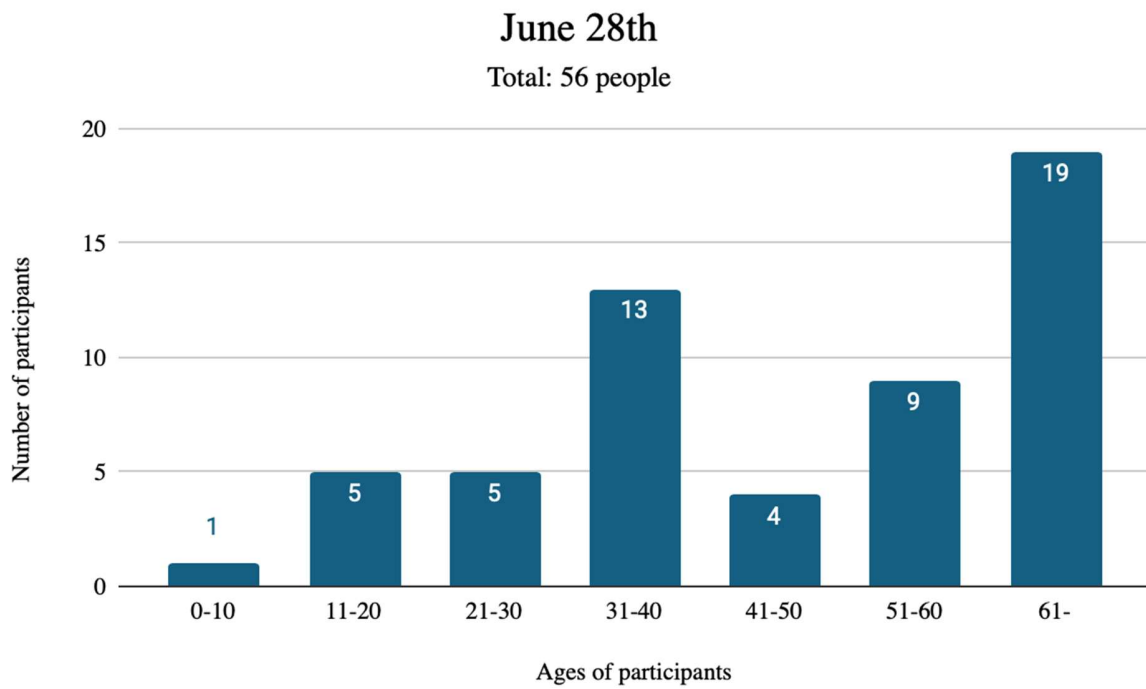
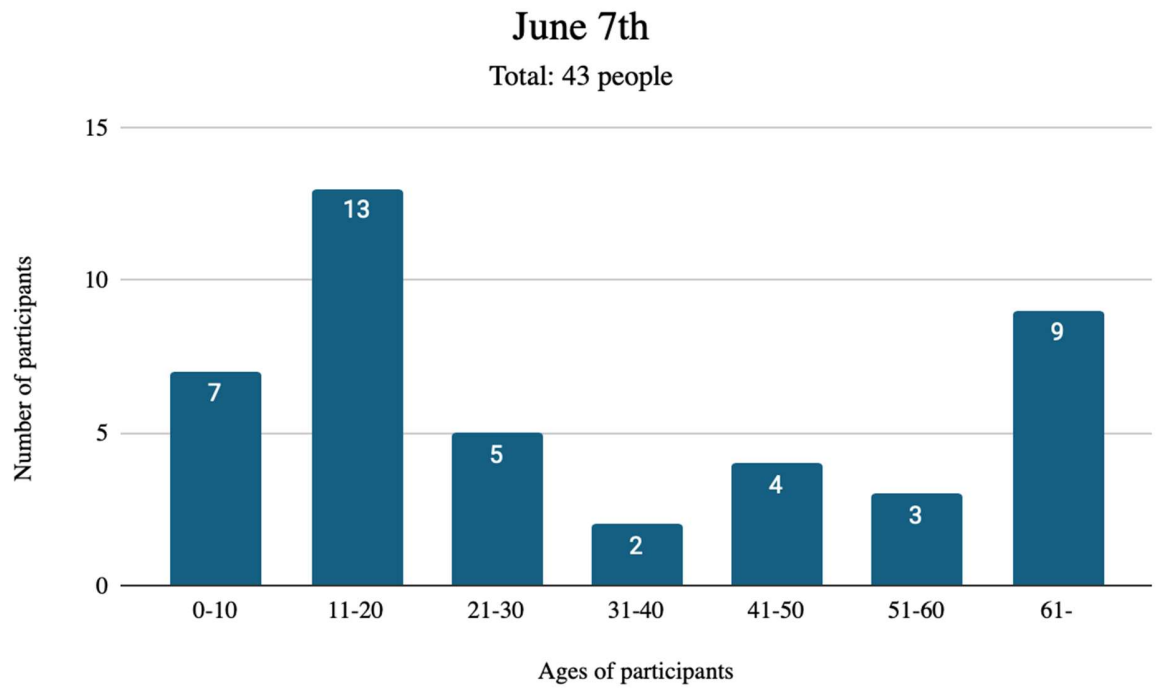
All sessions were held at the same time, from 13:30 to 15:30 at the Miki Hall at KCUFS.

RESULTS

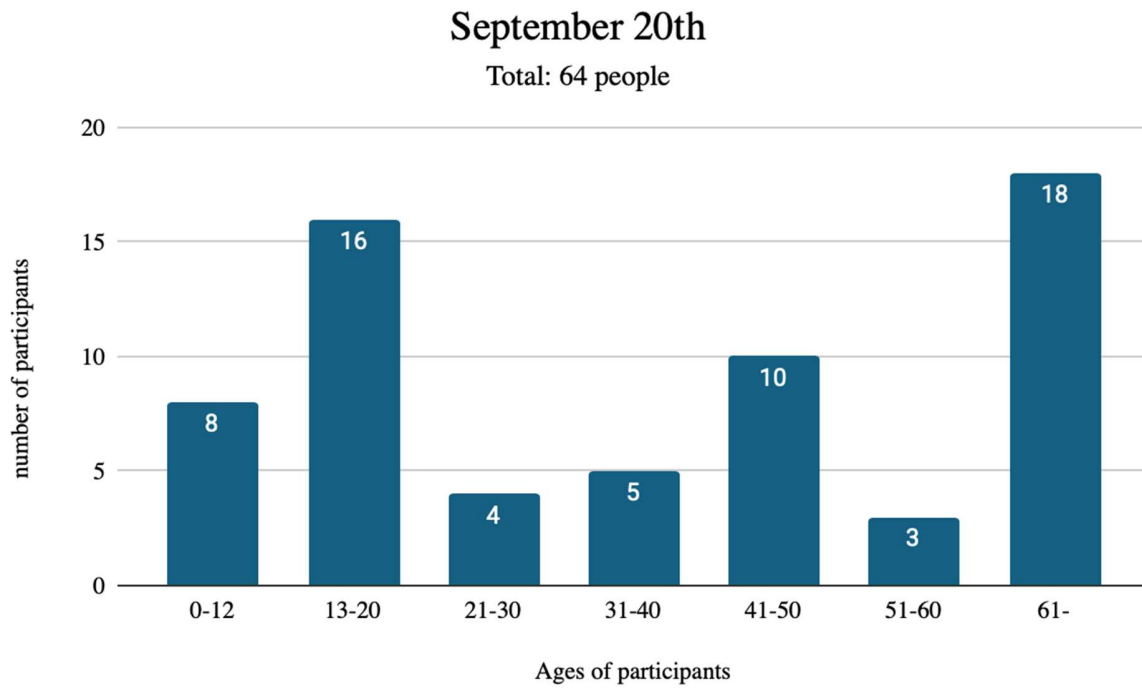
1. Total numbers of participants at each session



2. Ages of Participants

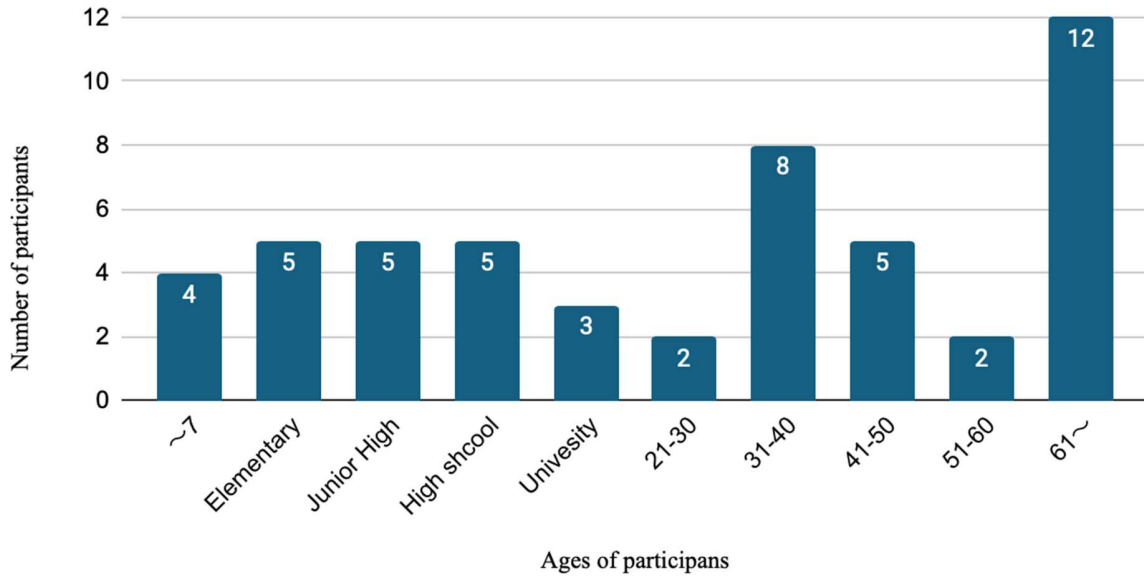


For the July CCC session, detailed data on participants' age distribution and participant types were unfortunately not recorded, and therefore could not be included in this report.



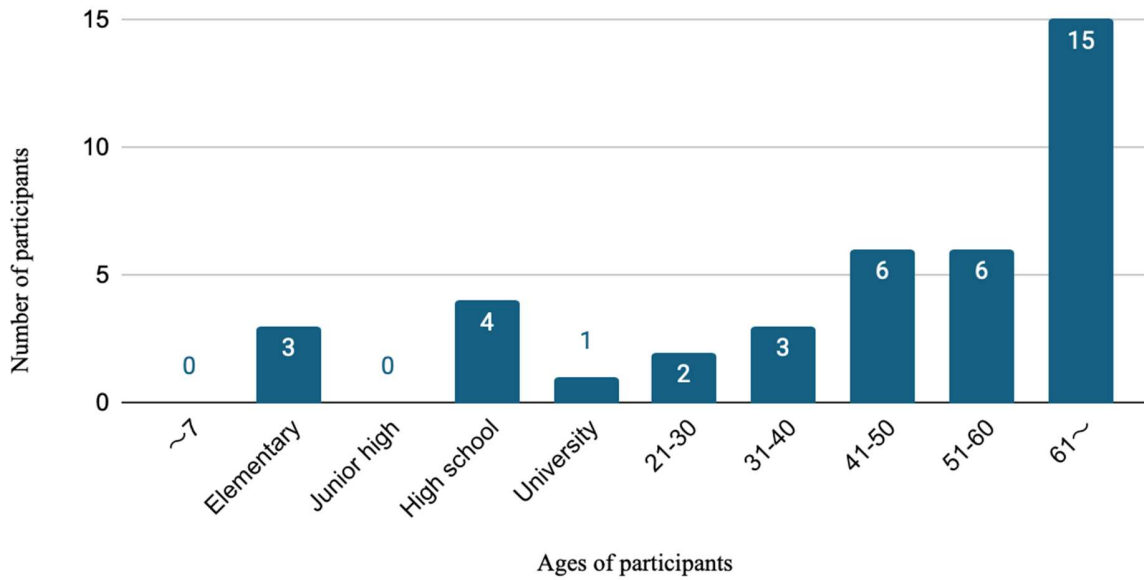
October 11th

Total: 51 people



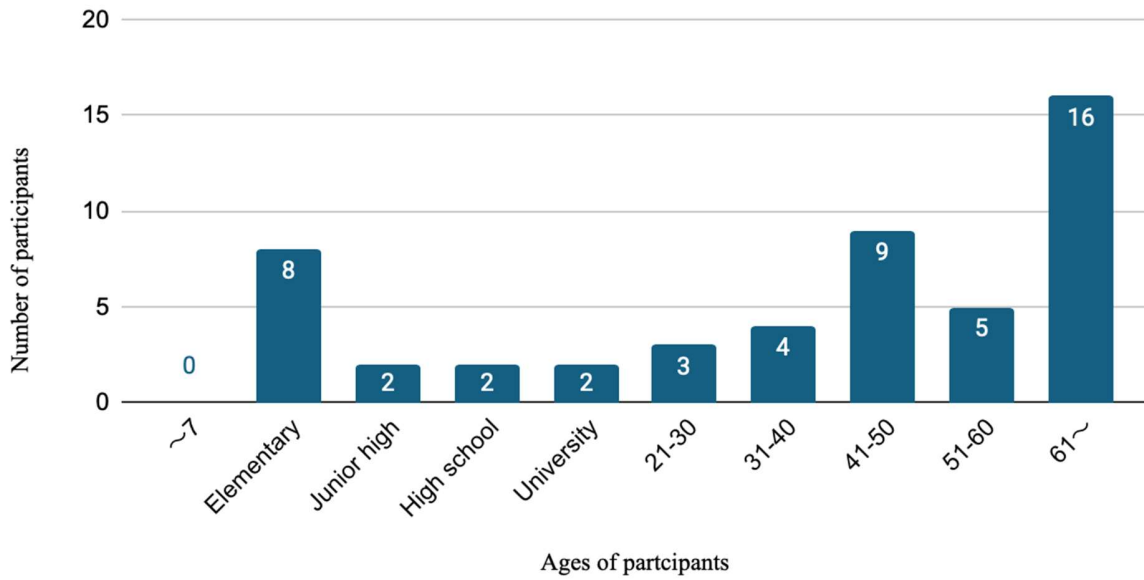
November 8th

Total: 40 people



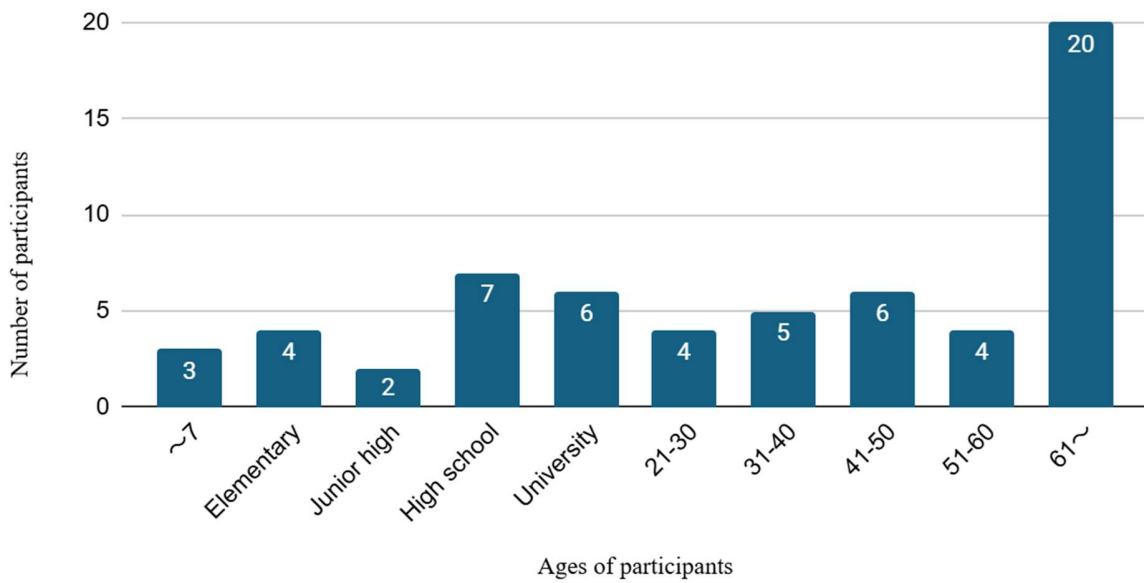
December 6th

Total: 51 people



January 24th

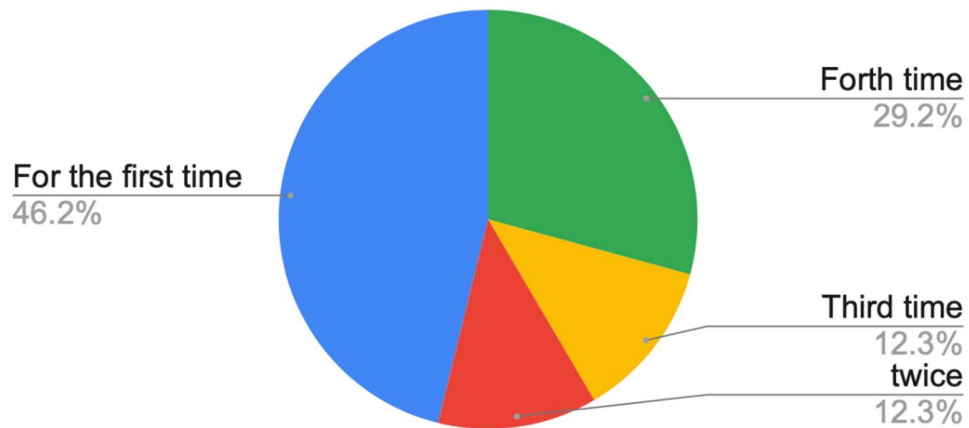
Total: 61 people



3. Frequency of participation

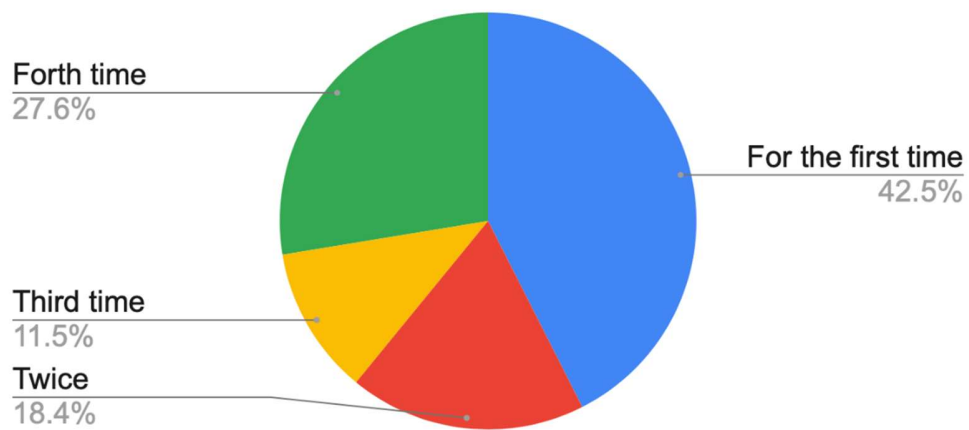
Have you ever participated in a CCC event?

December 6th



Have you ever participated in a CCC event?



January 24th






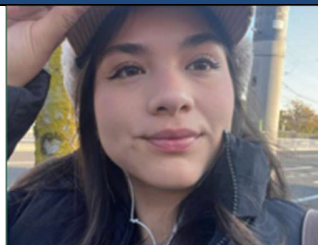
CCC SESSION TOPICS AND DATES





DATES	TOPICS
June 7th	What brings you to start learning another language?
June 28th	Childhood hobbies vs. Adult hobbies: How Have Your Interests Changed?
July 5th	What do you hope to achieve or experience this summer?
September 20th	How Was Your Summer?
October 11th	Halloween
November 8th	What Was the Most Memorable Moment for You?
December 6th	Christmas
January 24th	New Year's Resolutions and Hopes for 2026


VOICES OF STUDENT STAFF

<p>Mahana Gonno</p>	<p>June, September, October, November, December, and January</p>
	<p>I am honored to have been part of this amazing project and to have shared a wonderful moment with many lovely people. Each session, we could have a peaceful and energetic time through one thing, "English", which reminds me of the power of enthusiasm for learning something with people. When I participated in Citizen Chat Café for the first time, I just enjoyed the conversation with local people as a facilitator. This year, I became a manager, and I could find a lot of things that I had never noticed before. Every time I greeted participants at the reception desk, some of the participants looked nervous, but once the conversation began, their faces changed gradually, and they ended up with smiles. Among the regular participants, they got to know each other so that they could enjoy catching up with their friends. And this year, not only during the event, but also from the feedback, I could see how participants feel about this event. Every time I see that people appreciate it a lot, it was great to read them. As a result, I am sure that participation in this event made me even more grateful for choosing this university. Therefore, I believe this event will be loved by more people. Lastly, thank you so much to Sanz Sensei, Singh Sensei, and every staff member who always support and create this event successfully.</p>
<p>Miki Nakai</p>	<p>June, July, October, November, December, and January</p>
	<p>CCC is a great opportunity to practice talking in English. Every time I joined CCC, I felt that participants, who joined several times, showed their confidence in speaking English. They became more talkative, questioned a lot and reacted a lot. Everyone has same willingness to use more English. Therefore, in CCC, no one will make fun of someone's English. These heartfelt environment would be the reason many participants joined CCC repeatedly. I'm glad to be involved in this wonderful event, CCC!</p>
<p>Rena Inamori</p>	<p>June, July, September, October, November, December, and January</p>
	<p>It was a honor to join this event. I could meet many people with different backgrounds and learned a lot of new things. Each group included people from various generations, so it was really fun to talk with one another. Without CCC, I usually wouldn't have the opportunity to talk with people across such a wide age range. It was great to hear about past trends from older participants and the newest trends from junior and high school students.</p>

Nicolò Rosini	June, July, September, October, November, December, and January
	<p>CCC for me wasn't just an occasion to speak and improve my English skills. It was a wonderful event, where I could come in contact with the citizens of Kobe, and, in my small way, help them. This kind of experience was one of the many that I was hoping to do before coming in Japan.</p>
Juan Angosto	June, September, October, November, December
	<p>I am very grateful to be part of such an amazing event that allowed me to meet so many interesting people from Kobe and all around the world. Participants were from different age ranges, which allowed us all to learn from diverse experiences and points of view while practicing English in a very warm and welcoming environment. It is an experience I will never forget.</p>
Alexandra Carnicero	September, October, November, December
	<p>It has been a great experience to be able to get to know many people of different ages and cultures. I have learned a lot about Japanese culture, and I was happy to be able to share things about my own while improving my communication skills. I love the sense of community that we ended up creating between the participants and the facilitators, and I look forward to future sessions.</p>
Taiga Takasuka	June, September, November and January
	<p>It was my second year to join Kobe Citizens' Chat Café as a staff member. This must be a part of my memories in 2025. It was a pleasure for me to interact with various local people.</p>
Hanaka Sone	July, October, November, December and January
	<p>I had so much fun in CCC as a staff member! Since I was not from Kobe, I was first nervous talking in group, but everyone was so friendly and kind to me! I was able to enjoy every conversation and learn a lot of new things! The best thing about this event is that everyone tried their best to communicate in English! This was a big motivation for me to practice English more and more. Thank you everyone for participating and let me listen and share thoughts!</p>

Sora Hirano	June, July, October, November, and January
	<p>This year, I joined the event as a staff member for the first time, even though I had always joined as a participant before. It has been a very valuable and meaningful experience for me. Since the event welcomes people of all ages—from children to older adults—I can listen to many different stories every time, and I learn something new each day. I will keep doing my best so that participants can enjoy the event again next year.</p>
Krasimira Genova	June 7th&28th and July 5th
	<p>I am really grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Citizens' Chat Café. This initiative is beneficial not only for the Japanese guests but also for all the student volunteers. Through discussions on various topics, everyone can share their opinion and broaden his or her horizons while listening to others. There are guests of all ages and social groups, so you can learn a lot about different lifestyles, values and goals. Of course, the aim of CCC is mainly practicing English, but being a volunteer means that you will also give the floor to many people to express their thoughts and opinions, which chance they may not often have on a daily basis. That been said, I think each CCC meeting gives both sides a very special sense of fulfillment. When it comes to the topics, in my opinion, a few broader ones should be added. For example, favorite color, occupation that the participants admire, meaningful childhood memory or a dream that they have. Each of these topics will encourage them to share stories that can give everyone who is listening to the chance to learn a lot about different cultures and values.</p>
Kokoro Tatehara	June, September and January
	<p>It was a great opportunity to have conversations in English with local people. The participants came from a wide range of ages and backgrounds, which allowed me to gain valuable insights and broaden my perspective. As a facilitator, it was a bit challenging to guide conversations among participants with diverse backgrounds, but I really enjoyed this valuable experience and built my confidence. I'm looking forward to seeing you again next year at CCC!</p>
Dahiana Vera	June, September, and November
	<p>I'm really thankful for being part of this event. The people I talked to taught me a lot, and at the same time, they also learned from my own experiences. I especially enjoyed talking with people of different ages and sharing stories, because it helped me see life from different points of view. Some of them even invited me to other events where I can keep sharing and learning with others.</p>

Taguchi Mayu	June, July, October
	<p>I had a great time with participants and staff during sessions. It was not easy to make sure everyone was involved in the conversations and enjoying talking in English. But when I saw them smiling, and they told me that they enjoyed it and wanted to join again, I felt accomplished. Of course, I also enjoyed myself with them.</p>
Rio Watanabe	June, September, and December
	<p>I was very pleased to take part in this event because I enjoy engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and exchanging ideas. I was also glad to have the opportunity to use English actively, both in speaking and listening, in a real communicative setting. This opportunity to practice English was one of the main reasons I decided to participate. In addition, I was motivated to participate by the opportunity to broaden my perspectives beyond the classroom. Hearing different viewpoints encouraged me to reflect on my own ideas and made the experience both meaningful and valuable.</p>
Reina Sakashita	June, October
	<p>I had a great time at CCC. It was a precious opportunity to be able to speak and interact with people from many ages with different backgrounds. There were many things to learn from CCC. New perspectives, amazing experiences, funny stories and so on. I loved the atmosphere where everyone was willing to use English to communicate with each other. I'm looking forward to joining next year's CCC as well.</p>
Jinwen Kai	June and January
	<p>There were a lot of high school students who came to feel the atmosphere of this university, and I am happy that they could spend a happy time in here. In addition, each time I could learn something new and broaden my horizons. Thank you to everyone who has participated in these activities; I am truly honored to be a part of it.</p>

Myjeilthee Olit Matsusaki	June, September, November, January
	<p>Participating in CCC was a very meaningful experience for me. It not only helped me improve my English-speaking skills but also allowed me to learn about different cultures and perspectives. Through interacting with people of various backgrounds and ages, I was able to broaden my understanding and become more confident in communicating in English. I also appreciated the opportunity to make friends regardless of age, which made each session more enjoyable and enriching. It was encouraging to see the participants actively engaging in conversations and enjoying the events. Moreover, I was happy to notice that the number of participants increased with each session, showing the positive impact of the program.</p>

CONCLUSION

Following the decision to continue holding the event in 2025 after the previous year, we held our first event of this fiscal year on June 7th, with the final event taking place in January 2026. Over the course of eight events, we welcomed a total of 412 participants. Each event received numerous applications and words of support, averaging approximately 52 participants per session.

Participants ranged from kindergarteners to those over 70 years old, fostering cross-generational interaction. Some local residents have participated since last year, and CCC staff and other participants have become familiar faces, indicating potential for new community formation. As in the previous year, we also saw participation from junior high and high school students considering enrollment at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. Beyond that, we encountered participants in various groupings: families including elementary and junior high school children, parent-child pairs, siblings, friends, and more.

Additionally, surveys from the last two sessions in December and January revealed that over half of the participants attended for the second time or more, with about 30% attending for the fourth time or more.

The proportion of new participants, age groups, and staff also varied each month. With a different group of members each time, lively conversations flourished on a wide range of topics. In addition, these events have become so popular that students at the Kobe Gaidai Satellite language courses have asked if these chat sessions can be offered in languages other than English too. As a result, the first Citizens' Chat Café in Spanish will be held on May 30th 2026, at the Satellite. We are very proud of this expansion and we will continue to make efforts to serve the needs of the citizens of Kobe.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEXT YEAR

There were several changes compared to the previous year. One was the application method. Initially, we used the same Google Form attached to the main CCC poster. While it was convenient that both participants and organizers could manage participation using the same form, it became clear that using separate forms for each session was preferable for security reasons.

- Therefore, starting next semester, we will prepare a separate Google Form for each session.
- In addition, a substantial amount of feedback was collected through the application forms. While many participants expressed positive opinions about the event, several constructive suggestions for improvement were also provided.
- First, regarding table arrangement, it was suggested that the facilitator should be seated in the center rather than at the edge of the table to ensure smoother communication and better audibility for all participants. Additionally, limiting the number of participants at each table to approximately five or six was recommended in order to encourage more balanced and active discussions.
- Second, concerning topic announcements, participants indicated that sharing the discussion topic in advance would allow them to better prepare for the conversation. In response to this feedback, which was received in September, the topic for the December session (“Christmas”) was announced beforehand. This approach was positively received, and it is planned to continue this practice in the next semester.
- Finally, regarding introductions before the table discussions, greetings and student presentations were conducted primarily in English, which made it difficult for some participants to fully understand the content. To address this issue, providing important announcements in both English and Japanese is being considered, as well as adding Japanese subtitles to presentations to improve overall comprehension.

REFERENCES

1. English poster



**LET'S TALK WITH
GAIDAI STUDENTS!**
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PRACTICE YOUR ENGLISH?

KOBE CITIZENS CHAT CAFÉ



Date:
<2025> 6/7, 6/28, 7/5, 9/20,
10/11, 11/8, 12/6
<2026> 1/24 **SAT**

Location: KCUFS, Miki Hall
Time: 13:30-15:30
Capacity: 50 people
Fee: Free (Reservation required)

AT THIS INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE EVENT,
LOCAL RESIDENTS CAN ENJOY CASUAL
ENGLISH CONVERSATIONS WITH GAIDAI'S
INTERNATIONAL AND JAPANESE STUDENTS!



APPLY FORM **OFFICIAL LINE** **OFFICIAL INSTAGRAM**



If you wish to cancel, please contact us through the official LINE.
Due to limited seats, please refrain from cancelling without notice.
In that case, we may cancel your application for further events.

KOBE UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES, KCUFS PROMOTION PROJECT 2025
SECRETARIAT: PROF. MONTSERRAT SANZ, PROF. RAJEEV KUMAR SINGH

FOR ANY INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT US EXCLUSIVELY AT THE FOLLOWING.
EMAIL: citizenschatcafe@gmail.com DO NOT CONTACT THE SCHOOL OFFICE DIRECTLY.

2. Japanese poster



KOBE CITIZENS CHAT CAFÉ



地域住民の方が外大の留学生や日本人学生と
英語で気軽に楽しく会話できる国際交流イベントです！



主催：神戸市公立大学法人 神戸市外国語大学
神戸市外国語大学 魅力発信事業2025
事務局：モンセラット・サンス教授
ラジブ クマル シン准教授

日程

<2025> 6/7, 6/28, 7/5, 9/20,
10/11, 11/8, 12/6

<2026> 1/24



場所：神戸市外国語大学
三木記念会館

時間：13:30-15:30

定員：50名/回

参加費：無料（予約必須）

申し込みフォーム



公式LINE



公式Instagram



@CITIZENS_CHAT_CAFE

申込を取り消す際は、公式ラインよりご連絡ください。
席に限りがあるため、無断キャンセルはお控えください。
無断欠席されますと以降の申込を取り消す場合があります。

当イベントに関する問い合わせは下記のメールにてお願いします。
Email: citizenschatcafe@gmail.com
学校への直接の問い合わせはご遠慮ください。

3. Photos during the session



Beginning of the event



Presentations from student staff and participants



Table conversations



Kid's table



Break time



Staff group picture



Group photo in the final session in January

Citizens' Chat Café 2025

Final Report



Official Email: citizenschatcafe@gmail.com

Official Instagram & LINE Account

An official LINE account has been set up for communication with participants, including event updates, reports, and cancellation requests.

