

報告

徳島大学におけるグローバルランチ・セミナーを通じた異文化交流の実践

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要約：本報告は、徳島大学における国際交流活動「グローバルランチ・セミナー (GLS)」を事例として、地域大学における内なる国際化の実践を考察するものである。2025 年春学期に実施された本プログラムは、英語によるランチ交流と学生主体のセミナー発表を組み合わせたハイブリッド型の活動であり、参加者同士の社会的交流と学術的交流の両面を統合する枠組みを提供している。参加データおよび参加者の語りの分析から、GLS は低コストかつ継続的な運営を通じて、異文化理解に関わる学びを支える可能性を示していることがうかがえた。参加規模は限定的で、日本人学生が中心ではあるものの、常連参加者を核とする安定した小規模コミュニティの形成が確認された。また、国内外の類似事例との比較分析を通じて、限られた資源や学生移動の機会が制約される状況においても、小規模な取り組みが学内国際化を促進し得ることが示唆される。これらの点から、GLS は、継続的な異文化交流と学術的要素の統合を通じて、社会的交流と知的学習を架橋する学習成果をもたらす可能性を有する実践として位置づけられる。

(キーワード：異文化交流, 内なる国際化, 変容的学習, 地域大学, グローバルランチ・セミナー)

Global Lunch/Seminars as Tools for Intercultural Engagement at Tokushima University

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Abstract: This report examines Tokushima University's Global Lunch/Seminar (GLS) program as a model for promoting intercultural engagement within a regional Japanese university context. Conducted during the Spring 2025 semester, the GLS combines informal English-based lunch gatherings with structured student-led seminars, creating a hybrid format that integrates social interaction and academic exchange. Attendance data and participant narratives reveal that the program fosters sustainable intercultural learning through frequent, low-cost, and community-driven engagement. While participation remains modest and dominated by Japanese students, recurring involvement suggests the emergence of a stable intercultural core community. A comparative analysis situates the Tokushima model among similar initiatives in Japan and abroad. The findings highlight that small-scale, resource-efficient programs can effectively advance "internationalization at home," especially in institutions with limited mobility opportunities. The GLS suggests that sustained intercultural interaction and academic integration can potentially foster transformative learning outcomes, bridging the gap between social and intellectual engagement.

(Keywords: intercultural exchange, internationalization at home, transformative learning, regional university, Global Lunch/Seminar (GLS))

1. Introduction

The internationalization of higher education has become one of the most significant and widely debated trends in the 21st century, reflecting the growing interconnectedness of economies, societies,

and cultures¹⁾. Universities across the globe are increasingly tasked with preparing students not only to succeed in their chosen disciplines but also to function as globally minded professionals who can thrive in diverse cultural and professional environments¹⁻²⁾.

Internationalization is no longer confined to the traditional markers of student mobility and the recruitment of international students; it is also embedded in curriculum design, pedagogy, and the campus environment as part of what is often referred to as “internationalization at home”³⁾.

Within this broader framework, informal and semi-structured intercultural activities have gained recognition as highly effective and low-cost methods for promoting meaningful engagement. Initiatives such as language cafés, intercultural lunch programs, peer conversation hours, and tandem learning arrangements allow students to encounter different cultural perspectives in everyday settings, often outside the rigid boundaries of classroom⁴⁻⁵⁾. These initiatives not only foster communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity but also create inclusive spaces where domestic and international students can interact as equals, thereby addressing a well-documented challenge in higher education: the limited interaction between international students and their local peers⁶⁻⁷⁾.

Such practices are particularly valuable because they complement, rather than replace, formal mobility programs, which remain accessible to only a minority of students worldwide. In fact, research suggests that the majority of students may never participate in long-term study abroad programs, making informal on-campus intercultural activities crucial for embedding international perspectives across the entire student body⁸⁻⁹⁾. Furthermore, these informal on-campus intercultural activities are adaptable to resource-constrained contexts such as regional universities, where the emphasis is on cultivating global engagement opportunities within local constraints¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾. By blending social interaction with academic themes, initiatives like intercultural lunch programs serve as microcosms of global learning, contributing to the formation of graduates who are better equipped to navigate multicultural professional environments.

In Japan, the national agenda for higher education

has long emphasized the dual goals of increasing the number of international students and cultivating a globalized learning environment. Since the launch of the “100,000 International Students Plan” in 1983 and the subsequent “300,000 International Students Plan” in 2008, universities have been under sustained pressure to internationalize their curricula, pedagogy, and campus culture¹²⁻¹⁴⁾. Within this policy framework, initiatives that foster everyday intercultural encounters on campus have gained prominence as practical and cost-effective means of bridging cultural divides, supplementing more formalized structures such as degree programs in English or large-scale mobility schemes.

Large universities located in urban settings such as Tohoku University operate well-funded “Global Lounges” and international student centers, which are designed to promote interaction and support between Japanese and international students¹⁵⁻¹⁶⁾. These models have been widely examined in the literature in Japan and abroad^{11,17-19)}. These spaces serve both as social hubs and as highly visible symbols of institutional commitment to international competitiveness. By contrast, regional institutions, those located in non-urban settings, often employ more grassroots approaches, initiated by small international offices, faculty champions, or student volunteers^{12,20)}. These activities may take the form of intercultural lunch programs, language cafés, or seminar-style events, which, although modest in scale, contribute significantly to creating opportunities for everyday intercultural engagement.

However, such regional practices remain underrepresented in scholarly literature. Much of the academic focus continues to fall on elite universities and macro-level policy frameworks, leaving the contributions of regional campuses relatively invisible²⁰⁻²²⁾. Yet, these initiatives are especially valuable, as they reveal how internationalization is locally adapted through creativity and efficient use of limited resources, often producing deeper and more sustained intercultural exchanges than those achievable

in larger, more formalized settings. Understanding these regional efforts therefore enriches the broader discussion of “internationalization at home” by highlighting how institutional geography and scale shape practices and outcomes.

This report documents the Global Lunch/Seminar (GLS) series conducted during the Spring semester of 2025 at Tokushima University’s Kuramoto Campus. The program, designed primarily for medical, dental, pharmaceutical, health science and nutrition students, offers a unique hybrid of casual English-based lunches and research-driven seminars. In addition to describing the program, this report situates Tokushima’s initiative within the broader landscape of similar intercultural programs in Japan and abroad. Through comparative analysis, the report seeks to demonstrate the distinctiveness of Tokushima’s approach and highlight relevant lessons for other institutions worldwide.

2. Global Lunch/Seminar Description

2.1 Objectives

The GLS was established with the overarching goal of promoting English-mediated interaction among Japanese and international students at Tokushima University’s Kuramoto Campus. Situated in a prefectural capital, the campus has a diverse population in medicine, dentistry, nutrition, and health sciences, yet opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue outside classrooms remain limited. The program therefore aimed to create an informal, accessible, and intellectually stimulating environment where students and faculty could meet across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

2.2 Participants

The program primarily targeted a diverse campus community, with Japanese undergraduate students from the faculties of medicine, dentistry, health sciences, nutrition, and pharmacy forming the core group of participants. Alongside them were international students representing a range of countries,

including Mongolia, Taiwan, the Philippines, Chile, China, Vietnam and Indonesia, whose presence enriched discussions with global perspectives. In addition, several faculty and staff members participated on a voluntary basis, joining intermittently throughout the semester to support interaction and contribute to the program’s inclusive and cross-generational atmosphere.

2.3 Formats and Activities

The program was structured around two complementary formats designed to balance informality with academic engagement. The first segment, Global Lunch, consisted of weekly lunchtime gatherings, where participants were encouraged to engage in open conversation in English, share cultural perspectives, and build friendships in a relaxed atmosphere. The second format, Global Lunch Seminars, introduced a more structured component to the series through presentations delivered by both international and Japanese students or researchers. These seminars provided a platform for participants to share their academic work, personal experiences, and intercultural reflections, followed by interactive discussions that deepened mutual understanding and inspired further exchange. Together, the two formats created a dynamic learning environment that fostered both spontaneous social interaction and intellectually meaningful dialogue.

Sessions were held every Wednesday from 12:00 to 12:50, beginning April 16 and ending July 16, 2025. The midweek lunchtime slot was selected deliberately, based on feedback from previous program cycles and a short survey conducted among current students at the start of the semester. Both sources indicated that Wednesday noon was the most convenient time for the majority of participants, as it coincided with a common lunch break across departments and minimized conflicts with laboratory work, lectures, or part-time employment. This scheduling choice thus aimed to maximize accessibility and continuity of participation, ensuring that students could join the

sessions without disrupting their academic routines. In total, 14 sessions were conducted during the term, three of which were designated as seminar events featuring invited student presenters.

To promote participation, bilingual posters in Japanese and English were designed and distributed across multiple locations on campus, including faculty bulletin boards, the main library, and student common areas. These posters were visually engaging and provided clear information about the schedule, themes, and objectives of each session. In addition to official postings, word-of-mouth and peer networks among regular participants proved highly effective in reaching new students, particularly within departments where international exchange was already encouraged. Although the event information was also published on the university’s International Office homepage, web-based engagement remained limited, with few students accessing the online page directly. This suggests that in-person visibility and social circulation within student communities were more influential in sustaining participation than institutional online announcements.

2.4 Attendance

As shown in Table 1, attendance varied considerably throughout the 14 sessions, reflecting both the informal nature of the activity and the different appeal of regular lunch sessions compared to seminar-style events. The regular Global Lunch sessions typically involved fewer than 10 participants, whereas the seminar-style sessions attracted nearly 30 participants. Japanese students consistently represented the dominant share of attendees, while international students and faculty/staff accounted for relatively low numbers. Moreover, frequent participants made up roughly half of the attendees at each session, suggesting that the program has built a stable, though modest, core community.

Table 1. Attendance by Session (GLS Spring 2025)

Session#	Seminar#	International Students	Total
1		1	18
2		6	20
3	1	8	21
4		1	7
5		1	17
6		1	7
7	2	14	28
8		0	7
9		1	9
10		1	6
11		1	9
12		1	9
13	3	12	28
14		1	2

This report draws on simple post-session feedback and narratives collected immediately after GLS activities. These narratives were obtained through open-ended reflections voluntarily provided by participants, rather than through formal structured surveys. The purpose of this approach was not to conduct a rigorous qualitative analysis, but to enhance the transparency of the practice report by capturing participants’ immediate impressions and reflections on their experiences.

2.5 Seminar Themes

The three seminars embodied the interdisciplinary and multicultural character of the GLS series. Each session became a space not only for academic exchange but also for personal storytelling, where participants reflected on how global experiences had shaped their professional identities and aspirations. The first seminar, titled “Cross-Border Research” was delivered by a doctoral student from the Philippines who also holds a faculty position at a university in his home country. His presentation centered on the challenges and opportunities of conducting research across national and institutional boundaries. He spoke candidly about how he came to the decision to pursue

doctoral studies abroad, emphasizing how immersion in Tokushima's research environment had broadened his methodological perspectives and strengthened his resolve to contribute to the scientific community back home. His story resonated with many participants, illustrating that international education is not merely a personal pursuit but also a means to build academic bridges between nations.

In the second seminar, "My Journey Starting from the IFR," a Japanese undergraduate student shared a deeply personal account of transformation through international exposure. Having initially joined the university's International Friendship Room (IFR) with little experience in intercultural communication, she described how casual encounters with international students eventually led to a passion for global travel and cross-cultural understanding. What began as curiosity evolved into a sense of responsibility to represent Japan abroad and to help peers overcome hesitation toward intercultural engagement. Her narrative highlighted how small steps, such as attending lunch, joining a club, participating in exchange events, can cumulatively shape one's worldview and future trajectory.

The third seminar, "More than a Tooth: Beyond the Clinical Lens through Art" was led by a Latin American researcher who bridges the fields of dentistry and art. Drawing upon his expertise in micro and specialized photography, he explored how visual storytelling can reveal the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of scientific practice. His presentation encouraged participants to look beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries and to find beauty and meaning even within technical work. The session inspired a lively discussion about creativity, empathy, and how art can serve as a universal language that transcends linguistic and cultural differences.

Taken together, these seminars went far beyond conversational practice. They demonstrated how sharing professional journeys in an inclusive, supportive environment can foster empathy and inspire others to reflect on their own paths. The

authenticity of each speaker's motivation to give back to their community, to encourage others to explore the world, and to merge science with art, transformed the sessions into moments of collective inspiration. Several students later reported feeling encouraged to share their own stories in future Global Lunch meetings, suggesting that narrative-based exchange can act as a catalyst for deeper intercultural connection and self-discovery.

3. Comparative Perspectives

Intercultural lunch-style programs are not unique to Tokushima University; they form part of a broader set of informal initiatives designed to foster "internationalization at home"³⁾. These activities are particularly valuable in higher education because they provide low-cost, accessible opportunities for domestic and international students to interact without the barriers often associated with formal study abroad programs. By examining comparable practices in Japan and abroad, the distinctiveness of Tokushima approach becomes more evident.

Japan's major metropolitan universities, such as the University of Tokyo, Osaka University, Tohoku University, typically operate resource-rich international lounges, global cafés, or intercultural exchange centers^{20,23)}. These facilities are often centrally located, staffed by professional coordinators, and promoted through university-wide channels. Participation tends to be larger in scale, frequently drawing dozens of students per session, and activities may include structured workshops, themed events, and collaborations with external organizations. While such programs achieve high visibility and contribute significantly to institutional branding, they may risk becoming impersonal, with interactions sometimes limited to surface-level exchanges.

By contrast, regional institutions like Tokushima University face structural challenges such as smaller student populations, limited funding, and lower international student enrollment. Yet these institutions also have unique opportunities to experiment with

grassroots, low-cost models. Tokushima GLS series illustrates how regional universities can creatively combine casual conversation with academic engagement. The integration of student-led research seminars—covering topics from international research journeys to art and clinical practice—demonstrates that even modestly resourced initiatives can generate meaningful intercultural learning opportunities. This emphasis on intimacy and continuity contrasts with the higher volume but less personalized interactions typical of metropolitan programs and reflects earlier findings that regional universities play a crucial role in balancing international education and local contribution²⁴).

Although the GLS model is described in this report as the “Tokushima model,” this designation does not imply that similar practices exist only at Tokushima University. Rather, it reflects the fact that, to date, there is limited published literature documenting the systematic integration of informal lunch-based interaction with recurring, student-led academic seminars as a single, continuous program, particularly in regional university contexts. Existing studies have documented informal intercultural initiatives such as language cafés or international coffee hours⁶), as well as more formal seminar-based or curriculum-linked approaches to internationalization at home^{3,5}). However, reports that explicitly examine the interaction between informal social exchange and structured academic presentation within the same recurring framework remain scarce. From this perspective, the GLS is not presented as an exclusive or non-transferable model, but as a locally articulated configuration that combines elements already known in the literature in a deliberately integrated manner. Given its low-cost, low-threshold design and reliance on existing campus spaces, the GLS format is potentially replicable in other regional universities, even those with limited international student populations.

Globally, intercultural lunch and coffee-hour programs are widely practiced. In the U.S.,

universities frequently host “International Coffee Hours”²⁵) which serve as informal spaces for cross-cultural exchange but rarely integrate academic content⁶). In Europe, institutions such as Erasmus partner universities have developed similar lunchtime programs, often tied to language practice or tandem learning, supported by the broader Erasmus mobility framework²⁶). In Asia, particularly in South Korea and Taiwan, intercultural lounges and “global zones” are popular, combining informal exchange with language tutoring services²⁷⁻²⁸). These cases underscore the diversity of formats worldwide, ranging from highly institutionalized models to student-led grassroots initiatives.

Placed alongside these examples, Tokushima’s GLS stands out for its hybrid format. The program blends the informality of bring-in meals with the academic rigor of research presentations, while maintaining a small, stable core of participants. This design enables deeper and repeated interactions, which research suggests are more conducive to building intercultural competence than one-off encounters²⁹). While its scale is modest compared to metropolitan or international counterparts, Tokushima’s model demonstrates how regional universities can contribute to the broader goals of internationalization at home^{3,12-13}) by leveraging their smaller communities to foster intimacy, sustainability, and academic relevance. Compared to these global counterparts, Tokushima’s Global Lunch is smaller in scale but features some academic elements. While many international coffee hours emphasize food and casual talk, Tokushima’s GLS incorporates student-led research seminars, adding intellectual depth and aligning with professional development in health sciences.

4. Discussion

From a pedagogical perspective, these student-led seminars exemplify the principles of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory³⁰), which posits that personal growth often begins with reflective engagement and dialogue across different frames of

reference. By sharing their lived experiences, each presenter invited others to reconsider assumptions about research, culture, and identity, effectively transforming the Global Lunch sessions into spaces of mutual learning. Such exchanges align with Deardorff's model of intercultural competence development²⁹⁾, where openness, curiosity, and empathy are cultivated through iterative interaction and reflection. The narratives also embody the concept of internationalization at home³⁾, demonstrating that global awareness can be nurtured not only through mobility but through local, relational encounters within the university community. In this sense, the GLS functions as a microcosm of global learning—one that empowers participants to view their academic and cultural journeys as interconnected, meaningful, and transformative.

The GLS highlights the potential of small-scale, low-cost, and grassroots approaches to intercultural engagement in higher education. Unlike metropolitan universities in Japan, which often benefit from extensive funding and infrastructure for global lounges or dedicated international centers^{20,24)}, Tokushima model relies on modest resources while still cultivating meaningful intercultural interaction. The integration of both informal conversation and academically oriented seminars represents a hybrid format that aligns with recent calls for “internationalization at home,” which emphasizes creating global learning opportunities for all students within domestic contexts^{3,6)}.

Comparisons with international models further illustrate Tokushima's distinctive contribution. In the United States, “Coffee Hour” programs are widely used to facilitate casual intercultural interaction, but these events often remain social in focus and lack structured academic components²⁹⁾. European initiatives connected to Erasmus mobility have developed more structured intercultural programming, yet these are typically tied to mobility schemes and require significant institutional support²⁶⁾. In Asia, universities in Singapore and South Korea have

established “global zones” or language cafés that provide continuous exposure to international communities, but again these models are resource-intensive and often embedded in urban, globally connected campuses¹²⁾. By contrast, Tokushima model demonstrates that sustained intercultural engagement can emerge even in regional contexts, provided that continuity and community-building are prioritized.

The sustainability of the Tokushima model deserves particular emphasis. First, its low-cost nature ensures feasibility even without substantial funding, making it replicable for other regional or resource-constrained universities. Second, the reliance on a core group of repeat participants generates stability and allows for deeper intercultural relationships over time. Although absolute participation numbers remain modest, the program demonstrates that frequency and regularity can compensate for scale, offering long-term benefits in intercultural competence and global awareness³⁾. This is consistent with findings that repeated, meaningful intercultural encounters are more effective for developing intercultural competence than isolated, large-scale events²⁹⁾.

At the same time, limitations must be acknowledged. The predominance of Japanese participants and the relatively low number of international students limit the diversity of exchange. Minimal faculty involvement also restricts opportunities for mentorship and academic-professional linkage. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for enhancing the program's impact. However, the model's demonstrated sustainability, community-building effect, and academic integration suggest that Tokushima University's GLS model contributes an important alternative pathway to internationalization in higher education, particularly for regional universities often overlooked in discussions of global engagement^{20,24)}.

To visually summarize the unique characteristics of the Tokushima GLS, Figure 1 illustrates the five

core strengths of the model, its hybrid format, sustainability, community-building effect, inclusivity, and potential for transformative learning. As the GLS is still at an early stage of implementation, the illustration should be understood as conceptual rather than definitive. The model is proposed based on the initial implementation, together with insights from existing literature on internationalization at home and intercultural learning. Rather than representing fixed or linear causal pathways, the elements shown are intended to depict a dynamic and evolving framework in which multiple components interact and mutually reinforce one another. Prior studies suggest that low-threshold hybrid formats can support sustainability by enabling repeated engagement with limited resources^{3,5)}, while sustained participation over time facilitates community building and gradually enhances inclusivity by reducing psychological and social barriers to entry^{28,29)}. These conditions are widely recognized as conducive to reflective dialogue and perspective transformation, which form the basis of transformative learning processes³⁰⁾. As the GLS continues to develop, the proposed model is expected to be refined through ongoing practice and further empirical observation.



Figure 1. Strengths of the GLS model

Looking ahead, several directions hold promises for enhancing the model's reach and effectiveness. Expanding participation through targeted outreach, increasing the involvement of international students from diverse backgrounds, and encouraging faculty contributions could enrich the intercultural dynamics.

The adoption of hybrid or online formats may also extend accessibility to participants beyond the campus, aligning with broader trends in digital internationalization. Additionally, building collaborative networks with other regional and metropolitan universities—both within Japan and internationally—could position Tokushima's GLS as part of a larger ecosystem of intercultural engagement initiatives.

5. Conclusion

The GLS model at Tokushima University illustrates how regional institutions can contribute to the internationalization of higher education through sustainable, low-cost, and community-driven practices. While the program faces limitations in terms of scale, diversity, and faculty involvement, its hybrid model, blending informal social interaction with academically oriented seminars, appears to be potentially effective in fostering intercultural awareness and competence among participants. The presence of a stable core community of frequent attendees further strengthens the program's continuity and long-term impact.

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