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## Poster Presentation

# Student-Created Tours to Local Tourist Destinations

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The Japanese government is promoting international tourism ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. This includes renovating ports so they can accept large international luxury liners (“Japan meets goal”, 2015). The Japanese government has also designated Yokohama Port, Shimizu in Shizuoka city, Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture, Yatsushiro in Kumamoto Prefecture, and Motobu and Hirara in Okinawa Prefecture as international cruise ship hubs that will feature terminals where immigration procedures can be conducted for passengers (“Japan eyes int’l hubs”, 2017). These moves aim to promote international tourism as well as help revive the local economies, particularly in small port towns.

For passengers, taking a cruise that stops in several Japanese ports presents a relatively worry-free travel experience in Japan. According to Marrit Aartoaho, a tour agent for the Diamond Princess Line, “International luxury liner companies are taking advantage of cheap airfares into Japan because people can come into Japan, board a ship, and easily experience traveling in the country without worrying about language barriers and transportation issues” (personal communication, June 30, 2016). From our portside observations, discussions with port authority staff, and interview with Aartoaho, we learned that many international passengers arriving at Japanese ports choose to take bus tours pre-arranged by the ships’ tour companies, but some opt to see local sights by themselves. Whichever style of sightseeing they choose, the passengers typically need help from people who speak English when they disembark from the ships.

More and more international luxury liners are coming to small Japanese port

towns such as Shimizu, Shizuoka, but these rural areas often do not have budgets for professional English services. Universities can provide English support through community outreach projects aimed at assisting with international tourism needs. These projects establish bonds between the university and the local community while creating opportunities for students and local citizens to engage in authentic English interactions (Gough & Kato, 2016). Community outreach activities for English language learners in English speaking countries have been shown to promote language learning, intercultural communication skills, a sense of second language identity, and a feeling of being part of the local community (Andrew, 2011; Perrin, 2008). The researchers, who are the advisers for the Tokai University Active Tokai Local Ambassadors (ATLAS) English Club, feel community outreach projects and the English support we are providing for the local citizen volunteers can help achieve similar results.

In 2014 the ATLAS English Club at Tokai University's Shimizu, Shizuoka campus established a relationship with the Shizuoka Association for Multicultural Exchange (SAME) and the Shimizu Port Authority and began an ongoing community outreach project that provides volunteer English assistance for international luxury liner passengers arriving at Shimizu port (Gough & Kato, 2016). When ships make port calls, the ATLAS English Club students and local community members volunteer at portside information, bank, and post office booths and explain how to access the complimentary Wi-Fi service. In 2014 the ATLAS English Club students also created a map written in English that explains how to take public transportation to Miho no Matsubara beach, which was registered as part of the Mt. Fuji World Heritage site in 2013. In 2015 and 2016 they continued their volunteer interpreting at Shimizu port and occasionally lead tours for passengers to the beach and Minowa Inari Shrine, which is near the port.

In 2016 the ATLAS English Club advisers received a To-Collabo grant for community outreach projects from Tokai University and worked with SAME and the Shimizu Port Authority. First, the two advisers investigated volunteer tourism support activities in other Japanese port towns where international luxury liners make port calls by traveling to Hakodate, Kobe, and Hiroshima. At

these ports they observed portside activities and interviewed port authority staff and local citizen volunteers. They also conducted a seminar and needs analysis for potential volunteers at the Shimizu town office. The seminar included two parts: first, the advisers gave a presentation to describe the purpose of the project and how they planned to create materials to support the local volunteers at Shimizu port. The second part of the seminar included group discussion time among the attendees and a questionnaire about their perceptions of the types of English expressions and communication skills they would need to successfully help passengers at the port. Finally, the advisers used the information they learned from their investigations at other port towns and the Shimizu seminar questionnaires to make the *Shimizu Volunteer Interpreters Handbook* (SVIH). The handbook is currently being used by portside volunteers in Shimizu, and at the end of the 2017 tourism season the advisers will survey the volunteers to determine its usefulness.

In 2017, the advisers were again awarded the To-Collabo grant from Tokai University. This paper describes the 2017 stage of the ATLAS English Club community outreach project. In two elective English classes in the spring semester, students who were interested in the volunteer activities researched local sites and activities then planned an English language guidebook called *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook*.

## **Guidebook Planning**

In the spring 2017 semester, which spanned from April to late July, two elective English communication classes focusing on the sightseeing and tour guidebook project were combined and team-taught by the ATLAS English Club advisers at Tokai University's Shimizu campus. After forming small groups, the students conducted Internet research into sightseeing spots, specialty products, transportation options, and prices for entering local attractions. Next, they developed timetables and plans for tours in the Shimizu area that could be completed in five hours or less. The five-hour time limit was chosen because that is the average amount of time passengers typically have for sightseeing when the international luxury liners make port calls in Shimizu.

The tours included options for transportation by taxi, bus, rental bicycle, water taxi, or on foot. Activities included visiting a historical neighborhood where a famous local person who helped found the town lived, local shrines, Miho no Matsubara beach, a hot spring foot bath, the Tokai University Marine Science Museum, and the Tokai University Natural History Museum. In addition, there were options for trying activities such as strawberry picking, watching a traditional fishing exhibition, or eating sushi at the portside fish market.

## Practicing and Revising

Once the students had completed their initial tour plans, they practiced explaining their tours to classmates in other groups. The SVIH was used as a text to practice English vocabulary, grammar, and expressions for giving directions or explaining local foods and places of interest. The *Volunteer Interpreters Handbook* also served as a base for writing descriptions that could be included in the new *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook*.

As the groups practiced explaining their tours with each other, their classmates checked the timetables, costs, transportation details, and descriptions of the places and activities then gave suggestions for revisions. The groups revised their tours then repeated the process of practicing, checking, and revising several times during the semester. Once the revisions were completed, the students entered their sightseeing and tour plans into a guidebook template created by their instructors. As the students worked on their tour plans, descriptions, revisions, and formatting, the two teachers supported them by explaining grammar and vocabulary and demonstrating effective communication styles that could be used when participating in portside volunteer activities using the *Volunteer Interpreters Handbook* or the *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook*.

## Finalizing the Guidebook

After the students entered their contents into the template, the two instructors edited it and added pictures of the sites, foods, and activities included in the tours. Then one of the ATLAS English Club members designed the cover artwork for

the booklet. In October 2017, the data was sent to a printer for an initial printing using a portion of the money provided by the 2017 To-Collabo grant. In the 2018 tourist season, several international luxury liners carrying English-speaking passengers will make port calls at Shimizu port. During this time, ATLAS English Club students will run a pilot test with the *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook* as they use it to explain sightseeing options to passengers who opt out of the prearranged bus tours provided by the ships' tour companies. Using feedback from the trial, the ATLAS English Club advisers and students will make further revisions to the guidebook and send a final version to the printer. The formatted PDF data for both the SVIH and the *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook* will be linked to the Tokai University Shimizu campus homepage and used to create an iBook that can be downloaded onto a smartphone or tablet computer for easy access by volunteer English interpreters, passengers, and other community members.

## **Conclusion**

The ATLAS English Club at Tokai University's Shimizu campus was started in 2013 as a means to support students who were interested in honing their English skills and helping students find authentic situations to use English in Japan. Since fostering a connection with the SAME office and the Shimizu Port Authority in 2014, the ATLAS English Club advisers have been able to develop opportunities for their students to use English in real-life situations through community outreach projects. The students and their advisers have created an ongoing project in which they brainstorm, research, design, and implement annual projects that help serve the international tourism needs in Shimizu. This teaches the students critical thinking, English language, and leadership skills that will be useful in their future endeavors. It also contributes to Tokai University's efforts to forge bonds with the people of Shimizu through community outreach. In 2017, ATLAS English Club students and advisers undertook the *Shimizu Sightseeing and Tour Guidebook* project. They will continue to research Shimizu's English needs and create unique projects to support those needs in the future. These projects serve as a model for other small Japanese port towns where international luxury

liners make port calls and for English groups at Japanese universities that wish to establish a connection with their community and experience using English in real-life contexts.

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