

---

---

## Poster Presentation

# Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Volunteer Preparation

Kevin Thomas

*Asia University*

Since Japan attained the rights to hold the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games, there has been a push by national and local governments and universities to encourage students to volunteer (Lange, Gorshkov, & Flanagan, 2017). In 2014, The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee created a partnership agreement with 552 universities to create interest in the games and foster Olympic values (Tokyo 2020 signs partnership, 2014). Due to the upcoming screening interviews for prospective volunteers in summer 2018 the recruitment drive has intensified in recent months. (Tokyo 2020 organizers plan, 2016). The Nippon Foundation ([www.nippon-foundation.or.jp](http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp)) has been contracted to train successful applicants in their specific roles. Various universities are running courses to either prepare prospective volunteers (Temple University, 2017) or use the Olympics as a context from which to improve students' English competence (Lange, Gorshkov, & Flanagan, 2017). Record numbers of university students are expected to volunteer with motivations such as patriotism and community values; love of sport and the Olympics; interpersonal contacts; personal growth; career orientation (Koutrou, 2014, p. 55). It appears universities around Japan want their students involved, both for supporting the events and for the positive publicity it would provide.

Recently the president of the author's university requested a course be designed to encourage students to volunteer and help them to be able to do so. The allocation for this course is Semester 1 of the 2018 academic year and will consist of sixteen 90-minute lessons. The classes will take place in a "comm class",

a series of communication-based classes on a subject decided by the teacher. Any student interested in volunteering can apply. After a screening test, the teacher is allowed to select a level-cohesive group. Materials need be prepared before students' language levels and motivations are ascertained.

## **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

ESP is seen to differ from other forms of English instruction. It has been argued to create suitable materials, extensive needs analysis is required to determine what should be included in a course and how it is taught (Flowerdew, 2012). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) defined the characteristics of ESP as to meet the specific needs of learners as to the activities they need to perform. Content design is "centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities" (Gatehouse, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, students on the Olympic volunteer course need to be introduced to the language, grammar, and functions a volunteer will require ascertained from an analysis of the roles and functions students would perform. Further characteristics of ESP course design suggested by Carver (1983) are the use of authentic material, having a purpose-related orientation, and self-direction of students (Gatehouse, 2001).

A primary needs analysis is impossible in the context due to the class not being assembled until the week preceding the course. However, an analysis of secondary sources could inform a course to help meet students' ESP needs. Focusing on areas such as volunteer requirements to pass the screening test, definition of a volunteer, and testimonials by former volunteers on their duties and challenges. These sources can be found from government documents, volunteering recruitment sites, and news articles. They can be analyzed by focusing on the areas previously detailed as defining ESP provision, namely lexis, grammar, skills, and knowledge of discourse that volunteers require.

## **What is an Olympic Volunteer?**

In December 2016, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government produced the document "Volunteering Strategy for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2010" (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2016) which outlined its

vision of volunteers' roles and duties. In addition to performing specified duties, volunteers will be expected to “widely promote the attractions of Japan to the world through the Tokyo 2020 Games, having each Games Volunteer and City Volunteer demonstrate the strengths of the Japanese people, such as the Japanese spirit of hospitality *omotenashi*” (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2016, p. 5). *Omotenashi* is frequently defined as the welcoming hospitable spirit which is suggested that Japanese people display to visitors. Through this document and other publicly available national and local government websites and publications ([www.pref.saitama.lg.jp](http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp); [www.city-volunteer.metro.tokyo.jp](http://www.city-volunteer.metro.tokyo.jp)), two types of volunteers can be identified.

The first “Games Volunteers” compose the majority. Eighty thousand volunteers are being sought through the Olympic Organisation. They will be based at sporting venues and fulfill a range of duties. Duties include providing support to athletes and spectators including language support, aiding foreign media, becoming drivers, assisting with doping control, and helping the running of events. Volunteers will be expected to create a positive atmosphere at the Olympic venues (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2016). The second group is “City Volunteers”, 10,000 of whom are being sought. They will be based at points near venues and sightseeing spots and should be available to aid domestic and international games attendees. They will provide directions and transport guidance, answer questions people have about Tokyo or Japan, and recommend places to eat and relax ([www.pref.saitama.lg.jp](http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp)). They should also be “the face” of the city with displaying *omotenashi* (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2016, p. 3).

To become volunteers, applicants must be over 18 in 2020, have knowledge of Olympic events, and go through a screening process in summer 2018. Prospective volunteers will need communication skills and foreign language competence. They must work over 10 eight-hour days, attend three stages of training, and pay their own transportation and accommodation costs (Blaster, 2016).

## **Designing the curriculum and materials**

From the analysis above, a mixed syllabus should be implemented to meet different areas of requirement. As the Nippon Foundation will provide training to successful applicants, there is no need for a course to prepare students thoroughly for individual roles.

In order to become volunteers, students will need to pass the screening test. In which, they need to display an amount of global awareness, show knowledge of the games operations, and display *omotenashi*. This means a part of the curriculum must be content-based. Prospective volunteers will need to decide which type of volunteer they would like to be, the various roles and expectations of different volunteers must be taught. The course materials will direct students to various websites created by the recruiting organisations. For example, the Tokyo Metropolitan Volunteerism Navigation website ([www.city-volunteer.metro.tokyo.jp](http://www.city-volunteer.metro.tokyo.jp)) allows students to take quizzes to see if they are suitable applicants and experience the day-to-day life of volunteers. They can read and watch testimonials by previous volunteers in London 2012 and Rio 2016 outlining the roles they played. First-hand testimonials could contribute to meeting the need for authenticity suggested by Carver (1983, cited by Gatehouse, 2001) required by ESP students.

The course will also need to include functional elements preparing students for the most common volunteer tasks. Materials will include lessons on giving directions, explaining how to use public transport, recommending places to visit and eat, describing popular attractions, how to use services, and more. Authentic materials will be used where possible such as subway maps, bus and train timetables, menus for restaurants, and brochures for popular sightseeing spots. These are available at tourist information sites across Tokyo and can be used for language practice in lessons.

The course will also need to be communicative. Volunteers must display a certain language ability and have the confidence to answer spontaneously to inquiries and approach visitors. In order to display the sought-for spirit of *omotenashi*, students will need to be able to communicate using polite language and display elements of natural use of intonation and stress to show willingness

to help. They will be graded on tasks in class and in private counselling sessions be asked to reflect on their suitability as a volunteer in terms of the attitude and skills outlined by the Tokyo Metropolitan Volunteerism Navigation website and think how they can improve their chances of passing the screening test.

Students will be encouraged to ask the teacher about areas of difficulty. This could address the need for a student-guided curriculum as identified in the characteristics of ESP course design (Gatehouse, 2001). Student background schemata will be used to motivate them by showing they already have some knowledge needed to volunteer. Using familiar topics is seen as motivating, and the knowledge lexis produced by the activating of background knowledge can be attached to the scaffold of the functional phrases taught (Lange, Gorshkov, & Flanagan, 2017).

## What next?

Although the majority of lessons will be designed before the course starts, it seems reasonable to leave space in the curriculum to allow for student direction. If it becomes clear that some students have similar motivations and want to be a certain type of volunteer in the initial course screening test, this should inform the course design. For example, if a number of students will be involved in assistance to medical staff, the appropriate vocabulary and functional English should be focused on in class. Contact could be maintained with students after course completion through a joint online social network group. If they were able to become volunteers during the official screening test in 2018 after the initial course, more tailored courses on their specific roles and duties could be created for the following semester.

## References

- Blaster, M. (2016, July 8). Tokyo Olympics is looking for volunteers, may have a hard time finding them. *SoraNews*, 24. Retrieved from <https://en.rocketnews24.com/2016/07/08/tokyo-olympics-is-looking-for-volunteers-may-have-a-hard-time-finding-them/>
- Bureau of Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games preparation, Tokyo

- Metropolitan Government. (2016). Toward Tokyo 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.city-volunteer.metro.tokyo.jp/en/about/tokyo2020/>
- Carver, D. (1983). Some propositions about ESP. *The ESP Journal*, 2(2), 131-137.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998) *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Flowerdew, L. (2012). *Needs analysis and curriculum development in ESP*. In B. Paltridge and S. Starfield (Eds.), *The handbook of English for specific purposes* (pp. 325-346). Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons. doi: 10.1002/9781118339855.ch17
- Gatehouse, K. (2001). Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 7(10). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Gatehouse-ESP.html>
- Koutrou, N. (2014). Motivations of Volunteers at the Olympic Games. A Case Study of London 2012 Games Volunteers. In Forsyth, J., O'Bonsawin, C., & Heine, M. (Eds.) *12th International Symposium for Olympic Research* (pp. 55-61). London, Canada: International Centre for Olympic Studies.
- Lange, E. J., Gorshkov, V., & Flanagan, B. (2017). Gearing up for the Olympics in English classes. In P. Clements, A. Krause, & H. Brown (Eds.), *Transformation in language education*. Tokyo, Japan: JALT.
- Saitama Prefectural Government. (2017). Volunteer for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Retrieved from <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/oly-para/eng/volunteer/index.html>
- Temple University (2017). Introducing Japan as a volunteer guide (IJV101). Retrieved from <https://www.tuj.ac.jp/cont-ed/courses/culture-and-arts/IJV101.html>
- Tokyo 2020 organizers plan to hire at least 90,000 Olympic volunteers. (2016, November 19). *The Mainichi*. Retrieved from <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20161119/p2a/00m/0na/010000c>
- Tokyo 2020 signs partnership arrangement with Japanese universities. (2014, June 24). The International Olympic Committee. Retrieved from <https://>

[www.olympic.org/news/tokyo-2020-signs-partnership-arrangements-with-japanese-universities](http://www.olympic.org/news/tokyo-2020-signs-partnership-arrangements-with-japanese-universities).

Tokyo Metropolitan Government. (2016). Volunteering strategy for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Retrieved from [https://tokyo2020.jp/jp/get-involved/volunteer/data/volunteer-summary\\_EN.pdf](https://tokyo2020.jp/jp/get-involved/volunteer/data/volunteer-summary_EN.pdf)

## **Author bio:**

*Kevin Thomas teaches at Asia University in Japan. He has worked at various universities in Japan and the UK and specializes in preparing Japanese students to study abroad. He is also interested in how SNS platforms can be used to help students improve their communicative skills. [kthomasefl@live.co.uk](mailto:kthomasefl@live.co.uk)\**

Received: September 30, 2017

Accepted: November 10, 2018