Community Outreach Programs to Develop Intercultural Communication Skills

Wendy M. Gough
Tokai University Liberal Arts Education Center
Shimizu, Japan
Email: wgough@tokai-u.jp
Program Background

Justification

Research

Results and Conclusions

Moving Forward
The Tokai University Active Local Tokai Ambassadors (ATLAS) English Club

• The ATLAS English Club was started in 2013

• The club aims to provide resources for students to use English outside of the classroom

• The club consists of two parts: An English café and the ATLAS English Club volunteer activities
2014
- **May:** Finding information about volunteer activities
- **October:** Students begin volunteering at Shimizu Port

2015
- **August:** Students plan a tour to Miho no Matsubara
- **October:** Students lead the tour to Miho no Matsubara
- **November:** Students volunteer at an international teaching conference

2017
- **July:** ATLAS students participate in an event with international students
- **August:** Students volunteer at a professional soccer event
- **September:** Students volunteer at a teaching conference
Justification for the Research Project
As the students volunteered they were able to use English to talk with people from around the world

A variety of unscripted situations

Learning information and vocabulary to answer questions about the local area, Japanese culture, and other things unique to the situation

Chatting with people about a wide variety of topics
Volunteering and English language learners in English speaking countries

Learners develop sociocultural and sociolinguistic skills

Learners feel a deeper connection with the community where they live

Learners develop a sense of L2 Identity

Perrin, 2008; Andrew, 2011a; Andrew, 2011b
Conducting the Case-Study Research

**Research Timeframe:** July to October 2017

**Participants:** ATLAS English Club students

**Activities:** Portside volunteering, interpreting for a soccer team visiting from Hong Kong, Volunteering at a teaching conference, participating in an exchange event with visiting international students
How it Worked

After signing consent forms the students were given journal notebooks with prompts.

The researcher observed the students while they participated in the activities.

The students participated in interviews in November 2017.

The transcribed data was sorted and analyzed using Microsoft Word.
Results

Two themes that are explored in this presentation emerged from the data analysis:

• The importance of authentic experiences to learn the English language

• The importance of authentic experiences to develop intercultural communication skills
The Importance of Authentic Experiences to Learn the English Language

Language learned in the classroom is not always natural

In real-life, people use language that is not taught in English classes
The Importance of Authentic Experiences to Develop Intercultural Communication Skills

People from different countries use a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal expressions to communicate.

Understanding common communication styles and differences in communication styles.
Learning Coping Skills

Each student developed their own coping skills

Asking for clarification

Trying to understand from context

Chunking information

Making notes
Conclusions

The results of this study may seem obvious to us as language teachers, but for students with little opportunity to use English outside of the classroom they are significant.
Classroom English interaction is generally limited and unnatural.

Even if textbooks include videos or Internet resources they typically do not portray natural interactions.

Authentic communication enables students to experience how English is used in the real world and learn coping strategies.
Volunteering in English speaking situations in non-English speaking countries can produce similar results for students as it does for English language students in English-speaking countries.
Future Research

Develop more volunteer projects for students

Design a quantitative research project to assess language acquisition and retention

Materials development
References

