English Projects to Bridge University and Community needs
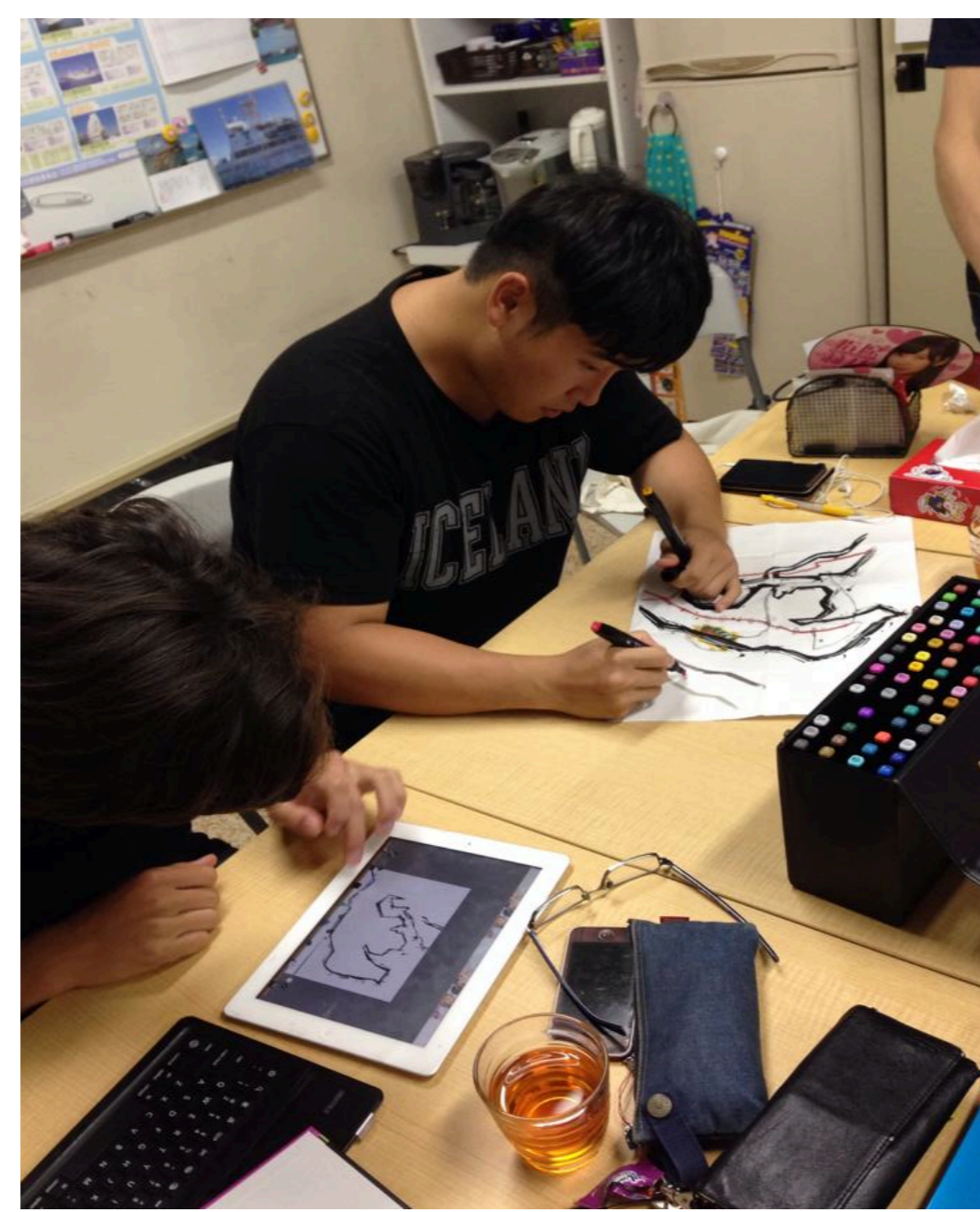
Kazumi Kato and Wendy Gough
Tokai University Liberal Arts Education Center
Shimizu Campus
kazumilk@tokai-u.jp
wgough@tokai-u.jp

The Tokai University ATLAS (Active Tokai Local Ambassadors) group was created as a means for students improve their English language, critical thinking, and social skills by finding practical, authentic opportunities to use English and creating connections with the local community.

- Researching and giving a tour of local sights to visiting professors gave the students an understanding of the need for practical English skills.
- The Map Project led to ties with the community and helped the students develop both language and critical thinking skills.

ATLAS students began by researching the local area to develop English explanations of the places of interest.

Through their research, the students found an area where the local community could benefit from English support and developed a project to make an English map of the Miho no Matsubara Mt. Fuji World Heritage area nearby the university.

They analyzed other English maps of the town and identified points that needed clear explanations for foreign visitors such as taking a bus or taxi. Those were incorporated into the map.

Meetings were arranged with the local city office to discuss ideas for the map and volunteer opportunities in the community.

ATLAS students were able to partner with the city office and participate as volunteer interpreters for cruise ship passengers coming into Shimizu.

Helping people from around the world built confidence in the students' English skills.

Community outreach projects are an excellent avenue for an ESP class.

- Ties are created between the university and the local citizens.

- Students can find practical uses for English and develop skills that will become useful in the future.

- Students may find insights into career opportunities.

Talking with crew members introduced the students to new career options for skills they study in their majors at the Marine Sciences and Technology University.