

As PEN Ambassador from Japan

Information Science, 2nd year

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There are two main reasons that I applied for this student exchange at TUT. One reason is that I wanted to know about the support system for deaf people in other countries, and the opportunity to visit China was a rare one for me. Another reason I applied is that I wanted to discuss many different issues with the students who represented the three countries as student ambassadors : the United States, China and Japan. I was elected as one of student ambassadors from Japan and flew to the P.R. of China.

What I expected most from this student exchange was discussion of various themes and topics with students from three different countries. For example, I wanted to ask Chinese students about the support system for handicapped people in China, deaf Chinese students' daily lives, and the "hot issue" for their lives in China. I was too excited to ask all those questions when I got there. As a matter of fact, I was really able to observe a lot of "cultural differences" while I was staying at Tianjin University of Technology.

First of all, I was really impressed with a fact that deaf students are able to communicate very well with teachers. Teachers at the deaf schools in China used many methods of communication, such as oral method, manual method and lip-reading, in order to communicate with students well. They were very clear in their communication. Also, a lot of students at the schools had only slight hearing loss and most of them didn't wear hearing aids. I thought that the reason why many deaf students in China were able to communicate clearly with their teachers was due to the teachers' ability of signing and also that students are able to hear well compared to deaf students in Japan. When I asked Chinese students about the support for handicapped people, they answered me that there are several people who receive some welfare from the government, similar to people in Japan. However, in the United States, deaf people are more independent than in other countries and fewer people depend on welfare. So I really learned about the difference in this support/welfare system in each country.

Also, at the deaf schools, the students were very united. I felt a lot of students' ambitions to acquire better grades and be successful as I saw the honoring list with each student's grade on the wall of the classroom and the sidewalk outside of the classroom.

In terms of Chinese deaf students' daily life, the dorm had limited hours for using hot waters and the bathroom didn't use water for flushing. Old books that students had used were recycled and sold at a different place. Envelopes and letter papers were also old, and were kept with a lot of care. I realized how Chinese people treat things with great care and I thought Chinese people still practice an important lesson of not wasting things.

Although I was not able to discuss all the things I wanted with the other students, our conversation that consisted of Chinese, English and Japanese was a very rare experience for me. In order to communicate clearly, everyone tried to do their best to communicate with others, and when another understood, it really gave great feeling of satisfaction.

I asked about the permission for getting a driver license, which I had discussed when I visited the United States prior to visiting China. The Chinese students told me that driving is prohibited for deaf people in China. I was really surprised by that answer. On the other hand, the United States allows deaf people to get a driver license since they have a different perspective that deaf people can drive if they are able to see well. I learned that Chinese perspective is that deaf people can't drive since they are not able to hear the sounds.

As I mentioned above, it was a very precious experience for me to learn all the differences between each culture.

Finally, I would like to keep in touch with the people I've met through this student exchange and I would like to have a big discussion in the future about their ways of thinking about their deafness.