

The Exchange with Chinese and American Students

Architecture, 2nd year

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From November 25 through Dec 1, 2001, I visited Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology, China, with 2 fellow TCT students and 6 students from NTID (approximately 20 people, including faculty members) in order to interact with the students and faculty members there.

This was my second time traveling overseas. However, it was the first time for me to visit China and interact with students from overseas. I was really excited to see them; however, I was nervous as well.

After I arrived in Beijing International Airport, I first met the NTID students. I had never talked with people from different countries, so I was not sure what to say at the beginning. However, the other students were able to communicate well, so I tried to communicate with them with help from my friends and the use of written English on paper, even though I wasn't able to sign ASL at all. As I experienced this, I realized that I was able to communicate with them not only with ASL, but also in many different ways. For example, I was able to communicate with only facial expression or body language. After a week ended, I had quickly begun to learn ASL and I still remember it a few days after returning from China. I can say the same thing for Chinese Sign Language. I really learned a lot in both sign languages as I became used to the environment. This was the best part of the exchange.

During the visit in China, I visited Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology, Tianjin School for the Deaf, TV Tower, and temples, etc. After I visited all the different places, I felt that the public environment, e.g. the public bathrooms, is behind compared to that in Japan. Also, the transportation system wasn't impressive -- drivers ignoring lane lines and pedestrians ignoring traffic lights were common.

Actually, I saw many things I hadn't been able to see in Japan. I felt it was quite interesting, but it was scary as well.

Every night after dinner, student delegations socialized with Chinese students. Even though Chinese and Japanese students look similar, we speak different languages. Mainly, we used written English as a way of communicating with each other, but sometimes we were able to use Kanji (that is, Chinese characters imported from China into Japan.) I was really able to enjoy interacting with them by sharing each country's sign language with each other and my experience from Japan. We also were able to joke around and have fun as well. After those hours, we became good friends. I felt Chinese students' expression and body language is also different from the ones of American students. For example, Chinese students expressed their anger and happiness as they felt them. Before that, I thought Chinese people were cooler than Japanese people, but I realized that Japanese people are cooler than the Chinese (that means, Chinese people are more friendly).

In addition, I was able to learn about the deaf education system in each country: the United States, China and Japan. American students used sign language most of the time without using their voice. On the other hand, most Chinese students didn't use sign language and instead used their voices. It seemed like Chinese students had less severe hearing loss and a lot of them were able to speak well. The deaf education system which is based on oral education is very similar to the one in Japan. I asked several Chinese students what the Chinese government does to support deaf people. One thing that surprised me was that deaf people aren't able to drive in China. There are several other things that are prohibited for deaf people in China, and I felt that China, the country itself, is a little behind compared to Japan and the United States in its treatment of deafness.

Even though I visited as a PEN student ambassador from Japan, I sometimes I wasn't satisfied at various locations. Chinese students welcomed us earnestly, and gave us a lot of heartwarming gifts. However, I wasn't really able to communicate with many students there since most of them don't know English.

I wish a lot of people knew English, so I could communicate with them easier. Also, Japanese and American delegations weren't really prepared, and I really felt bad for Chinese hosts. I hope the student exchanges after this will be

improved after seeing our mistakes. In the future, I hope students will be able to interact with others better and build a “PEN-International”, reflecting its original purpose.

During the week I was in China, I was given a great opportunity to experience so many things I've never done before. I was able to expand my understanding of the world and to make friends from different countries. Therefore, my experience was a meaningful one. Although I go to the real world after I graduate from the college, I would like to do many different activities to contribute to the society as much as I could to make the most of the experience I had from this trip. Also, I would like to travel the world and meet many different people to continue expanding my view.