

## The Exchange of the Students between China, America and Japan: The PEN-International Student Ambassadors Visit to China

Midori MATSUFUJI<sup>1)</sup>, Akiko HASEGAWA<sup>2)</sup>, Naohito IZUMI<sup>3)</sup>,  
Hiroko HIRABAYASHI<sup>2)</sup> and Minoru YOSHIDA<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup>General Education, Division for the Hearing Impaired, Tsukuba College of Technology

<sup>2)</sup>Department of Information Science and Electronics, Tsukuba College of Technology

<sup>3)</sup>Department of Architectural Engineering, Tsukuba College of Technology

<sup>4)</sup>Department of Information Technology, College of Computing and Information Sciences,  
Rochester Institute of Technology

**Abstract:** Ambassador of Goodwill Student Exchange is one of the activities conducted by PEN-International, which was founded in June 2001. A delegation of 3 students, 2 faculty members from Tsukuba College of Technology visited Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology in China in the fall of 2001 with a delegation from NTID in the United States as the first PEN-International Ambassador of Goodwill Program. Visiting China was the first experience for most of the members from Japan and the United States. This paper describes how the TCT members conducted this program and what the students gained from the cultural events, visiting classes and discussions with their colleagues.

The original papers were written in Japanese and were translated by a Japanese staff at PEN-International in America.

**Key Words:** ambassador of good will, exchange, PEN-International

### 1. About PEN-International

In the spring marking the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the director of PEN-International (the Postsecondary Education Network International), Dr. James DeCaro, proposed an unprecedented plan for a student exchange. He stated that "From Tsukuba College of Technology, I would like you to send three students and two faculty members to China as student ambassadors for a student exchange to interact with deaf students and faculty members at Tianjin University of Technology. From the United States, I am going to send six students and two faculty members along with two interpreters." PEN-International was established to create an international network of postsecondary educational institutions serving deaf and hard-of-hearing students around the world. In June 2001, PEN-International was launched with funding from The Nippon Foundation of Japan as a 5-year-long project. Tsukuba College of Technology is one of the institutes of PEN-International, along with Tianjin University of Technology (China) and Bauman Moscow State Technical University (Russia).

## **2. TCT's application process and orientation plans**

Tsukuba College of Technology planned the schedule for the exchange as described below:

May: Started accepting applications from students

June: Deadline for submitting applications

July: Final three candidates were selected, and projects were assigned to each student.

September, October, November: Bi-weekly orientation.

November 25: Departed for China

December 1: Returned to Japan.

I distributed the description of this student exchange to approximately 160 students at TCT; as a result, seven students applied to the exchange. Three students were selected as student ambassadors through a written examination and an interview. All of them were sophomores and each student had maintained good academic standing in their courses. Two of the three students had passed the second grade of the STEP test (the test of practical English proficiency which is authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education). Overall, the students had good understanding of English. In addition, two of them had visited the United States prior to the exchange and had experienced communicating in American Sign Language. I assigned the students to develop an English composition to introduce themselves and TCT.

After the summer, on September 11, terrorist attacks on the United States broke out, and the exchange could have been cancelled. However, Dr. DeCaro along with the vice president of NTID, Dr. Davila, visited Tsukuba College of Technology for the Multimedia Lab dedication ceremony. He emphasized the need to overcome the fear of terrorism and continue this project. Therefore, the Japanese PEN Team agreed to continue the project, with the agreement to use Japanese airlines in order to assure safety.

## **3. Language Barrier**

A language barrier is a common obstacle for international cultural exchanges, especially for this student exchange, which faced the complications associated with 3 spoken and 3 sign languages. NTID sent two sign language interpreters, along with Dr. Susan Fischer, who is proficient in both spoken Japanese and Japanese Sign Language (Nihon-Shuwa) as well as English/American Sign Language, and Robert Baker, who is responsible for visitation programs at NTID. At Tianjin, there was an English-Chinese interpreter for all preparations and discussions. There were no professional Chinese or Japanese sign language interpreters, so each faculty members interpreted for students by turns. From Japan, Prof. Qingyuan Zhang and I (Midori Matsufuji) were sent to TUT. Prof. Zhang is a Chinese national and fluent in Chinese, Japanese and English. The American and Chinese delegations were able to benefit from his abilities as well.

One of the responsibilities of the student ambassadors was to present about the educational system in their home country. For the first step, I was not sure which language should be spoken or used for the presentation. All three Japanese students are able to speak clearly in spoken Japanese, and I taught them English pronunciation as well. However, I was not able to determine the value of them speaking English in front of the deaf students from other countries. As a result, in discussing with the

students and Dr. Fischer, we decided to present our PowerPoint slide shows in both spoken Japanese and Japanese sign language with the slides written in English. We consumed a lot of time in creating the presentation that was translated into English. However, all the students were accustomed to the use of PowerPoint, so I was able to efficiently help them.

For the communication between individual students, it was not necessary for sign language interpreters or multi-sign languages interpreter to help them, since they were communicating with each other on their own. There were two professional interpreters from the United States and so information was clearly delivered to the American students for the tour. On the other hand, there were no professional sign language interpreters provided from Japan, and we had to interpret from foreign languages into Japanese sign language even though we were not professional. I wish we could have been able to provide professional sign language interpreters from Japan, so that the students would have been able to understand better.

#### **4. Understanding of the different cultures**

The next concern was the performances and gifts for the exchange. For the tour to the United States, we always had enough people for the performance and presentation. However, there were only three students at this time, so the students decided to perform Japanese traditional dance, called “Mikagura” (meaning “the sacred dance for the harvest”) since one of the students ambassadors was involved in this kind of dance practice. They spent a lot of time practicing the sacred dance with the folding fans that are used for offering appreciation to the god for the harvest. This dance was performed on the second night on the stage at Tianjin University of Technology, followed by Tianjin students performing Kung-fu, as well as on the fourth day when we visited Tianjin School for the Deaf.

The students from Tianjin’s Kung-fu (Chinese martial arts) performance were excellent. There was an international champion in the performance and his portion was a very powerful one. After that, the Japanese delegation performed the sacred dance without music. However, everyone cheered for us. The fans we borrowed from the school for the deaf added more spice to the dance and it was fairly successful.

For the gifts, we brought keyholders with the name of TCT carved on it and attached netsuke of an ox, the zodiac signs for the year 2002, and buns that have “I Love You” sign on it. For Chinese people, they were able to figure out the meaning of ox, the Chinese mascot for the new year; however, we needed to explain to the American students meaning. Prof. Zhang mentioned that the equivalent meaning of the Chinese phrase “I Love You” is “Will you marry me?”, so the students from Japan and U.S learned that it’s important to understand the nuance of the sentence itself, not only the words.

These gifts contributed to an understanding of the different cultures. Chinese students’ gifts were mostly hand-made such as crafts, stamps and calligraphic work, in contrast with American students’ gifts such as factory made mug-cups and caps with NTID logos

#### **5. Future planning and students’ reactions.**

In conclusion, the Japanese student ambassadors were able to accomplish their

responsibilities with a positive reputation — they were very polite and friendly. Due to the success of the first year of the five year project, this program was officially able to continue for the next four years. Now, we are to discussing the next student exchange; that is, an exchange at NTID with the students from China along with Japanese students. Thanks to PEN-granted scholarships, six students will be sent from TCT to the United States and three students to China or Russia. I hope these exchanges will benefit and enrich students' perspectives in the future.

(Midori MATSUFUJI)

---

### **As PEN Ambassador from Japan**

Akiko Hasegawa, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at Information Science

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 People's Republic 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.

### **The Exchange with Chinese and American Students**

Naohito Izumi, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at Architecture

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.

**As a PEN-International Student Ambassador**

Hiroko Hirabayashi, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at Information Science

I visited the United States in the March prior to my visit to China and learned about the deaf education system in America and American deaf people's perspective on their deafness. Because of the impact of this experience on me, I came to be more interested in student exchanges with deaf students all over the world. This sounds exaggerated, but I finally understood the meaning of being deaf for the first time during this visit in the U.S, since I was mainstreamed for all of my life up to high school. Until I came to China, I was ashamed of myself being a deaf person, and wanted to live my life as 'a hearing person'. However, I learned about the positive attitude of American deaf people. As a student ambassador sent to China by PEN, I wanted to see not only the American experience, but also what deaf people's lives in China are like. My main goal for this student exchange was to understand Chinese deaf people's points of views regarding their deafness and their lifestyles.

As this was my first visit to China, I was really curious what China was like. One thing I was surprised by is that China as a country is huge. The roads were wide, traffic was heavy, and there are plenty of roads for cars, bicycle, and pedestrians. However, there were some people who were riding bicycles or walking on the road with the cars, and I saw some people who ignored traffic lights. Also, various aspects of Chinese culture fascinated me as well.

I was able to see Chinese deaf education system with my own eyes through the visits to Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology and the deaf school in Beijing. The oral method was mainly used at the deaf institutes in China similar to Japan, and sign language was used to avoid communication break down. When I saw that China used the oral education method, I assumed that Chinese might feel ashamed of themselves as deaf people. However, there were several schools that integrated deaf and hearing students together. At this kind of school, students used sign language for communication, and I was hardly able to distinguish whether a student was hearing or not. Chinese deaf education is very similar to Japan, however, I was really impressed with the system that allows deaf students to learn along with other fellow hearing students, since this helps deaf and hearing students to learn about the difference between each other and has a positive impact on both of groups for their future.

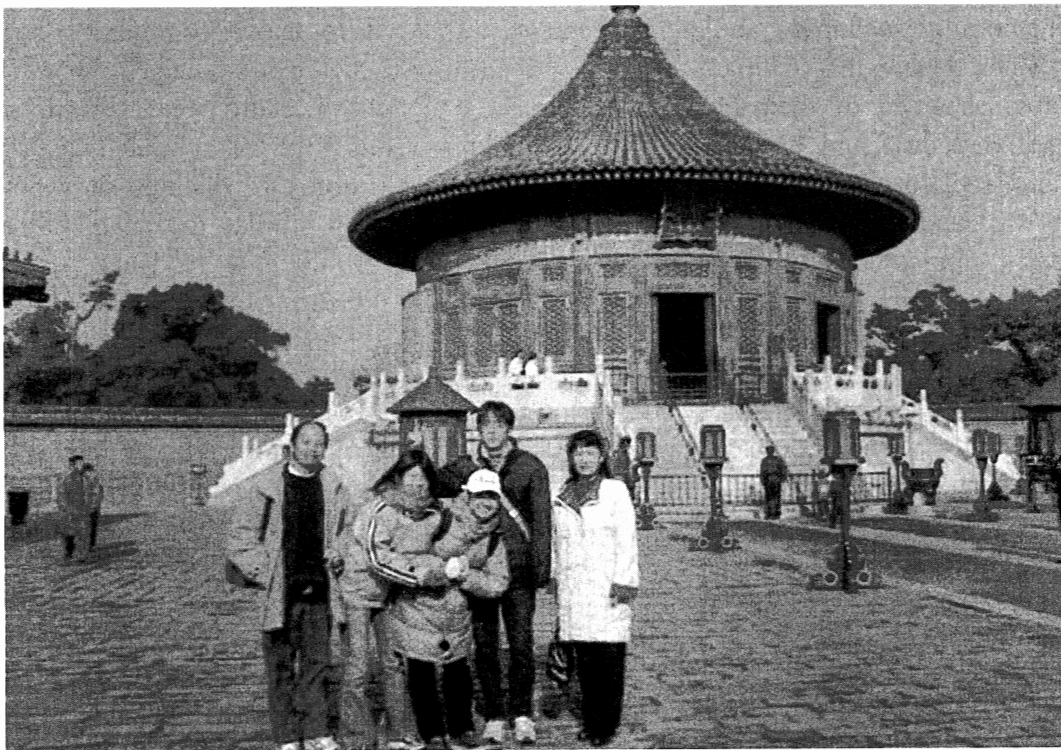
I was confused sometimes since Chinese students tried to communicate with me in Chinese, even though I don't know Chinese very well. When I tried to communicate in English, I still wasn't able to communicate with them very well because some of them weren't able to understand English. So, I tried to communicate through a book (Chinese-Japanese travel conversation book) that I purchased in Japan. Then, the students there taught me Chinese Sign Language with the sentences from the book. There were some signs that are similar to Japanese ones; however, some of them were really different. It was a quite good experience for me. In the end, I really realized that China has had a very deep historic impact on Japanese culture.

Finally, as I described above, I asked how Chinese deaf people view their deafness. They answered me that, "At first, I wasn't able to accept myself as a deaf person positively due to the communication break down with the people, however,



right now, I am able to accept myself as a deaf person better. There are some advantages of being deaf such as I can spend my daily life without loud noise pollution. Also, I was able to meet you who is Japanese and deaf since I am deaf, so I am really happy about that.” As I was told this, I was really impressed by their positive attitudes toward deafness.

As PEN-International project continues, there will be more need for understanding the various cultures of each country that participates in the project. For example, Chinese deaf people weren’t able to communicate with the fellow Japanese and American students since they weren’t able to understand English. It’s easier for Japanese students to communicate with Chinese, since we use languages that are similar; however, American students get completely lost at times since they don’t know either Japanese or Chinese. Therefore, to solve this issue, there is a need to have an experience for each group to share its own culture with others. Since English is used as a world standard language, it would be a great idea for America to teach Japanese and Chinese students English through the network. To establish a strong PEN-International, we need to eliminate the language barrier. I hope there will be more opportunities for deaf students to participate in this kind of wonderful student exchange in the future, and hope there will be an ideal university that all the deaf students from the world can learn together in harmony.





无声的交流 真挚的感受

# 中美日聋人学生津门“手谈”

本报讯(记者 黄卫) 昨日上午,来自美国、日本的9名聋人学生来到天津理工学院聋人工学院,与该院的聋人学生进行交流座谈。3国聋人学生以独特的手语方式架起了沟通的桥梁,为聋人的交流开创又一片天地。

据聋人工学院院长鲍国东介绍,此次3国聋人学生的交流是国际聋人教育网络协议组织的一个项目

组成部分,美国与日本的聋人学生将在津与本地的聋人学生见面、交流,并参观本市。同时,中美日3国的聋人教育家将分别介绍各自的教育情况与网页制作。明年本市聋人工学院将派10名学生回访美、日两国。

此次美日聋人学生访津团的负责人贝克先生表示,天津聋人工学院的教学设备先进,教学水平一流。

虽然他是第一次来天津,但天津给他留下了美好的印象。3国的学生们能够通过手语进行交流,他们很快地融合在一起,交流中充满了友好欢乐的气氛,使他感到无比兴奋与愉悦。

在交流座谈会现场,聋人学生们的交流令人感到另一种世界的魅力。那里没有任何声响,学生们用手势、表情、动作表达出心中的话语,其交流的热切

程度令观者兴奋、向往。随着互相了解的深入,各国随队的翻译老师已不用来回为学生转译语言了。美国国家聋人学院(NTID)的苏珊·费歇尔博士表示,此次3国学生进行国际交流,有利于学习交流各自的文化,互相了解聋人语言的异同并丰富手语知识。她相信,聋人的国际交流会使这个无声的世界更加丰富多彩。



“咱们不需要翻译”

本报记者 刘欣媛

花絮

## 此时无声胜有声

### 聋人手语也分国界

记者初次参加这样静谧的交流会感到十分好奇。看着聋人学生们连“说”带笑,记者如坠雾中不得其解。幸好,来自日本筑波大学的张晴厚博士为记者充当了翻译,才使记者有幸走进了聋人的世界。张晴厚博士介绍说,聋人手语也分国界。美国、日本、中国的手语受各国语言、词汇、发音的影响各有不同。总体来说,在表示自然语言的手势上大体相近(如吃饭),而抽象语言的表示方法则不大相同。比如同时说出数字6的表示方式时,美国手语是把大拇指与小拇指碰在一起,另外三指伸直。而日本手语中是把大拇指与食指做成汉语8的样子,这和中国手语“6”的表示方法截然不同。为了让记者了解,中国、日本、美国的3名学生还分别以各国的“说”法作了一次示范。

### 会说话的日本聋人学生

在交流现场,记者注意到一名日本女学生非常活跃。在她的带动下,周围的一些男学生都争先恐后地与她“交谈”。张晴厚博士告诉记者,她叫平林裕子,是一名20岁的大学生。令记者吃惊的是,当记者向她问好时,她竟然能用近乎标准的日语与记者交谈。看见记者吃惊的样子,平林裕子向记者解释了其中的原因。原来,在平林裕子上中学时便开始接受发音指导训练,指导老师鼓励她与健康人交朋友,在交流中改善发音状况。几年下来,她终于可以说出近乎标准的日语了。现在,除了不能像正常人一样听见外界的声音,她已经完全掌握了与正常人交流的方法。平林小姐谦虚地说,自己还不太懂中国聋人学生的手语,今后一定要加强学习,和更多的中国聋人交朋友。

### 中美学生情深谊长

在交谈的学生中,两位漂亮的中美聋人大学生聊得十分火热。记者根据几位老师的介绍,以文字的形式对她们进行现场采访。漂亮的中国姑娘叫陈瑜,她认真地在记者的采访本上写下她的名字。陈瑜用工整的文字写道,通过交流,彼此之间建立了友谊,互相了解了对方的一些情况,并知道了美国手语和我们的不同。和陈瑜交谈的美国姑娘伊丽莎白·爱斯非常活泼开朗。当记者和她道别时,伊丽莎白·爱斯小姐将右手轻触一下自己的下巴,然后将手向记者挥了一下。旁边的翻译告诉记者,她在用美国手语向记者道谢。记者连忙回以相同的手势,这种无声的语言立即得到了旁边几个聋人学生的鼓励,他们用一个让记者感到欣慰的手势表达了他们的感情——向上翘起了大拇指。 本报记者 黄卫