PENインターナショナルによるリーダーシップ研修

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今年8月6日から11日まで、イギリスのハーストマンザ城にて日本、アメリカ、ロシア、中国、フィリピンの5カ国から、ろうの大学生が集まる研修が行われた。これはPENインターナショナルによって実施されたもので、日本からは筑波技術大学のろう学生4人と、引率の先生、通訳者である9人が参加した。

ロンドンから車で2時間ほどの距離にあるハーストマンザ城は、1930年代に建てられ、れんが造りの城としては英国でも最古といわれる。近年になって、あるアメリカ人がこの城を買い入れてカナダの大学に寄付したため、今は大学の授業やセミナーなどに使用されている。ハリーポットの映画で出てくるような美術、実際にはその著者のローリングス女史もこの城を訪問したことである。

研修の目的は、各国のろうリーダー育成である。1日の視察を除いて、夕食の後まで毎日のレポートを作成し、プログラムが予定されている。滞在中の先生方の皆さん、例を挙げると、ろう生のNTIDの生長であるアラン・ホー・ウィッツ氏や、その夫人でアメリカのろう女性の会の会長を務めた経験を持つイッキー・ホー・ウィッツ氏がホールディルとして登場し、それぞれのようにキラリと輝けている。
発表する日本の学生たち

アクティヴィティからまった手をほとんど輪に戻るというゲームで交流（上）
夜にはパブで楽しんだ（下）
Deaf and hard of hearing students from the five countries of Japan, the U.S., Russia, China and the Philippines gathered together to participate in a training workshop held from 6–11 August, 2006 at Herstmonceux Castle in England. The worldwide network, PEN International, run centrally by the Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in the United States, organized this event. Japanese participants totaled nine people—four deaf students, three teachers and two interpreters from the Tsukuba University of Technology.

The Nippon Foundation has been financially supporting PEN-International for a period of six years since its inception. As program officer in charge of the PEN-International project at The Nippon Foundation, I have been given this opportunity to take up my pen and introduce this latest development to you all.

Herstmonceux Castle, located approximately two hours by car from London, was originally built during the 1440s. It is the oldest building of significance in Britain to have been made out of brick. In recent years, an American individual purchased the castle and donated it to the Queen’s University in Canada, and it is now being used for events such as university classes and seminars, although a part of the castle still remains open to the general public. It bears a striking resemblance to the castle that appeared in the Harry Potter films, and we learnt from the guide that the author of the Harry Potter novels, J.K. Rowling, once visited this Castle.

The purpose of the training workshop is to nurture and develop young leaders among the deaf and hard of hearing from different countries all around the world. Apart from one day of sight seeing, the program schedule occupied every minute of every day until dinner. Even the teachers from the Tsukuba University of Technology were surprised by the sheer density of the program. To offer an example of the kinds of activities that took place, deaf role model speakers such as Alan Hurwitz, the Dean of NTID, and Vicki Hurwitz, who served as the chairperson of Deaf American United, gave talks upon how
they had each forged their own careers.

The four students who participated from Japan were Ms. Yuka Tamura (second-year Information Science major), Ms. Chiaki Mori (second-year Design major), Mr. Motoyoshi Akikawa (second-year Electronics major) and Mr. Kensuke Takahashi (third-year Information Science major). In addition, three professors of the Tsukuba University of Technology joined the team to oversee the students: Mr. Masahiko Suto, a previous instructor of the students and team leader, Dr. Hirohito Chonan, as Japanese sign language interpreter, and Dr. Mayumi Shirasawa, as Japanese sign language interpreter.

The students from the different participating countries gave presentations introducing deaf leaders from their respective countries. In line with this the students from Japan gave a presentation focusing on the late Mariko Takamura, who was active in a variety of different fields and occupations, such as anchorperson in sign language news and English teacher at the Tsukuba University of Technology. After the participants were decided in October of last year (2005), under the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Masahiko Suto, the students periodically gathered to discuss the contents of their presentation. Their presentation was given in Japanese sign language with English PowerPoint. The students stayed up and practiced until 3:00 a.m. the night before with an interpreter, which helped to make the presentation the resounding success that it was.

Whenever I go overseas with deaf people, it always surprises me, as a hearing person, that in no time at all deaf people from different countries pick up a mutual form of sign language that enables them communicate with one another. The speed at which they are able to do this simply cannot be compared to the speed at which hearing people memorize the spoken words of foreign languages. This was again evident when the students from Japan went to the pub with the students from the other participating countries, they were able to enjoy themselves and join in the lively conversation (the consumption of alcohol is permitted from the age of eighteen in the UK). This was no doubt also facilitated by the students having attended a bimonthly American Sign Language course at their university for a period of roughly six months.

Mr. Motoyoshi Akikawa, one of the participating students from Japan, reflected that, “Out of all deaf students in the world today, what position is Japan in when compared to the rest of the world? What kind of environment are the deaf students of other countries
in? I want to know what the differences are in the way of thinking of Japanese deaf persons and those of other countries—what is necessary to improve communication ability skills? I thus came to participate in this training workshop thinking that I wanted to take part in meaningful exchange, and to take in useful information and new things. I was surprised by the fact that in countries such as the US and the UK, deaf persons have realized that they are not inferior to hearing people, and so they have desires and dreams, which in turn makes them active. I would like the deaf students of Japan to adopt the same way of thinking. On the streets in the UK, hearing people show no animosity towards deaf people, they are used to using gestures to help them communicate. Upon witnessing these deaf people, I realized that both hearing and deaf people are able to communicate their intentions smoothly. If sign language is recognized as a language in Japan, I think that such gestures would come to be used more by hearing people.”

The cultural background, economic situation and circumstances of the deaf students of each of the different participating countries were all different. It is my belief that the experience of coming into contact with culture from different countries and making friends from other countries can become a stepping stone to stop taking things for granted, and start being active to change the current situation. I am looking forward to seeing how the students will make use of their experiences in England in the future.

Finally, there are numerous activities currently under way in PEN-International and The Nippon Foundation, so for those who are interested, please feel more than welcome to look at the web pages included below.

PEN International  The Nippon Foundation
http://www.pen.ntid.rit.edu/  http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/

Photo captions (right to left)
1. All participants gathered together in front of Herstmonceux Castle
2. The students from Japan giving a presentation
3. An exchange activity in which people whose arms are entwined have to return to a circle without letting go of each other (above)
4. Relaxing at the pub in the evening (below)