

Gallaudet CAN Report

Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf,

Tokyo September 29, 2017



12 Junior High School Students of Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf participated in the Gallaudet CAN Project on September 28, 2017 from 9:00—11:00. They formed two groups of 8 participants, 6 students and 2 teachers to discuss the questions. Below are their responses.

1. Please describe what it looks like when language and communication are at the best in your school? What would an ideal situation look like for language and communication at your school?

- Our school has an ideal situation because we can communicate everything in JSL. We understand everything and can express whatever we want to say.
- It is also a bicultural deaf school and has strong links with other deaf people all around the world. This gives us a very wide perspective on the lives of deaf people.
- Hearing teachers' competence in sign language doesn't have to be 100% perfect. They don't have to try too hard. If they can't sign, they can write or use interpreters. (The interpreters in Meisei classes are the top interpreters in Japan!) Even if the teachers can't sign well, we would want them to use JSL rather than Signed Japanese. Signed Japanese basically expresses loan words from Japanese and isn't easy to understand.
- We want 50% deaf teachers and 50% hearing teachers. (We need hearing teachers in case of fire!) It is important to learn not only Deaf culture but also hearing culture. That helps us to participate in society after we graduate from Meisei.

2. In everyday interactions at your school, how are JSL and Japanese used? Please think of the various settings: the classroom, dorms, cafeteria, sporting events, etc.

- At school everything is done in JSL. Japanese is used to take notes and keep records. It is also used for communication with the outside world.
- We don't have a dorm. For afterschool club activities, deaf coaches come so we use JSL.
- At home, it is better if parents can sign, but it is not a must. More often than not, mothers interpret for us when we need to speak with our fathers.

3. A) Describe what makes ASL effective and beneficial when you are using it? What support do you already have and want to keep allows you to be effective with ASL?

- The merit of JSL is that we can understand everything and can communicate fully.
- Inside the school there is nothing that hinders sign communication.
- It is really nice that we have deaf interpreters. (Deaf teachers take on the role of deaf

interpreters.) When outside hearing guests come to give a talk, hearing interpreters interpret, but this is in turn interpreted by the deaf teachers into sign language that is easier to understand and more fun to watch. We certainly get a deeper understanding of the contents in this way.

- To improve our JSL, we have a school subject called “JSL” where we learn the grammar of JSL and historical background of JSL. It helps to let us use JSL effectively.
- Using the telephone relay service in JSL is another way to improve JSL.

B) Describe what makes English effective and beneficial when you are using it? What support do you already have and want to keep allows you to be effective with English?

- The merit of using Japanese is that we can keep records, read books and communicate with people who don't know Sign Language.
- In Meisei, teachers correct our mistakes patiently and explain why we should use one expression/form over the other in JSL so we would understand their usage in future. We would like to acquire Japanese fully while we are here before joining the real world.
- Effective ways to learn Japanese are to watch TV with subtitles, chat or send text messages to friends and talk a lot. In the beginning, we made many mistakes, but gradually we were writing better Japanese naturally. With text communication, even when we make mistakes, we can always go back and correct them. It is very convenient. We can also read comic books or ordinary books to learn Japanese.
- Just as hearing persons learning JSL can improve their sign language by mixing with Deaf people, we can improve our Japanese by mixing with hearing people. The environment is important in either case.

<Other opinions>

- Meisei is a bilingual deaf school in which the educational rights of Deaf children are ensured. I would like to see more bilingual deaf schools like Meisei throughout Japan.
- I know we are in a very privileged surrounding and that this asset should be carried down to our successors. To do so, it may be a good idea to raise public awareness through advertisement on TV and by visiting doctors who give advice to parents of deaf babies.
- It is our responsibility to engage in such activities because we have been fortunate enough to be given bilingual/bicultural deaf education.
- Meise Gakuen is like home. A safe place we can always come back to and talk away even after we graduate. I hope it stays that way for ever.

