

Essays from Sign Language Interpreters in Asia (in alphabetical order)

Essay on Sign Language

by Etsuko UMEMOTO (Japan)

Hello, everyone.

I am Etsuko Umemoto, Manager of the International Division of NRASLI (National Research Association for Sign Language Interpretation) in Japan. I am now serving as the WASLI Asian Representative. It's been 30 years since I had my first encounter with sign language.

At that time, I lived with my two sons in Mitaka-city, Tokyo. One day, I found an announcement about "Sign Language Course for Beginners" in a city bulletin published once a month. I had never seen sign language in use before, and there was no deaf person around me. Why did I enroll in it? Just because I thought it looked interesting and it offered childcare service during the class.

That was the first sign language course provided by Mitaka-city and I was a member of the inaugural class. Every time I took my elder son to a kindergarten, left my younger son in the childcare and then attended a class. Now, we have two training courses in Japan; the one for sign language volunteers and the one for interpreters. But in those days, we had beginners', intermediate and advanced courses. That was my first encounter with sign language and deaf people. Then my 30 years of life flew by, and now I lead a busy life working as an interpreter, a teacher at a technical school and a trainer of the Training Program for Sign Language Volunteers.

At the time when I started learning sign language, there was no interpreter at any official event yet. The first thing we did was to provide interpretation service for presentations, cooking classes and other events on a voluntary basis, to get the credit and recognition in society. Then, the number of municipal events using interpretation service has been growing gradually. It makes me so happy and very glad I interpret to see deaf people moved to tears or rolling with laughter to the story. But I still get upset when I see a face of deaf person tilting his head in confusion while I'm interpreting. I'll keep working hard to reach our goal to improve the interpretation services so that deaf people can live more comfortable, encouraged by their words of "thank you".

The Meeting of Sign Language Interpreters in Asia, held every year except when there is WASLI Conference, will be held in Macau in 2014. It will be a valuable opportunity for interpreters in Asia to talk about activities and exchange information each other meeting face to face. I will let

you know when further details are settled. I hope many colleagues will be able to join us in Macau.

Etsuko Umemoto
Manager of the International Division of NRASLI
WASLI Asian Representative
Japan

An Essay about Sign Language Club in Fukuoka by Junko OKUDA (Japan)

I am Junko Okuda and live in Fukuoka City far from Tokyo.

I joined a group of Sign Language learners 17 years ago.

After I finished the beginners' course of Sign language which was hosted by local government, I became a member of the group to work as a volunteer.

This group named "Sign Language club in Fukuoka" was established in 1973 by those who finished the beginners' course of Sign Language in 1971 and 1972. So, last year we celebrated 40 years' anniversary.

Since the beginning our club was established, we have had a lot of conversation with Deaf people and have known with each other. We have learned their language, their culture, their history through various activities. We also have tried for the spread of sign language and the recognition in the society. We have always thought of the protection of human rights and ending discrimination.

Our club is divided in 8 branches by the area and activity time and has more than 300 members. I belong to the branch where we have a regular meeting once a week on weekday nights. Deaf people in the area come to join us to enjoy the gathering. One day when we had a conversation about childhood playing, an old Deaf signed how to tear up the frog to catch the crawfish. His vivid sign frightened us. Another day we had a lecture about how to protect ourselves from flood disaster by a member who was certified for disaster prevention. Deaf teachers also help us to practice sign language expression of a speech. On the weekends we have some events hosted by the governments and entertainments such as a camping and cooking class hosted by the club branch. There we can share time with deaf people. The age of members varies and each member has his own strength. We cooperate with each other to run the meeting.

We all happen to learn sign language with each motivation and come to know that learning sign language never ends. We are fascinated with it and enjoy learning it. While the members enjoy activities in the club, some of them decide to become an interpreter for Deaf.

It has been more than 10 years since I became an interpreter. Whenever I work as an interpreter, Deaf people, who taught me 17 years ago, are in my mind. I am sometimes puzzled or regret my

interpretation or face the challenges but I go back to the club activity to get energy there and re-start.

I would like to improve myself little by little and enjoy activities in the club.

Self Introduction **by Kagari MISAWA (Japan)**

To My Dear Fellows,

My name is Kagari Misawa. I was born in Tokyo and lived in Seattle, U.S. for 7 years when I was a child. After majoring English language at a university in Tokyo, I became an English teacher at a hearing school. But that was not what I wanted to be. The dream from my early years was to be a professional English teacher for the Deaf students. Having this dream in my mind, I started learning Japanese sign language 20 years ago. Now I teach English at two schools for the Deaf in Tokyo and work as a JSL interpreter as well. I also teach English to Deaf adults when requested.

As the proverb “To teach is to learn twice” says, it is lucky for me to be able to study both English and sign language with the students every day. I experience the joy to encourage the Deaf youths to be world-wise active participants in building a better tomorrow.

Last year, 2012, I had a wonderful chance of participating in the Asian interpreter meeting in Hong Kong. I learned a lot about the situation of sign language interpretation in some Asian countries. It was such a happy and fulfilling time. I enjoyed talking with my fellow sign language interpreters and shared information about each country. I would like to meet you all again in Macao next year!



The 5th Asia Sign Language Interpreters meeting.
A right end is a writer.

My Story as a Sign Language Interpreter **by Lindley SALADAGA (The Philippines)**

Where do I begin?

I am Lindley S. Saladaga, a sign language interpreter (SLI) in Cebu City, Philippines. In this country, SLI regarded as a volunteer service for the deaf. I work as a SLI for sixteen (16) years now.

As I observed, SLI is an attachment of your work aside from teaching deaf students.

Here is the story of my life as Filipino sign language interpreter.

When I am still a freshman college student at the Cebu State College (now Cebu Normal University), I reach out to blind students in Cebu Braille Center (CBC). CBC is a non-government organization responsible for educating the blind students here in Cebu City.

I am a copy reader for the two (2) blind students. My work is to read aloud a parable to the blind students. Then they will do the braille of what I read. For two years, I do volunteer work for the blind students.

After graduating my Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Sciences in 1994, I pursue my post graduate education in the same college taking up Masters of Arts in Teaching Special Education major in Hearing Impairment.

I learn free sign language classes every Sunday at the University of Cebu (UC) for two (2) years. It is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Cebu East and the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and UC.

After learning two years of sign language, I immerse myself to the Deaf Cebuano community in the Mission for the Deaf in Banilad, Cebu City. It is run by the religious orders. I go there to join the mass for the deaf and every activity where deaf is involved.

To enhance my sign language skills, the Deaf students of De La Salle College of Saint Benilde from Metro Manila visited Cebu City. I join the Summer Sign Language Workshop for those interested persons last 1997. The venue of the sign language workshop was the Cebu State College of Science and Technology (CSCST now Cebu Technological University).

In the same year, I was working as sign language interpreter for two (2) deaf college students taking up bachelor's degree in education. First, I don't know about the role of sign language interpreters in the field of education. The two deaf education students were experimented in Inclusive Education. I find it difficult about my role since hearing students have no awareness about deaf. At last, they graduated on year 2000 as educators.

To know about the current issues surrounding deaf education, I try to learn by joining conferences in other countries like the Asia Pacific Congress on Deafness (APCD) in Bangkok, Thailand on 2009. The International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Vancouver, British Columbia on 2010. I joined the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters in Durban, South Africa on 2011 and lately I joined the Second World Federation of the Deaf conference in Sydney, Australia last October 2013.

I hope that the theme of the conference in Sydney will be implemented in our country which states that Equality for Deaf people.

(Cebu and Bohol experience a magnitude of 7.2 during the earthquake last oct. 15, 2013 and four buildings of our university is not in good condition to hold classes. Last nov. 8, 2013, typhoon haiyan (named yolanda) again visit our place sad to say, many loss their lives and properties. hope the filipino people will recover from these calamities.)

Message to Asian Colleagues by Tomoki HAYASHI (Japan)

Hello!

My name is Hayashi Tomoki. I am the vice-chairman of the board of directors of a Japanese Association of Sign Language Interpreters (JASLI). And I am taking charge of the chairperson of the Committee for International Contact.

JASLI was established in 1991. More than 2000 sign language interpreters who passed the examination which received authorization of the country are the members. JASLI is working for the improvement in a sign language interpreter's status, and the development of the sign language interpreting system.

The activities of JASLI are trainings for the SL interpreters, research, publication, international activities, and cooperation with related organizations.

Now, I have been taking the role of the vice-chairman of the board of directors for three years. Prior to the position, I've been performing international activity since 2000. I participated in the meeting in U.S. Washington as a member of the working group for WASLI establishment. Moreover, I participated also in the WASLI organization meeting in South Africa. It was my great joy to be in the midst of the establishment of WASLI with the friends in the world.

International activities of JASLI are the participation to the activities of WASLI, the participation to the Asia sign language interpreters meeting, and dispatch international information to JASLI members.

Let me introduce myself at the end. I am 52 years old. I learned sign language from the age of 19. I found a job at the Rehabilitation and Treatment Center for People with Hearing and Speech Disorders in Kyoto after the graduation from a university, and worked as a sign language interpreter. I began the research on sign language interpreting at the university when I was 33 years old. I am engaged in education and research as a professor of Kinjo Gakuin University in

Nagoya now.

In 2014, the Asia meeting will be held in Macao. I am looking forward to being able to meet you .
If you want to make contact with us, please feel free. Here is our E-mail addresses. Thank you.

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Hayashi Tomoki / vice-chairman of the board of directors of J A S L I



The 5th Asia sign language interpreter meeting

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