

2010年 1月 12日 (火) 12:45~ (B21) 留学生別科入学式
学長挨拶

皆さん、Center for Japanese Studies 留学生別科への入学おめでとうございます。今日から、約一年の間、この南山大学名古屋キャンパスは皆さんの学び場となります。短い期間の勉強ですが、皆さんは何を得て自分の国に帰るのでしょうか？それについて少し話してみたいと思います。

皆さんが入学した南山大学の学科は「留学生別科」と言いますが、むしろ英語のタイトルが適切かもしれません。Center for Japanese Studiesなので、皆さんは主に日本語という外国語を勉強することになります。

言うまでもなく、日本語は皆さんにとって最初に学ぶ外国語ではありません。高等学校で皆さんは既に外国語を学ぶ経験がりましたが、いかがでしたでしょうか？外国語は必修科目なので、ある程度の成績を取らなければ卒業も、大学進学も出来ません。このような状況で外国語を勉強すれば、一つの弊害があると私は思います。自分が何のために、何を目指してこのような面倒くさい外国語を勉強しているか分からなくなってしまうと言った弊害です。

もちろん、南山大学の留学生別科を志望した皆さんにとって日本語は単なる「必修科目」の外国語ではありません。皆さんはしっかりした目的意識を持って今後南山で勉学に励むと私は確信しています。しかし、ここで皆さんに考えて欲しいことがひとつあります。このCenter for Japanese Studiesは優れた日本語教育のプログラムがありますが、学ぶことが出来るのは日本語の単語、文法、表現法だけではありません。もっと重要なことを学ぶチャンスがあると私は思います。これについて少しだけ英語で話します。

One of my favorite topics when talking to high school students here in Japan is "Why do we have to study a foreign language in high school?" ("Foreign language" here in Japan usually means "English.") The answer is, of course: it is a required subject, necessary for graduating and getting into a university. Quite a few students do enjoy studying English for reasons of personal interest, and there are always those who can connect the studying of English in high school with their future work or studies - but what about the rest, about those who just do what is required? It is for these poor students that I have a special message: studying English is a waste of time and money - because it's only a matter of time when cell phones will come with a program for simultaneous translation. The only thing you have to learn is how to operate that machine.

Of course, I don't really believe that learning languages will be made obsolete by computer programs and cell phones. Rather, I offer these technological solutions to international communication as an occasion to make students think about the real value of studying a foreign language, the great opportunity one gains by living in a foreign country. It becomes a real chance to learn and experience first hand the richness of our common human nature. It becomes a chance to get a feel of the dazzling variety of words and actions that human beings are capable of. And it is a chance to get a deeper understanding of what connects us human beings across boundaries of language and culture.

Needless to say, this reflects my own experience. The diversity of language and culture I have experienced in Japan and in the United States has helped me to see that the very differences that seem to separate us are also expression of the richness of our human nature. One language, one culture just isn't enough to catch and express all the rich diversity of human life on this earth.

Things tend to get lost in translation. I hope your time at the Center for Japanese Studies will help you to get in touch directly with that particular brand of human life here in Japan, to get a taste of diversity - and to add some of your diversity to the campus life at Nanzan University. 頑張ってください - do your best.