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言語の壁を感じたワシントン D.C.での経験と、会話のできない祖父との病院での面会を通じて、コミュニケーションとは何かを自分なりに考えてみました。言葉だけでは相手の理解を確かめられなくても、不確かさを抱えながら互いに歩み寄ろうとすることに、コミュニケーションの本質があるのではないかと考えています。

Beyond Words: Connecting Through Uncertainty

How much of what we say truly reaches another person? I won a quiz competition about the U.S., and as a reward, I got a ticket to Washington, D.C., I was not a fluent English speaker, so communicating with people there was not easy. This experience changed how I think about communication.

Although my English was far from perfect, I actively tried to communicate with others using body language, making eye contact, and searched for words I did not know exactly what to say. The people I spoke with listened carefully and tried to understand me. I was never completely sure how much of my English they understood. Differences in language and cultural background made perfect understanding difficult. Still, communication was possible. When I could get connected with others, my heart was fulfilled. I began to realize that the willingness to communicate could create a connection even when understanding was incomplete.

After the trip to Washington D.C., I visited my grandfather. He has been bedridden for several years, and because the hospital is far from my home, I can only visit him a few times a year. Though I can meet him, I cannot talk with him. I sit beside him and speak; the conversation is one-sided. He can no longer form words. Whenever I visit, I tell him what happened to my life, particularly happy events. This time, I told him about winning the quiz competition and traveling to Washington, D.C. Yet every time I spoke to him, one question remained in my mind: How much does he understand me?

That uncertainty always made our conversations difficult and awkward. Because he could not answer, I never knew how much of what I said reached him. That uncertainty made our conversations difficult for me.

However, my experience in Washington made me reconsider what communication really means. What I learned is that communication does not depend on perfect understanding. Differences in language, culture, and experience always leave some uncertainty. It turns out that communication is about continuing to try to understand each other. We can never know whether another person

understands us completely, even when we share the same language.

Thinking so, I found my grandfather might have managed to respond in his way. After speaking to him, his expression changed slightly, or his fingers moved a little like trying to shape a message. These small gestures are subtle, but I began to see them as his way of responding to me. They tell me that he is listening, and that something inside him is reaching back toward me. A nurse once told me, "He doesn't always react when we talk to him, but he often reacts to you and looks happy when you visit." Hearing that made me realize that our conversation is working, just the way has changed.

He might try to tell me "I'm understanding what you say." I just did not notice that and felt a little awkward. Before these experiences, I believed that communication depended on spoken dialogue, without words, conversation would be impossible. However, my grandfather showed me that communication is not limited to speech.

Whenever it is time for me to leave, my grandfather gazes at me as I leave the room, which makes me reluctant to go out. I still do not know how much he understands me. Perhaps I never will. However, I have learned that communication does not begin when uncertainty disappears. It does not have to be overcome. It begins when, despite that uncertainty, we keep reaching each other.

Words may fail us. Perfect understanding may be impossible, but the willingness to connect can still help us reach one another beyond words.