

France and I (2)

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In June 2001, I was invited by INRIA Racquencourt in the suburb of Paris near Versailles as an examiner of a Ph.D. student there for his dissertation. His thesis is in French; they say that, unlike in Germany, Ph.D. thesis must be by law written in French. At that time, I had no knowledge of French, but anyway before going to France I read his thesis he had sent me with much effort, using a dictionary. I could mostly understand it, because he had also sent me some of his related papers written in English.

The dissertation presentation was in French, and the audience was asked for discussions. I summoned up my courage and asked a few questions in French. Other people, the parents of the candidate in particular, were very surprised, saying "Look at that Japanese professor! He is speaking French!".

Later, all the examiners, including me, are called together in a separate room for evaluation, again in French. I gave my evaluation in French in very primitive French expressions. It was a nerve-taking experience to me. Of course, I endorsed the thesis, and the candidate was given an official approved. Then, there was a party organized by his parents; it is customary in France to hold such a party, celebrating him and thanking professors. We all said to him: Congratulations!

I also visited ESIEE (École Supérieure d'Ingénieurs en Électrotechnique et Électronique) of the Université Paris-Est located east of Paris near the Disneyland Paris. There, I visited Ms. Yukiko Kenmochi, who I had known before in Japan. At the time, she was a visiting researcher supported by JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science). I gave a seminar there on my research results.

I stayed at a hotel near the Jardin du Luxembourg. It was a nice place to take a stroll. I also went to the Panthéon near by. It was an interesting place. There was huge Foucault's pendulum inside. It now served as a mausoleum of famous French thinkers, authors, scientists, including Voltaire, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, and Marie Curie. I met with Ms. Kenmochi and had lunch together near the St-Germain des Prés church. We walked around Quartier latin.

The next day, Ms. Kenmochi took me to the Versailles Palace. The palace was magnificent and beautiful. We were exhausted after walking around the whole day, we were utterly exhausted.



Jardin du Luxembourg