

Bericht eines Austauschstudenten aus Shanghai - Culture Exchange Internship Report

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Dieser Artikel wurde von einem Austauschstudenten aus Shanghai verfasst, der ein achtwöchiges Praktikum am Institut für Maschinewesen absolvierte.

This article was written by an exchange-student from Shanghai, during his eight week internship at the Institut für Maschinenwesen.

1 Culture shock?

It seems that this summer holiday passed much faster than the previous ones, maybe the reason is when engaging in something and enjoying the life, time passes incredibly fast. One summer, two-month internship in Germany, this is what I have experienced. Looking back at the first day I got off the plane and stepped on the land of Deutschland with excitement and curiosity, all the cities, all the people, language, weather, smell, sound, flavor even each feeling of the air I was breathing, everything here is quite different, new and strange to me.

Before I left for Germany, so many people were talking about the so called Culture Shock, what's Culture Shock? Firstly, Culture Shock can be described as the feeling of confusion and disorientation that one experiences when facing a large number of new and unfamiliar people and situations. Actually, I don't think I felt such kind of confusion or disorientation at all, because I really like the exoticism in Deutschland, that may be because I am a person who likes changes and novelty. Besides, the other meanings such as being touched or affected in the deep heart by the new atmosphere and environment, which may be what I did feel----German Culture.

2 People in Germany

Friendly, this is the first word that flicks into my mind referring to German people. Try to pick up any German on the street and ask for direction, I guarantee that none of them will reject your question; instead, you will surely get a satisfied answer. Remember the first day of my arrival, the train I took

broken down in the station, and I was totally at a loss. I thought I would miss the next connection. Fortunately, a very nice German lady helped me change the connection of the train, and led me to the other platform, thanks god, nice German. Most of the people say that Germany is a very rigid and prideful nation, but I didn't feel that so much, at least on the German friends I know in TU Clausthal. In my opinion, in Germany, the relationship between people is not as complicated as that in China, they just do what they want to do, talk with the people who they want to.

Even though I have said they are very friendly, but sometimes Germans aren't always going to come up and introduce themselves to strangers especially if they know that you don't speak their language. I worked in the university, so almost everyone speaks English, but not all Germans know English and even if they do they might be not comfortable to use it. Even if you don't know much about German, most of them will appreciate you learning their language.

Additionally, importance is never contact with personal space and privacy in Germany. I lived in a student apartment, we had six people sharing one living room, excepting party time and dinner time, almost all of the doors are always closed. This doesn't show their hostility, just because they greatly value their privacy. This also doesn't necessarily mean that you can't go in, just knock door slightly, then you will hear 'come in please!'. You can also conclude it from the structure from German houses, almost all private homes in Germany have a fence or a hedge around it to keep away from the noise and outside world.

In Germany people like to shake hands when they meet. This applies not only for the first time, but also at almost every time they meet in the daily life. So, when you're visiting people, make sure to keep your hands out of your pockets and make eye contact with the person you're shaking hands with.

3 Life in Germany

The life in Germany seems much more relaxing, I mean except of the working hours. Perhaps the reason is that where I stayed is a small town, Clausthal-Zellerfeld. But it doesn't matter, indeed, it is a kind of life style in Deutschland. Every morning, after brief breakfast with toast, butter and milk, get on the way to work. I always see some people whose ages range from teenage to around seventy years old walking their dogs on the street. Referring to dogs, it can not be denied that dog is one of the very important parts of German life. Almost all of the families here have their own dog family member. They are treated as children, and Germany also has complete law about dogs. It's usual or acceptable to find someone's dog lying underneath the table in a restaurant or sitting beside their seat on a train. I remember once a German friend asked me why Chinese government allows people to kill dogs even to eat them, that is horrible. What I supposed to say? Because in China, we have a lot of homeless dogs? Probably, it is due to the difference between two cultures.

There is something that I couldn't get used to at first. In Germany businesses and shops can't be open as long as they please. There are strict regulations set up on the hours they can be opened. Before 9:00am or 10:00am almost the only shops that are open are Bakery's. All businesses are also required to close for an hour or two during lunch in order for families to go home and have lunch with other family members. They reopen at about 1:00pm or 2:00pm until about 6:00pm. What's more, almost all of the shops are closed on Sunday, which is usually called Shopping Day in China. Although it gives inconvenience, German people have been accepting it for a long time, it's a part of their lives.

Nightlife is also indispensable here, especially for youths. On the table in Mensa (student canteen), you can easily find the information about some parties which will be hold in this club or that bar on certain Friday or Saturday night. I used to ask a student here why they are so crazy about party and I did join them for many times. Then I recognized how stupid that question was, it's just like asking why human being should eat food. Music, dancing, drinking, friends and endless chatting, laughing, everybody enjoys himself or herself, releasing the pressure from daily work and study. On the other side, without noisy rock&roll and drastic dancing, there is a total different way to be relaxing as well.

Ordering a cup of cappuccino and a piece of cheese cake or ice-cream, choosing a outside seat beside the street to sit down, just watch on the people passing by, kill a slouchy afternoon under the sunshine. This is life.

4 Work in Germany

Originally, my impression on the work in Germany is like that I have to get to my office at a fixed time every morning, and what waiting for me are stacks of paper. But in fact, on the first talk between me and my supervisor, Mrs. Guthmann, I figured out that it was entirely unnecessary to worry about that. I could arrange and control my own working hours. Compared with other aspects, I don't have much feeling about my work, even though one of my main duties is to work. The reason is that actually I was not working in TU Clausthal, but studying here. So I didn't have much pressure from my work, just like a student, arranging the schedule by myself. The first task my supervisor gave me is to learn and know well about how to use Pro/Engineer, which is an engineering program. Although I have learnt something about it before, it still took time to master this program. After that, I began to do some simple work on it, including creating 3D models for some components of machine, assembling all parts into an integral mechanism model, doing kinematic simulation and analysis of mechanism, etc. Afterwards, she gave me a tutorial to learn some knowledge about CNC (CAD/Numerical Control), but it's only written in German, my god. I begun to regret that I haven't learn German before this internship. It is true that I didn't feel so tight when I was working, but it doesn't show that all the work in Germany is like mine. 'Purity is wisdom and simplicity is efficiency.' once a wiser said. I think if use the last half of this saying to describe the work which is done by Germans can not be more appropriate.

Culture itself is neither education nor law, it is an atmosphere penetrating each cubic centimeter of the air, it's a heritage inherited from ancient ancestors. Sometimes you can not describe it clearly, just feel, enjoy and get used to it. All in all, it's hard to say if I have learnt lots within the fleeting two months, but I am sure I felt a lot, saw a lot, and experienced a lot. Perhaps this is the essential value of this internship training. I am grateful to all the people who helped me within these two months for giving me such an unforgettable experience.