

WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE

The days for the students of the Department of the International Trade who participated in The Junior Year Abroad Program are drawing to a close after a 10 months stint in a foreign country. These students are the first year English Class of the Department; therefore, their experiences abroad are crucial for the succeeding classes. So far, most students are positive about their lives in a different culture, despite occasional collisions, which in turn, they believe will only expand their international vision. Such a vision, they realize is vital for their global competitive edge. In order to achieve that, they urge other students on the program to plan their future and develop their individual potentials as early as possible.

The weather and food are two of the most obvious differences anyone can experience in another country or culture. Tsai Yu-chiao, who has gone to Winona State University in the US, mentioned about the severely low temperature, i.e. minus 30, she encountered when she first arrived there. Tamsui, a cold enough place in Taiwan, appears to be harmless in comparison with Winona, she jokes. For Huang Chi-sian, who is studying at Stockholm, Sweden, where winter is long and dark, similarly is proud to have developed a resistance to cold. As for food, both of them started cooking first time in their entire life during this time. Both claim that their culinary skills have improved greatly—their mothers should be proud.

Culture of learning is also different. Tsai points out that learning at the university in the US is a serious matter. No one would ever fall asleep during the class, as it tends to happen in Taiwan. Revision is very much emphasized and so is the ability of independent learning. Another feature, she finds is very different from Taiwan, is the truly multiethnic

members of her classes. There are students of all colors and nationalities and they all exhibit various learning attitudes and aptitudes. Mainland Chinese and Korean are studious, African are strong in logical thinking, while students from Hong Kong, Naples, and Malaysia are good at English. Tsai finds such an environment extremely stimulating.

In the meantime, she has had several opportunities at important festivals to mix with local community, either to learn about them or allow them to learn about her and her culture. One experience that stands out in her memory was when she had to introduce Chinese Lunar New Year to a local elementary school.

For Huang, it was his internship at the Swedish subsidiary of AsusTek Computer Inc. and the participation of a mock United Nations conference that are the most memorable. In the latter occasion, he learned about the dos and don' ts of international conferences, which he feels are of great importance for developing an international vision. Finally, Tsai and Huang remind their junior fellow students to enjoy a life of diversity by being involved in whatever activities that are being offered. Travel when possible, they add, but of course, not at the expense of studying. (~Ying-hsueh Hu)

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