

Thoughts from New Zealand...

This is meant to be a brief mind provoking article which intends to switch on your brain for a sec and focus on study abroad. The prospective is to encourage and to point out how easy it is to broaden your horizons internationally and that the main obstacle to achieving this goal is yourself.

People keep telling me how great, amazing and awesome their exchange year was in Spain, Italy or somewhere else on the globe. Well, it's not always as superb as claimed and there are drawbacks that come with it, but in the end it's always worth the effort. If your main objective is to learn a second language, the easiest approach is to either go abroad for an exchange year or for your diploma thesis.

However if you're stuck in Graz, for whatever reason, and are still keen on improving your language skills or on picking up new language skills, I warmly recommend the „Institut für Sprach- und postgraduale Ausbildung“. Another great opportunity to acquire language skills and meet native speakers is to become a mentor with the „Referat für Auslandsbeziehungen“. Still keep in mind that this option, as any other in Austria, can only give you the basis. To fully comprehend a language there's no way around going abroad.

Exchange Year

I recommend that you pop around to the „Abteilung für Auslandsbeziehungen (AfA)“ and hook up with them, as there's a variety of different scholarships available which make life easier financially.

Diploma Thesis

There are some universities you might not have access to, but you really want to go there badly as they have great resources you're keen on using (e.g. Shake table (simulating earthquakes) in U of Vancouver (CAN) or down here in Christchurch (NZ)). Again, I strongly recommend that you check out the information about scholarships provided by AfA. In terms of resources you might want to take a closer look at homepages run by varsities around the world.

Fairly often, whilst writing on your thesis, you might encounter the problem that your active vocabulary knowledge is roughly half of your passive one (at the moment that's what happens to me quite often here in Christchurch). Again, see it as a challenging opportunity to improve your second language.

Postgraduate Training

I warmly recommend the program they offer and I enjoyed every single class I picked up so far. Mag. Reitbauer and his team give all they can and it's for free!

Be A Mentor (Referat für Auslandsbeziehungen, see Chrissi's article as well)

It doesn't include a huge work load. Don't worry, you don't have to work your butt off. Honestly, it's a piece of cake. Usually, you work just as much as you want to. In general, it's a great chance to meet new, interesting people from around the world and maybe find lifelong friends. If you're interested, please don't be shy as we are always glad about any help we can get. It's great fun and it's amazing how much you can gain by simply participating.

Keep in mind those acquired language skills will make it way easier for you to find jobs in Europe and even overseas. Dare to jump into the unknown and you'll see how good it feels to experience new attitudes, cultures and ideas. Don't be a chicken and 'wuss out' on such a good opportunity; or you'll never experience what Kiwis mean by saying „Get your A into G“.....

For further inquiries or if there's anything unclear or needs further clarification, please feel free to contact me: tonyw@sbox.tugraz.at

**Tony Walther
Referat für
Internationales**