

➤ ***ABOUT THE SCHOOL LEARNING***

Now I'm going to talk about my school lives in ESCM during these past 5 months. There are so many different points regarding the means of learning and teaching in ESCM. Before I came to France, I was asked to select the several modules of classes. This is quite an interesting design of classes. First, instead of taking the same classes every day, these modules usually can be accomplished within normally 4 days sometimes 5 days at most. Each time the same class could last all day long which sometimes is pretty exhausting.

However, put aside the part of physical exhaustion, we are enabled to arrange our free time more flexibly. We could either go discover more about Europe or France itself, or try to interact with local people from Poitiers to improve our knowledge in French and French culture. I honestly benefit from this class design a lot. I did acquire sufficient knowledge of French lives and French.

The first class I took was "art de vivre" which means the art of living. The way of French people live is really an art of living. From the class, we learned the food culture, including the food history, important chefs in France now and the past, different kinds of cuisine, ingredients used to cook. These all are new to me because it's obviously so different from our Chinese cuisine which differs from the ingredients used to the ways used to cook. If you ever go to a Chinese restaurant, you will find out how unique these two cuisines are. We learned France's greatest culture, wine. The wine culture of France spreads out to all over the world; even in Taiwan I can find a variety of French wines. Through the class, I learned the classification of wines, the kinds of wines that range from white wines, red wines, champagne, and their mixture, the methods employed to make wines, and also their histories. Besides that,

cheese is also a famous product of France. I was surprised by the kinds of cheese that could be found in France. If I remember it right, there are around 500 kinds of cheese, including the local one and regional one, that exist nowadays. Generally, I love this class and teacher. The way he taught was interesting, entertaining, and effective. The knowledge we learned was useful, aggregate, and enlightening. Even when I talk to French people, I can talk about wine making, food kinds, or cheese making, they are always amazed by my being so knowledgeable in their drinking and eating culture.

The second class I took was negotiation. The contents our professor taught us were diverse. We learned not only the negotiation but also ways to do business. Here is a quote from teacher, 「when you are doing interviews, you're also in the world of negotiation, the product becomes yourself, and you have to know how to sell yourself」. This is very true and should be remembered by every little future businessmen and businesswomen. Also the profiling learned from class is interesting, we were even asked to create our own in the final report. As to the teacher, I have to say he's been really helpful in terms of all kinds of difficulties we were confronted with. He is an experienced businessman; thus, we learned not merely from his slides of theories, also from his personal experiences which are extremely precious and practical.

The next class I had was luxury business management. The reason why I chose this class was because my interests were aroused when I first saw the title of the class at the first time. France is also well-known for its fashion design and luxury business. Tons of brands are catching on every day in their fashion streets in Paris. If we don't come to France to learn more about it, where else could we be to learn the world of luxury business? However, the

class contents were sort of under my expectation. I had to admit the teacher led us to the business world of luxury from the supply aspect to sales aspect. However, the entire class was too much about details and not so practical in my opinion. Moreover, English spoken by the teacher should be improved. It is especially hard for us to comprehend as non-English native speakers.

After luxury business management, I took International Marketing. From this class, we trained ourselves in different ways. For example, the first class, we were asked to do an overall reading fast then to summarize the part we were assigned to. This trains our summarizing ability and articulating ability since we had to report our part to our group members. Also the teacher made use of many cases either from the UK or from France to get us to connect the real world to theoretical world. The teacher also encouraged us to speak and to express our own opinions in class. He always welcomed our questions and considered them interesting and worthwhile to be discussed. This is important to students especially when they don't know if they ask the right questions. I, in general, like everything from the teacher except one point. The teacher was not so helpful when he encountered some problems from students and hard to contact. I sent emails twice or three times to the professor but got no response from him. I felt upset and considered it not appropriate.

Next class I took was Sales and Promotion. This class has not been a cheerful experience to me as a whole. The way teacher taught was sometimes boring and not effective. I have never taken any class related to sales and promotion, but I did feel those contents from the class were repeated from my memory. I do acknowledge that some contents are new and worthwhile to be learned. However, they were too theoretical which could not be combined with the real world if the teacher didn't use the cases or examples as auxiliaries. Also

sometimes I did find out the teacher had problems articulating himself on some points and regulations of class. Those made us feel confused sometimes.

The last module I took was Sales Management. This class has been great but it's a pity there were too much teaching focused on slides and textbooks contents. Except for this part, I would say this teacher is one of my good experiences in ESCEM. He has been helpful for students and always made himself crystal clear on his teaching materials. Also I admire his being insightful to know students' needs. He knows when to give students a break out of his class. This is especially important when we have to take all day classes.

Now I will talk about the classes that were combined as one. The first one was Learning French as A Second Language. The first thing was that the classification of students was not good enough as a reference to students' levels. I found out so many of my friends were put in the wrong level after the test results. I myself was also an example of that. Despite of the fact that there was some dissatisfaction with the class, it was still a cheerful experience since most of our teachers were kind and willing to answer students' questions. Take my French teacher, Joel, for example, she always tried all ways to get us to understand what she tried to explain with either oral explanation or physical explanation. She also tried to understand our needs and adjusted her way and contents of teaching.

The second class that was combined in this module was marketing research. In general, I have to say I didn't learn too much from the class except the fact that I made my first questionnaire and this did improve my knowledge in marketing field in some way since the questionnaire design has always been an important issue in this field.

➤ **ACCULTURATION**

The first obstacle we have to overcome as soon as we arrived at Poitiers was the communication problem. When I got off the flight at CDG airport, communication was totally not a problem since CDG airport is an international airport and I could always find someone to speak English with. However, this is not a case when I arrived at Poitiers. First, Poitiers is not a big city with many immigrants or workers from the other countries. Most of people are relatively conservative in some way. The first sentence I said when I wanted to cope with my daily life problems was “Est-ce que vous parlez français?” Not surprisingly, the answer remained “Non. Pas du tout.” No matter how many times I asked. Although it did bring some inconvenience to me, being forced to speak French, nonetheless, has raised my French up to the next level. I have to admit this kind of environment-forces-you-to-speak method is really effective for language learning. From then on, I have more motivation and more confidence to keep learning French.

The second thing that I had to face was the distinct French culture and the new surroundings. The culture shock, with no doubt, was huge, especially for people who are from a country in Asia. Most of people in Asia work hard and work a lot. The first week in France totally turned over the impression that every shop should remain open regardless of different festivals or holidays. In France, shops are all closed up on Sundays. Even shops that have important value to people such as supermarkets are also closed up on Sundays, which is definitely not possible in Taiwan or in Asia. Furthermore, people in France seem to take holidays whenever they want. Every time when I had some important things to inquire or to deal with, I always couldn't find people who

were in the position because they were always absent for a certain reason. Also, when you have to run errands, you have to be especially patient because things as insignificant as filing your personal information might take you couple hours to wait and they could get it done within couple minutes. The worst experience I ever had was when I was seriously sick: I got sent to the emergency room by an ambulance due to my inability of walking at that time. I arrived in the hospital at 9:30 PM, but they didn't send a real doctor and give me proper treatments till 5:30AM. From then on, I've been always joking that in Emergency room you have to be long-lasting enough to see the doctor. What's more ridiculous is that I had to pay 220 Euros simply because I stayed overnight which was caused by their lack of inefficiency.

After a period of time, I also observed the unique life style in France. I myself admire much some of it. On weekends, it's always family time. A lunch could last 3 hours simply because the family spend more time talking to one another and knowing what kids are doing at school. On the contrary, people in Taiwan don't have much time to spend with their children due to the business from work. What I also like about French people is their emphasis of healthy life. When I was in Poitiers, I liked to walk along the riverbank or along the park Blossac. It was not hard to find people jogging while I was taking walk. Even when I had to get up as early as 5 o'clock to catch an early train, I also saw people jogging at this time. This is what everyone should do in Taiwan or in Asia, to make it a rule to do the sports. These are just a part of cultural differences I discovered, let alone some trivial such as French people buy the baguette all the time, they like to sit in the yard of the café drinking either coffee or beers, there are a lot of cathedrals in France, etc.

With all those differences, I still blended into this society quickly. A part of that

was from my own adjustment; also an important part came from the efforts from local people. At the beginning, we had ALOHA which is deemed as an important student organization for international students to help us out in many things that ranged from as insignificant as settling down in a new apartment to as important as opening a new bank account or the other important documents. Except for being a useful hand, they are also our good friends. We had a great time together and they were everywhere in our entertainment activities. There are also some other school organizations that are supposed to be a part of our lives; however, due to the lack of information about their activities, we didn't get to join many of them and it is as well a pity for them not to be able to join international student's life. Also I liked the events organized by the city hall such as Poi-tranger events which got us to meet with local families and tried to become a part of them or some art events such as a visit to the shoes photography exhibition. I also got a host family from one of these events. My friends and I were invited to their house for a lunch and an afternoon walk. That was also one of my best times in Poitiers. Nonetheless, we lost contact with our family afterwards. It is genuinely a pity. Apart from these events, we could also enjoy the delicious and representative French snacks provided by city hall. This is also my personal favorite!

➤ ***SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW COMERS***

From what I experienced during this entire 5months, I have so much to share with people who are going to either this school or the other schools in France. In France there are so many things we have to be careful with especially when it gets involved with some governmentally documental work. Because of not being so knowledgeable on these things, I suffered a lot from this stay in

France. Some of them are insignificant while some of them are really pain in ass. I will talk about them in a form of a list below.

1. If you arrive in CDG airport in Paris really late or not in the right timing which keeps you from going to your destination soon and you have to sleep in the airport for a night, you have to be terribly careful on your belongings because pick pocketing in the airport is common and it happens in a blink. Also when you are traveling with a night train, it's very important. I had my things stolen when I fell asleep in the train. My entire bag was stolen even I put my hands on it when I was asleep.
2. Things you have to do when your things are stolen are a lot. You can go to their Objects trouvees(lost and found) to register things you lost. If lucky enough, you might get your things back. Normally, when things are gone, they are gone for good. Don't hold up your expectation too high. You can also go to the conductor while you're still in the train. The next important thing is to go to the police station to report your important documents and IDs stolen. After that, you have to go to the bank where you apply for your credit card to report stolen of your cards just in case someone tries to withdrawal your money. You can either stay at where you are to wait for your card sent to the local bank or pick up the card at the very first place you applied for the bank account.
3. When you have receipt that is signed by someone, you have to make sure the receipt is signed with full name instead of initials. When I brought my medical receipt to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France to have it validated so that I could apply for the insurance refund in Taiwan, I was refused because the woman who gave me the receipt didn't put her full name on

the paper. Usually you will be asked to go back to get simply “her complete signature”. This is really a bummer.

4. When you are traveling across borders, you have to carefully check if the train ticket could be picked up in another country or only in France. Do not ever trust conductors when they tell you that you could get the full refund and you have to pay the fare right away because Europeans usually don't know what they are talking about and they couldn't be responsible for what they have said. You either pick up the round trip tickets at the beginning or try to check on-line if the return ticket could be acquired in another country.
5. When you are treated not in the right way by the waiters in the restaurant or in hostels, you are allowed to report this to their headquarters about their bad manners. If you couldn't make it right on the scene, just try to find out where their official website is and report this through official way. Normally you will get some compensation such as vouchers or gifts. You definitely have to do this because most of French people are arrogant and not responsible.

These are basically things that have to obey when you are in France. With all these principles, you should have a fun stay in France.