

Study Abroad in Germany

Exploring challenges faced by international students through a media task

(From Year 10)

Objectives

- to help students become aware of the advantages and challenges of studying abroad (in Germany)
- to raise learners' awareness of cultural differences between Germany and other countries
- to discover the German university system and German culture from a foreign perspective
- to help students understand how campaign videos influence the viewer
- to foster students' listening skills
- to foster their media competence in a media task

The Topic

Owing to its high-quality education and affordable living costs, Germany is a popular destination for international students.

The campaign *Study in Germany – Land of Ideas* (<https://www.study-in-germany.de/en/>) is an official initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Its aim is to promote Germany as a destination for international students seeking higher education. By means of campaign videos on social media, the campaign tries to increase the international visibility of German universities and to encourage students from around the world to choose Germany for their studies.

In this teaching unit, students critically analyze how the campaign video represents Germany as an attractive destination for international students. Based on their findings, learners compare the experience of different international students in order to adopt a new per-

spective on the German higher education system and on German culture in general. On the basis of these discoveries, the learners become aware of (cultural) challenges that international students face and critically reflect on their own culture in a media task. For this unit, tablets or smartphones with internet connections are needed.

Suggested Treatment

Step 1

Introduction: International students in Germany

To start the unit, confront the students with **Transparency 2**, which shows a line graph illustrating the number of international students in Germany since 2011. Ask students to describe what they see. At this point, chunks of language that are useful when describing statistics can be collected. Moreover, the difference between 'university' and 'university of applied sciences' (a translation of *Fachhochschule* that *Wissenschaft Weltoffen* provides) can be discussed. For possible solutions, see **S1**.

Step 2

Collecting more information

Announce that your students are going to explore the chances and challenges of international students who are studying abroad in Germany. In order to collect more information regarding international students in Germany, students go through **W1**. In this step, the learners need a digital device with Internet connections (smartphone, tablets, etc.). The data provided by *Wissenschaft Weltoffen* includes different kinds of fig-

ures from which the students can choose. Remind students that not all of the figures are equally relevant to the topic. Again, students' attention can be drawn to useful chunks that can be found on **W1**. Moreover, the website *wissenschaft-weltoffen.de* also provides descriptions of the figures, from which students can pick useful expressions if necessary.

First, students work on the first part individually and then share their findings with a partner. Once they have finished, they talk about the three discussion questions provided in the second part. After that, students share their ideas with the whole class. In order to lead the students to the next step, collect their ideas regarding the third discussion question and announce that you are going to examine how Germany tries to attract international students. For suggested solutions see **S2**.

Step 3

#HelloGermany – Analyzing a campaign video

In this step, the learners critically analyze how Germany presents itself in a campaign video addressing potential international students. **W2** guides the learners through the process. Before the learners watch the campaign video, they collect their expectations in class as a pre-viewing activity. Then, they watch the campaign video and describe their first impressions of it. After a second viewing, the learners examine how visual, textual and auditory elements are combined to promote Germany as an attractive study destination. Ask students to work on **W2** individually before

they compare their findings in pairs or small groups. After that, the findings are collected in class. See **S3** for possible solutions.

Step 4

Studying in Germany – Students' voices

While the last step focused on the German perspective of studying abroad in Germany, this step examines different YouTube videos in which young students talk about their experiences as international students in Germany. The learners work in small groups and each group member works on a different video. Therefore, ask your learners to use headphones if possible or have them do this part of the task at home. **W3** suggests three YouTube videos that can be used. Alternatively, the learners can use the questions provided by **W3** and look for YouTube videos themselves. For their findings, the learners should take notes. After that, they present their results to each other and identify similarities/differences between the YouTubers. Then, collect these similarities/differences in class. At this point, learners should also become aware of the fact that there are different types of stay (exchange semester, full-time study, internship, etc.) and that application processes differ according to the student's citizenship. For possible solutions see **S4**.

Step 5

Media task

In the final task, the learners create a digital creative product that explores the advantages and challenges of studying abroad in Germany. The product is intended to creatively illustrate the experi-

ence of one (or more) international student(s) who study in or near the region of the learners. The challenges presented in the products can be due to cultural differences or to bureaucratic difficulties. The aim is to give the learners the possibility to put themselves in the shoes of international students and to become aware of potential problems and advantages that international students might face. The learners work in small groups and can choose the genre of their digital product themselves (e.g. podcast, vlog, interview, etc.). The products can be based on examples the learners find on the Internet (e.g. YouTube, blog entries, etc.) but they can also present the experience of a fictional student. If the learners want to, they can also include their own experiences. In either case, the product should be instructive and culturally sensitive.

Go through **W4** together with the learners and discuss open questions if necessary. Before the learners work on the task, collect criteria for good products in class. These criteria should be written down somewhere in the classroom (e.g. on a poster or on the board) so that the learners can refer to the criteria when evaluating the products of the other groups in the following stage. Here are some possible criteria:

- The product explores both positive and negative aspects in depth.
- The product considers local aspects (chances/challenges) of our region.
- The aspects that are presented are accurate and well-researched.
- The product is culturally sensitive.
- The product has a clear structure.
- The product includes appropriate visuals/audio-elements.

- The language is correct.

Once the learners have finished, ask them to upload their products on a platform such as *Moodle*, *OneDrive*, *Padlet*, etc.

Step 6

Task evaluation

In the final step of this teaching unit, the products are evaluated and learners get peer feedback. If necessary, ask students how to give constructive and fair feedback. Moreover, remind students to refer to the criteria that have been developed when they evaluate the products of the other groups.

Depending on the group size, the products can be watched together in class and each group gets oral feedback. In this step, you might also discuss language problems if necessary. Alternatively, the learners can watch the products at home and provide written feedback for (at least) one group. In this case, the students should be assigned to one group product which they have to evaluate in order to make sure that each group gets the same amount of feedback.

After the peer evaluation process, you can have the learners reflect on their learning outcome and on possible challenges. Here are possible questions that might be asked in class:

- *Did your perspective on studying abroad in Germany change during this project?*
- *Can you imagine studying abroad? Why (not)?*
- *What did you find most challenging about creating your digital creative product?*

W1 International Students in Germany: Collecting More Information

- A. Go through the figures and tables provided by website <https://www.wissenschaft-weltoffen.de/en/data/> and collect five striking facts regarding international students in Germany. Take notes and compare your results with a partner.

Useful expressions

- It can be seen from the line graph/bar chart/pie chart that ...
- Unexpectedly, the data shows that ...
- A (huge) majority is ...
- There are more than twice as many ... as there are ...
- is three times as high as ...

- B. Together with a partner, discuss the following questions.

1. Why do international students want to study in Germany?
2. What challenges might international students face?
3. Why might Germany want to attract international students?

W2 #HelloGermany: Analyzing a Campaign Video

1. Pre-viewing activity: You are going to watch a campaign video issued by the German Ministry of Education and Research. The video is intended to promote Germany as a destination for international students. What do you think will be shown in the video? Compare your expectations with a partner.
2. Watch the video and describe your overall impression of it.
3. Watch the video again and analyze how the following elements of the video create a certain effect. The questions might help you:
 - **Content:** What are the messages of the video? How is Germany presented in the video? Is there a specific (argumentative) structure?
 - **Language:** Are there any stylistic devices such as metaphors, rhetorical questions, etc.?
 - **Music:** What is the effect of the music? Is there a development?
 - **Visuals:** What kind of visualization does the video use? What kind of colours are used?
4. How do the elements work together to underline the message of the video? (E.g. Is the relation of sound, image and text contradictory/illustrative/...? Do the images illustrate/reinforce what is being said? ...)

W3 Studying in Germany: Students' Voices

- A. On YouTube, many international students share their experiences in Germany. Get together in groups of three. Each group member chooses a different video and takes notes on the content. Here are three examples:
- Jossam (Mexico): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9diCf61sAJg>
 - Mattia + friend (Italy + Japan): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvFw2f44Uak>
 - Ailen (Philippines), Maria (El Salvador), Nikita (India): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58BxVoRAkrq>
- Individually, watch your video and answer the following questions. Take notes only.

1. What do we learn about the student's/students' background(s)?

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2. Why did the student(s) choose Germany and which positive aspects are mentioned?

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3. How does/do the student/students view Germany/Germans?

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4. What challenges are mentioned?

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B. In groups: Present the YouTuber(s) and their experiences to each other. Identify similarities and differences between the videos. Be ready to provide feedback in class.

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W4 Media Task: The Challenges Faced by International Students

In small groups, you are going to create a digital creative product which explores the advantages and challenges of studying abroad in Germany. For example, you can create a podcast or a video blog. Your product should present the experience of one (or more) international student(s) who is/are studying in the region where you live. The international student(s) that you present can be based on examples you find on the Internet, but you can also construct a biography yourself. You can also make use of humour, but the project should be instructive and avoid stereotyping. Before you start, do some Internet research and take notes. The website <https://www.study-in-germany.de/en/> might help you with some potential challenges that you can illustrate in your product. Go through the following questions. After that, create your product.

- What is the background of the international student(s)?
- Where is he/she from?
- Why does he/she want to study in Germany?
- What is the education system of his/her home country like?

Now take the perspective of the international student(s) and collect some potential challenges:

- What do you think might be striking to international students who come to your region?
- What are the challenges the students face? What are the positive aspects?
- How does/do the student(s) see their future?

TR 2

International students in Germany since winter semester 2011/12

