

Summer Language Study Report

Name: **Kate Ishida** Program: **German Language School in Berlin** Duration: **4-weeks**

My experience as a student at the German Language School (GLS) in Berlin has been a rewarding opportunity. At GLS, I connected with students from all over the globe, all the while immersing myself in Berlin's unique cultural environment, all the which has supported my growth as a student learning German.

What initially sparked my interest in attending the German Language School was that it was founded more recently in 1983 by a female entrepreneur, Barbara Jaeschke in Göttingen. She eventually re-opened the school in Berlin, first with only 4 classrooms and eventually transformed the school into what it is today: an international language school with a campus with various course options to choose from, from a course in business German to an intensive German course. Barbara, with her two daughters, still directs the language school today and are actively involved with the school. I wanted to learn at a school that was similar to the small community experience at Bowdoin, and I thought that GLS, being a medium-sized family business run by women, would perfectly cater to my needs and belief in the importance of communication between student, teacher, and institution.

I spent four weeks enrolled in what they called the "super intensive German course", a class of 8-14 students in three, 90 minute classes every weekday. Outside of the classroom, the program also offered students the option to partake in extracurricular "Activity Programs", which could include a guided tour through one of Berlin's many museums, a seminar on German culture, or a weekend excursion to Dresden or Potsdam. Learning in an international classroom with peers from all over the globe was truly a unique learning experience. Inside the classroom, having these diverse perspectives created fruitful and rich class discussions. Even when it came to learning something more fundamental like grammar structures and functional aspects of the German language, hearing how people whose first language is not English process and internalize German was also a unique experience that is harder to get at Bowdoin, as most of my peers' first language is English. As someone who is planning on pursuing an ETA in Germany, I think seeing some of the different ways students from varying backgrounds process and internalize a new language was insightful and gave me more tools that I could utilize as a potential teacher.

Immersing myself in the language outside of the classroom was also enriching experience for my language learning. Berlin's rich cultural history and abundance of museums gave me endless opportunities to learn more about Germany's history. Some of my favorite excursions included a special exhibit to the Deustches Historisches Museum (German History Museum) about Wolf Biermann, a famous singer in the DDR, which catered to my interest as a music student, and to the Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum der Charite (Berlin Medical History Museum at Charite), which was relevant as a current psychology student and my interest in occupational therapy, all the while fueling my passion for German culture, history, and the sciences. Additionally, I realized that daily living in Germany, from taking the public transportation and trying to understand the announcements that were only in German to doing my groceries, had significantly improved my passive listening skills and confidence in speaking.

With my newfound confidence in the language-learning process and enhanced passion for the language and culture, I hope to not only bring back what I learned as a way to enrich my current studies and involvement with the German department, but also provide new insight in the classroom.