

1. Listening Input and Report

Report (310 Words)

To: Birgit Walzl


From: David Rauch

Topic: Culture Shock

Introduction

The purpose of this Report is to provide information about as well as give advice on how to deal with culture shocks. Most information is taken from a presentation given by Dan Fishel, an exchange student from Israel who talked about his experiences in America.

Findings

A person who experiences a culture shock usually goes through three phases. The first one is called "The Honeymoon" and can be described as the extremely good mood you are in when you first arrive  a new place. All the new impressions, the sights you visit and the people you meet are basically overwhelming your feelings.

The second phase sets in when you start digging deeper, and it is called "What am I doing here?". In this phase, most exchange students feel foreign, they have the feeling that they cannot connect to others and that they want to go home. Dan Fishel, the man who gave the presentation, said that during this phase, he really started hating Americans. He said that Americans are not just too friendly, distant and insincere, they are plain fake.

To start understanding Americans, you should utilize the American Phrasebook, which translates American phrases, such as "How are you" or "I have to think about that", into plain English, such as "Hello" or "No way".

Once you start adjusting, which mostly happens in the after 3 months, you automatically feel better. To keep the culture shock to a minimum, it is important to be patient and remember why you are in America. Also, you should always ask for help if you need it.

Conclusion

When you are in a foreign country, you often experience culture shock. This can be dealt with in a variety of ways, but it is most important to simply adjust to the persons around you.

Follow-up (157 Words)

As I have only been to the US for two weeks, I did not experience any signs of homesickness, but I also noticed the cultural differences in many ways. In the beginning, I was stunned by the fact that everything in America is twice as big as in Austria, but I got used to it within a few days. After that, I also noticed that Americans are extremely polite and friendly, which sometimes makes them appear fake. This was not a problem to me, as I don't need to talk about my entire life with strangers in the subway. Also, my host family was quite conversational, so I had somebody I could talk to.

If you are planning to visit America, be sure to not only experience other people's friendliness, but to be friendly and polite yourself as some people might have problems with the more direct Austrian way of communication.

2. Text

Summary (124 Words)

The main idea of the Text, which is written in a very pro-Obama style, is, that the shift in power that resulted from the midterm elections was mostly caused by three simple reasons: abstraction, frustration and communication.

The failure to abstract the idea that even though the economy is bad it might have been much worse without big spending is one that drew away many voters from the Democrats. Also, the overall frustration in America that goes hand in hand with every economical downturn is a big reason for voters to turn to the opposition, especially when the party in powers seems to be unable not only to present their idea to the voters, but also seems to struggle with internal communication.

Letter (330 Words)

Dear President Obama,

I am positive that you are busy right now, but I can not let last night's election results pass by without writing a few words. First of, I think that you and your party have done a lot for America within the last two years, and I am also positive that you did not deserve this wave election, but I also agree with some critical points I read in today's *Newsweek*.

The first problem they described was the democrat's inability to simplify the idea that even though the economy is really bad and unemployment is extremely high, actions such as the big economical stimulus brought forward by your party has actually prevented the worst. A party has simply drifted away too far from their voters when they expect them to understand a capitalist economy. Most Austrians don't do that, and I am pretty sure neither do most Americans.

The second Advice I want to give you is to think about your party's image. The democratic party always seemed kind of chaotic to me, struggling with internal as well as external organization. In an Interview I recently read, an important person from your party said that even though he likes the idea, he deletes the daily email your party sends out to it's representatives every morning without reading it. How can you expect to communicate your message to millions of voters when even your closest colleagues stop listening to it.

Last week, when you were on Jon Stewarts "*Daily Show*", you talked about the fact that the "Yes We Can" has mostly been changed into a "Yes We Can, but ...". I like the new one, because it is more realistic and honest, but you used the old slogan to become president, and now that you reached this goal, you and your party can not be surprised if people actually believe you can fix an 8-year-disaster in two years.

Yours sincerely,

David Rauch

3. Recommendations to next year's students

Personal Account (298 Words)

If you are looking forward to your USA-trip next year, I can assure you one thing: It will be awesome! Having said that, there are still some things you should consider to make it even better.

First of all, I experienced that many host families are very interested in Austrian culture, so be sure to visit America packed with knowledge. If you, however, are in a family that already hosted several students and therefore already knows a lot about Austria (which happened to me), it is your job to ask questions and encourage conversation if you want to talk and improve your speaking.

When you visit high school, one rule that is always important in school becomes fundamental: be polite. Think of the fact that you are just a visitor and the teachers don't have to pay any attention to you. Still, most of them will ask you something about yourself or about Austria. See this as an opportunity to talk and be thankful for it.

If you want to stay in contact with the rest of the world, Starbucks is a great place to get free Internet access, and they also sell coffee. As there is a Starbucks on almost every corner in New York, they are also a great way to navigate from one sight to the other. Places you must not see include the Empire State Building (at night!), Central Park, Battery park (also at night, you have a beautiful view of New Jersey), Times Square and all the flagship shops, such as the ones by Nintendo, M&Ms, Toys'R'us and Hershey's.

Oh, and don't forget to bring a power adapter. In fact, the best thing is to bring two power adapters, as some of your colleagues (and I am not giving any names) might forget theirs.