Intro – #00:17#

Alisa: Hello everyone and welcome back to a brand new episode of our podcast #UniStuttgartInternational. Today we would like to introduce you to another offer from the International Office: The German courses. We will be talking about the different course options we have in store, we will be listening to some first-hand experiences from students, and we will talk to colleagues here at the International Office, who grew up speaking other languages besides German.

Since we are going to focus on non-German-speakers, this episode will be exclusively in English.

Course offers – #00:57#

Alisa: Learning German is not the easiest of tasks. That is why we would like to introduce you to our German course offers today. If you are an international student, for example, who would like to study at a German university, often times you will have to take a German course and pass an obligatory language test to certify your language level. That is exactly what our preparatory German course with following TestDaF exam is intended to do. You do not necessarily need an admission to a degree program offered by the University of Stuttgart. However, you do need an admission (Vormerkung) for the German course. So you will still need to go through an application procedure.

For current application deadlines and course dates, please visit our website. There you will find all the information you need, as well as the relevant contact persons. You will find all the necessary links in the show notes.

In contrast to the preparatory German course, the intensive and extensive German courses are aimed exclusively at exchange students, who come from a partner university in the EU (Erasmus+) or from overseas (Overseas) and for students in our selected international Master's programs, as well as for students in double Master's programs. So you should spend at least one full semester at the University of Stuttgart. As the name already suggests, the intensive course takes place over the time of roughly four weeks, while extensive course normally extends over the entire semester. These courses are offered at different language levels. Whether a course takes place, however, always depends on whether there are enough participants. The teaching locations can also vary. Both face-to-face and online courses are generally possible.

Up-to-date information and more detailed instructions on the procedure can be found on our website as well, so be sure to check it out if you are interested.
Experiences from students – #03:12#

Melanie (M): So without further ado, we would like to jump right into the next segment, where Veera from Finland will tell us a little bit about her experience with learning German at the University of Stuttgart.

So what did you like in particular about the German Course?

Veera (V): In a German class at the beginning we did a lot of group activities and got to know each other as well we visited also Mercedes Benz museum and at the end of the course we did a national food day where we brought national food from our own countries and that was really nice way to learn from different countries and cultures and also I liked a lot that be used German a lot in the class, I think it was very helpful that we weren’t allowed to speak English in the class, at least in the B1.2 Level and it encouraged us all to use German as much as we could.

(M): And what do you take away from the course apart from the language?

(V): I’ve met a lot of new people. I think a lot of different groups were built during the ... of the German course. We were very intensively together for the first six, seven weeks. I got my friends from the course. I learned also a lot from the other cultures and countries and of course, we learned a lot of things from Germany and Stuttgart too.

(M): Have you learned a German word that you find very funny or special?

I think there is a lot of funny words in German language. Some of the words are funnier when you translate them to English than to other languages. The literal translation doesn’t make sense in English but it makes sense in other languages like “Luftschloss” – air castle. It doesn’t make sense in English but in Finnish, it does because we have the translation in Finnish for it. One particularly word what I find funny is “Handschuhe”. “Handschuh”, because the literal translation is funny in all the languages what I speak. Why would I put shoe in my hand?

(M): Yes, that really doesn’t make any sense. So last but not least: what advice would you give other students who want to learn German and what has helped you?

(V): I have watched a lot of German TV-series and movies and I’ve learned a lot of words and phrases from there. I have also used app, which have been fun way to learn more German, but I think the best way to learn is just to use the language as much as you can.

(M): Thank you very much Veera for your insight in the German Course at the International Office! We also went around in our office and talked with our colleagues and student assistants who’s mother tongue isn’t German. They also told us their story with a German word that they find especially funny or interesting.

Experiences from colleagues – #06:23#

Silvia (S): I’m always fascinated by German words in which the same consonant occurs three times in a row, like “Fitnessstudio” with three times s, or “Geschirrrückgabe” (dish return), with three times r, and so on. But my favorite German word is “beziehungsweise”, abbreviated in "bzw.". It is translated with "or rather", "or better", but also "respectively", sometimes. I really like that you can express such a wide range of
meanings in one word, which doesn’t exist in English or in Italian, my mother tongue. I
like this word so much, that I use it in German when I speak Italian with Italian friends
who speak German as well, and understand what I mean. And I have some difficulties
when I cannot use it in other languages and I have to tell the same concept in another
way and with more words, and this is not so beautiful as saying "beziehungsweise".

Eric (E): I think Feierabend is a funny and interesting word that I first heard on my first
workday in Germany. If you translate it word by word it means „night party“, but you’ll
be surprised to find out that it actually means "end of work" or "quitting time" and it just
sounds so cheerful and celebratory. It's like saying “finally, time to party!” after a long
day of work. This is one of THE MOST used goodbye-phrases amongst work colleagues
and it doesn’t really matter whether it actually is evening or not. So after finishing your
workday you’ll usually wish to your colleagues „Schönen Feierabend“.

Anu (An): I’m from Finland originally so my mother tongue is Finnish and pronouncing
German is not particularly difficult for Finns. There are some vowels that are different in
Finnish. I was really struggling to differentiate between the “ä” and “e” in German – I
still need to concentrate to get that right – and during my first year in Germany I was
many times asked about living in Finland and I was always telling about our wonderful
forest and that we were picking berries there. Now the German word for berries is
“Beeren” and the German word for bears – the animals – is “Bären” and I couldn’t
distinct between those. So I was always telling that I was picking bears in the forest in
my home country.

Maria (Ma): So one word that I find quite cute and fun is “Faultier” which means sloth
in English and I think it’s really funny because it literally means “lazy animal” like “Faul”
is lazy and “Tier” is animal and I think in general German is full of these words that are
very logical because they are compounds or words and it makes sense, but they are
funny if you think about it. For instance “Handschuh” which means gloves, but it’s like
shoes for the hands and it makes fully sense but it’s also funny.

(M): So it seems like those words who are put together from different components are
really funny and I can totally understand! Then let’s close this episode with some more
tips for learning German!

(E): One great way to do it, is by reading online articles and following meme pages on
Instagram. This will not only help you pick up new vocabulary but it will also give you
insights about the real spoken language in the everyday life in Germany. Plus, following
meme pages on social media it’ll keep you engaged and entertained during the learning
process. Another tip is to practice speaking German with friends who also speak the
language. Plus a very important point is not being afraid to make mistakes - it’s all part
of the learning process. For me this was and it’s still a fun and easygoing way to improve
my conversational skills. Moreover watching your favorite series in German is a fantastic
way to improve your listening skills and get a better feel for the language. I personally
recommend checking out some of the new German shows and series available for a fun
and entertaining way to practice German. Remember, practice makes perfect, so don’t
be afraid to dive in and get yourself used with the German language.
(S): You should have fun learning a language, so find anything that you like, watching movies or series, reading, writing short texts, and so on, and do it in German, even if you don’t understand a lot. But this shows you that you are learning a “living” language, which is more than just the sentences of your student’s book. On the other hand, vocabulary and grammar are necessary, so, you should dedicate enough time to learn them, especially at the beginning. Last but not least: German articles are frustrating. I have been speaking German for 14 years, and I still do mistakes with der, die, das. So don’t worry if it seems impossible to overwhelm them, it is normal! German articles are important but they’re not everything. So you will manage to do it even if you do some mistakes with the articles.

(Ma): I think the thing that helped me most in learning German was to force myself in speaking just German with my formal flatmates who were two German girls with whom I lived for two years after my first semester. And really the fact that I knew that at least at home I was forcing myself to only speak German and not use English or other languages gave me a huge boost, because when I was feeling more and more confident also when I was using it outside with other people or in shops or yeah with anyone that spoke German in daily life. So yeah, I think probably at least finding one environment or one in one situation in which you force yourself to only use that language helps a lot, because I know that it can be stressful to be very concentrated all the time and use a language that is not yours all the time but at least try to use it in certain setting is already quite a good training.

(An): I’d suggest to try and immerse yourself in the German language completely. Also thinking in German even though it’s not quite correct. Reading in German, writing your notes or grocery lists in German and just trying to get yourself that immersion. Changing between two languages all the time you can’t concentrate on either of the languages that much. I know this is much more difficult nowadays for young people since there is so many international contexts where you speak English anyway and you might be studying in English too. I think I had an advantage that I was really living my first year in Germany in a totally, completely German environment. But you can do something yourself for that, that you consciously start to do things in German.

Outro – #13:10#

Alisa: And that brings us to the end of today’s episode. We hope you enjoyed the episode and perhaps some of the tips given might actually help you out. Thank you for listening and hopefully until next time!