**Martha Lewis
Report on Scholarship to Goethe Institute, Schwabisch Hall, August 2015**

First of all I have to say that spending a month in Schwabisch Hall has been one of the most

enjoyable and educational experiences of my life so far. I have met so many amazing people and

this month away really enabled me to grow in confidence and also opened my eyes to so many

different cultures; I couldn’t have loved it more. I feel that I firstly need to thank Charnwood

Borough Council for giving me this opportunity and also Dr Karin Eißele‐Kraft for all the efforts

she put in to organizing my stay and making sure I got the most out of my time there.

On the 2nd August, a day before the course began, I flew from Manchester Airport to Stuttgart

and then took the train from Stuttgart to Schwabisch Hall‐Hessential. The course began the next

day but this day was just the official ‘arrival’ day and interview day. The interview was just a

short conversation about yourself to assess your level of speaking. Then there was a short test

to assess your writing. It was really relaxed and friendly though because there are people who

arrive without being able to speak a word of German. I felt the group and level that I was put

into was appropriate to my ability but many people did change classes after the week had

started so I don’t think that the assessment of your abilities at the beginning carried so much

weight.

The accommodation was comfortable. It was clean and we had a lot of space, each room with

storage space for your things, a wardrobe for your clothes and a desk to work on with a pin

board above it.

The Institute was easy to find on the day the classes began and it was nice because we all got up

and made our way to the institute and had breakfast together. This was the same at lunch time,

after the classes, so we were always speaking in German at the table. The food was good and

there was always a lot to choose from at breakfast, and a vegetarian option at lunch.

The classes were great, I learned so much in such a short period of time. We did a lot of group

work to improve our conversational and presentation skills, but also every week we would

spend a couple of hours in the media library in the institute on the computers writing about our

previous week, which was then marked and given back to us. I enjoyed this because it was really

nice to have a record of what I did.

The range of cultural and free time activities was so vast. Every day there was something

different to do and it was so fun. On the second day I went to Latin‐American dance classes and

they were brilliant. It was a great way to meet new people and socialise with everyone, and of

course, learn to dance. There was also an historical tour round the town which was very

interesting and I learned a lot, similar to the trip to the museum that I took part in which was

very informative. Every week there is Stammtisch, beginning on the first Thursday I was there.

We all met outside Wohnheim 2 and then went together to a bar in the town. There were so

many of us and it was great that we could all meet and go together. It was a chance to meet and

socialise with even more people. On the Friday there was a Goethe Party organised in the

Goethe Pub at the institute, which was also very enjoyable. The international buffet the

following week was incredible. Everyone cooked something from their country and brought it

along for everyone else to try. It was so cool trying all the dishes especially the food from

Thailand and Japan. During this second week, extra classes took place in the afternoon such as

conversational classes and phonetic classes. But these you had to sign up for (along with many

of the other activities) and the classes filled up really quickly, so I would advise signing up for

them as soon as possible. There was so much more on offer and many I took part in, such as the

coffee and cakes evening, Brezeln baking, theatre trips (as there are open air theatre

productions outside the town hall every night during august.) One afternoon my friends and I

went with the institute and hired a rowing boat for an hour, and there was bowling and bike

rides. It was fantastic! Some of these did cost a little bit of extra money but it was all relatively

cheap.

The middle weekend was the trip to Berlin, which was the most expensive trip, costing 99

Euros, but that included accommodation and the activities in the day for the 3 days. This was

absolutely amazing! It was so much fun and I even enjoyed the 7 hour bus journey there and

back because by this time there was a group of friends and we just spent the journey chatting, it

was very relaxed and the bus was comfortable. In Berlin we had the evenings free to do

whatever we wanted and also there was free time in the day. The first evening we all just went

out and the Berlin City Hostel that we were staying in was really close to Checkpoint Charlie so

the first evening I went to that museum which I found really interesting having studied the war

and in particular the divide between east and west Germany and Berlin. We spent the evening

after that wandering around Berlin discovering new places and multiple beer gardens by the

river. The atmosphere was incredible, with live music being played everywhere through the

streets and in the squares, and people relaxing on the grass outside the museums, and sitting,

dipping their feet in the fountains... it wasn’t hard to join in.

The next day we had a tour round Berlin on the bus and everything that we had discovered the

previous night was explained to us. We visited the Berlin Wall which was so incredible and the

East Side Gallery artwork was just amazing. We also visited the Reichstag, a very impressive

building and went right to the top of the large glass dome, giving us a 360‐degree view of the

whole of Berlin. We had some free time to get lunch in the Berlin Mall, which was so big and

there was so much to see and to do, it was great! That evening we had free time as well and once

again we just spent time exploring the City. The next day we had to drive home but we stopped

on the way back in Potsdam and visited the Cecilienhof palace where the Potsdam conference

was held in 1945. The next weekend there was a day trip to Stuttgart on the Saturday that was

also very good and we were able to visit the Mercedes museum, and I found the history very

interesting.

However, despite the fact that that there was so much to do every day, my friends and I still

found time to do our homework, often doing it together and helping each other, either in the

media library on the top floor of the institute, sitting in our kitchen, or sitting outside enjoying

the sunshine. We also ended up organising our own little things, like having a picnic in the park,

or one day the Italian’s cooked dinner for about 20 of us and it was like a huge family meal! And

we spent most evenings walking through the town and ending up at the beer garden or a café

sitting and enjoying what everyone had to say.

One thing I loved the most was that out of the group of about 10 of us that had become close

friends, I was the only British person. Now I have friends all over the world, Poland, Finland,

France, Israel, Mexico, Russia, Italy, Portugal and more! It was so interesting just chatting to all

of these people and learning about their cultures and how different their daily lives are from

mine. The language barrier was never an issue as everyone was at different levels of German but

many spoke English and so there was help if you couldn’t phrase something correctly. However

it was great because not everyone spoke English so we simply had to speak in German

otherwise we would be excluding half of the people sitting with us!

Overall it was an absolutely fantastic trip and I am so grateful that I had this opportunity. My

German improved dramatically and I not only gained confidence with speaking the language,

but also the different style of teaching the grammar really helped me to understand it and

therefore my writing has improved too. I have made some truly great friends and I hope to keep

in touch with all of them. It was fantastic to meet so many people from all around the world and

I loved chatting to them and learning about their countries and the history and the conditions

and political situations there at the moment and hearing everyone’s different opinions about it.

It has made me more aware of the world around me and through spending a month in

Schwabisch Hall studying German, I have learned a lot more than just the German Language.