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I am a new graduate economics student in Northeastern University. This semester I have two classes: Microeconomic theory 1 and Math & Statistics for Economists. Next semester I will choose Macroeconomic theory, Applied Econometrics and Information Economics & Game Theory in January. The third semester I will choose Microeconomic Theory 2, Workshop in Applied Econometrics and Applied Econometrics 2.

I have a strong interest in mathematical economics and econometrics. These days I am studying Matlab. Before I pursued Economics M.A, I earned a degree in Journalism from Jinan University, which is one of the top journalism colleges in China. In addition, I interned as an economic journalist from when I was a sophomore. After I graduated from Jinan University, I became a formal economic journalist in South-East Asia.

When I was an intern as an economic journalist, my mentor always assigned some important tasks for me. The most frequent task I faced was data visualization. Nowadays the world is full of data. We call it “big data”. Our job is extracting valuable information from lots of data. The other thing is data visualization. People that do not work in or have studied economics sometimes can not understand the meaning of this data. Someone must act as a translator to visualize this data into readable graphs. It was my primary responsibilities to bridge this gap between meaningful economic data and the general public.

For example, at one time my mentor asked me to write an article analyzing region inequality in China. It needs to lift a lot of data. And I knew that general readers tended not to have enough patience to read it completely. So I drew a graph which showed the same idea. In the graph, the softer color represented poorer provinces. It was so clear that the gap between Shanghai and Guizhou province (a poor province in the south-western of China). in GDP per person. That article got a huge reception in Chinese media and my mentor was criticized by local government. However, we viewed such critics as our upmost praises as Chinese journalists.

When I was a formal economic journalist in Cambodia, I always wrote articles about negotiations and games between three parties: local workers, firm mangers and firm bosses. I have a lot of experience reporting on them and balance them in articles. I want to write a dissertation about labor markets in South-East Asia after my theory background is strong.

Most of the articles I wrote are about the relation between firm managers and worker unions, which is very intense. They often have some frictions. For local workers, they usually tend to work less and earn more. However, for the firm managers, most of them are Chinese, their jobs are just to monitor and oversee the local workers’ productivity. They tend to be very serious and harsh because their incomes depend upon the workers’ production. It is obvious that the firm bosses (usually from America or Europe) are the directors of these intensive relationships. The power of worker unions in Cambodia is very strong. Sometimes they organize huge strikes, which results in some bloody affairs from time to time. Before this point, the firm bosses tended to blame the managers being incapable to control situations. However, after this point, the same people said to the media: the managers will be fired according to their brutal behaviors to workers and they apologize for such situations. And they swear that they do not know everything. I wrote an article to analyze it and gave my suggestion. The managers should make use of the power of local NGOs to come together to deal with disputes.

I will pursue Economics Ph.D. next year. So now I study very hard and want to get high grades. I have a strong interest in this frontier area of research. I thank you for your consideration. I hope to have an opportunity to participate the NBER project on the Economics of Digitization.

Thank you very much.

Yao Zhao