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Experiential Module Reflection

For my Experiential Module, I chose to study abroad in Salamanca, Spain during the summer of 2017. The program that I studied through is called Cursos Internacionales and is housed in the University of Salamanca. This program came highly recommended through the MAFLT program, and I was impressed with the academic rigor and program requirements.

I chose to complete a study abroad for a number of reasons. One of my soapboxes in teaching a world language is to promote and infuse experiences where the language can be applied in an exterior context outside of the classroom. I feel that these travel experiences allow students to break away from the classroom norms and explore their Spanish-speaking selves in a new environment. Therefore, I felt that it was most appropriate for me to follow in my own beliefs and apply the MAFLT course content in Spain. Personally, I do not have immediate access to native or non-native Spanish-speakers in my rural community, so practicing and expanding on my own language skills is quite difficult on a daily basis. For these reasons, I feel that an international educational experience would allow me to fulfill my ambitions as a Spanish-language educator and promoter of study abroad programs.

While in Spain, I took three courses taught within the target language at an “Advanced-Intermediate” Level as determined by the program and an initial placement test upon arrival. These courses were “Advanced Spanish Grammar and Mechanics”, “Spanish Culture” and “Spanish Art History”. I think that these courses were the best courses to expand in my knowledge of the country, it’s rich histories, and language principles. These courses ran daily for a total of five hours a day throughout the four-week program.

At the conclusion of the program, I took a series of exams to determine my level of understanding within the content material. In all courses, I earned an “outstanding” rating from my professors. I was able to assist professors within the courses to supplement teachings with some of my personal experiences within the classroom here in the United States, and they welcomed my suggestions and supplemental materials. In my classrooms, I use much of the material from my courses in Spain and developed a unit on Spanish Art History where my students learn about the various movements and influential artists and explore these themes and ideas within a local museum. So far, I have only used this unit with my upper level courses so that they can negotiate meaning and develop critiques within the target language with ease and expand on their reflections seamlessly. Additionally, I have infused a small cultural component of Spanish history in my classes as well. As of late, I expanded this unit to include some information about other Spanish-speaking countries using my own anecdotal experiences as well as those of my students and colleagues.

In summation, the experiential module as a study abroad worked very well for me and my goals as an educator. I was able to improve my own skills as a Spanish-speaker and develop an understanding of Spain that I had not yet endured throughout my own learning. This program is something that I may choose to revisit as a “refresher” program for furthering my understanding and improving my skills in and outside of the classroom.