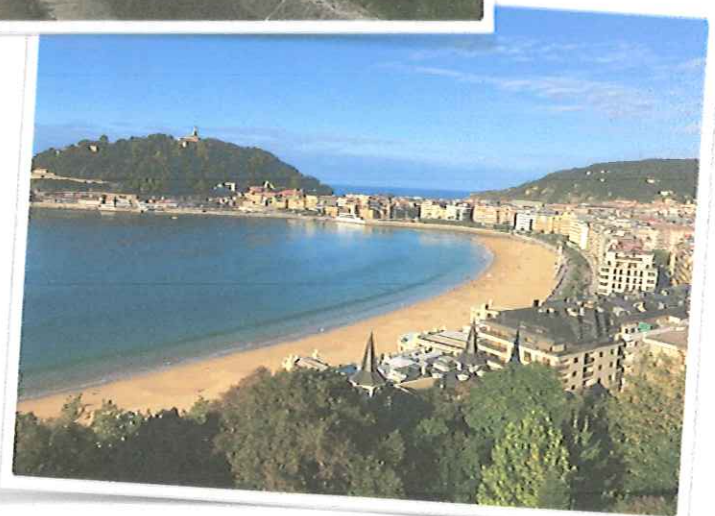


Carmen Sotolongo
February 20, 2017

Sabbatical Report

Fall Semester 2016



Sabbatical Leave Report, Fall 2016: Carmen Sotolongo

During the fall semester of 2016, I travelled throughout Spain and Argentina for my sabbatical. As a foreign language teacher, specifically Spanish, I requested a sabbatical leave that would entail spending some time in countries where Spanish is spoken, so that I could immerse myself in the language as much as possible and better acquaint myself with the culture. In Spain, accompanied by my husband, I visited fourteen cities throughout the provinces of Asturias, Basque country, La Rioja, Castilla - La Mancha and Andalucía, which entailed driving to the northern coast along the Bay of Biscay then heading all the way south to the Mediterranean coast. I did not travel to Barcelona since I had already been there while traveling in Spain for a full semester as the on-site director for study abroad in Spain program in 1994. I wanted to become familiar with other regions of the country. The second week of November I flew to Argentina where I visited the provinces of Córdoba and Misiones (*Spanish spelling*) until the beginning of December.

Both my husband and I are native speakers of Spanish. He is from Cuba and I am from Argentina, and we were immediately recognized as such. As soon as I said something, I would get a “Argentina?” response with a big smile. Funny thing is, even though I’m a native speaker originally from Argentina I didn’t get that reaction when I was in Argentina. I’ll explain later on in this report. The pronunciation in Spain that makes theirs distinguishable from the Spanish spoken in the Americas is the marked pronunciation of the letters, c and z. The combinations of ce, ci and za, ze, zi, zo, zu will require that the z and c be pronounced similar to the “th” in the English word “think”. This type of pronunciation usually gives a speaker away as being beyond a shadow of a doubt, a Spaniard. It is called the “ceceo” pronounced, “thetheo” as opposed to the

“seseo” pronounced in English something like “seseo” (the “s” pronounced like the “s” in the word *snake*, and the vowel “e” in both examples should be pronounced like the “e” in elephant). Interestingly enough, the Spanish of the Americas does not have any trace of this pronunciation. This is possibly due to the fact that many “Conquistadores” came from the region of Extremadura, where the “ceceo” pronunciation is not used. There are other characteristics that distinguish the Spanish of Spain from that of the Americas, such as the tone and cadence of the language. Another difference is the use of the second person plural subject pronoun *vosotros*, rather than *ustedes* (for “you-all”) more commonly used in the Americas. There are also slight regional differences in the accent, not unlike what you would find when you compare the Texan accent to a Californian accent or a southern accent to that of a New Englander. In the northern part of Spain, for example, due to the predominately Basque population there, sometimes it was difficult to understand what people were saying. Even in restaurants when reading a menu I was totally frustrated at times when I was not able to understand the food items listed on it. Luckily, I am not a fussy eater so when I ended up with a pile of sardines and a side of french fries for lunch I was able to eat it.

The same language differences occur in South America. Each country has a different accent and within each country there are regional accents as well. What’s interesting is that there is a common sound or “accent” that all people from South America have that gives them away as being from South America as opposed to being from North America, Mexico in particular, or Central America. In Argentina the accents vary greatly within the different regions. The most well known recognizable accent that people who are fluent in Spanish can recognize as being an “Argentine” accent is the one from the capital, Buenos Aires. People from Buenos Aires are re-

ferred to as “porteños”, meaning from the “port.” The specific pronunciation that would have another Spanish speaker identify one as Argentine is the pronunciation of the “ll” and the “y.” These letters, anywhere other than Argentina and Uruguay, are pronounced like the letter “y” in the word “yoyo.” In Argentina and Uruguay, however, they are pronounced like the “sh” in the word “shout” or even like the “j” in the word “just”. So *tortilla* will be pronounced: “tortisha” or “tortija.” Another major difference in Argentine and Uruguayan Spanish is the use of the second person singular pronoun “vos” for the familiar “tu” (you) with all of its corresponding verb forms. In some of our more advanced Spanish textbooks this form is presented along with the traditional conjugation so that students of Spanish become familiar and aware of this verb form that is widely used throughout Argentina, Uruguay and some parts of Central America. It is believed that it may be a remnant of an older form of Spanish and would be the true singular form for the plural “vosotros” form (meaning *you-all*). In my own life, the “vos” form is the form for the informal “you” that I have used since I was a child. If a student studies Spanish here in the States then later goes to South America or even Central America, the lack of exposure to this form can pose some problems in comprehending the language.

During my visit in Argentina I stayed in Córdoba, the second largest city, located in the interior of the country, where I was born and still have family. The accent is different from one region to the next. The accent that would be considered the stereotypical Argentine accent is that of the capital, Buenos Aires. The Cordobés accent, where I am from, is referred to as the *tonada cordobesa*. and is usually quite difficult for Spanish speakers from other regions and can at times be overwhelming to the student of Spanish. It is characterized by the elongation of the sound of the vowel in the syllable preceding the stressed syllable in words with three syllables or more. It

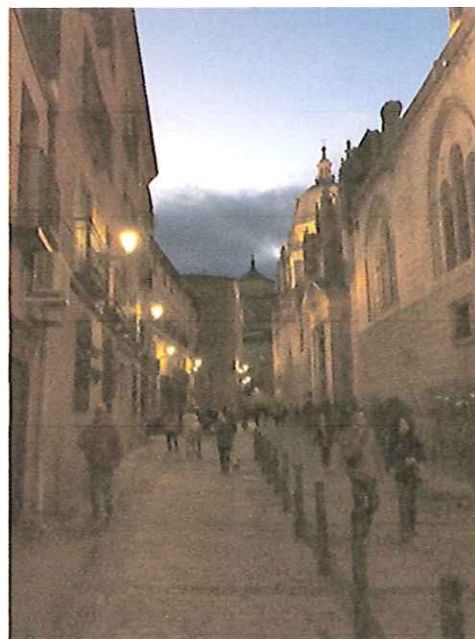
is thought to have been derived from the languages spoken by the *Comechingones* who were at one time the local indigenous people of that area. So the main thing is to identify the stressed part of the word then elongate the vowel in the syllable just before the syllable with the stressed vowel. Another quirk of the language is the pronunciation of the double “rr” or a single “r” that is not intervocalic hence not rolled otherwise all rs in Spanish are rolled, single or double. Anywhere else in Argentina and the rest of the Spanish speaking world it is a rolled r. In Córdoba the way to pronounce the double r is by rolling it at the same time blowing air through your mouth and making the same “sh” or “j” sound described above that is used for the *ll* and *y*. So if you wanted to say “la historia de Roma” (the history of Rome) you would end up saying something like “la historia de shrroma”. For someone who is unaccustomed to this it is almost impossible to produce this sound.

My sabbatical started with the trip to Spain, where my husband and I visited more than fourteen different cities. We started in the capital, Madrid, then headed west to Salamanca, then to the northern coast and Basque country, before driving south all the way south to the Mediterranean coast, with a stop in Toledo along the way. We rented apartments throughout Spain with the exception of a one-night stay in a hotel in Elciego, in the wine country of La Rioja, designed by famous architect Frank Gehry, who also designed Disney Hall in Los Angeles and the Guggenheim Museum (which we also visited) in Bilbao.

We spent our first ten days in Madrid in an apartment not far from the Plaza Mayor, a very central location that allowed us to walk to many noteworthy and historical attractions, with an occasional metro ride to a few places that were a little further away. The transportation system in Madrid is very good, particularly the metro system, minimizing the need for a car while in

the city. Most of the cities we visited were not suitable for cars. Their cobble-stoned streets, which dated back to medieval times, were barely wide enough for small European-style cars, making them difficult to navigate. We did not have a car in Madrid, but rented one to travel throughout the rest of Spain, as described above. Once we arrived at a new town, however, we left our car parked and explored the town on foot, which allowed us to visit many historical and cultural sites that were not easily accessible otherwise.

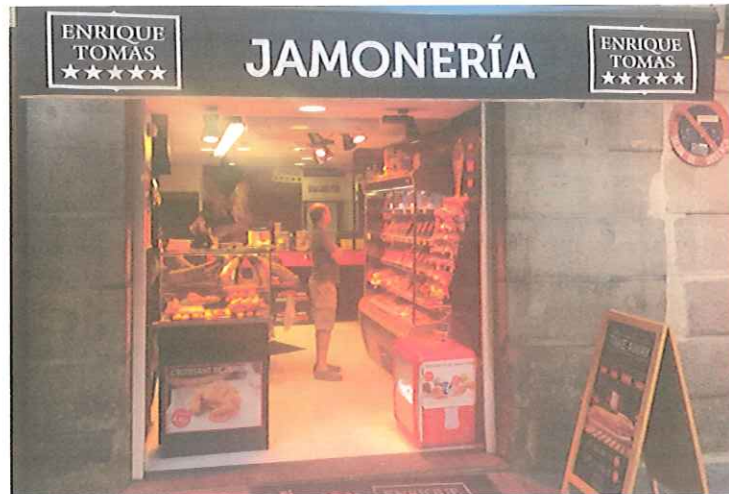
Spanish food tends to be quite different than the foods that we are accustomed to in Latin America, and I enjoyed trying as many different foods as possible. Although some of the food is familiar to anyone from Latin America, it is usually because such foods were brought there by the Spaniards during colonial times. For example, “churros” come from Spain, where they are traditionally consumed with a “*chocolate*” (hot chocolate) that is as thick as pudding. You can put a churro in the *chocolate* and it will stand upright in the cup. Throughout Spain, you can always find a “*Churrería*” shop that specializes in this treat, which is a common breakfast food. Other food items that come from Spain are: *horchata*, *empanadas*, *pan dulce*, *sidra*, *turrón*, *paella* (pictured below, left) and much more.



Spanish cuisine has significantly influenced the foods eaten throughout Latin America and has also been adopted into their traditional cuisines. One thing that is not typical in Spain or in South America, however, is the spicy food consumed particularly in Mexico. Indeed, a per-



son used to the spiciness of the food in Mexico may find both Spanish and South American food somewhat bland. The spiciness of Mexican food comes from the indigenous cultures there, which are not the same in South America and not at all present in Spain. We found that the best food in Spain is along the northern coast: Oviedo, Bilbao, San Sebastian. The food in these regions was unbelievably good, and they “know” it! The display of the food on counters inside restaurants or in the windows was definitely photo worthy. Seafood predominates both in the north and the south of Spain, but many Spaniards tend to consider the seafood from northern Spain to be the best. Although seafood is prevalent throughout the entire country, pork is very popular too. There are entire shops dedicated just to ham and other pork products. Some types of ham cost several hundred euros per kilo. There are places with names like, “Palacio del jamón” (Literally: Ham Palace) where you will see more ham hanging from the ceiling than you will ever see in your life in any one place. Another food item that comes from Spain and has in recent years become popular here in southern California, although it is not done quite “right” here, are the “Tapas.” It consists of small portions of different plates, which in some places in southern Spain are free as long as you pay for the drinks, which are very reasonably priced. By



the way, the word “*tapa*” means “lid” or “cover”. The term comes from the practice in medieval times of a bartender placing a slice of ham, cheese or bread over a drink to protect it from the dusty ambiance of medieval pubs. These “tapas” were typically salty, which made the patron thirstier, resulting in more consumption of wine or beer. These days, tapas have taken on a much more elaborate form, evolving into dishes far more sophisticated than a simple lid on top of your drink. Tapas are usually consumed standing rather than sitting as in a typical meal. Everyone in a group shares the “tapa,” however, no one seems to mind and we certainly didn’t either. In Granada, for example, the tapas were exquisite, and for about \$50 to cover for the price of drinks, six of us had more than we could possibly eat. We found ourselves having to say “*no gracias*,” turning down the unlimited amount of food that just kept coming, so long as we ordered drinks. One of the most common tapas was the “tortilla española.” By the way a “tortilla” *anywhere* outside of Mexico is a dish consisting of eggs, onions and potatoes cooked in a frying pan, ranging from about an inch to three inches in thickness, which is served almost like a pizza; meaning that to serve, wedges are cut out. It can be a meal just by itself or served with a salad and your favorite beverage. I have heard some people particularly in the U.S. compare the tradi-

tional Spanish tortilla to an omelette, but I never really agreed with that comparison because an omelet tends to be folded over and is often stuffed with cheese. A tortilla is never folded over and holds its' form like a slice of quiche and usually does not include cheese. Also one of the requirements of the tortilla is that it contain potatoes. I have often throughout the years made tortilla to take to my classes for my students to sample.

While in Madrid I had the opportunity to visit the Prado museum as well as other museums such as the Reina Sofia museum, which houses the very famous Picasso painting from the Spanish civil war depicting the massacre and violence in the city of Guernica. This painting is also found in every one of our Spanish textbooks. The painting covers almost an entire wall from side to side and from floor to ceiling. Just the size of this painting and its depiction of human cruelty leaves one awe stricken upon encountering it. On one occasion, while exploring an area a bit removed from the Madrid city center, we went to a tiny little chapel that housed beautiful frescos on its ceiling and walls, painted by none other than one of the most famous Spanish painters from the 18th century, Francisco Goya, whose tomb laid at the center of the chapel. One of Goya's most famous paintings, which we had seen at the Prado a few days earlier, depicts the execution on May 3, 1808 of the Spanish patriots who resisted Napoleon's invasion of Spain to install his brother Joseph Bonaparte as the new king of Spain. Near the tiny chapel with Goya's frescos, we visited an adjacent park, and while making our way up a pathway, we found a gate hidden by the overgrowth of shrubs and other plants, obviously not intended to be a tourist destination. It was the entryway to an old stone building in front of which there was a stone pillar with an engraving depicting Goya's painting of the patriots' execution. An inscription on the pillar stated that it was in this location where the French had executed the Spanish patriots, and

where they were buried. We could not go in, it did not seem like a place that was open to the public, but it was really interesting to have stumbled upon it. All of a sudden, these paintings of historical events were coming to life before our very eyes.

At the Plaza Colón in the “high-end” neighborhood of Salamanca in Madrid, there is a relatively new monument dedicated to Columbus and the sailors (the crew), that accompanied him on the voyage to the new world in 1492. The name of every man who sailed with Columbus is inscribed in the massive stone monument surrounded by a large pond, men whose names have for the most part been forgotten in history, overshadowed by Columbus' fame.

While in Madrid we were able to visit the royal palace, which we were informed is the largest in Europe, and many other places of cultural, artistic and historical interest. Along with the tapestries, paintings, clocks, chandeliers and beautifully painted ceilings the royal palace in Madrid houses the largest and most valuable collection of Stradivarius violins. One Stradivarius alone is valued at 1 - 4 million euros. These violins are played during “special” occasions, when there are “special” guests. The violins are on display in a room referred to as the “Stradivarius room”. During the Napoleon invasion of Spain, one of the Stradivarius violas was stolen from the Royal palace and what is now left are a violoncello, a viola and two violins. This collection of instruments is named the “Spanish Quartet” and when these are played at the same time it sounds like a dozen instruments playing at once.

We happened to be in Madrid on Columbus Day, in Spanish referred to as “Día de la Raza” the 12th of October, which like the U.S. is also a national holiday. While walking home at the end of the day we found some of the streets blocked and then heard loud music coming from the other end of the street. Groups of dancers predominantly Peruvian and Bolivian came

down the street all in colorful traditional Andean costumes accompanied by their traditional Andean music. It appeared to be a very cheerful event on this grey rainy day. We watched for about an hour before heading off to a local “*Churrería*” for the traditional hot chocolate and churros. I filmed some of the dances to share with my future classes. While writing this report, I was curious as to why Latin Americans in Spain, in particular those of indigenous heritage, would be celebrating Columbus Day and found the answer in the United Nations website. What is being celebrated is the “Día del idioma español”. The objective of which is to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism, and create an awareness of its interrelationship with history, culture and the development of Spanish as an official language. You can find more on this topic in the United Nations website under “Día del idioma español en las Naciones Unidas - 12 de octubre” (the section is written in Spanish).

Spain is the largest olive producing country in the world. The photo below shows entire hillsides of olive trees. While driving to the southern coast of Spain for more than five hours we saw nothing other than a sea of olive trees, some of them are as old as 500 years. Now imagine this scenery for more than five hours!



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continued

While in the southern portion of Spain I visited the Mesquita in Córdoba (pictured below) and the Alhambra in Granada, both architectural masterpieces of the Moors. The Alhambra was the last stronghold of the Moors in Spain, which was captured by the Christian forces of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, bringing to an end the "reconquista" (the re-conquest) after 800 years.



My favorite place of all was San Sebastian on the northern coast of Spain, near the French border. Not only was the food wonderful, but the scenery was unbelievably beautiful. While on the northern coast in Bilbao we went to the Guggenheim Museum. The special exhibition during the time of my visit were the works of Francis Bacon, a surrealist painter from Ireland.

I travelled to many cities and found so many similarities and also so many differences from city to city, especially when contrasting the northern regions of Spain to the southern regions. The people of Asturias in the north will boast of being the "true" Spain because "they"



were never conquered, whereas the rest of Spain was. Northern Spain does not fit the image of what the average tourist expects Spain to be: bullfights, paella, sangria, beaches and warm weather.

Personally I like the northern part along the coast of the Bay of Biscay the best. The area tends to be rainy, wet and cool most of the year, although summers can get warm, nevertheless still not as hot as the rest of the country. I'll take the lush green hills and mountains and cooler weather of the northern coast any day over the dry hot south full of tourist from all over the world but especially from England. In Málaga alone there are more than 82,000 English expats. I didn't feel that one gets the real Spanish experience in Málaga.



In Segovia, just about an hour outside of Madrid, I was able to visit my favorite castle, actually a reinforced fortress, *El Alcazar*, and admire the Roman aqueduct which to this date still transports water into the city after 2000 years. It's incredible to think that the Romans built this aqueduct so long ago without any of the technology that exists today and it's still functional. It is thought that the Alcazar is where Columbus met with Queen Isabela to request funding for his voyages; although in recent years, the validity of this story has been questioned. The Alcazar was Walt Disney's inspiration for the Sleeping Beauty castle.

We returned from Spain during the first week of November. By the second week of November I was off to South America where in order to cut down on the cost of renting apartments or hotel rooms I was able to stay with my relatives in Cordoba, Argentina for three weeks.

Argentina is predominantly a country of immigrants much like the United States. The assimilation with the little indigenous groups that were already there upon their arrival was mini-

mal hence the country is around 98% white European and 2% indigenous. The heart of the capital Buenos Aires was originally modeled after Paris, France. There is a strong Italian as well as French influence. The musicality of the spoken language is attributed to the Italian influence. Many Italian immigrants came from the northern region and the French from northern predominantly Basque regions. The Spaniards who came were predominantly from Galicia, northern Spain. Not too often do you find an Argentine who is not at least part Italian. There is some influence from Italian in the language, not only in the way it sounds but also with “nouns”. There is also Quechua and Guaraní language influence in the nouns, particularly of foods. For example, “choclo” is the word for corn, “zapallo” is pumpkin, “chauchas” are string beans and “porotos” are beans.

A very common combination in Argentina would be of a person being of half Spanish and half Italian decent. Or Spanish, Italian and French. People tend to think there are a lot of Germans in Argentina which is not necessarily true. Only around 3 million people in the entire country are of German decent with the majority of the population being a mixture of Spanish, Italian or French decent.

One of the first things that one notices upon visiting Argentina is the accent or sound of the language that I already spoke about earlier in this report and then the appearance of the majority of the people being predominantly white European.

Argentina is also home to one of the largest Jewish communities in Latin America. There are currently 250,000 Jews living in Argentina. The majority of the Jewish population lives in the capital, Buenos Aires. Jews in Argentina are predominantly Ashkenazi, coming from Eastern Europe, Germany and France. A smaller percentage are Sephardic descending from Spain in par-

ticular, northern Africa and the Middle East. Jewish migration to Argentina began as early as the 16th century to escape the inquisition in Europe. There were other waves of Jewish immigration throughout history. As a matter of fact I was told that in Buenos Aires you will find the only other “kosher” McDonalds outside of Israel.

Argentine food is quite different from foods in other Latin American countries. Starting with the most traditional beverage being “mate” which is traditionally consumed by putting the “yerba mate” leaves in a gourd also referred to by the same name “mate” then adding hot, not boiling, water and a “bombilla,” a straw made from stainless steel usually with a copper tip and a small strainer at the base that is inserted into the leaves in the gourd. The mate is sucked through the “bombilla”. The drinking of “mate “ is quite a ritual. Many people sip on the “bombilla” all day long sometimes forgetting to eat. But the most traditional way to drink “mate” is for one person to start by sipping the mate in its entirety then filling it up with hot water and passing it on to someone else to do the same. If there are two people or twenty people, everyone drinks from the same “mate”. When I travelled to Misiones in northern Argentina I stayed in a very modest hotel that included a breakfast buffet. On the buffet table there was “one” mate with a “bombilla” in it and a thermos with hot water next to it for *everyone* staying in the hotel to share. I have been raised in a culture where sharing mate with family members or close friends was acceptable, but the idea of having to share “mate” with perhaps fifty strangers was a little uncomfortable to me. When I returned home I mentioned to my cousins that there was one mate in the hotel buffet for everyone in the hotel to share. Their response was, “sí, ¿y?” meaning, “yes, and...?” After that I did not mention it anymore. I suppose that means for me to give my students a true cultural expe-

rience of “mate” I should take *one* mate with me to class and have all 25 - 30 students drink from the same one. I wonder how well that would work?



Mate with curved bombilla



Mate with elaborate bombilla

Argentina is also well known for the best beef in the world. *Asado* is the Argentine word for steak. If you are going to be grilling beef, which is the most common way to prepare it, you would be having “un asado” at your home. Steak in Argentina, if you are a meat lover, is really incredibly good. It really does not matter where you have it, whether it’s at home a fine restaurant or a hole in the wall. Argentine beef is good and tastes entirely different from beef in the



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U.S. It is usually grilled over a wood fire, branches from a specific tree, often “quebracho” are used. It is cooked up very slowly along with sausages like “morcilla,” “chinchulín,” and if the budget allows for it “corderito,” lamb. This is very traditional especially on a Sunday afternoon. Similar to Spain, dinner is served after 9:00 PM and possibly after midnight for some people. Lunch tends to be around 2:00 PM again also similar to Spain. Foods tend to be quite different from other Latin American countries. There is a strong Italian influence and also dishes similar to northern European stews, roasts and boiled meat preparations are common. “Milanesa” similar to chicken fried steak is very common and empanadas are present everywhere; often as an accompaniment to another meat dish. Spicy foods are non-existent. *Dulce de leche* (similar to caramel) is the “national” dessert and tends to be part of every sweet delicacy. It is also commonly used as a spread on toast for breakfast.

I would like to add a little cultural information about the “tango”. Everywhere outside of Argentina people equate the “tango” both the music and the dance to Argentina. Fact is the “tango” is specifically from Buenos Aires. It is not representative of the entire country neither in the style of the music nor the lyrics or language that is heard in the songs. The rest of the country has folk music that is entirely different, played with entirely different instruments and danced with folk costumes that range back to the epoch of the first wave of immigrants not unlike the colonial era dresses that women wore in the United States. The men dress in traditional “gaucho” clothing the style depending on the region of the country.

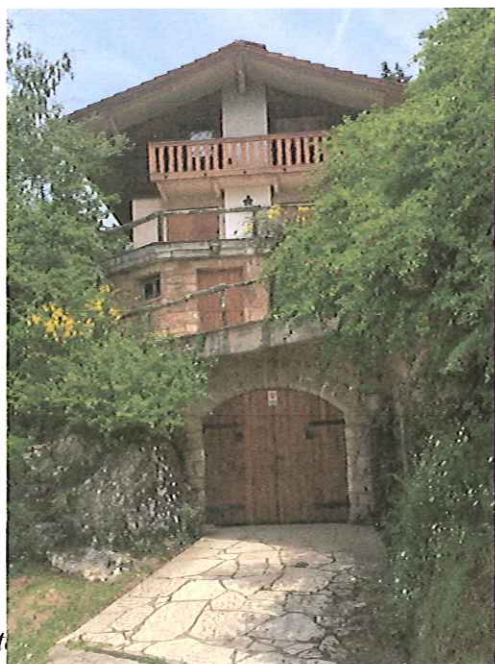
Córdoba is known for its many universities and considered a “centro universitario” of the country. Córdoba was settled by Jesuit priests in the early 17th century. They brought progress in the form of the first university in the country founded in 1613, and also created agricultural and

industrial establishments. In the province of Córdoba, there is a city called Alta Gracia (High grace). Here you can visit the home of Ernesto “Che” Guevara where he lived from the time he was 4 years old until he went to the university to study medicine. Referred to as el “Che”, he was Castro’s right hand man in the Cuban revolution and was later ambushed in 1967 in Bolivia and assassinated. Che lived a great part of his young life in Córdoba because he suffered severely from asthma and Córdoba was often recommended to people who were afflicted with respiratory problems. As a matter of fact, health issues were the reason my family ended up in Córdoba from Buenos Aires just a couple of generations ago. I have been trying to imagine el Che speaking with the Cordobés accent. I have listened to a few recordings of interviews with Che and also of talks he gave at the UN in the early and mid 60s and detected a very slight Cuban accent that he must have picked up living in Cuba. He still had the distinctive musicality that is inherent in the Argentine manner of speaking. Which brings me to the point I alluded to earlier in this report regarding “my” accent.

When I am outside of Argentina, to other native speakers of Spanish, I have an unmistakable Argentine accent; however, when I am in Argentina, for the first time in my life people detected something in my accent that was not quite “all” Argentine. I attribute it to the fact that I’m surrounded by native speakers all from different Spanish speaking countries at work daily and when I come home to a Cuban husband. Anywhere outside of Argentina I am identified as Argentine, but the really strong Argentine accent can be maintained by living in the country surrounded by everyone else speaking with the same accent. Another interesting experience that I had in regards to the language itself was an admonishment by an Argentine university professor that I should not be referring to the language of Spanish as “español” because only the españoles,

meaning the people from Spain speak español, in the Americas we speak castellano. The term “español” for the language is predominately used in the United States, Mexico and possibly some areas of the Caribbean. If you were to ask for example a Colombian or a Peruvian or a Costa Rican what language they speak, they will tell you “castellano”. Getting back to the language, I believe we tend to simplify the language that we teach here, particularly in southern California. I found that the everyday Spanish both in Spain and in Argentina would be difficult for our students and they would really have to spend some time in the country for anything to eventually sound intelligible to them. The level of the spoken language both in Argentina and Spain was much more sophisticated than what we deal with here, even for non-academic level conversations and the velocity with which it is uttered would be too fast for a student of Spanish. I say this as a native speaker myself. These trips have been of great value for my own language skills.

In the Province of Córdoba, I had the opportunity to visit the *Sierras* of Córdoba. This is a mountainous area where there are little towns established by predominantly Swiss and German settlers. I didn't hear people speaking German, but noticed that I could have goulash (although



originally Hungarian) with beer and then have apfelstrudel for dessert. This region was settled by German and Swiss immigrants about 80 years ago and the character is definitely Germanic. The pictures that I have included here are of an area called: "La Cumbrecita" The word "cumbre" by itself refers to a mountain-top. Notice the architecture.

I have come to the conclusion after taking these long trips to both Latin America and to Spain that when it comes to really becoming fluent in the language the only way a student is really going to become fluent in the language will be by spending some time in the country, perhaps a "Study Abroad " trip in which *all* of the courses are in Spanish not in English. Taking the students to Spain or to Costa Rica or Mexico and having them take courses in English doesn't make sense from a language acquisition perspective. Anything students might learn while they are out traveling through the country and cities is quickly undone by hours of lectures conducted in English or returning to a dorm in which roommates are not native speakers of Spanish, which I believe is basically what the study abroad trips to Hispanic countries currently entail, and is counterproductive from a language acquisition perspective. One course in Spanish is not sufficient. We should have programs in which the student would be totally submerged in the language and culture. That would be a real opportunity to learn the language. As I walked through the various cities both in Spain and Argentina I couldn't help but say to myself, "my God, there isn't much we can really do in a classroom environment to prepare students for the *real thing*". The only way anyone will ever become truly fluent both linguistically and culturally will be to put them in the country and not teach them classes in English, but rather have the entire program in the target language.

In our classes we teach our students or at least “try” to expose them to as much of the culture that is reflected in the language that we are trying to teach. This is also one of our “learning objectives” so I’m very excited to have gathered so much information and hundreds of pictures that I will be using in my classes. And of all the things I saw and experienced the most beautiful was a three day visit to the Iguazú falls in Misiones, Argentina. (*Northern Argentina*) It is said



that when Elenor Rosevelt visited the Igaúzú Falls her comment was, “Oh... poor Niagara” I now understand.

Both photos show “Iguazú Falls” *las Cataratas del Iguazú* from the Argentine side. The Iguazú Falls are the largest waterfalls in the world. The word igauzú comes from the Guaraní language and means, “big water”. The tallest or highest waterfall in the world is “Angel Falls” *El Salto de*



Angel in Venezuela, named after a pilot who inadvertently discovered them when his plane crashed near the waterfalls. He survived.

I would like to add a little story that I promised my husband I would include in this report that he claims some of you history buffs will enjoy. My married name, Sotolongo, taken from my husband's side of the family is a northern Spanish name. This is the story: Several years ago perhaps early 60s and 70s my father-in-law commissioned a study of the family name because he wanted to know the family history. According to the report that he received, the Sotolongo name originated in a little village in Asturias, Spain, called Soto de Cangas in the municipality of Can-

ga de Onis. While traveling through northern Spain my husband and I drove to Soto de Cangas which is about 60 kilometers east of Oviedo at the foot of the Picos de Europa, among the highest mountains in Spain. The area is gorgeous, near the entrance to a national park, verdant, with rivers and brooks everywhere. It turns out it is a significant place in the history of Spain and perhaps for Western civilization. Soto de Cangas is only about 4-5 kilometers from Covadonga, where a historic battle took place in the year 722. As some of you may know, in the year 711 the Moors invaded Spain and quickly took over most of the Iberian Peninsula. Their advance was stopped by Christian forces under the command of the Asturian (*from Asturias*) king Don Pelayo in the battle of Covadonga. Historians consider the battle of Covadonga as the beginning of the “Reconquista” of Spain, which took over 800 years, culminating under Ferdinand and Isabela in 1492. Hence, the Asturian refrain “Asturias es España, el resto es tierra conquistada” (*Asturias is Spain, the rest is conquered land*). My husband would like to think that his ancestors fought alongside Don Pelayo, although it is more likely that they just ran for the hills. (-: According to the maps and diagrams that are available in the area giving an outline of the battle, the Moorish army went straight through Soto de Cangas and were ambushed by Pelayo’s forces just down the road in Covadonga, at a mountain pass.

There isn’t much to the actual town of Soto de Cangas, just a dozen or so buildings and homes, many falling apart in this beautiful but impoverished hamlet. My husband concluded that he can understand now why the Sotologos left for Cuba in the 1500s, according to the study.



Photo: Soto de Cangas (*Northern Spain*)

In conclusion, as a language professor this has been an invaluable experience for me. I have returned to El Camino this semester with great enthusiasm to share with my students and colleagues hundreds of pictures and hours of videos to animate my lectures on Spain and the Latin American culture and my experiences throughout my travels. I drove more than 3000 kilometers in Spain alone and visited many regions throughout the entire country. I also have my memories and stories to share with my students about life, art, foods, history and music of the Spanish culture that goes beyond anything we could ever provide for them with a textbook. Thanks to this wonderful opportunity that I had I will be able to encourage students to learn the language and to travel by sharing with them my experiences and advice. The foreign language department has an SLO at all levels (Spanish 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 21 & 22) that deals specifically with the culture of the language. This experience will help me add more dimension to my classes on this topic. Also I learned that the ability to speak and be understood by a native speaker of the

Identification of photos used throughout this report
All photos were taken by me using my iPhone.

Cover page: Center - Alcazar in Segovia, bottom left Roman Aqueduct in Segovia, bottom right San Sebastian in northern Spain.

Page 5: Cobbled stone medieval street in Toledo, Spain

Page 6: Left - Paella, right - "pintxos" (*pronounced, pinchos*) and "caña" (*beer*) in northern Spain, Basque country

Page 7: Jamonería (*ham shop*) Madrid

Page 10: An endless "sea" of olive trees along the highway to Andalucía, southern Spain

Page 11: Interior of the Mezquita, in Córdoba, southern Spain

Page 12: Church in Elciego, La Rioja (*famous wine region of Spain*)

Page 13: El Alcazar in Segovia (*About one hour outside of Madrid*)

Page 16: Two top photos depict mate with the bombilla (*something like a straw made of metal*) inside each one of the mates. (Pronounced "ma" as in "mama" and "te" as in "ten") Behind the mate on the right is a bag with loose leaf mate tea.

Page 16: Bottom photo - typical Argentine style barbecue of beef, sausages and red bell peppers cooked with an egg in the middle. Wood is used, never coals nor gas.

Page 19: Bottom left typical Swiss style home in La Cumbrecita and Calamuchita
Bottom right, typical germanic style bar/pub. Both in Argentina.

Page 21: Cataratas del Iguazú (Igauzú Falls) in Misiones, northern Argentina

Page 22: Cataratas del Iguazú, Misiones, Argentina. Photo taken from the top of the falls.

Page 24: Homes 800+ years old. Soto de Cangas, northern coast of Spain.