

## Erasmus+ Spanish Language Course 22<sup>nd</sup> October-26<sup>th</sup> October 2018

This half term, three members of Sharples' staff travelled to Gran Canaria on the first of our Erasmus+ funded Spanish language and methodology courses. Miss Southern, Mr Hesford and Mrs Fairclough set off bright and early (on Sunday morning) and arrived in GC at lunch time where Mrs Fairclough was able to celebrate her birthday on the beach.



The rest of the Sunday was spent getting familiarised with the island and preparing for the intensive course to come. After a lovely meal on the sea front, the staff were treated to an impromptu firework display (planned, of course, by Miss Southern and Mr Hesford in honour of Mrs Fairclough's birthday!) to round off an excellent first day on the island.



On Monday morning, the three teachers found themselves in an unfamiliar position: that of students! Armed with notebooks, pens and highlighters galore, they arrived at the local café where a delicious breakfast was served each morning. This was the first time they met the other students, six teaching assistants from a London primary school, the course organiser, Chris Souvlis from the British Council, and their host for the week, Daniela Cicic from the MBA.



After croissants and pastries, and copious amounts of coffee consumed, the party headed to the MBA where they met Elena, their Spanish teacher for the week. Monday morning was a jaw-dropping introduction to language learning: over three hours of Spanish, covering: greetings, the alphabet, numbers up to 100, useful questions, how to conjugate verbs, feminine and masculine words, days of the week and animals!



After such a mind-boggling start, the staff were somewhat shell-shocked. Thankfully, Spanish custom came to the rescue and a 'siesta' of three hours was scheduled. This gave the staff a chance to try local food, get to grips with some of the vocabulary they have learnt in the morning and unwind. This was something Miss Southern truly excelled at!



The afternoon consisted of another 3 and a quarter hour lesson with another teacher, Fernando Gonzales. This session focused on applying the learning from the morning session and methods to use in the Spanish classroom, including songs, and this tricky tongue twister:

Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo

Three sad tigers swallowed wheat

en tres tristes trastos en un trigal,

in three sad things in a wheat field

en un trigal tres tristes tigres

in a wheat field three sad tigers

tragaban trigo en tres tristes

swallowed wheat in three sad

trastos.

things

Monday evening was spent with the whole party at a lovely restaurant on the seafront. This gave the staff from both schools an opportunity to get to know one another and put their recently-acquired Spanish knowledge to the test. There really is nothing better than hunger for making you speak in a foreign language!

Tuesday followed the same pattern in terms of lesson times and breaks. In the morning lesson with Elena, the students covered numbers over 100, singular and plural terms, cities, countries, professions, personal qualities, date, time, location and prices. The afternoon was once again spent applying the morning's learning and putting together biographies of each other in Spanish.

On Wednesday, our teachers were fortunate enough to visit Teresiano school where they had a tour of the school. The school has over a thousand students between 3-18 and our staff were able to observe lessons in English, History, Economics and Maths, as well as chatting with the students and teachers. The teachers were enthusiastic and spoke of the importance of learning languages. The students were something else! Our three teachers marvelled at the confidence and skill these students demonstrated when talking about their school: all in perfect English! Mr Hesford in particular was impressed with some Halloween stories a group were writing (especially the one about the clown painting!) in their second language. The young people were a credit to their school.





It was a fantastic experience and could lead to a pupil exchange programme in the coming years!



Wednesday afternoon was spent on a tour of Las Palmas Old Town with Daniela, where our teachers learned the history of the city and the island, as well as getting tips about where the best bargains were to be found. A well-deserved evening of tourism ensued:







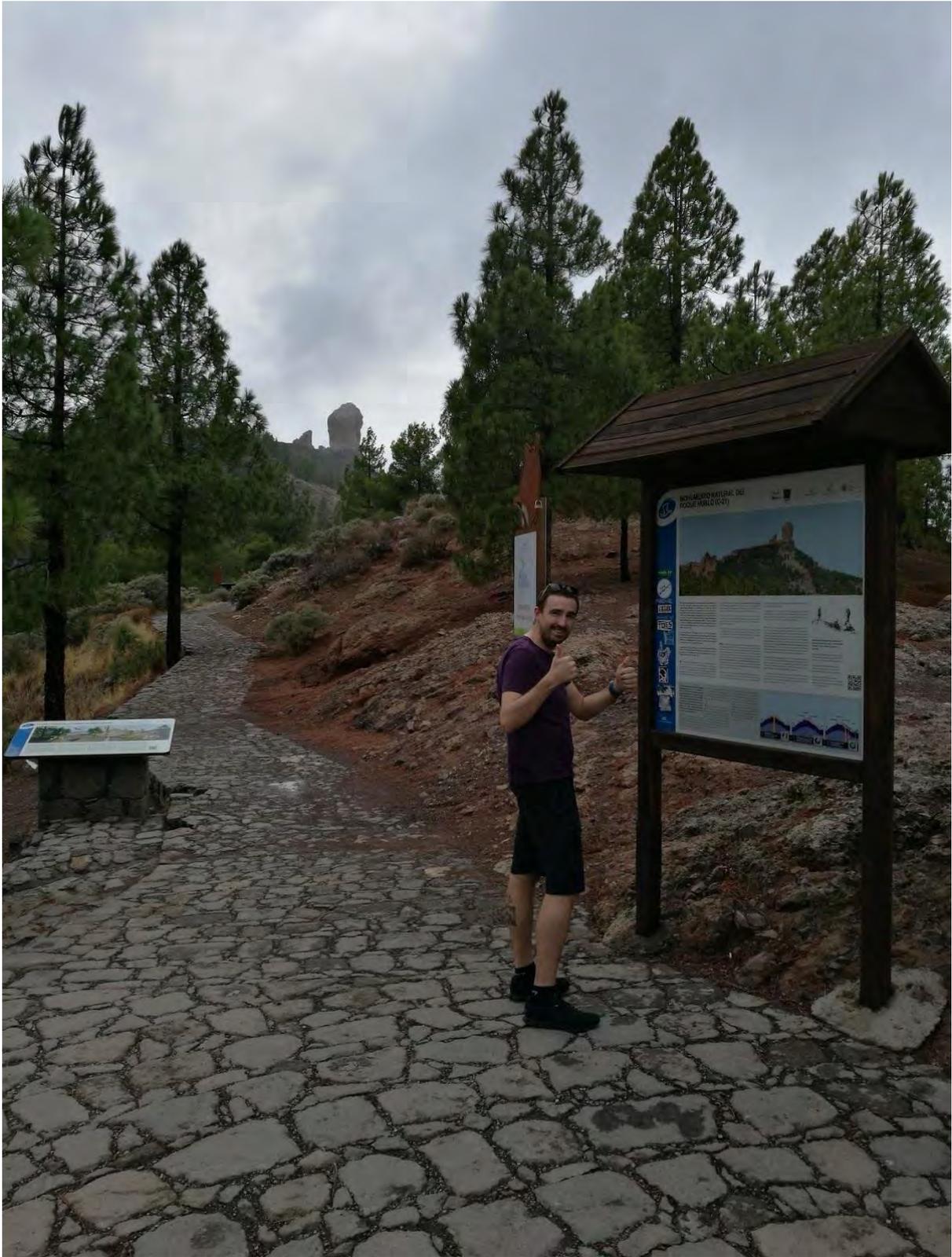
On Thursday morning, the Boltonians were reminded of home with an epic thunderstorm, which they were entirely unprepared for! Who would have thought that umbrellas would be needed on an island just 90 miles from the Sahara Desert?



Rain didn't stop learning; it was back to learning with Elena and Fernando. The Sharples staff covered adjectives, colours, body parts, emotions, time and weather in another intensive session. The afternoon was left free and our three amigos took to the road; renting a car to explore the island. First was the south coast for lunch, where the weather was slightly improved, followed by a long drive through the stunning countryside of the mountains back to Las Palmas. The climb up the mountain was breathtakingly beautiful, weaving up to over 1500m above sea level on roads that would have looked perfect on any Tour de France mountain stage. A mixture of excitement and fear seemed to grip Miss Southern as she descended through clouds and fog down narrow, winding roads back to our accommodation.







Friday could best be described as bittersweet. The sun's return was welcomed and the excitement of finishing the course, as well as receiving diplomas, brought about a sense of anticipation. However, this was tinged with the sad realisation that a truly memorable experience was coming to an end. Learning Spanish had been the aim on the course but something more had come from a week on the island of Gran Canaria. The enthusiasm of

Elena and Fernando; the support from Dani and Chris before and during the event; the chance to learn from teachers in another school: it was sad to be saying goodbye to it all. Solace came from the fact that the experience could be described as life-changing.



The final morning started with a dictation and reading task. This was followed by verbs, animals and directions; the learning was relentless! The final moments with Elena took place in the gardens of the MBA's school.



The final afternoon session with Fernando was a shorter one of an hour to allow time for presentations, photographs and goodbyes. The excitement at receiving their certificates was clear to see!



The earlier finish allowed for a sunset walk along the pier; the perfect end to a week of very intense but hugely enjoyable lessons! After missing out on it on previous nights, our staff were able to watch the sun set over the mountains and bring an end to their Spanish experience.





However, they weren't quite done with Spain and learning Spanish. With a later flight on Saturday, there was a chance to do some last-minute running (this wasn't just Mr Hesford!), sightseeing and shopping. And of course, before departing, the compulsory seaside ice-cream was enjoyed in the Old Town.



All three of our teachers enjoyed the course tremendously and would like to thank the MBA business school for their hospitality and excellent teaching throughout the week. They have returned to Sharples with an abundance of ideas of how to use and extend their learning and skills. Watch this space for some very exciting developments.