

Transcript

[Interviewer]

Hello again and welcome to another installment of our Ullandhaug Exchange podcast and once again, I'm very happy to be joined here with our international students who have been studying with US during this autumn semester in 2023 and they will introduce themselves.

[Elena]

Hello, my name is Elena and I'm from Valencia, Spain and I'm 21 and I'm studying English studies in Spain.

[Mireia]

Hello, my name is Mireia. I am 21 years old. I'm from Spain, Barcelona and I'm starting to become a primary school teacher.

[Interviewer]

OK, welcome again and thank you for doing this for us. So, you are both studying to be teachers, so why teachers of English?

[Elena]

Well, in my case I just wanted to become a teacher when I was a child. I have a huge blackboard in my in my room and my mom once told me, why don't you want to be an English one? And yeah, I wasn't sure, but then I had a really good English teacher, and she's today. She's my friend. And yeah, I decided to to go ahead with that idea. And I'm really proud of myself because of choosing that that degree, to be honest.

[Mireia]

And for me, I didn't know if I wanted to become a teacher before starting the career because I was either to start primary education or to become like an interpreter and translator because languages are something that have always called me. But I decided to go for being a teacher. Cause I've always been surrounded by kids and I don't know. I think it was something natural. But then I am in the fourth year of university. We need to choose a specialization. So, I was deciding to do the English 1, so I could have more opportunity, I guess internationally. And I've been enjoying it so far.

[Interviewer]

That's good to hear. And how is the program here different from the program back home at your universities?

[Mireia]

I think here, it's much more practical in a sense. Maybe it's also because we are in our last year and I think the career of education, it becomes more practical towards the ending of it. We in Barcelona started being much more theoretical wise. But here I think there's a good balance. in combining both theory and both practice, because also in Barcelona, we also do the teaching practices and everything, but I think every year it's different. I think, here, they have achieved to have a very good combination or balance and I think a lot of things we already did in Barcelona, but in a much more theoretical way, so I think we were able to also develop more our abilities. And I've enjoyed it a lot, to be honest.

[Elena]

In my case it was my very first time doing my practice period here in Norway. I was so scared because I never taught a whole class. So my very first time in front of a Norwegian class and they were 15. And I was, like, scared at the beginning, but everything went very well. And yeah, I think it's a good option to combine the practice and the theoretical part. And yeah, I'm so excited to go back to Spain and do my practice there because I'm in my 4th course and I didn't do my practice yet..

[Interviewer]

And, because you both mentioned that, so is there anything that surprised you when you went to your practice period in schools here or was there something that you expected to find but you didn't?

[Elena]

Hmm.

[Mireia]

So for me, for example, I was very surprised of, first of all, that we went to, like I wasn't supposed, like to go at the start because I'm starting for primary, but here it was secondary, I believe, because it was year 10. But I really enjoyed teaching and exchanging opinions with young ones that were more grown than the ones I'm used to working with, and I was very surprised that I found it more enriching than I would have expected. Also, I think maybe because the level of English, it was very high, so maybe with the younger ones it wouldn't have been that possible. But it surprised me that I enjoyed it quite more than I

would have expected, and everyone was so nice, so welcoming in the school, I think we felt very comfortable there.

[Elena]

Yeah. I think that the main difference talking about the English part is the level of English and they had they have a really good level of English and the topics to work with are not the same as in Spain. We cannot work with a topic here with the same age in Spain. So we have to change. And they are very different. Yeah. But we really enjoy it. And talking about some topic, specific topics, with the pupils and yeah, it was such an experience. Yeah.

[Interviewer]

Good. It's good. It's good to hear. And was this Erasmus exchange the first that you've done or have you done some exchanges before?

[Elena]

Yeah. In my case it's my second exchange. I went to England, to Southampton and I stayed there for four months, and it was such an experience I learned a lot. It's very different from here, to be honest. And yeah, it was so important to me, enriching, that I wanted to repeat, and well, I learned a lot - not only English, but the way of life. And yeah, I decided to go to yeah, I wanted to go to an English country, like English speaking country. But yeah, in the northern part, they really know how to. Yeah, I have no problem to communicate in English because I have no idea about Norwegian. So yeah, and I have no problem to communicate. And they all know English perfectly. So yeah.

[Interviewer]

OK, so this is this is a a second time for you. How about for you, Mireia?

[Mireia]

For me it's the first time that I do an exchange. The most similar, I wouldn't even say it was like English summers, where you meet other people and you go to a different country and it was really enriching. To be honest, I would recommend 100% everyone that is thinking about starting doing an Erasmus to do it! Don't... have faith that it will go better than you expect, because in my case I think it went better than I expected for multiple reasons, but also because I had the opportunity to meet also a lot of people that are quite different from me and I think it helped towards my academical and personal and also professional path, to say so.

[Interviewer]

So was there anything particular about the UiS that you saw and then you decided to come here. Or, it was just one of the options, and you said "well, why not!"

[Mireia]

So, for me as I decided to do the specialization in English, we had different options that we could choose between. And I knew that one of the countries was Norway, and I've always been quite interested in the northern countries such as Finland, Sweden, and Norway, and but I think Norway was the the one that took my attention the most and in the different options. Actually, Stavanger wasn't my first option. It was the second one because I was thinking to go to Oslo because of the university also, but I don't regret not being accepted into Oslo because I was accepted here as the second choice and I think it was meant for a reason. So I'm really happy that I got to come here.

[Interviewer]

Yeah, probably for a reason. How about for you?

[Elena]

Yeah, the educational system is very rich and to be honest, the first time I did my exchange, Norway was not in the list. So as soon as I was in England and I saw the the new country added in the list and I saw Stavanger, Norway well, I didn't know anything about Stavanger, but I OK. And I said, "why not"? I decided to repeat it, and to be honest, in summer, I I didn't want to come here because I was so scared to repeat the experience and Why Norway? It's so far away from Spain. And now as you can see, I I'm crying because I I don't want to leave.

[Interviewer]

So we can always come back and visit. We're always very happy to see you!

[Elena]

Yeah, for sure. Yeah, yeah!

[Interviewer]

So, when you think about the student life, how was it outside of the classroom and how was it inside the classroom?

[Elena]

Well, inside the classroom, in my case, I had four days per week, 4 hours per day. And yeah, in Spain I have two hours a class and here they are like 4 hours long. But they were dynamic. And yeah, I had so much fun as well. We I thought I was gonna spend my class

with international students. But we were like 5 Spanish ones and the rest were all Norwegians, so it was a real class of Norway and I really, really enjoyed it. And on the other hand, the well outdoor part, outside classroom, yeah, in my case, I had to work and to read, but I really had time, you know.

[Interviewer]

Oh, imagine that you have to work and to read while studying at the same time. Ohh.

[Elena]

But no, but I really had a good time and and yeah, and I had a lot of free time as well. So yeah, I really enjoyed it.

[Mireia]

I also agree with Elena. I think we were Spanish ones and Norwegians, so I think it was really interesting to see the different points of view and exchanging opinions inside the classroom and also outside the classroom. I think for the student life, we got multiple opportunities here in the university. And the amount of work that we had to do, in my opinion, it's not that it was much more less, but maybe it was much more fun or less demanding than I am normally used to in Spain and also the time in class goes by surprisingly fast at times. So I think I could combine like my social life with also studying. And not having, like, having good grades to say so or feel proud, so yeah.

[Interviewer]

It's good to hear. So it means you had some time to travel around for sure. OK, what nice places did you see in the region or in Norway or in Scandinavia?

[Elena]

If someone is thinking about coming here, don't forget to hike. In my case, we went to Preikenstolen and well, think about it -early in August in September, because otherwise it would be snowing and or so cold. Then the Kirrag, don't forget to go to Bergen, Oslo. I went to Copenhagen and what else... Oh, we've gone to Tromsø to Lofoten as well. Ohh yeah, everything is so nice here and I fell in love with the country, to be honest. Yeah.

[Mireia]

I didn't travel as much as Elena, but I think I was more, like, local, to be honest, but I also went to Bergen again, because I was here in Norway. I did a road trip with my parents, like, some years ago. So I was lucky and had the opportunity to visit a lot of places here in Norway. And I was here in Stavanger also, like for two days, so I knew a bit the city when I

came here. But yeah, here I think I had more opportunity of doing hikes and also visiting places that maybe are less visited, to say so, or that are not found easily, such as little islands or just going to cabins and I really enjoyed spending the time, more chill, to say so, because the life here, the rhythm of life, is very different from Barcelona or Valencia maybe if I can say so.

[Elena]

And Stavanger is such a beautiful city. Center is handsome.

[Interviewer]

It is, it is. It's good to hear. Of course. And, you mentioned you've visited before, but in general, how did you prepare yourself for coming here - in all sorts of ways?

[Elena]

Umm well, at the beginning you are scared. You you have to come here thinking you're gonna make a lot of friends. You have to prepare everything. And in case of Norway, take a lot of clothes with you and everything and. yeah, well, you have to to do some papers and some arrangements. But yeah, in my case everything was so easy, both in my home university and here, they facilitated me everything. So yeah, everything was.

[Mireia]

And I also think it was quite complicated at the start because there are a lot of things to do when they, like, accept you. For example, in the home university, but then you need to contact the university you're going to. So there are a lot of paperwork, but they are easy to do. But I think the process of awaiting gets more heavy than actually what it is, but I think once you have it more or less all solved, and as Elena said, they resolve the problems very quickly and they keep in contact constantly and they answer pretty fast. I think it was smooth, to say so. And yeah, I think you just need to prepare a little bit mentally that maybe staying away from home if you haven't before, like, living alone and everything, it might be quite challenging at first. But then, me, for example, I didn't know how to put the washing machine before - and now I'm expert!

[Elena]

Yeah, you realize everything!

[Mireia]

I think it helps you mature more that you're actually come here so. I think it's pretty cool, yeah.

[Interviewer]

Well, that's definitely so I, I guess. And did you have any expectations before you came?

[Elena]

Well, expectations. I was thinking about watching the Northern Lights. Yeah, and expectations of Norway. The the first thing I I came up with when I think about Norway are snow, Northern lights and staying at home the whole day.

[Interviewer]

Mm-hmm. So no, no, no, no.

[Elena]

No, we had a little bit of snow in Stavanger. I saw the Northern Lights, but in the north of Norway in Tromsø, and yeah, I was outside the the whole Erasmus. So I was not at home because yeah, I thought I was going to spend the whole day at home because of the cold. Yeah, but, no, it was not like that.

[Mireia]

Yeah. For me it was like, as you said, it's not as colder as I expected. I don't know if maybe it's personal, but. I didn't expect it to snow here personally, cause I know we're like far in the South. So for me it was quite enjoyable to see every day - like not every day - but like, the season or like the period that it snowed to wake up, and or like suddenly, it started snowing and also I think the social life here like the party life, as I'm used to in Barcelona, it wouldn't be as much as I expected, but I had so much fun and I think maybe it was quite of a different rhythm, also 'cause they closed a lot of early, a lot more early here, but I think it was pretty enjoyable, and it's also the rhythm of everyone going. It's pretty more calm and just taking your time to do the things, don't rush into going to every place.

[Elena]

Yeah, we had such a really good environment among the international students. Yeah, the Spanish, Italian friends and. It was, yeah, yeah. Good vibes.

[Interviewer]

So, to kind of finish up, is there any advice that you would give somebody coming to the UiS or somebody coming to the teacher education program?

[Elena]

So, in my case, don't think twice. Go ahead if you have the opportunity, go ahead with it you're not gonna regret. And if you go, for example, here in Stavanger, don't stay at home. Go out! You're gonna meet a lot of friends. Not only, like, be open minded. Enjoy every moment from the first day. And yeah, I don't know. Enjoy a lot from the very first day. Yeah.

[Mireia]

I also do agree, like if you haven't done an Erasmus before and you're thinking of doing it, don't think twice. You're going to meet a lot of people. You're going to make new relationships. It will help you mature more than you already come here, as like individual and also as as social human being. And it will be enriching no matter what. Maybe the first times will be quite challenging and it will be difficult when you come here and also when you say goodbye because you will get definitely attached to people, but I think it's very useful for having connections and also, it's an excuse to do trips! Yeah. And you form a family here.

[Interviewer]

And for future. Now, Twinning classrooms and getting projects together and maybe cooperating as future teachers that opens up a lot more possibilities, I guess.

[Mireia]

Definitely do it, yeah.

[Interviewer]

Yeah, that's good to hear. Well, thank you both, and thank you for answering our questions and congratulations for finishing the semester and stay in touch!

[Mireia]

Yeah, for sure!

[Elena]

Thank you very much, it was a pleasure.