What changes, personally and linguistically, do you see in the students after the seven-week Program?

The word I hear the most at the end of the program is “independence.” I don’t really think that the students are aware of how much more “independent” they become. Independence means not only that now students are able to take care of themselves, which is certainly true, but they also become responsible for the learning process.

The most obvious change is, of course, linguistically. When they arrive in Spain, for example, they can barely explain what they want to eat! The first week is the most painful one because the majority of them can’t express themselves nor even understand what their host families are saying. They feel frustrated, but each day they learn more and more and by the third week the communication is not an issue anymore.

Along with the new language and culture, they are also discovering who they really are. They have to face on their own—probably for the first time—the many challenges they encounter during the seven weeks. It is a new culture, new language, new people and a different support system. They all have to figure it out by themselves. Now they are responsible for the choices they make. It is a discovering process. This experience helps to shape their character. It is amazing to see how much they grow in seven weeks. They arrive in Spain as adolescents and leave as young adults, prepared for the many challenges they will encounter in “real life.”

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