

Dilnoza Khasilova

## World Language and Culture Intensive Summer Camp: Window to the World with Access the World

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### Introduction

Access the World with World Languages and Cultures (AWWLC) is a summer program hosted by the University of Wyoming (UW). AWWLC's mission is to provide access to everyone (adults 16-80) who wants to learn world languages (including less-commonly-taught languages) and gain awareness of world cultures in a nonformal setting. The program offers a nonformal, non-institutionalized (e.g., semi-structured) learning setting driven by unique student needs and desires (Khasilova & Weatherford, 2020). In this nonformal setting, learners interact with their native-speaking instructors to design an authentic, contextualized, hands-on/minds-on, and self-paced world language and culture curriculum that addresses each student's unique goals and responds to each student's favored learning styles.

The program is committed to 21st-century linguistic and cultural literacy to cultivate lifelong learning, appreciation, and enthusiasm for world languages and cultures. AWWLC views language and culture as inseparable and strives to integrate both teaching and learning simultaneously. The AWWLC works to create learning communities to nurture cross-cultural communication and understanding. The participants of AWWLC and UW's World Language and Culture Program (WLCP) community members have ties to other states in the region. We are happy to extend our service beyond Wyoming.

The AWWLC organization was established because of the WLCP, a campus service learning program, to reach a broader audience across the state and the country. The World Language and

Culture Program (WLCP) was launched in 2014 to serve our Laramie community and University of Wyoming (UW) campus members. I am the founder of the WLCP, and I earned my doctoral degree in literacy studies from the University of Wyoming. I developed the WLCP in 2013 to bring awareness of diverse languages and cultures. The WLCP is a volunteer and service-learning program that offers free world language and culture sessions to all interested throughout the state.

The WLCP provides opportunities to build a lifelong learning community of learners, develop cross-cultural understandings, service learning and teaching, volunteerism, engagement, internationalization, and language and culture exposure. As the director of the WLCP, I have been recognized for my work. I have received multiple awards from several professional communities, including the Wyoming Foreign Language Teachers Association, the Pacific Northwest Council for Languages, and the Association for International Educators (NAFSA) for providing unique service to the community members and for engaging diverse volunteers through the WLCP.

The volunteer WLCP facilitators include local and international students, faculty and staff, UW members who travel overseas or speak a world language, alumni, exchange students, visiting scholars, and local and international community members. The sessions usually occur every semester in fall and spring once a week. However in the summer of 2022, WLCP offered short-intensive programming. The AWWLC's summer intensive language and culture program aimed to provide access to adults aged 16-80 in the learning

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of world languages, including those less-commonly taught languages, and to promote awareness of world cultures in a nonformal setting.

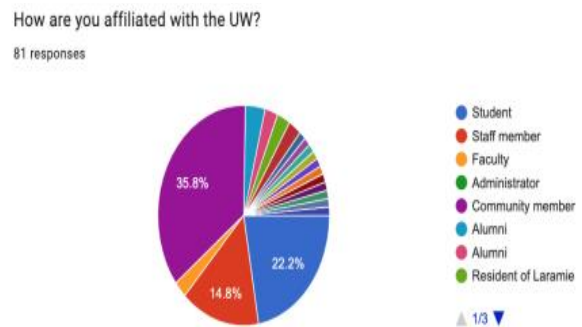
I, the program director, decided to apply for grants from the American Rescue Plan Act, the Wyoming Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities to support this new summer program. These grants were designed to assist in funding much-needed opportunities for nonprofit organizations during the financial fallout caused by COVID-19. Moreover, losing face-to-face learning during the COVID-19 pandemic required transitioning to unfamiliar virtual learning platforms, seriously affecting our program.

AWWLC was among other organizations and universities awarded funding in the 2021 competition: We received a Wyoming Humanities American Rescue Plan Operating Support Grant and a programming grant in 2021-2022, which were partially used to establish AWWLC's intensive two-week summer camp. In 2022, the National Endowment for the Humanities funded our two-week intensive summer camp program, Window to the World with Access the World, offered to Wyoming citizens. This program was free to any adult interested in exploring and learning world languages and cultures. The goal of this intensive summer camp was to develop participants' awareness of world languages and cultures in an authentic context. Figure 1 below shows the demographics of the AWWLC's summer program participants.

Seven language courses were offered during the July 18-30 camp at the University of Wyoming. Many of the learning sessions were held both in person and virtually. To increase accessibility, we offered hybrid sessions combining face-to-face and virtual learning. Courses offered were Arabic, Armenian, German, Korean, Spanish, Turkish, and Uzbek. The program integrated spoken conversation, writing, activities, and hands-on projects led by WLCP/AWWLC volunteer facilitators who were native speakers.

During the two-week summer camp, each course focused on learning the basics of the language and fun facts about the different countries and cultures representing each language. Each course explored language through aspects of culture, such as food and music.

**Figure 1.**  
Demographics of the AWWLC's Summer Intensive Language and Culture Program Participants.



Moreover, participants explored the following seven common topics necessary to access daily life and travel in the represented countries:

1. Introduction to language and culture
2. Travel: Numbers, booking hotels and accommodations
3. Weather and colors
4. Health: Hospital visits and emergency calls
5. Shopping: Payment methods, handling money
6. Food: Ordering in restaurants
7. Tourism

Each learner interacted with native-speaking instructors to design a uniquely tailored, authentic, contextualized, and self-paced world language and culture curriculum. The AWWLC nonprofit organization believes that no matter where a person lives, if they are interested, they should have access to instruction in learning a language and exploring diverse cultures. Our program encouraged participation in smaller learning communities that nurtured cross-cultural communication and understanding in a nonformal learning environment. Specifics of the intensive summer camp follow.

### Day One of the Summer Camp

On the first day of the summer camp (Monday, July 18, 2022), the following language sessions began their activities: Arabic, Armenian, German, Korean, and Spanish. Forty-nine people attended the different sessions. Twelve participants attended the Korean session, six

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attended the Arabic session, 13 attended the German session, four attended the Armenian session, and 14 attended the Spanish session. All participants in all sessions attended both the hour-long session designed for beginners and the hour-long intermediate session.

On day one, the volunteer facilitators for these five language classes introduced participants to their target language culture. The facilitators shared general facts about their countries and introduced their towns and cities to the participants. The participants watched three-minute videos and asked questions about the country representing their target language.

Although participants could ask questions in English when they talked about the culture, they used the target language when they learned the tenets of basic conversation and other aspects of the target language (e.g., alphabet, phrases, words, etc.). Some facilitators played games and had the students work in pairs to practice their conversation tenets, such as introductions. Introduction stems included:

- My name is . . .
- I am from . . .
- I live in . . .

#### Day Two of the Summer Camp

On day two, the Turkish language class with six participants started their session. The facilitator brought books, booklets, and traditional outfits to share with their participants. The participants listened to Turkish music and talked about travel opportunities. They used life-like role plays to practice their target language skills. For example, the facilitators introduced phrases that helped learners explore options concerning how to book hotels and purchase tickets.

The learners practiced asking about travel opportunities and places they could go when they visited their target language country. Some language sessions explored writing in their target languages. For example, those attending Arabic and Korean sessions learned about the different variants of Hangeul writing (left-to-right, top-to-bottom, and right-to-left).

In the Turkish session, the participants learned about the currency of Turkiya (Turkey). The facilitator introduced the currency of Turkiya (as shown in Figure 2) and provided

expressions that learners could use when they traveled and booked hotels. Most participants were exposed to the target language by reading in the target language. They practiced their new expressions in the session with a partner and the facilitator. At the end of each session, participants were given time to ask questions about their target language and culture. Figure 2 demonstrates an example of topics the participants engaged with during the Turkish session.

**Figure 2**

Currency of Turkiya: Turkish Session

Currency

Today's Date: July 20, 2022

1 Turkish Lira = \$ 0.057

1 U.S. Dollar = 17.59 TL

1 Latte from Kahve Dıyari 14.25 TL

1 Latte (16 oz) from Starbucks \$2.10

\$0.81

#### Day Three of the Summer Camp

On day three, the language sessions continued working according to their schedules and covered the topics indicated above. By the third day and meeting, participants started creating their own sentences and questions in the target language using their Google translator or dictionaries. The facilitators could then listen, provide feedback, and add phrases related to the same situation. The Korean session prepared a Kimchi salad and worked on the book from Yeonsei University called 김치볶음.

Some language facilitators sang a song, talked about the country's currency, and/or provided historical facts about such things as the Hellenistic period or a Pisidian town: Sagalassos (Ağlasun, Burdur / Türkiye). Figure 3 shows the engagement between the facilitator of the Korean session and her students.

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### Figure 3

Summer Camp Engagement: Korean Session



#### Day Four of the Summer Camp

On day four of the first week, the less commonly taught Uzbek language and culture session began by welcoming guests from Uzbekistan. These Uzbeks engaged the new learners and advanced participants in their activities. The facilitator introduced some conversational phrases written on the board so that participants could access them to greet and hold basic conversations with the guests. The visitors talked about their home cities and greeted participants in the Uzbek language. Figure 4 shows the engagement between guest speakers from Uzbekistan and out-of-state and in-state participants via Zoom.

In the meantime, other sessions were doing pair-share and project-based activities in the classroom. For example, participants in the Spanish session focused on the presentations they had prepared about their favorite hobbies and cuisine. The Armenian facilitator taught her class virtually from Armenia. Mrs. Ani talked about her country and city. She provided basic phrases and showed small video clips about the topics she had covered.

The summer camp participants were engaged and could ask questions when they could not find answers on the Internet. The facilitators helped participants find resources that would be helpful when studying the language independently later because, as we know, attempting to learn a language for only two or three hours a week is not

enough (Tochon, 2014; Khasilova, 2018). The goal of these summer camp sessions was to guide participants and provide the tools to encourage the participants to self-study after they finished the summer camp.

### Figure 4

Summer Camp Engagement: Uzbek Session



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#### Week Two of the Summer Camp

The second week of the intensive summer camp proceeded much the same way, and participants focused on researching various topics using online educational resources. The session participants in various language classes found



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online newspaper articles and read about current events and weather in their target countries. For example, the Uzbek class learned about different regions and cities of Uzbekistan and read about the weather forecast for a particular city. Each session participant then prepared a little report about a particular location in Uzbekistan using the phrases they learned in class.

One participant in the Uzbek session researched and wrote about their favorite city, Xorazm, in Uzbekistan, one of the ancient Silk Road cities of Central Asia. The participants presented their reports via Padlet (an online platform where participants can read each other's reports and design their own projects). Several students shared that "it was interesting to convert Celsius and Fahrenheit degrees, and it was surprising how the weather varied in different cities around the country."

The participants in the Arabic and German sessions listened to YouTube videos, and participants in the Uzbek class watched and listened to a local newscast. They tried to interpret and discuss the main ideas in the news. One participant explained, "Although it was hard to understand from one time, we tried to listen several times and finally identified main ideas."

With only three days remaining, the participants started working on their personal projects. They looked back at what they learned and described what they liked doing or where they liked going. Each session participant shared multimedia projects that were meaningful to them. For example, participants used visual materials to talk about their stories or things they did when they had free time. In addition, as they prepared their personalized projects, some participants created videos, recorded their own talk, created podcasts, used multiple social platforms like Padlet, and included photos from their travels. Figure 5 shows one of the samples of the final project.

#### The Summer Camp Concludes

As the second week of the intensive summer camp ended, participants shared the following comments about their experiences: "WLCP's summer camp helped me to gain knowledge about different countries and their culture. This is an awesome program to make new connections." For two weeks, the participants in the Spanish sessions had two different facilitators who taught different cultures (Argentinian and

Mexican) using the same topics. Summer camp participants in these sessions mentioned that they liked learning about and comparing the two Spanish-speaking countries.

#### Figure 5

Sample of the Participant's Final Presentation in the Spanish class



The same applied to the Arabic facilitators who taught about Sudanese and Egyptian cultures. One participant in the Arabic session stated, "We practiced daily phrases, but we also learned about Egyptian slang (e.g., Esmak Eh? – what is your name?; Ma Esmuk is the formal way to ask a person's name). Figure 6 demonstrates the sample of daily phrases participants learned during the Arabic class.

On the last day of their sessions, each class got together to celebrate their accomplishments by doing such things as going bowling, getting together for a picnic, cooking a cultural dish, or gathering to taste traditional sweets.

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### Figure 6

Sample of the Participant Learning Daily Phrases in the Arabic class

Peace be upon you	AL salamu Alikum	السلام عليكم
Peace be upon you too	W alikum ehsalam	و عليكم السلام
Good morning	Sabah elkher	صباح الخير
Good Evening	Masa elkher	مساء الخير
Hello	Marhaba	مرحبا
What is your name?	Ma esmuk?	ما اسمك؟
My name is -----	Esmy-----	اسمي-----
Thank you very much	Shokrn gazelan	شكرا جزيل
Nice to meet you	Sarertu-blekauk/tsharafna	سررتك بلفلك اشرفنا

Egyptian slang:

How are you ? Ezayak ( man ) ؟ زيك ؟

### Summer Camp Participant Feedback

As mentioned in the opening of this article, the grants' goal was to motivate, inspire, and support public programs that use the humanities and to explore cross-cultural learning among community members. In the final feedback form, ten participants wrote comments about WLCP's intensive summer camp, saying that the camp motivated them to learn less commonly taught languages and inspired them to explore world cultures.

Program participants also wrote comments that attested to how the summer camp was important and helpful in their culture-learning journey. After working hard for two weeks, participants made the following comments:

*The teacher was incredible. She was so lively and engaging it didn't feel like I was learning but having fun. I left WLCP knowing more Korean than I ever thought I would and a new appreciation for the culture thanks to Mrs. B.*

*I really enjoyed the group conversations we did for the last half hour of each class. It was sometimes difficult to follow since I am so new to the language, but it was really engaging to talk with Mrs. I and the other students there.*

*... I enjoyed all of it, but I really enjoyed learning about the culture and*

*how I was able to also learn about Uzbekistan . . . I also found all the linguistic similarities between Persian and Uzbek fascinating. I really felt like my knowledge of Turkish helped me learn more Uzbek.*

*As a self-study learner of the Uzbek language, it was a pleasure to come across your Uzbek language summer course, especially since it's incredibly difficult to find a native tutor or a program of this sort in the United States for such a rarely learned language. It was also nice to interact with other students of the language from across the United States and abroad. The short program was a very helpful introduction to the language, and I wish this program can be extended to have more sessions beyond summer to help learners of this language like me in the U.S. Thank you for your effort. Sizni yana ko'rishga umid qilaman!*

*I loved all of it and it's helped me a great deal! Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity. I believe this program is helping with the diversity in work settings, travel and in school. It is also helping with the communication barrier while on the job and just in general. I think it'll help in a lot of ways to know another language.*

*This program will serve as a great way to get people involved in other languages and cultures. It is not highly committal, so I believe many people will be more willing to start learning.*

*I think it's a great program to help students get started on a language and to promote less commonly taught languages, especially free of charge. Free language education is a great thing for students who are seeking to learn more about languages. I hope that such humanities related projects will continue being offered.*

### Conclusion

In closing, I believe the AWWLC intensive summer camp's learning goals were accomplished. For example, growth was seen in the following areas: 1) use of basic phrases in the target language; 2) exploration of and understanding about the differences between cultures; 3) knowledge about writing symbols of particular languages; 4) engagement in projects and activities in an authentic context; and 5) learning cross-cultural components in conversations.

Such positive results and the feedback of participants attest that the first year's pilot summer camp was successful. For those of us who planned this summer camp and facilitated sessions, we believe the camp environment was important in bringing awareness of our own cultures to Wyoming citizens.

As the program director who planned this camp, I particularly want to mention how our volunteer facilitators worked as a team, participated in special training, recorded their sessions, gathered materials, and planned their sessions with authentic resources. For example, Dr. J., a former elementary school teacher and retired faculty of the College of Education, was invited as a guest to do a webinar on "World Language and Culture Program: Online Teaching." She presented some online teaching tips to the WLCP volunteer facilitators. These tips included using icebreakers to help the facilitators and participants feel comfortable with one another and provide a personalized purpose for using the target language.

Dr. J. also included some examples of how to break a complex concept down into smaller parts and teach one part at a time to assure success in the learning and teach through 'gradual release of responsibility' where the teacher models and explains first, then provides guided practice for the learners. There were many more takeaways from this presentation than the facilitators could use to help them design an engaging, authentic, and personalized curriculum for each of their unique learners.

Finally, we were impressed with everyone and their skills to make this camp engaging, interesting, and successful. I want to express my gratitude to all the participants for making this camp so

successful and for sharing their time and feedback. We believe these summer camp activities served as a Window to the World with Access the World. We are also thankful and acknowledge Wyoming Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities for the grant. We look forward to continuing working with Wyoming Humanities, the National Endowment for Humanities, and others in the community to bring awareness of the world through cultures.

We also hope to include even more language and culture sessions in the future. We encourage readers from surrounding states to participate in our program and events. To participate in the WLCP or AWWLC program, the reader should register by filling out the form on [www.uwyo.edu/wlcp/index.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/wlcp/index.html) or emailing [wlcp.uwyo@gmail.com](mailto:wlcp.uwyo@gmail.com) or [wlc@uwyo.edu](mailto:wlc@uwyo.edu). We also encourage our readers to develop similar programs in their own states with our guidance or launch outreach programs of AWWLC.

### References

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