

Food Equity and Diversity in a Language Immersion Camp

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Final Project

Part I: Executive Summary and References List

This project is a series of lessons for a novice-mid to novice-high Russian language class at Concordia Language Villages' (CLV) Russian immersion program, Lesnoe Ozero. The mission of CLV is to "Inspire Courageous Global Citizens," and to that end, I have designed a unit that not only includes representation of a range of areas where Russian is commonly spoken but also asks students to consider question of equity and access to food worldwide, and then to take action in developing an equitable, accessible, and inclusive menu for the camp. The lessons incorporate authentic materials; multiple means of engagement, action, and expression; and both linguistic and social goals.

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Part II: Analysis

The context is [Lesnoe Ozero](#), Concordia Language Villages' Russian language immersion summer camp in northern Minnesota. The mission of the Language Villages is to "Inspire Courageous Global Citizens," so social justice-oriented lessons align well with our overall purpose. At the Russian village, many of our novice learners are interested in history, government, and international policy, although some students have a family connection to the Russian language or an interest in literature, music, ballet, chess, or space travel.

We have worked on integrating broader representation into our language curriculum for several years, so for this project, I elected to also focus on explicitly addressing social justice issues, as they directly relate to our program's mission, and our language classes (as opposed to our other activities) have generally not addressed them explicitly.

I chose the topic of food because it is always engaging, it is necessary and easily comprehensible for novice learners, and it is a central part of life at Lesnoe Ozero: we eat meals together, and we offer cooking activities, restaurant nights, and a snack food store.

Over the last 5-7 years, we have intentionally diversified the food that we eat; where once it included primarily food commonly seen by Americans as "Russian", such as borsch, beef stroganoff, and golubtsi, we now serve dishes such as mamaliga, echpochmak, lahmajoon, and beshbarmak. At each meal, there is a short presentation about where the food comes from. Given this ongoing exposure, villagers are ready to delve more deeply into the diverse range of foods in areas where Russian is spoken.

Learners are 6-8 novice-mid high school students. While villagers represent a range of racial backgrounds, socioeconomic status, gender identities, and geographic areas, most are white and from higher income brackets. We typically have a range of dietary needs, including villagers with religious diets who avoid pork and shellfish, vegans, vegetarians, and those with serious food allergies.

Learners can ask for basic types of food (молоко, хлеб, мясо, и т.д.) and have receptive understanding of many more (говядина, молочные продукты, глютен, и т.д.). They know numbers and can use formulaic language to ask about price. They know prepositional and accusative cases as well as genitive singular. They hear announcements about dietary needs daily, so their attention to this issue has been raised, and specific vocabulary is familiar to them.

Classes take place in a residential cabin, with minimal classroom infrastructure (for example, white boards must be held by the teacher, students do not have access to computers, and there may be limited wifi). There are no nearby Russian-speaking communities to visit, and use of English is discouraged.

This series of lessons combines core vocabulary (food) and grammar constructs (instrumental case), as well as interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes, while also considering issues related to social justice. The overall goals are for students 1) to be aware of

the range of food traditions in areas where Russian is spoken; 2) to reflect on issues of equity and inclusivity related to food; 3) to improve their performance across all three modes on topics related to food.

Part III: Design

- Performance objectives

Students will:

- Describe diverse dishes using food vocabulary, instrumental case, and genitive singular.
 - Identify some of the environmental and cultural factors that resulted in specific cultural dishes.
 - Analyze the equity and accessibility of diverse dishes.
 - Consider issues of equity and inclusivity when creating a menu for an event.
- Assessments:
 - Listening checklists: Students will complete graphic organizers as they listen to authentic video and classmate presentations.
 - Dish presentations: Students will give a presentation in pairs on dishes from a chosen cultural tradition from an area where Russian is commonly spoken.
 - Final menus: Students will create menus that represent multiple cultural traditions and are inclusive of a range of dietary needs.
 - Strategies, Activities & Methods
 - Lesson 1: Learners will review basic food words by watching a [video on school lunches around the world](#) that is heavily edited to remove problematic language about cultures, eating, and bodies, but is otherwise authentic. As they watch, students will check off [foods found in school lunches in different countries](#). After they watch, they will ask and answer questions in small groups about which meals they like, what they eat for lunch at their schools, and what they eat for lunch at home and record their peers' answers on a handout.
 - Lesson 2: Learners will listen to a short presentation from the teacher on what people with different dietary needs can eat, including [vegetarian & vegan](#) diets, the level of religious diets we typically experience at camp (kosher - no pork or shellfish, halal - no pork), diabetes (sugar, white bread, white rice). In pairs, students will use their graphic organizer from the previous day to fill out two columns each (jigsaw-style) of a [second graphic organizer](#) to indicate which of the meals described in the video are inclusive of students with various dietary needs (vegetarian, allergies, religious diets). Next, students will read an infographic of free lunch systems made by the teacher. In pairs, they will add a row to their graphic organizer for financial accessibility and fill it in for their column, following the infographic. Finally, each student will share their

conclusions with the class: who can eat the different meals? Who cannot eat them? The rest of the class will record the information from their peers on their graphic organizers.

- Lesson 3: Learners will listen to a presentation from the teacher on instrumental case using examples from the video. Learners will practice the instrumental case by asking and answering questions about what meals they enjoy at camp. Finally, learners will listen to an explanation of the final project: what to serve at camp restaurant night to be maximally inclusive of both villagers' needs and a range of cuisines from cultures where Russian is widely spoken.
- Lesson 4: In pairs, learners will begin mini-research projects on foods from different cultural traditions (e.g. Georgian, Kazakh, Moldovan, Tatar, Uzbek, Estonian) using authentic [фоторецепты](#) as well as relevant cultural traditions and geographic information provided or found by the instructor and printed out.
- Lesson 5: In pairs, learners will prepare presentations on 1-2 dishes from the cultural traditions they chose: a one-two sentence overview of relevant cultural historical information with visuals to support their classmates' understanding, and then a list of primary ingredients, and a descriptive sentence (salty, sweet, filling, etc.) As pairs finish their presentations, they submit to the teacher for discussion of possible revisions of vocabulary and grammar.
- Lesson 6: As necessary, pairs finish revisions and practice their presentations. Then, learners will present 1-2 dishes from their chosen cultural tradition. While listening to their peers' presentations, learners will take notes on a graphic organizer.
- Lesson 7: Learners will begin their final project: Create menus that include a range of cuisines and dietary needs, with the stipulation that camp can only pay for 3 dishes, so menus with more than three dishes will require at least some villagers to pay. Not all villagers have money in their bank accounts, so we cannot require all villagers to pay. Learners will hear an example of a solution (villagers with more than \$10 in their camp bank account pay \$2, and villagers with less pay nothing) and make suggestions for other equitable approaches.
- Lesson 8: Students will continue preparing their menus, with feedback from instructor.
- Lesson 9: Students will practice presenting their menus, present their menus & then make a final choice of one menu.

All work will be completed in class, and the teacher will be available for any additional assistance. Because the class is small (6-8 students), there is ample opportunity to provide individualized support for students who need it.

The language used in the video is much higher than the students' proficiency level, but the task they are completing involves recognition of specific, known vocabulary words, and the visual input can provide a boost to comprehension when the aural input is challenging.

The series of lessons is scaffolded from familiar language with simple tasks to more open-ended, creative activities. However, the output expected even on the more open-ended activities is appropriate to the level.

Objectives	Assessments	Strategies
Describe diverse dishes using food vocabulary, instrumental case, and genitive singular.	Cultural food tradition presentation	Authentic listening, graphic organizer, scaffolded discussion, authentic materials, pair work
Identify some of the environmental and cultural factors that resulted in specific cultural dishes.	Cultural food tradition presentation	Authentic materials, teacher-created materials, pair work, project work, UDL
Analyze the equity and accessibility of diverse dishes.	Lunch-around-the-world graphic organizer #2 Cultural food tradition presentation listening handout.	Authentic listening, graphic organizer, project work, pair work, individual work, presentation
Consider issues of equity and inclusivity when creating a menu for an event.	Final menu presentation	Graphic organizer, authentic listening, project work, pair work, UDL

Criteria for assessment of Cultural food tradition presentation:

- 1) Comprehensibility: Can the written and oral language be understood by a sympathetic interlocutor?
- 2) Language Use: Are target vocabulary (food) and structures (instrumental, genitive singular) used correctly?
- 3) Social Justice: Are the dishes described faithfully to their diverse traditions? Are there at least 2-3 geographic or cultural influences indicated accurately?

Criteria for assessment of Menu presentation:

- 4) Comprehensibility: Can the written and oral language be understood by a sympathetic interlocutor?

- 5) Language Use: Are target vocabulary (food) and structures (instrumental, genitive singular) used correctly?
- 6) Social Justice: Does the menu represent both diverse foods and the dietary needs of diverse villagers?

Part IV: Development

- Resources for Students
 - [Video of school lunches around the world](#)
 - Infographic of cost of school lunches around the world (to be made by teacher) – green lunch tray if free for everyone, red lunch tray with average cost if free for nobody, yellow lunch tray with explanation if free for some and paid for others.
 - Information on dishes from different cultural traditions, e.g. this [фоторецепт](#)
 - Research packets for cultural traditions (to be made by teacher)
- Resources for the instructor
 - Information on cultural & geographic influences on food from different cultural traditions, e.g. [this](#) or [this](#) (This information can be used to create the research packets for the students)
 - [Teaching Tolerance Social justice standards](#) (Teachers should familiarize themselves with the standards for grades 9-12 and ensure that they are guiding discussions and creating materials that target them.)
 - Information on which countries serve free or subsidized lunch for creating infographic, such as [this](#), [this](#), or [this](#).

As I am the supervisor of this program, and I am preparing this unit for the seasonal employee who will teach the class, they will definitely have support. While food is among the least controversial topics in the social justice pantheon, it's possible that discussion of equity and access to food could veer into problematic territory. If this happens, it is permissible to use English to address it. For example, teachers could ask the following questions for reflection: what are the effects on learning and health if students are hungry? What are the effects on society if children don't learn and/or are unhealthy? If the minimum wage is not sufficient for a family to get out of poverty, how can we ensure a healthy, educated society?

Part V: Implementation

Due to the constraints of the language villages' environment, all work will be completed in class. This provides support for students with attention challenges, as it is easier for them to remain focused on their work. It also provides support for linguistically diverse learners to clarify instructions as much as possible, and for first generation students to

access teacher support without having to navigate office hours or other bureaucratic hurdles.

At the same time, principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) will be used to maximize support for learners with different learning needs. These include opportunities for choice on assessments – more or less written/spoken language, different possibilities for visible depiction of foods, recorded presentations, etc.; a range of means of engagement – video, independent work, pair work, graphic organizers, etc.

The presentation of lunches from around the world gives students from diverse backgrounds a chance to see something similar to what they eat at home, and the discussion afterwards allows those whose foods were not presented in the video to share their own cultural traditions.

Part VI: Evaluation

Students complete weekly reflections which provide opportunity for open-ended feedback on their learning experiences. This series of lessons will take place over a week and will likely be the focus of their weekly reflection. I may also do short formative assessments at the end of class, such as asking students one thing they are confident about and one that was difficult for them, or rating their understanding of the learning from 1-10 and writing a sentence of explanation.

I will respond to challenges as they arise by slowing down, repeating, or providing additional information – there are about two lessons of space in this plan for additional work as necessary during the week. Because classes are small, it is generally easy to tell when things are moving at the wrong pace, when additional help is needed, the extent to which students are engaged, etc. I will reflect each day on what to change for the next lesson and make changes to the plan for the future as necessary.