



Meet Ursula Miniszewski, a master's candidate in International Studies. She recently completed a language-immersion program in Xela, Guatemala.

Tell us about your background.

I'm originally from Portland, Oregon. I graduated from Lewis & Clark College in Portland with a degree in Modern European History, so I am already fluent in German. That's why I went to Guatemala, to learn another language.

What are you pursuing at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies?

I am in the [International Studies](#) program, with a concentration in [Human Rights](#). I think the general degree is more flexible, as I am also interested in administration and management positions. I have more flexibility in terms of skills courses than in some of the more theory-heavy degrees.

What attracted you to the Spanish language?

I am interested in refugee and immigrant communities, and this past summer I had an internship with the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for more than 200 groups in New York state that works with immigrants and refugees. It became clear that I needed to speak Spanish to take on an advocate role. I had spent time in Colombia studying human rights, and by the time I left, I could understand but not really speak the language.

Describe your language program for us.

I did a program, *Educación Para Todos*, in Xela, which is in the middle of the country and is less touristy than other areas. There are a ton of language schools in Guatemala, so it was hard to know which was legitimate. I read about this program on a friend's blog so I had an idea of what to expect. It was a one-on-one based program with five hours a day with a private tutor, which was great. It seems like Guatemala is a more affordable choice than many other Spanish-speaking countries for students wanting to participate in Spanish immersion.

Did you get to explore the country?

Yes, I stayed with a host family. They were great and very accommodating! It's not an exchange program though, so don't go expecting them to lead you around town. The school provided lots of day trips to the hot springs and other sights however. There was even a so-called educational trip to a *chocolateria*, a woman-owned business, where we learned about cocoa within the Mayan culture.

How did [The Language Fund](#) assist your study?

I found out about the fund quite randomly, from the Josef Korbel School's Office of Career and Professional Development. It certainly wasn't easy to find, but it helps that it will cover some of the cost of my trip. It's great that there is a language fund, although it would be nice if there were more language-based funding opportunities. I am now helping to come up with a comprehensive list of language school opportunities for all Korbel students.

How will Spanish affect your future work?

I want to do more work with immigrants and refugees, so it will definitely play into that. I am also working with local organizations to look into health provisions for minorities in clinics around Denver, so speaking Spanish will help that as well. I would love to work at a nongovernmental organization in an advocacy role once I've graduated from the Josef Korbel School.

If you had your own language, what would you call it?

I kind of have created my own language! It's a quirky side of my character that my friends like to tease me about; they call it "Urs-Speak," like in the novel *1984*.

Learn some Urs-Speak!

Main Entry: **Booba**

Pronunciation: \?boo-bah\

Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Ursula Miniszewski

Date: 21st century

1: Something not worth thinking or talking about <That is so booba; new subject please>

2: Boring

3: Can also function as a noun <What a Booba!>

- - Nirvana Bhatia, MA candidate in International Human Rights,
Josef Korbel School of International Studies