Alexis Strang

UNC Alumni 2017

Incoming UNC TAM MA Student

Embracing Turkish as my language of study during my undergraduate years at UNC was one of the best decisions I made.

Initially sparking my interest in studying Turkish were my conversations with a Turkish friend of mine in high school who introduced me to the complexity and beauty of Turkey. Upon entering university, I knew I wanted to study Turkish and the region because I found the politics, the society, and the relations between Turkey and the rest of the world to be very interesting and important.

During my junior year at UNC, my long-awaited desire to begin studying Turkish was finally fulfilled, and I was able to complete the first and second levels of Turkish before graduating. Studying the language was a humbling process full of error, revision, and many questions, but when practicing and learning Turkish between UNC and Duke, the experience was also accompanied by laughter, genuine interest in my success, and a great level of support from my professor, TA, and classmates. Every step of the way, I felt amply challenged and encouraged.

Through my involvement with the Turkish program, I have not only gained valuable friendships and language skills, but I have also experienced great opportunities. After my first year of study, I lived in Istanbul for a summer, practicing my Turkish and conducting research under the guidance of Professors Banu Gökarıksel and Didem Havlioğlu for my Turkey-focused thesis. Living in the bustling city of Istanbul was one of the best experiences of my life. I gained equally as much insight into the essence of the city and the rhythm of the language as I did confidence in myself. For my second year, my passion for studying Turkish allowed me to be awarded a FLAS scholarship for the school year, along with a summer FLAS scholarship that allowed me to study Turkish at the University of Chicago’s Summer Language Institute.

I have been so pleased with my Turkish education at UNC because the program has integrated me into a supportive language and area studies community between UNC and Duke, connected me with like-minded students and academics, as well as opened many doors into Turkey and the world. I intend to continue my Turkish studies during my Master’s degree at UNC, as well as apply my skills in a government or public service related career.