

Conversations With Kate

Lesson Guide Based On Podcast Episode [098] My Conversation With Lindsay Williams, Part 2

“The Root Of Everything Is Human Connection”

Episode 98 - Conversations with Kate podcast

Lindsay
Williams

The Root of
Everything
is Human
Connection



 bit.ly/cwkpodcast

Web link

<https://soundcloud.com/user-404896233/098-the-root-of-everything-is-human-connection-my-conversation-with-lindsay-williams-part-2>

15:30 minutes

Vocabulary and expressions

- **footage** - a section of completed video film
- **essentially** - basically (in this context)
- **format** - a type of media
- **stands out** - something memorable or important
- **hotbed** - an area where things grow quickly
- **insane** - crazy, hard to believe
- **despite the fact** - even so
- **bilingualism** - speaking two languages (bi = 2)
- **Langfest** - a festival or celebration of languages
- **Maya** - the language of, or a person of Mayan descent
- **geeks out** - gets excited about s.thing that may be boring to other people
- **holds a special place** - is a special memory
- **lined up** - scheduled
- **Nahuatl** - one of the indigenous languages of Mexico
- **Aztec** - a culture that flourished in central Mexico before being conquered in the 1500's
- **pun** - a joke using words that sound alike but have different meanings
- **Creole** - language spoken in the Caribbean, Louisiana and other areas of the southern U.S.
- **booked** - reserved
- **oral histories** - stories told from one person to another
- **humbling** - causing one to feel modest about success
- **arrogant** - someone who feels smarter than others
- **brought that home** - to understand more clearly

Conversation questions:

What are your favorite formats for getting information about the world? Please give an example.

What stand out for you when you think of your life in the past year or 5 years?

Do you enjoy puns and wordplay? Can you think of an example in English? your native language?

Retell a story that was passed down as oral history from one of your parents or grandparents.

Transcript:

". . . really at the root of everything is human connection, regardless of where you are, regardless of what language you speak."

That's my guest Lindsay Williams speaking. This episode is part 2 out of 4 in which we talk about Language Stories, the podcast and video series created by Lindsay and her husband Ashley as they traveled in the Americas and Asia to get to know people and talk with them about their life, language, and culture.

I'm uploading this episode on March 22, 2020 at a time when many people around the world are "sheltering in place" to help contain or slow the spread of the Coronavirus which causes the disease Covid-19.

In my lifetime, I have never seen the the connection of the world's people more clearly.

I am encouraged by the positive stories of cooperation and the heroic service of medical personnel and also by the many other service providers in our communities: the people who prepare food, sell food, deliver food and keep the grocery stores stocked. The store and postal clerks who show up for work even when it puts them at risk. The caregivers and people who clean and disinfect surfaces and pick up our trash, just to mention a few.

We are all connected and we can get through this together. May this podcast bring you something positive, more ideas for good media to consume, and a way to improve your language skills. Take care of yourself and each other.

This is episode number 98.

Let's talk a little bit about each episode. I'd like for you to tell a discovery, an adventure maybe. . .something that would get the interest of my listeners so that they want to go and watch this episode or listen to the podcast.

And by the way, the podcast is longer, right?

They're slightly different each time, yeah. And that's what we loved about it. It's because Ashley's background is in film and video editing and mine. . . well I had no background in podcasting but I wanted to be a part of the creative process for it.

So we thought, okay, let's make it into a podcast and a video. So what's great is that we do the same interviews. We go and meet people. We talk to them and do the interviews. We have the same **footage** that we're working with **essentially**. And then sometimes they come out completely different.

If you have the time, if you enjoy both **formats**, it is always worth taking in both from the two different angles, I think, because they do kind of have this different aspect. But I think the podcast generally is longer.

That's good to know. I have read your book. I have watched every YouTube episode. I have not listened to every podcast episode but now I'm inspired to do so.

Ah, yeah.

Okay, so maybe you could tell us one thing that **stands out** about each one and I'll go through the list, okay?

So, you started in New York City. Tell us something about New York City.

We started in NYC because there were cheaper flights to New York than there were to Montreal. And we wanted to make an episode in NYC because it's such a **hotbed** of language. There's like more languages spoken in that relatively small geographical space than there are in many, many countries around the world.

You know, some estimates were claiming that there were, I think it was, 600-800 languages spoken in New York. And we're thinking, wow, that's **insane**. So, we kind of tracked down where this figure was coming from and it was coming from the Endangered Language Alliance.

And so we spoke with Ross from the Endangered Language Alliance in New York and they do great, great work in terms of giving people access to resources. They have a radio station where people can come in and broadcast in their language. I think they do have a regular broadcast in other languages, as well.

They work on kind of documenting what kind of languages there are in New York and things like that. Just fantastic! So, yeah, it's worth checking out that episode to learn more about languages that you might not expect in New York.

Perfect. And then "Chinatown in Cuba."

Yeah. So, "Chinatown in Cuba". There's not many Chinese people. But **despite that fact** when you walk around Chinatown in Havana, you still see signs in Chinese. And so it really raised the question: Who are these signs written for if there aren't many Chinese people living here anymore.

And, so that was surprising. Okay, let's go on. "Montreal, Beyond Bilingual."

Yeah! So, Montreal, we decided would be a great place for an episode because of the **bilingualism**. We thought it's really going to be cool. We'll talk about French. We'll talk about English and how they live side by side.

And when we got there, and we found the people to speak with for the episode, everyone spoke more than the two languages. And that's why it's called, "Beyond Bilingual." Because that was a real curiosity about the place.

And that makes Montreal a great place to have **Langfest**.

Definitely, yeah.

Although I understand Langfest is moving south to join with the Polyglot Conference in this year in Mexico.

Yeah, I believe so. Exciting.

Yeah, okay. So the next one. . . very interesting. Tikal, but not to talk about **Maya** but to talk about the constructed fictional languages!

Yeah, so we went to Tikal, in Guatemala and Ashley is a bit of a Star Wars fan so he was really interested in the Mayan history of it but the thing that he did want to see Tikal for was that it was a Star Wars filming location!

So, we thought that would be a good opportunity to talk about languages in Star Wars, especially because they were releasing the second, *The Last Jedi* (the 2nd of the most recent Star Wars Trilogy) not long after that episode was due to be released.

So, we thought, okay, this is perfect! So we decided to do a bit of research into that and it's filmed on location in Tikal. So it's a really, really lovely episode to watch.

It is. So anyone who **geeks out** on Star Wars or fictional languages, that's a great one for you to start with and then keep going (through the episodes).

So, in the next one, you do talk about Maya, "Maya isn't dead."

Yeah, "Maya isn't dead" was the first episode that we made without any initial contacts. So this one, for me, always kind of **holds a bit of a special place** because when we got to New York, we knew people already. When we were in Montreal, we knew people already. We'd contacted them before. We knew we had those interviews **lined up** and ready to happen.

With "Maya isn't dead," we arrived in Mérida on the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico and we knew no one. Bit of a lie. We did know a guy called Carlos, who we'd met in Langfest in Montreal who said, "I'm from Mérida and said, Come! Let me know when you're there."

And Carlos himself. . . he's not of Mayan heritage necessarily but he knows language. So he was our first sort of loose contact for the episode. We spoke with him and we also spoke with some very, very interesting and inspiring people.

It was an absolute joy to make that episode and it really felt like it solidified the whole thing. I think before that, for me, it felt like *Is this thing still going to happen? Are these interviews so far just going to lead to nothing?*

But as soon as we made that episode, I felt solid, like yeah, we can do this. We can find people. We can reach out to people. And everyone that we wanted for that episode said yes.

And there's been a common pattern as we've gone on. And this started with the "Maya isn't dead" episode that when we reach out to like official bodies or museums or things like this, they tend not to reply as much. I think they're probably just busy. But with "Maya isn't dead," the people that we wanted all replied. And so that was really exciting about that one.

I love that one because I've been to the Yucatan peninsula.

Ahh. Stunning, yeah!

And then the next one, I think, was "You know a word in **Nahuatl**."

Yeah, so with Mexico, it's not just the Mayan language. . . Mayan languages. Sorry there are 23 Mayan languages. But they're not the only indigenous languages spoken in Mexico. There's also Nahuatl which is the kind of primary **Aztec** language.

And unfortunately, when we were in Cuba, Hurricane Irma hit. . .when we were in Cuba. And as we had about half an hour of wi-fi before the hurricane really hit the town we were in, we discovered that earthquakes were hitting Mexico all over the place. . . all along the route that we had wanted to take in Mexico. . . which meant that we wouldn't be able to film a Nahuatl episode which is why it became a mini-episode.

And we spoke with Siska, a good friend who lives in Mexico City, who has learned Nahuatl and she told us a bit about the language and about things you do know. So, if you're thinking, I know a word in Nahuatl? No I don't. I've never even heard of the language!

You do know a word. Listen to the episode and you'll find out which word you know.

That's right. And you'll learn that there are 62 national languages in that episode.

Sixty-two. Yes. Yeah.

Okay. Unbelievable! Which leads into "UnBelizable."

Yeah, I had to get a **pun** in. So yeah, Belize felt really curious because everyone around there speaks Spanish. You know, there are obviously other places in the Caribbean where they speak English, French, other languages. . . but primarily Spanish is all around. And then you've got Belize. And they speak English but that didn't feel like that was the full story.

And so what we were able to do for that episode is actually speak with Omar who runs a Facebook page. . . I think it's even called North Belizian Spanish. So there's Spanish spoken in Belize and how is that different? There's English but there's also **Creole**, most commonly spoken in Belize. How do all of these languages fit together in this country that is kind of different in that linguistic sense? And so that episode is a fun one, too.

It is. I learned so much in this whole series. And I also loved the next one on my list which is, "All about YOU." And it was about several languages and how YOU changes. And we have it so easy in English. Do you have anything that you want to say about that one?

Yeah, that one was a bit of a surprise. It came about because, as we were traveling about through these different Spanish-speaking countries, I realized that, you know, 15 years of Spanish learning behind me and I would arrive in these new countries and not know how to address people because of the different forms of "you". And I thought, I kind of want to look into this a bit more and so that's how that episode started.

So if you've ever found that just talking to people with the right form of address is a little bit complicated in the language that you're learning, then that episode will make you feel a little bit more at home.

Anyone who is studying languages, I think, will enjoy that episode.

Okay, and then the next one is the one that won the award. Now, I'm curious. Did you submit just this one episode or did they pick this one out of the whole series, "Keeping **K'iche**"?

We submitted "Keeping K'iche" because we were only allowed to submit one film. So we hadn't filmed the second season. We looked through the first season. And you know, a lot of the episodes are very cinematically beautiful because Ashley is a good camera man, in my opinion. But most of them are filmed in living rooms, or like offices or places, right?

With "Keeping K'iche," we got incredibly lucky. I was just stumbling around on Airbnb trying to find our accommodation for the area, thinking we'll find people to speak with in a minute. Let's get somewhere **booked** to stay.

And I stumbled upon Carlos's listing. And it said, "Stay with a Mayan family in the countryside." And I thought, *yes! Yes, please!*

So I contacted him and said, "I don't suppose that you happen to speak this language K'iche, do you?"

And he said, "Yeah. We do speak K'iche."

And I thought, *Oh, okay.* "We want to come and stay with you but could we film you?" (laughter)
"It's for a good reason."

And so we spoke with him and were able to stay. Then after our time there we went to Chichicastenango, another town nearby where they also speak the language. And there's a gallery there. And we spoke with Juan who makes art and they teach lessons there, as well, but he's primarily an artist. His art is completely inspired by K'iche **oral histories** and things like that.

So the episode. . .because we'd stayed with Carlos, when we got to the editing stage, it just looked so good. And it was a really nice time capsule of our time there.

Then when we were in Laos, the competition appeared not long before we were due to go home. And Ashley said, "Oh, I wonder. . .which one?" And we were like, "Yeah, it's gotta be 'Keeping K'iche.' It has to be." So that is what we entered.

And it won! And it was so. . . I don't even know the word to describe it. It was such a. . . just like. . .an honor and so rewarding and **humbling** to think that this is a film festival, not for people who love languages. This is a film festival for film. And this film won. This film about a language that I'd never heard of until months before. . . that probably most people in that room that night watching had never heard of.

And I don't say that in a, kind of, **arrogant** way if you've never even heard of this language. But I just mean in the sense that *really at the root of everything is human connection, regardless of where you are, regardless of what language you speak.*

And that film. . . winning that award, for me, really **brought that home.**

As time has gone on, that one has become one of our personal favorites, as well. For sure.

His family was just so lovely and interacting with them. It was beautiful, really. So congratulations on that.

You've been listening to the second part of my conversation with Lindsay Williams. Tune in next week to hear about Season Two of Language Stories, the video series and podcast created by Lindsay and her husband, Ashley. You can find a link to Language Stories at Lindsay's website, www.lindsaydoeslanguages.com.

The transcripts and lesson guides to these and all of the episodes are available at <https://www.patreon.com/conversationswithkate>.

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Thanks to Aaron Burdett for our music.

This is Kate. Remember that every day truly is a gift. I'm honored that you spent some of your precious time with me. Thank you for listening. Until next time.