

Conversations With Kate

Lesson Guide Based On Podcast Episode [099] My Conversation With Lindsay Williams, Part 3

“Sign Languages Around The World”

Episode 99 - Conversations with Kate podcast

Lindsay Williams

Sign Languages Around the World



 bit.ly/cwkpodcast

Web link

<https://soundcloud.com/user-404896233/099-language-stories-from-asia-lindsay-williams-part-3>

14:16 minutes

Vocabulary and expressions

- **to pick up** - to continue from before
- **vicarious** - experienced in the imagination through the feelings or actions of another person
- **batik** - a method of decorating fabric using wax and color dye
- **relevant** - closely connected or appropriate to what is being considered
- **profiles** - descriptions
- **accommodation** - a place to spend the night
- **to look into it** - to research something
- **Tio** - Spanish for uncle
- **Sonrisas** - Spanish for smiles
- **potentially** - with the possibility of happening in the future
- **to dominate** - to have a huge influence on; to control
- **under the surface** - something not obvious; the deeper aspect of something
- **complete spectrum** - a whole range of something
- **costume** - clothes in a style typical of a particular country; clothes worn on special occasions
- **filmed on the ground** - filmed on the location
- **obviously** - clearly understood
- **to show up** - to arrive at a meeting place

Conversation questions:

What surprised you about this episode?

How often do you live vicariously? Describe an experience that you have had.

When you travel, how do you choose your accommodations? What kind of accommodations do you prefer?

What experience do you have with sign language or the deaf and hard of hearing community?

What are some things that dominate the culture in your country?

Describe a time that you dressed up in a costume.

"Pick up" and "show up" are 2 phrasal verbs used in this episode. What others do you know that include "up"?

Transcript:

This is episode number 99. Recorded in February, it's going public on March 28th, 2020 in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. I'm sending out best wishes for the health and safety of everyone around the world.

The conversation **picks up** with a question about interacting with people as we travel. Since most travel is prohibited these days, I hope you will enjoy a **vicarious** travel experience as you listen to Lindsay talk about her journey.

What do you think is the best way to connect with locals as you travel?

Ooh, good question. What we did find is that, as we went on beyond Language Stories, we started to do more things like Airbnb experiences. When we were in Asia, there's a website called Backstreet Academy where we did things like a Vietnamese Calligraphy class. We did a Lao cooking class. We did a Lao batik (Hmong batik), class in Lao. We made Udon noodles in Japan. And stuff like that has proven for me to be much better than the huge kind of social gathering meetup with like a room full of people.

Those one-on-one experiences that you can get so much easier now. They proved to be, as we went on, more and more useful and more and more a way to meet local people on a much closer basis because you can have that conversation and you can learn about them. And what they're teaching you is most likely relevant to the country and to the culture, as well.

So it's a really nice way to go beyond language, too.

So, to sum up: look for one-one-one or small family experiences. Go on Airbnb and try to stay with a family, especially where you will have some contact. At some Airbnbs, they just give you the key and that's it.

Exactly, you can tell from the **profiles** about the **accommodation**. Yeah, I have a blog post about this. Would it be helpful to link to that in the show notes, as well? (Yeah.) I'll share that with you after. Yeah.

"Keeping K'iche". . . so the next one would be "Panama Canal."

"Panama Canal." Yeah, we were conscious that, as we were moving on, we were like, Oh, Costa Rica. . . we were in Costa Rica and it was like a very personal experience for me because it's like the first kind of place I'd gone. So we didn't do an episode there and we thought we can't not do anything in Panama.

What's going on in Panama that we can do? And we decided to make a mini-episode about the Panama Canal because it's such a huge operation. How does that function in terms of language?

And so we **looked into** what languages you need to apply for a job there. You know, what the countries are that take trade through the Panama Canal every day. . . all of that kind of stuff.

So it's quite a different episode but one that was quite fun to make.

Yeah, and everyone should know about the Panama Canal. (Yeah.)

As well, everyone should know something about Sign Language but Nicaraguan Sign Language? That was fascinating.

Yeah. I was, as well, very conscious of the fact that, you know, there's **potentially** more than 300 Sign Languages in the world. And so, with each season, I want to, as far as possible, include one Sign Language at least per season as we go forward. That's a little personal goal.

"Nicaraguan Sign Language" was a good one to film. We didn't get any on-the-ground footage but we spoke with James Sheperd-Kegl for a long time and he almost brought me to tears. He was so generous with his time, told me the full story of Nicaraguan Sign Language. . . .because their is a full story to be told.

We did do some on-the-ground footage because we met **Tio** Antonio who runs Café de la **Sonrisas**. So we spoke with him. And that's a café, in Granada in Nicaragua, which is run by deaf and hard-of-hearing people who otherwise would find it **potentially** difficult to get work. So it's a wonderful thing. You have to listen to and watch that episode because it's just incredible.

Definitely. Okay, and then. . . do we say Guarani?

"Guarani." Yeah. It's the final episode. . . yeah, you're right was Guarani. This felt like what it had all been working up towards. With this first season, I knew that I wouldn't be able to learn all of the languages but I thought if I can focus on learning at least one of these languages, that would feel like more of a solid thing.

Guarani was going to be one of the last languages on the continent that we would encounter. And I absolutely fell in love with it. I fell in love with the language. I fell in love with the country. . . all of the people that we spoke with, just so wonderful! It's such a curious, curious case because something that I was worried about was the story of Language Stories, especially for Season One with a region so **dominated** by one language would be the same.

The story would be repeated every episode of here's a language. And it's not spoken very much anymore because this other language came in. And now that **dominates** the narrative.

I knew that wasn't going to be the case. I knew there was more to be told about these other languages.

So with Guarani, it is a very different story. I won't say anymore than that. I'll let you listen and watch and discover for yourself why it's such a different story.

Great. Fantastic. So that was the end, except there was a bonus. But that actually ties in with Season Three coming back. So let's skip over that. (Yeah.) And let's go into Season Two when you went to Asia.

So the first one was "Learning Vietnamese."

Yes. So, "Learning Vietnamese." It felt like moving across to this region where actually there wasn't just one language that **dominated** the countries anymore, like Spanish had in Latin America (or at least in the Latin America that we'd been to.)

Every country had their own national language. In Vietnam, they spoke Vietnamese. In Lao, they speak Lao. In Thailand, they speak Thai. In Cambodia, they speak Khmer, right? And we thought. Let's at least look at one of these in a bit more depth. So we decided to do that with Vietnamese.

We spoke with Gaston Dorren, the author of *Lingo*, and *Babel* which he was writing. At the time that we spoke to him initially, he was learning Vietnamese for the book. He went to Vietnam and we spoke to him after as well to find out how he did.

Okay, great. "Singapore takes the Floor."

Oh! Okay. Singapore is one of my absolute favorite places in the world. It's just a **glorious**, glorious place and linguistically, it's absolutely fascinating. There are 4 official languages. How do they all fit together? How do they all tie in when the other thing to consider is that they are not the only 4 languages? They're the 4 official languages but there's a lot more **under the surface**.

In this episode, we dig into also Singlish which is Singaporean English and look into how people are using Singlish for creative projects especially. So, yeah. . . .

And then, for teachers of English, "Teaching English in Laos."

Yeah, it was interesting because, you know how I said with "Maya isn't Dead," it was the first time that we kind of found people ourselves kind of pretty much as we got there. With this one it was like I know nothing. I don't speak these languages. For the whole series in Asia. It was like I don't speak these languages.

You know in Latin America, as you know from the episodes yourself, Kate, a lot of those interviews are in Spanish. It was fine because I could do that. But in Asia, I couldn't do that and I wasn't sure how this was going to work out.

But what we found is that actually there were a lot of projects in Lao, in particular, where people were teaching English, and in various different ways. So we spoke with an official organization. We spoke with a language school. We spoke with someone who teaches English from their backyard in Luang Prabang. It's just a **complete spectrum** of various ways of teaching English in one country.

So again, there's such variety in the series. I love it. And "Discovering Hmong" was very interesting to me because I loved that woman who dressed you up in that **costume**.

Oh, I love her!

My sister lives in Minneapolis. I'm from Minnesota and there's a big Hmong population there.

Yeah, oh that's cool. We actually spoke with someone in the episode -- Jasmine Tierra who's a singer, who sings in the language but isn't a native of the language and she's from the same area. So, that's really interesting. Yeah. She mentioned about the big population.

But a lot of that episode was **filmed on the ground**, with one person, kind of like with Carlos in "Keeping K'iche" in that we stayed there. . . not for as long. But Chua was just so kind, so generous with her time. She has a place in my heart, too. I love her. She's wonderful.

In mine, too. Just from the episode. I watched it a couple of times.

Yeah, she's lovely. Totally.

So, the next one was "Make Hokkien Cool Again."

Mmm. Yes. Hokkien. Language vs. dialect, the age-old question, right?

Great question, yes.

This episode, for me, really helped to answer that question a little bit more with a solid case study,

would say, of Hokkien. Interestingly, we filmed all of what we call "B-roll footage," like the stuff that's on screen when I'm talking off-screen, like a narration. We filmed all of that **on the ground**, in Malaysia, in I think parts of Singapore, perhaps. And then we spoke with no one. Everyone that I found to speak with for that episode was all across the world.

They were in Korea. They were in America. They were in London. So actually, that was the very, very last interview that we filmed for the whole season, in London right after we got back. We went one sunny day, in July, and spoke with someone there who was again so generous with his time and told us about why he wanted to meet at that particular place in London and how there was a relevance to that place and a connection to Hokkien. We were on the other side of the world and we ended up meeting an hour down the road.

Fantastic. You know my little tagline for my business is "connecting cultures through conversation" and you are just experts at it.

Aww, thank you.

So, the next one is "Hands for Vietnam" so you're getting back into sign language.

Yes. We actually made 3 episodes in Vietnam for Season Two. . .unexpectedly but there were just too many good stories that we couldn't ignore them. So there's **obviously** "Learning Vietnamese." There's the Hmong episode which was filmed up in the north. This episode was filmed mostly at a school in the center of Vietnam.

And just a lovely, lovely family, an American family, who were very conscious of the fact that there's Vietnamese sign languages - plural. There's like 3 in the north, the middle and in the south. Yeah, they were very aware of that and so the teachers were native Vietnamese. They just managed the whole thing, right?

And then also. . . okay, we thought this is it. We've been to the school, we've got everything we need. We've done all of the interviews and then we went to a café. And again, there's another café in that town run by deaf and hard of hearing people who were again so kind. We just **showed up** and they were happy to speak with us.

But what was really cool about that is our only interview for Season Two where we needed a translator. And it was a sign language interview and it was just awesome. We'd never done that before so that was really a cool experience to do.

Wonderful.

You've been listening to the third part of my conversation with Lindsay Williams. Tune in next week to hear the final episode 100 in which we talk about Season Three of Language Stories. You can find a link to Language Stories at Lindsay's website, www.lindsaydoeslanguages.com.

I'd like to remind you that after episode 100, I will be taking a break from the podcast. You'll still be able to find all 100 episodes on Soundcloud, my website, and wherever you access podcasts.

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.