

[Live, Learn, Latin America Kody Gerkin MSU's Latin American & Caribbean Studies]

[Why learn another language?]

I think learning about language is a window into understanding of culture unlike any other kind of a window. When you learn a different language you begin to think differently about the world and in fact, I remember the first time I learned that a tree you know with the trunk and leaves isn't necessarily a tree, that's just the word we use in English. There are other languages, if you said tree someone who only spoke Russian they wouldn't know what are you talking about. So even just thinking about that relationship with objects and language I think is very fascinating and something you don't really get perspective unless you learn another language. Another great example I think the benefits of learning a second language as I mentioned, it's a window into the culture so quick example, if I would write my name in English, you know I'm writing left to right if I were to write in Arabic I'm writing right to left so that you have three pictures to people in a study, an infant, a child and an old man and asked them to put them in order chronologically, people who read left to right are gonna put the baby on the left and the old man on the right because they think of the passage of time passing this way. People who read languages in the opposite direction will place the baby on the right, the young child in the middle and the old man on the left because they see time passing the way that they read. It passes the other way before then. That's fascinating and I think that they're really helps you understand other cultures. Later in life when you're in society you will very likely have opportunities to interact with people who are different from you and being able to speak a different language opens up such a window to communication to understanding the culture to understanding how people from different parts of the world have developed different understandings of things. And I think that should be celebrated and language is an opportunity to peer into other people and another culture in a way that very few other things are. Travel helps and travel helps when you're trying to learn a language. Spending some time in the areas of the world where you want to be able to speak the language, even for me, Latin America over Spain because I could develop a very strong Spanish accent but it wouldn't help me in the same way Central American accent will, well, I'm working in Central America so travel and learning another language for me should be top priorities for anybody who wants to have a better understanding the world we live in. Even if they don't plan on living and working abroad, even if they plan on living in the same communities where they are from, just has a way of expanding the mind.

[Makes me want to take Spanish again.]

How are your skills?

[I probably read a lot better than I can speak it.]

¿Puedes entender todo lo que estoy diciendo?

[It's been a couple of years since...]

Todo lo que yo estoy diciendo?

If you would got that one, you would probably understood what I said.

Was high school the first time you were able to study Spanish?

[Yeah]

Me too.

[I don't know the way I was learning was the right way because I could answer the test questions and everything, but like you said you have to be there really communicating with people.]

Yeah, absolutely. Language is just a bridge to getting somewhere and once you're there through your understanding of the language so many doors open up at an incredible rate and it's very exciting to be able to step through them with the confidence of understanding the language, a different language. [inaudible comments off screen] Well, there are ample opportunities I think you know I can only imagine even here in Lansing there are probably non university, less expensive and you know just opportunities to be producing the language. That's so important. So you study a little bit you have a little bit of a base, you are doing flash cards but couple times a week you're out speaking Spanish all night. You know and that helps. And also if you're doing that then you're interacting with, you know, you're in the culture as best you can be to an extent. I hope you do, I hope you stick with it.