

Deep Culture Podcast – Transcript

The Deep Culture Podcast explores the psychological impact of intercultural experiences, informed by the sciences of brain, culture and mind. Join hosts **Joseph Shaules** and **Ishita Ray** as we look at the personal growth that can come from travel, living and working abroad, learning a foreign language, growing up in a multicultural context—and the challenges of bridging different cultural worlds.

Episode 53 – Language Learning – More than a Code

Are you frustrated with language learning? It's no surprise! Join Joseph Shaules and Ishita Ray as they explore why foreign language learning is both frustrating and life-changing. They explore the deep connection between language and culture, and the embodied nature of linguistic processing. We hear personal stories about the pleasures and pitfalls of navigating new linguaculture worlds from Bridget van de Grooteveen, Ade Putri Verlita Maharani, Makiko Endo Kimura, Emre Seven and Torhild Liane Harr Skarnes.

Time	Speaker	
00:00:00	Joseph	<p>I almost failed my first year Spanish class. I would have failed if I hadn't cheated on the final exam. I rolled up little pieces of paper and then I put them into the shaft of my pen. It was a verb conjugation cheat sheet.</p> <p>Hello, this is Joseph Shaules, and welcome to the Deep Culture Podcast, where we explore culture and the mind, and I am here with Ishita Ray. How are you doing today, Ishita?</p>
00:00:41	Ishita	<p>Hi, Joseph. I am doing great, and I'm really excited to be here today. The title of today's episode is <i>Language Learning - More than a Code</i>.</p>
00:00:53	Joseph	<p>We were talking about this idea: "Wouldn't it be great if we could just take a pill and be fluent in a foreign language?" And you were saying, well, I'm living in Tokyo now. I would love to take a Japanese pill. Then I could read all of the Kanji.</p>
00:01:06	Ishita	<p>And you wanted to take a Bahasa Indonesia pill.</p>
00:01:12	Joseph	<p>And of course, there is no pill. In fact, it's kind of the opposite.</p>
00:01:16	Ishita	<p>Learning a foreign language is one of the hardest things that you can do, but it can change your life.</p>

00:01:24	Joseph	Yeah. It's equal parts inspiration and frustration. Like, you get excited and then you lose motivation, or else you struggle, and then there's a breakthrough.
00:01:36	Ishita	I remember on the airplane going to France for the first time, I was practicing in my head how to ask for directions to the train station. And when it was time, it worked. And I was so happy that the train employee understood me.
00:01:54	Joseph	But you also hear people have kind of the opposite experience. Like, "Oh, I studied German in high school, but I don't remember a thing!" I know people who have lived in Japan for years but have never learned Japanese. And so in this episode, we want to dig into why this is.
00:02:12	Ishita	We'll talk about how language learning is embodied. It's also psychologically disruptive. It stresses us out, and that's why it's hard and why it can have such an impact on us.
00:02:26	Joseph	And we're gonna have some fun geeking out. We'll talk about embodied simulation theory, linguaculture. Cool stuff. But we have also asked the podcast team and our listeners to share their stories about the power of language learning.
00:02:44	Ishita	And we will talk about things they don't tell you in school. Like, you can learn every word and pass every test, but it won't make you fluent. Or that practicing a foreign language can make you feel stupid. And that brings us to part one – It is not a code.
Part One – It is Not a Code		
00:03:16	Ishita	So, Joseph, we both love languages, but we come from very different language backgrounds.
00:03:25	Joseph	Well, you grew up speaking Bengali, Hindi, and English, I guess, switching between them.
00:03:31	Ishita	Right. Bengali was the language at home, but neighbors spoke mostly in English with each other. The TV news was in Hindi. We had a newspaper in Bengali, another one in English. And this is not

		uncommon in India and in many other places in the world where it is the most natural thing to speak multiple languages.
00:03:57	Joseph	So what do you consider your so-called native language?
00:04:01	Ishita	I don't know. . . all of them. . . none of them. There are limits for me in each of them. It is natural to give a work presentation in English. But then Bengali poetry moves me in a way that English just cannot.
00:04:20	Joseph	Well, as you know, Americans are famous for not learning foreign languages. My background is completely monolingual.
00:04:28	Ishita	But one thing we do have in common, foreign languages changed our lives.
00:04:35	Joseph	That is true. When I was 19, learning Spanish opened a door for me. I discovered Mexico. I ran a language school there. I came to Japan as a language teacher and on and on.
00:04:50	Ishita	And I signed up for French classes after my undergraduate studies at a time when I was bored out of my mind and deeply frustrated with my whole life. And French opened up a world of new challenges and possibilities. But of course, when I started, I had no idea.
00:05:09	Joseph	And I had no idea where learning Spanish would take me. In high school, I was a language learning loser. I almost failed my first year Spanish class. I would have failed if I hadn't cheated on the final exam. I rolled up little pieces of paper and then I put them into the shaft of my pen. It was a verb conjugation cheat sheet.
00:05:34	Ishita	That's weird. You are an excellent Spanish speaker. I've heard you. But you nearly failed in school. What happened?
00:05:45	Joseph	Well, in high school, I was like a lot of people. I hated foreign language classes. I couldn't get motivated. I couldn't see the point. There wasn't anything to spark my interest, to spark my motivation. That came later.

00:05:58	Ishita	And a lot of language classes are like that. One problem is they are organized around a basic misunderstanding that language is a code. Whereas in terms of cognitive processing, language is not simply an information system with predictable rules.
00:06:19	Joseph	And in the classroom, when you treat language like a code, it leads to something called the transfer paradox. So the most efficient way to teach complex skills is to break them into small pieces. But that leads to fragmented knowledge that's hard to integrate and it's hard to apply.
00:06:39	Ishita	And that means that the most convenient way to teach languages is not the best way to learn them.
00:06:48	Joseph	<p>But I think it's even worse than that because there are people who are good at this kind of learning. They find foreign language like a puzzle.</p> <p>But what often happens is that even though they pass every test, they really haven't mastered the language. Often they're putting sentences together in their head.</p>
00:07:08	Ishita	And that was the experience of Makiko, a first-time contributor to the podcast. She did well with foreign language study, she grew up in Japan and is now a high school English teacher. Let's take a listen.
00:07:26	Makiko	Growing up in a rural area in Japan, being able to read and write English seemed incredibly cool. However, the reality was that school English was geared toward passing exams. It was, so to speak, English with an expiration date. For me, school English felt like learning a system of symbols. The English I used was a direct translation of my thoughts in Japanese into another set of symbols.
00:08:10	Joseph	I love how she says she was learning English with an expiration date. It's like after the test, you don't need to remember it anymore.
00:08:19	Ishita	And just like we were saying, to her, it felt like a direct translation of Japanese into another set of symbols.

00:08:29	Joseph	And some people might say, Well, yeah, but language is a kind of code, right? You have words that you have to say in a particular order. There are grammar rules. It's a system.
00:08:40	Ishita	And yes, it is a system, but it's a dynamic system. A living language is much, much more complex than the sentences in textbooks.
00:08:53	Joseph	And that's why you hear people say that classroom language is different from real life. And that's something that podcast team member, Emre Seven discovered when he went to the United States.
00:09:07	Emre	<p>When I went to the United States, I had a BA in English. But despite all my studies, I had big problems. I got a job working in Louisiana at Burger King, but I had trouble understanding anything the other employees were telling each other. It was very disappointing. I had a college degree in English but could not join the conversations at all. The worst was when I heard one of my coworkers say: "This guy does not understand English."</p> <p>I found that despite knowing all the grammar rules and words perfectly, it was tiring to speak English because I had to think consciously about everything I said. It was exhausting.</p>
00:09:59	Ishita	So we can hear that Emre was struggling like Makiko was. His mind couldn't process language fast enough because he had learnt it like a code.
00:10:11	Joseph	And there's another problem. When you learn a language like a code, you expect that all you need to do is replace one code for another. But often that just doesn't work, which Emre discovered as well.
00:10:27	Emre	When I was in the United States, I found out that some of my sentences which were literally true, if you translate them word by word from Turkish, did not make sense for Americans. Once I wanted to learn if an American friend drinks wine, beer, or any other alcoholic beverages. And I translated the sentence in my Turkish mind and I said, " <i>alkol kullanmak</i> " - "Do you use alcohol?" He looked confused, "Use alcohol? For what?"

		I was surprised that he had trouble understanding me. In Turkish, the literal translation of drink is, to use, but it did not mean anything to my American friend.
00:11:17	Joseph	Well, I have to say congratulations to Emre for surviving all of that.
00:11:23	Ishita	<p>But let's get geeky here for a minute. From the cognitive perspective, when we say that language is not just a code, we are referring to how it is processed by the mind.</p> <p>Research in neurolinguistics has shown that language use is a whole-body process. Our mind simulates the experience of the words being used.</p>
00:11:50	Joseph	And this is technically referred to as embodied simulation theory. We talked about it in Episode 10 - <i>Language, Culture and Mind</i> . But here's an example. If you say the word "dog" and then ask 10 people what image comes to mind, you will get different answers. And that depends on that person's experience, like whether you grew up with a Labrador or a German shepherd.
00:12:17	Ishita	So linguistic meaning is grounded in our lived experience. So now if I say wet dog, you will not only get an image in your mind, but maybe you will remember the smell or maybe the sight of a dog shaking itself off. Language triggers an embodied simulation of experience.
00:12:40	Joseph	And that's a key point because it helps us understand why language is cultural, because language speakers have shared cultural experiences that are triggered by language. So, for example, if you say "the fourth of July" to me, as an American, I'll have a mental image of, say, picnics, fireworks, hot dogs. Because the word "fourth of July" means Independence Day in the United States.
00:13:10	Ishita	And that is different from July 4th, right?
00:13:15	Joseph	Right. The 4th of July is Independence Day. July 4th is simply the day after July 3rd. But how does that work in India?

00:13:25	Ishita	Well, for us, it's the 15th of August. The "15th of August" means Independence Day. So you might say, what will you be doing for the "15th of August" holidays?
00:13:38	Joseph	And I'm guessing it doesn't bring up images of hot dogs and fireworks for you.
00:13:43	Ishita	No, it does not. It is about hoisting the flag, singing the national anthem, watching the live telecast of the official celebrations in New Delhi, because everyone does that.
00:13:58	Joseph	So language triggers simulations of experience, and that shared experience is cultural. To understand the 15th of August, I need to have experiences with Independence Day in India.
00:14:11	Ishita	And another way to say it is that from the perspective of cognition, language and culture are not two separate things. They are one integrated whole. It's the textbooks that separate language from culture.
00:14:29	Joseph	And the word we use to talk about that is "linguaculture", language and culture as a single thing.
00:14:38	Ishita	And that brings us to Part Two - Deep Connections.
Part Two – Deep Connections		
00:14:59	Ishita	So let's shift gears a little bit. Instead of talking about how hard language learning is, let's talk about how people succeed. And you're a good example. You hated Spanish in high school, but ended up becoming a fluent speaker. How did that happen?
00:15:20	Joseph	Well, like a lot of people, I got hooked. I started to feel a connection to Spanish, and it was not something that I had planned on.
00:15:30	Ishita	And you told the story back in Episode 38 - <i>Transformation and the Road Less Traveled</i> . Let's listen back.
00:15:41	Joseph	When I was 18, I had a great summer job. I worked at the front gate of Sea World, a marine park in my hometown of San Diego. They had a dolphin show, a killer whale named Shamu. There were

		<p>also seagulls constantly squawking overhead, and they pooped on tourists and locals alike.</p> <p>My job was to take the tickets of guests as they entered the park and to direct them to the information booth with a set phrase that I repeated all day.</p> <p>“Maps and programs are across the bridge to the left. Maps and programs are across the bridge to the left. Maps and programs are across the bridge to the left.”</p> <p>I really liked the atmosphere at the front gate. There were kids running ahead of their parents, full of anticipation. And also, pretty often, there were guests, families especially, speaking Spanish. And Spanish sounded somehow cool to me. And I thought, wow, it would be neat to learn my line in Spanish. And so I picked up one of the small notepads I found in the employee lounge. I asked someone how to translate my phrase into Spanish, and I wrote it down.</p> <p>‘Hay’, there is, there are; ‘Mapas y programas’. Okay, got that. ‘Crusando’, crossing; ‘el puente’, the bridge; ‘a la izquierda’, to the left. Put it all together: “Hay mapas y programas crusando el puente a la izquierda.” Practice a few times, ready to go, with notepad in my shirt pocket for backup. I took my post, did my job as usual. But then I heard people speaking Spanish. So just as I took their tickets, I smiled and said: “Hay, mapas y programas crusando el puente a la izquierda.”, and they smiled back.</p> <p>It was like a tiny miracle, really, that these sounds that I had memorized actually meant something to people. Experiencing that connection was cool. Until, of course, before too long, someone turned to me and asked me a question, in Spanish. I had no idea what they were saying, but I had my notepad. So I started to write down words and phrases I might need. ‘Bathroom’; ‘The park closes at...’; ‘Where can I rent a dolphin stroller?’ And they all went into the notepad, which I soon realized wasn’t enough. So I borrowed a high school textbook. I took a class at a community college. I spent a summer in Mexico on a homestay. I was hooked.</p>
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00:19:21	Ishita	I love this story. This is the opposite of language as a code. Did it seem exotic somehow?
00:19:30	Joseph	It did. I got the feeling that there was this world of Spanish out there and that I could get access to it.
00:19:37	Ishita	But the key is, the foreign language has to be personally meaningful. And that could be the smallest or the biggest of things. And you never know what might hook you.
00:19:50	Joseph	And that's something Makiko found out too. Let's listen.
00:19:56	Makiko	<p>I was an undergraduate student studying English literature when the Great East Japan earthquake hit. Japanese society was in turmoil and I questioned the purpose of learning English. When the university reopened, I took a course in translation studies.</p> <p>I participated in a project to translate poems written in Japanese by children from Fukushima on the theme of hometown and share them with the world. I spent time with the children living in temporary housing.</p> <p>Initially, I thought translating children's words into English would be easy. However, I soon realized that many emotions in their words couldn't be fully expressed in English. This experience opened my eyes to the untranslatable aspects between Japanese and English.</p>
00:21:04	Joseph	Wow, this is a powerful story. I was in Japan during the Great East Japan earthquake in 2011, and it was horrific. There was a huge tsunami. Something like 20,000 people died.
00:21:17	Ishita	And I picture Makiko living with children in temporary housing trying to translate poems from Japanese into English with this deep desire to communicate what the children are thinking and feeling. And the difficulty of doing all of this - really feeling in her body that language is not just a code.
00:21:41	Joseph	And of course, this all happened while Makiko was in Japan. You don't have to be in a foreign country to find a foreign language meaningful.

00:21:51	Ishita	And that was true for first time contributor Bridget, who learned Japanese for several years while living in her home country, the Netherlands.
00:22:05	Bridget	Learning a language feels like I'm opening a door to a different world. I already opened a big door to the English-speaking world and a gate to the German one. And they look completely different. Now, the smaller but sparkly door to the Japanese speaking world is ajar. Being able to glimpse through is already a reward on its own and leaves me wanting for more.
00:22:41	Ishita	I love that metaphor about opening the window into a different world. And it's another way to see language as a world of shared experiences.
00:22:53	Joseph	But let's pause here for just a minute because I have heard people say: "Yeah, but how can you say that Language learning is cultural learning? There isn't a single English culture. British English or British culture is different from Jamaican English or Jamaican culture."
00:23:09	Ishita	<p>The thing is, culture is never a single thing. It's an ecosystem. And the same is true for language.</p> <p>The world of English is infinitely complex and diverse. I am part of the world of English as an Indian, and there are other English worlds: Hollywood, Reggae, Shakespeare. There's plenty for anyone that wants to explore.</p>
00:23:38	Joseph	And using a new language is foreign. So for example, a non-native speaker of English like Bridget or Makiko, they do have to find new ways to express themselves.
00:23:51	Ishita	And that's what happens when you dive into a different world. Which podcast team member Lia learned when she moved to the Philippines and was learning Tagalog. Let's listen.
00:24:07	Lia	It was not an easy leap from Norwegian to Tagalog. I couldn't translate all our various words for snow to Tagalog. And Tagalog has so many words for rice in different states. And to me there's

		<p>just one word. My Tagalog teacher laughed when I told him I had 'bigas' for dinner. Bigas means uncooked rice. What I ate was 'kannin', cooked rice.</p> <p>Sometimes, cultural references are hard to pick up on. I used to bring rap lyrics to language class and analyze these with my teachers. There was this song 'Bituin' - star; it was about a single dad who had to leave his daughter to earn money for her education. When he returned on her birthday, he saw from afar that there were many candles in the window. He broke down crying. I thought he was touched and emotional. Norwegians light candles any day, and especially when we have people over. But Filipinos light candles when someone dies, during wakes and funerals. His daughter had passed away. I had not caught the point of the song at all, even though I understood all the words.</p>
00:25:28	Ishita	Wow. There is so much in this story. It's a great example of linguaculture. Meaning doesn't just come from a dictionary. You can learn the word for 'candle', but it can mean one thing in one community and something completely different in another.
00:25:48	Joseph	Which means that learning a new language means navigating in different cultural waters.
00:25:55	Ishita	And this is something that first time podcast contributor Verlita discovered. Verlita is from Indonesia. She is now living and working in Norway, navigating in Norwegian. Let's take a listen.
00:26:13	Verlita	<p>My biggest challenge in language learning is forming deep connections. The way I form relationships feels different. I often feel distant from my usual effortless way of doing and saying things. Everything from the smallest to the biggest task feels more effortful.</p> <p>One moment that stands out was when I was working as a part time babysitter while I'm doing my master in Norway. I spoke English and worked with different families. One day I was with a family where the kids were more fluent in Norwegian and there was this moment where the little girl asked me to cut the carrot.</p>

		<p>I understood what she wanted, but when I cut it, it was clearly not how she imagined. She started crying and I couldn't understand why. We were struggling to communicate and I could see her frustration, but I just didn't have the words.</p> <p>That experience where I realized how much language shapes not just our ability to do things, but how we connect, really broke my heart.</p>
00:27:42	Joseph	<p>I have to say, it is a long way from Indonesia to Norway, and Verlita's life there is very local. She works with Norwegian youth in non-urban areas. What a journey.</p>
00:27:56	Ishita	<p>But it's so sad to hear Verlita say that it broke her heart to not be able to connect with this little girl.</p> <p>Let's also hear how it was for Makiko to navigate using English. This time not in Japan, but in a foreign environment.</p>
00:28:18	Makiko	<p>I was in Russia for a short term study abroad program while attending a university lecture on Japanese culture.</p> <p>The Russian professor delivered a lecture on Shunga, traditional Japanese erotic art, emphasizing that it was vulgar and impure as art. I was the only Japanese student in the classroom which was filled with Russian and European students.</p> <p>I felt incredibly embarrassed. I felt that my culture was being insulted and by extension, that I was being ridiculed.</p> <p>I wanted to explain that in historical Japan, Shunga was sometimes given by mothers to daughters as a life guide and reflected how women had to navigate life under a strong patriarchal system. However, I couldn't express this in English. I struggled to connect my emotions with language. Despite the anger burning inside me, the words coming out of my mouth felt shallow and meaningless. This experience was profoundly impactful. I do not want to feel that way again.</p>
00:29:50	Joseph	<p>This is powerful, isn't it? I really feel for Makiko.</p>

		Speaking a foreign language can be psychologically challenging, like boxing with one hand tied behind your back.
00:30:03	Ishita	And that brings us to part three - The Psychology of Linguaculture learning.
Part Three – The Psychology of Linguaculture Learning		
00:30:23	Ishita	So we've been using the word 'embodied' to talk about language use. Let's look at that a bit more. Language isn't something that happens in some abstract mental space. Both language and culture are experienced in the whole body.
00:30:40	Joseph	If I use a vulgar word, you can feel disgusted. Listening to a story can make you cry, it can make you laugh. Poetry can move you deeply. Language is a whole-body experience.
00:30:53	Ishita	And there is evidence that patterns of brain activation are different depending on whether someone has learned in a grammar-oriented classroom or in a more immersive way.
00:31:06	Joseph	Well, language learning is an embodied process in another way too, also one that they don't tell you in school. Language learning is not a psychologically neutral process. It is cognitively disruptive and that makes it emotionally demanding.
00:31:24	Ishita	All kinds of things can be effortful and stressful. Trying to pronounce different sounds, trying to put together a sentence, not understanding what people say, not being able to express yourself. That's all psychologically very tough.
00:31:42	Joseph	And in the academic literature, they call this feeling 'language anxiety'. I think that's a terrible name. It sounds like a mental dysfunction. I think it's more accurate to say that the psychological demands of language learning are very similar to the stresses of adjusting to a new cultural environment.
00:32:03	Ishita	And this is one reason we can feel so vulnerable using a foreign language. As Makiko tells us.
00:32:14	Makiko	Talking with a native English speaker excites me, but at the same time it makes me nervous. This is because my language ability is

		not on par with theirs. It's strange. No matter how much I have thoughts or opinions to share, when I feel my language skills are inferior, I start to feel like a child, as if I'm in a weaker position. There is always a lingering sense of embarrassment and shame.
00:32:54	Ishita	I really feel for Makiko and her English is great, but she still sometimes feels like a child. And I feel this with Japanese right now. It's stressful and I do feel stupid, like the dry-cleaning woman will swallow me alive if I don't understand what she says. It almost feels like a moral failure.
00:33:20	Joseph	Wow. A moral failure. But I know what you mean. I have been speaking French for years, but still, when I'm in a group of French speakers, I can feel my body tense up when it feels to me like I can't keep up.
00:33:34	Ishita	And it's really a delicate balance, isn't it? It can be exciting when you use a new language, but it's scary. And this is something that Bridget tells us. She studied Japanese for years in the Netherlands. She loves learning the language, but when she had to actually use it, she felt stressed. Let's listen.
00:34:01	Bridget	<p>It was terrifying at first to be in Japan and speak Japanese there. My boyfriend pushed me to try to speak it. I'm happy he did because it made me face my fears. It's a funny paradox. I speak multiple languages, but I'm afraid to speak them. Though I have overcome it mostly with English and German. The fear returns with every new language. So I had to face it again with Japanese. After two weeks in Japan, I finally had some courage and made the most of my remaining weeks there.</p> <p>It also makes traveling outside of the bigger cities easier and shows people you're trying. Some people were visibly relieved when they noticed I could speak Japanese with them and chattered away in rapid fire Japanese. It made me want to study more and take more conversation classes than I already had.</p>
00:35:10	Ishita	I really admire Bridget. She takes language learning as a challenge of personal growth. And I love that having some success motivated her to study more.

00:35:24	Joseph	And that's something that Makiko has experienced as well.
00:35:29	Makiko	<p>There is an English-speaking self inside me. In Japanese, it's possible to create distance between words and thoughts. Like wrapping a message in a veil. You often don't express your opinions directly. For example, if someone says to me: "You speak English so well, that's amazing." I would typically respond: "Oh, not at all. I still have a long way to go.", to show respect for the other person.</p> <p>However, the English-speaking self is different. I feel like I can put my thoughts directly into words while my language ability is still far from perfect. When English connects to my brain, it feels like a dam of emotions bursts open. I do feel that myself who speaks English and the one who speaks Japanese are not exactly the same person.</p>
00:36:45	Joseph	Wow. I just love how Makiko says: "Japanese is like wrapping a message in a veil". I totally get that.
00:36:54	Ishita	I love how she says: "a dam of emotions bursts forth", when she talks about English. So much can happen when you are learning to express yourself in new ways. Like playing your song on a new instrument.
00:37:11	Joseph	And Emre Seven also experienced this. Let's listen.
00:37:17	Emre	I noticed that if I forced myself to be the exact same person when I spoke English, it was not natural. Then probably my intuitive mind took over and I internalized it. I felt that I started to reconstruct my identity intuitively and my speech sounded much more natural. So did my feelings too.
00:37:48	Ishita	I am really interested in what Emre says about 'reconstructing his identity intuitively'. It's like he's building up a new sense of self.
00:37:59	Joseph	And he really came a long way from his classroom learning, his BA in English, to working at Burger King, to now having this feeling of having a new self.

00:38:13	Ishita	And it seems like Emre's English classes didn't really prepare him for all this. On the other hand, Lia had a different experience. Let's listen.
00:38:24	Lia	<p>My Tagalog teachers continuously assessed my ability to build relationships in Tagalog. We did role plays to practice handling conflict and tension in the Philippines, and received feedback on both our language and cultural performance.</p> <p>I remember one specific role play that assessed my ability to perceive when and how to use a mediator in a conflict situation. Presentations were evaluated not only on linguistic accuracy, but also on how well we would resonate with the Filipino audience. For them, success meant seeing me form authentic relationships and navigate the culture effectively.</p>
00:39:13	Ishita	Wow. Lia's language class included cultural role plays. I am jealous.
00:39:20	Joseph	I'm wondering when I was in high school if my classes brought Spanish to life like that, I might have done better.
00:39:28	Ishita	I think that the key is that language classrooms need to focus on language as something that is alive, experiential, something that engages our body, feelings, and mind. And of course, that kind of teaching isn't easy.
00:39:48	Joseph	And this brings us back to something that we touched upon at the beginning. Language learning is hard, but it's hard for the same reason that it's rewarding. Because language and culture are such deep parts of who we are.
00:40:03	Ishita	And that deep learning is something that Verlita has experienced.
00:40:11	Verlita	<p>Learning a language, like understanding a new culture, takes real effort. It's not just about memorizing words or following grammar rules. It's about immersing ourselves, making mistakes, feeling out of place, and pushing through those frustrating moments.</p> <p>But here's the thing. It's all worth it. Because the real reward isn't just speaking the language. It's in the connections we make. It's in those moments when a conversation flows more naturally, when</p>

		<p>we share a love with someone from a completely different background, or when we suddenly see the world from a new perspective.</p> <p>Learning a language pushes me to grow, to expand my values, to step into a better version of myself and deepen my understanding of others. And that's what makes all the effort meaningful.</p> <p>I'm still in the middle of the journey, figuring things out as I go. Some days I feel like I'm making progress. Other days I struggle to find the right words. But maybe that's the beauty of it then, that there is always more to learn.</p>
00:41:40	Ishita	Wow. I couldn't have said it better. And I really feel this. Learning Japanese, I do get discouraged or stressed, but it is pushing me to grow.
00:41:50	Joseph	And it's easy to lose sight of all of that when we have a vocabulary quiz or when we are struggling to talk to the dry cleaner.
00:41:59	Ishita	But it is worth it. It's true you don't know where it will take you, but that exploration is exactly why it's so powerful.
00:42:10	Joseph	<p>And I think that's a good place to stop. But let's mention some resources. If you are a language teacher interested in how cultural learning can be included in the language classroom, check out my book <i>Language Culture and the Embodied Mind</i>. Send us an email and we will send you an excerpt.</p> <p>The research we referred to about brain activation in different types of language learning was: <i>Explicit and implicit second language training differentially affect the achievement of native like brain activation patterns</i> and that was in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.</p> <p>The Deep Culture Podcast is sponsored by the Japan Intercultural Institute, an NPO dedicated to intercultural education and research. I'm the director of JII and we have great news. There are now educational materials to use with the Deep Culture Podcast. Things you can take directly into the classroom. You can find them</p>

		on the website of the Japan Intercultural Institute. Look under Resources, totally free, noncommercial.
00:43:14	Ishita	<p>And a huge thank you to all the educators, more than 20 of them from all over the world who are contributing to this materials development project. They have put in incredible work to help get the Deep Culture Podcast into the classroom. It's been a huge inspiration. To learn more or to find out about joining this project, write us at dcpodcast@japanintercultural.org.</p> <p>And also so many people to thank for contributing to this episode. The podcast team: Sanne Bosma, Emre Seven, Torhild Liane Harr Skarnes, Rob Fritz, Ikumi Fritz and special contributors Bridget van de Grooteveen, Ade Putri Verlita Maharani, and Makiko Endo Kimura.</p>
00:44:08	Joseph	And as always, thanks to you Ishita. It was incredible fun geeking out with you.
00:44:14	Ishita	Thank you Joseph. I again had loads of fun doing this episode with you.