

MODULE 1 - NATURE VS NURTURE

LISTENING COMPREHENSION - TRANSCRIPT

Part 2: Nathaniel Drew

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCEAGJgMImA>

The link between how language and how we view the world is something that has always fascinated me. Language isn't just a tremendous form of communication, it's also intertwined and influenced by culture and history. My experience of learning and mastering a new language is incomparable, it is truly unlike anything else, and more than ever I think we need to be learning other languages to bridge the gaps that exist between us.

So I thought I would share my experience learning foreign languages and the journey that it has taken me on. I'll start from the beginning here. So I technically come from a bilingual household. Both my parents are from Argentina. When I tell people this they usually think "oh, so you must have been bilingual your entire life" and that is very far from the truth, I wish things were that simple. It is true Spanish was my first language, I spoke it up till the age of four, but both my parents speak excellent English and when I started to go to school in the United States, where I grew up and where I was born, I quickly lost any ability to speak, or even understand Spanish. English very quickly became the only language that was present in my life.

When I was 13 my family took a trip to Panama, and I remember not being able to understand anything that the locals were saying. And that became a huge source of frustration and embarrassment. I felt limited. Not being able to speak the language that the vast majority of my family could speak felt like this massive, insurmountable obstacle that was blocking me from my own roots and from interacting with tons of different people.

Due to a long series of events, and me desperately trying to get out of the US public school system I managed to convince a rotary club to sponsor me to study for a year in France.

I was 16 so this was still in high school, and looking back this was a very pivotal moment in my life. I've mentioned France a couple of times in previous videos of mine but it's difficult for me to describe just how formative this year was for me. It gave me a better understanding and appreciation of my upbringing and where I come from. In so many moments during my time in Europe I was made to reconsider my ideas and opinions. It's kind of like when you are looking at a math problem, and you say to yourself "there's so much I'm not considering here."

I returned to the US after that year abroad, and it was immediately apparent to me that I was addicted. If I can do this once, who is to say that it couldn't be done again? And that's exactly what I did. I saved up my money for a couple of years and then I left to live for a few months in Argentina.

Once again I was in a place that I knew very little about, and was really putting myself in foreign circumstances, in foreign situations. This time it was a little bit different, I was digging into my past, you know, the history of my family. I don't want this to sound like it was all perfect and easy, it actually ended up becoming a very difficult period in my life on an emotional level, but what I'm saying here is that "yeah, ok maybe it was difficult but it was absolutely worth it".

I've had amazing work opportunities thanks to the fact that I speak Spanish, I mean there are more native Spanish speakers than there are native English speakers. Kind of crazy. Due to very poor media coverage, I originally had a very two dimensional perspective in things, but I walked away from my time there just with completely new eyes. Every time you learn a new language you are interfacing with and encountering new things. It's difficult, it's not easy to learn a new language but it's worth it. I think the trick is to have very solid habits in place and also play to your strengths. You know, go towards the things that interest and excite you.