

00:00:01 Sebastian Young

I think what we try to do is we try to challenge that idea, that or that narrative, that language does not matter. And so we do that in ways like by hosting events like World Languages Day.

00:00:13 Anna Marchetti

I don't have an ASL course at my school or a Latin course, or I don't get to see K-pop groups that often, and a chance to be exposed to new things.

00:00:26 Automated Voice

You're listening to Speaking of language, a podcast recorded at the Language Resource Center at Cornell University. Each week, we explore a topic related to language pedagogy and second language acquisition.

00:00:39 Automated Voice

This week, on Speaking of Language,

00:00:42 Sam Lupowitz

We revisit Cornell's World Languages Day, which took place earlier this month with participant Anna Marchetti and Cornell student volunteer Sebastian Young.

00:00:53 Angelika Kraemer

Welcome to a new episode of Speaking of Language. I'm Angelika Kraemer, the director of the Language Resource Center at Cornell University.

00:01:00 Sam Lupowitz

And I'm Sam Lupowitz, the LRC's media manager. We are excited to talk about our annual World Languages Day event today with two participants.

00:01:10 Angelika Kraemer

Anna Marchetti is a senior in high school in Victor, NY, just under 2 hours northwest of Ithaca, and Sebastian Young is a sophomore here at Cornell and one of our fabulous LRC student assistants.

00:01:23 Sam Lupowitz

We can't wait to hear what you thought about World Languages Day.

00:01:27 Angelika Kraemer

Welcome to Speaking of language, Anna and Sebastian.

00:01:31 Sebastian Young

Thank you for having us.

00:01:33 Anna Marchetti

Yes, thank you.

00:01:34 Sam Lupowitz

So before we talk all things World Languages Day, please tell us a little more about your background with languages and what prompted your love for languages and cultures. Anna, maybe you could start us off.

00:01:48 Anna Marchetti

Yeah. Well, when I was little, I always loved the sounds of languages.

00:01:52 Anna Marchetti

But I wasn't old enough to take a course in school yet, so I found an app and started learning through it, and I immediately loved how different pieces of language kind of fit together like a puzzle, and seeing how words relate to each other. And as I've grown up, I've really appreciated being able to use language to connect with other people.

00:02:13 Angelika Kraemer

And what languages are you currently studying, or what languages have you studied?

00:02:18 Anna Marchetti

I am currently learning French, but I have also learned a little bit of Spanish and Italian and I tried a lot of different languages but just a little bit of each language so I tried Spanish, French, Italian, German, Norwegian, Irish, Hawaiian, Klingon, which is made-up of the from Star Trek? Yes, just so many languages.

00:02:44 Angelika Kraemer

That's wonderful.

00:02:46 Sam Lupowitz

And Sebastian, what about you?

00:02:49 Sebastian Young

Awesome. Yeah. So my journey with studying languages began as a young child. I think growing up in a bilingual household definitely has played an important and integral role in my ability to learn languages. But actually I—

00:03:07 Sebastian Young

The story goes that I taught myself how to read and write in both Spanish and English one day because my mom said she went to school and the teacher had said something like did you teach your son how to read in both in or how to read in Spanish or how to read in English? And she said she was surprised because she had never taught me.

00:03:28 Sebastian Young

And so that was, I would say, my first time, my first experience.

00:03:35 Sebastian Young

Reading and writing in both Spanish and English, and I think that was further expanded upon when I was enrolled in a bilingual Spanish immersion school for both from kindergarten through 5th grade, which then I translated, transferred to a strictly English learning school and have been in that education setting for since 5th grade, but I think that's kind of where my process with languages began and has been continued. And to further answer the question of like what am I studying, what languages I'm studying, which I presume was going to be asked?

00:04:17 Angelika Kraemer

Yeah, sure.

00:04:18 Sebastian Young

Right now I'm learning German and I took a year of French in high school.

00:04:26 Sebastian Young

But right now as a college student, I am going to minor in Spanish, with the potential of studying abroad in a Spanish speaking country.

00:04:36 Angelika Kraemer

Nice. That's what we like to hear.

00:04:39 Angelika Kraemer

So we just hosted our third annual World Languages Day here at Cornell a few weeks ago. World Languages Day is a day-long event for middle and high school students that highlights the importance of language learning, cultural awareness, global literacy, and community engagement throughout the day.

00:05:00 Angelika Kraemer

Over 150 Cornell volunteers, presenters, performers and exhibitors helped make the day engaging and informative.

00:05:06 Angelika Kraemer

Our goal with World Languages Day is to celebrate different languages and cultures, which is so very important in times of global unrest.

00:05:15 Angelika Kraemer

Anna, this is your second time at World Languages Day. How did you first find out about the event and why did you decide to attend and then come back?

00:05:25 Anna Marchetti

Well, I happened to find it online and I decided to come because this event offers so many things that you can't learn in other places. Like I learned indigenous languages, ASL, K-pop, and I think it's a great

opportunity to be on campus and learn from people who are so knowledgeable about those things and I love learning language— about—

00:05:50 Anna Marchetti

I love learning about other languages and cultures because I love connecting with other people and expanding my horizons.

00:05:59 Sam Lupowitz

Awesome. Sebastian, you were our student keynote speaker at the Welcome Session of World Languages Day. What were some of the thoughts that you shared with the middle and high schoolers for our listeners.

00:06:12 Sebastian Young

One of the things— the main takeaways that I sought to instill in the middle and high school students was the importance of how language and culture can be bridged with your family history. And so for me, I have always found a stronger connection to my Mexican heritage as a Spanish speaker, despite being quite far removed from the migration that my family had made in the early 1910s, 1920s to the United States.

00:06:51 Sebastian Young

And so I feel like because I have been quite far removed from that history, it's been I've and we've lost connection with family in Mexico. It has been nice to and especially where I grew up to, there's been a large— there's a large Mexican community within the San Jose, San Francisco Bay area and so,

00:07:12 Sebastian Young

Within that and and it and a lot of— a lot of it had to do with growing up and and really, with my mother, who instilled in us the importance of tradition, Mexican tradition, like, for example, with coming up, is day of the dead or La Dia de Los Muertos is a really important family tradition or Mexican tradition. For those of you who've seen the movie Coco, you know that that's kind of what the tradition it looks like.

00:07:39 Sebastian Young

And through that experience, I was able to connect with my Mexican culture and heritage. However, I mentioned this to the students that I lack a connection or as strong a connection as I would like with my German heritage specifically, partly because and this is hard because my grandmother, who studied in, went to high school in Germany for three years and my dad who who lived and worked in Germany, who somewhat speak the language, was not—

00:08:16 Sebastian Young

That was not shared with us. And so it was—and that's something that I, you know, my brother and I are trying and my family are trying to learn German because we— it's his foundation to our family heritage and culture. And so I think that that was really the main take away from the conversation was well— how can we—

00:08:42 Sebastian Young

How can I share with them how important it is for you to learn the language because it serves as a pathway to understanding your, your, your culture and your heritage, and even your own family history?

00:08:56 Angelika Kraemer

And if I can jump in here, if you don't have a certain language or cultural background other than English, for example, I think being mindful of that is also, so very important for English speakers in the United States, because there are so many multilingual and multicultural people around us, right, we interact with people who I mean way back. Everybody is basically an immigrant of some sort, right?

00:09:25 Angelika Kraemer

Everybody, but I think the degrees of separation are larger or smaller for different people. But I think just being mindful that people have different backgrounds come from different language and cultural backgrounds and being understanding of that and being able to celebrate that I think is super important.

00:09:47 Angelika Kraemer

So Anna can you walk us through the day— how does World Languages Day work? So you arrived. What did you do? What did you learn?

00:09:59 Anna Marchetti

Ohh so first I got there. I checked in and got um— a kind of a map of different places we'd been going, my schedule, things like that.

00:10:08 Anna Marchetti

But then there was the opening ceremony when I went to French class. I really enjoyed being able to speak French with the professor and speak French with other kids and kind of converse with other people who love learning that language. So that was really cool and special. And then I also got to take ASL, which I've been one to learn for a really long time.

00:10:17 Angelika Kraemer

Sure. Yeah.

00:10:30 Anna Marchetti

But it's one of those languages that's really hard to learn by yourself or especially hard to learn by yourself. So it's really helpful to be able to practice with other people and learn how to convey different phrases, how to use facial expressions, important things like that.

00:10:48 Anna Marchetti

And also I had Latin, which was pretty cool because we learned how people still use Latin today and how, even though there aren't any more native speakers, it's still cool to see how different languages have come from Latin and also how Latin is used. And then also we got to see.

00:11:07 Anna Marchetti

Amazing K pop groups student-led K pop groups, which were amazing. They did an incredible job. I don't think I would have that amount of energy to be able to dance like that.

00:11:21 Anna Marchetti

And there were also a lot of cool informational tables about different resources on campus, different clubs and opportunities, different study abroad. And that was really amazing to hear about because I've always wanted to study abroad and kind of see you more of what that experience is like, yeah.

00:11:42 Angelika Kraemer

Sure. Great.

00:11:45 Angelika Kraemer

Yeah, jam packed program.

00:11:47 Angelika Kraemer

And as I mentioned earlier, 150 different people from the larger Cornell community make this event possible.

00:11:56 Angelika Kraemer

So it's great to see everybody coming together and sharing information and I think everybody who attends always learns something.

00:12:04 Sam Lupowitz

Now Sebastian is a volunteer for this event. Why is it important to highlight opportunities around language and culture? Learning on a university campus? Is there anything you learned at World Languages Day?

00:12:17 Sebastian Young

I think a lot of it has to do with the narrative that right now, when you know places higher education, world languages programs are being dismantled, and when even in high school, students are often saying, well, I'm only going to take three years of the language because that's going to quote unquote, "impress colleges" or "show them that that's all I need to get into college", it's these kinds of examples and narratives that perpetuate the idea that language does not matter.

00:12:54 Sebastian Young

And so I think it's. It's especially important now to share with students— younger students who are thinking of pursuing higher education about the importance of learning languages because of these narratives that dismantle that, that idea, and so we, I think what we try to do is we try to challenge that idea, that or that narrative, that language does not matter. And so we do that in ways like by hosting events like World Languages Day to answer the question of why I think events like this matter for

younger students is because it gives them an opportunity to understand that there are many outlets out there.

00:13:43 Sebastian Young

To continue to use language in ways that we don't really think about, especially in a world that views everything as so extremely transactional as we do, it's important to understand that even language will open up doors and opportunities in jobs. Not only that, but they also offer long term health benefits like decreasing Alzheimer's or dementia by five years minimum is what one of the studies found. I think at the NIH. So I think it's opportunities like this that prove that learning a language is important and for young children to know this at such a young age it is also "I'm cool".

00:14:28 Sebastian Young

And the second-half of the question, I think what something that was gratifying was a volunteer and seeing the students. One memory that comes to mind is the K pop session where one of the high school students or middle school students. I can't remember she had expressed a lot of the minute that the K pop group came in and the minute she walked into the auditorium there was a big smile and excitement because she was a huge K pop fan and so she was talking with the the 2 executive board members of loco, which was the the K pop group that. had come and taught a little bit of a K Pop dance and so to see her or say, Oh well, I've listened to this song or I listened to that song and I I know this move or or and to see how engaged she was and and really making sure like it was only like maybe 5, 10 seconds of the song but to see the way.

00:15:27 Sebastian Young

She tried to perfect the moves, was exciting and really proves that these are the kinds of support systems that are offered in higher education that she might not have access to as of now.

00:15:40 Angelika Kraemer

Yeah. Nice.

00:15:43 Angelika Kraemer

So what would both of you tell your friends about why they should join World Languages Day next year? Anna, if you, I mean you will be graduating and we hope that you will be joining as a volunteer next year. But if you had to, yeah, if you had to tell your peers in high school right now.

00:15:56 Anna Marchetti

I hope to do that too.

00:16:02 Angelika Kraemer

What would you tell them why they should join?

00:16:04 Anna Marchetti

I'd say because it's an awesome opportunity to be around campus and to interact with other kids, other high schoolers, other kids at Cornell's amazing and knowledgeable staff.

00:16:20 Anna Marchetti

About things that like I said earlier that you wouldn't be able to learn other places. Like I don't have an ASL course at my school or a Latin course, or I don't get to see K Pop groups that often and a chance to be exposed to new things.

00:16:37 Angelika Kraemer

Yeah. Wonderful. Great. Sebastian, how would you convince other Cornell students to volunteer for this event?

00:16:47 Sebastian Young

Well, I think there's many ways to do that, but two, one or two that come to mind are first by having them understand, I think the value of of sharing opportunities with middle and high school students with regards to language learning that, for example, that conversation hours and you talked to perhaps the facilitators or even just those attending conversation hours that we have such a such an event.

00:17:16 Sebastian Young

And to invite them to maybe potentially teach, teach the language that they're conversing in for, I believe each session was more or less an hour. And so I think if they come in and— or you advertise it in the sense that, like you, you have the opportunity to share with others those who are younger than you, the value and the importance that language has had on you speaks volume to encouraging students to, to, to continue language learning beyond middle and high school, when it's, quote unquote “required”, and the second reason, the way that you can encourage students Cornell students to vote here is by inviting them to look at this in a different light, as if they are the ones they are also learning. Because when I look at these students and I see, for example, the K POP student,

00:18:23 Sebastian Young

I think about how fascinated I was when I first started, when I took that French class in junior year of high school and how important it was to have that support system. That said, go on, learn French, because while it is another romance language, it gives you a window into the culture in France, I think it would create an opportunity for students to remember what was that moment for them that sparked their interest in language learning.

00:18:53 Sebastian Young

And yeah, it gives that window into the past and might in fact reinvigorate that passion for learning languages or excited. So those are just reasons why I think students should volunteer.

00:19:08 Angelika Kraemer

Yeah. And of course it's fun. Yes. And you get to spend the day with Sam and I. I mean that in and of itself is worth it.

00:19:21 Sam Lupowitz

So what are your plans for continuing your own journeys with languages?

00:19:27 Anna Marchetti

I hope to be a French major at Cornell and also study a ton of other languages, yes.

00:19:36 Anna Marchetti

And I really. Would love to study abroad, especially in France, but there are just so many places in the world that I want to see and so many experiences I want to have. So I hope to further my education at Cornell.

00:19:49 Angelika Kraemer

Great. That's what we like to hear.

00:19:51 Sebastian Young

I have been somewhat attempting to learn German through the online program of Deutsche Vela and yeah.

00:20:06 Sam Lupowitz

I know that one too.

00:20:09 Sebastian Young

And which is an opportunity. I had no idea about and and also of course, as I mentioned earlier, I plan on acquiring the Spanish Minor here at Cornell. So I've been taking a lot of Spanish courses too since I've been here.

00:20:26 Sebastian Young

And those have been awesome as well as participating. Last semester, I participated in the French conversation hour to further continue my French learning. And so those are just specifically for those 3 languages that I've kind of continued the language learning process.

00:20:50 Angelika Kraemer

So we could be chatting with the two of you forever, but before we sign off, We'd like to ask each of you to share a word in a language you speak, you love, you are learning, you may want to learn something that doesn't exist in English, but you wish it did.

00:21:11 Angelika Kraemer

What is that word, Sebastian? You look ready.

00:21:16 Sebastian Young

Yes, I have been thinking about this question for a while. One of the words that comes to mind is actually one that I learned in my Latin American documentary class with Professor Irina Troconis and one of the words that we've learned comes from a documentary we talked about in class about what was

happening in El Salvador at the time of the El Salvador Salvadoran Civil War, and there was a small town who, in which they, their town, had been decimated due to the military ransacking of their town and how they, you know, a lot of the mothers were struggling because they had lost their their children and so that word in Spanish is animero.

00:22:10 Sebastian Young

Animero which means someone, or one who used to ask for a charity for the souls in purgatory. So yeah. And so the role of **animero** is just sort of console those the souls that that are in in purgatory so.

00:22:35 Angelika Kraemer

Anna, do you have a word?

00:22:38 Anna Marchetti

Uh, mine is a little bit more of a playful word versus a serious word, but my word is **yaourter**, which is French and literally translated. It's a little strange because it means two yogurt as in like the food, but the actual meaning is to make up sounds when you don't know the lyrics to the song you're singing.

00:22:58 Anna Marchetti

So if you picture someone whose mouth is full of yogurt and they're trying to like speak, that's kind of where the idea comes from.

00:23:06 Sam Lupowitz

That's excellent. Yeah. I wish I had a word for that in English, too. That's great.

00:23:13 Angelika Kraemer

Well, maybe you can coin it, Sam.

00:23:15 Sam Lupowitz

There you go. I can. That could be my contribution. Well, thank you so much for Speaking of language with us today, Anna and Sebastian.

00:23:24 Anna Marchetti

Thank you so much.

00:23:26 Sebastian Young

Yes, had lots of fun.

00:23:28 Angelika Kraemer

Great. Tune in next week to hear about the safal Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African literature of Bedouin.

00:23:36 Sam Lupowitz

Until then,

00:23:37 Angelika Kraemer

Auf Wiederhören.

00:23:38 Automated Voice

The Language Resource Center is located on the ground floor of Stimson Hall on Cornell's main campus in Ithaca, NY.

00:23:44 Automated Voice

Check us out on the web at LRC.cornell.edu.

00:23:48 Sam Lupowitz

Or follow Cornell LRC on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

00:23:53 Angelika Kraemer

Speaking of language is produced by Angelika Kraemer and Sam Lupowitz. Thanks also to the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University.

00:23:56 Sam Lupowitz

Recorded by Sam Lupowitz.

00:23:58 Automated Voice

Original music by Sam Lupowitz, Dan Gable and Joe Gibson.

00:24:06 Sam Lupowitz

As a reminder, the ideas and opinions expressed on this podcast do not reflect those of the College of Arts and Sciences or any other official entity of Cornell University.

00:24:16 Automated Voice

We thank our listeners and do stay tuned for our next episode.