

Simplified Speech #074 – Jeremy's trip to Mexico

Episode description

Want to know what it's like to visit a place where the people speak your second (or third) language? Jeremy tells Andrew about his trip to Mexico, where he spoke Spanish with the locals and took his son on adventures.

Fun fact

Oaxaca is the most diverse state of Mexico. It is home to 18 different ethnic groups, 32% of Mexico's indigenous population, and the greatest number of languages spoken. It also has Monte Albán, an important, well-preserved archaeological site.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Thanks in advance (TIA)
- Catch the bug
- Blend in
- Off topic
- Kick oneself



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Welcome back to another addition of Culips' Simplified Speech. This is the Culips series where we have totally natural English conversations, but we speak just a little bit slower than we do in our everyday lives. And today I am joined by Jeremy.

And, Jeremy, you have been working hard here at Culips producing your new series for us, which is called Jeremy's English Tips. And we just recently uploaded the second episode of Jeremy's English Tips.

And this morning, I got an email in our inbox here that I wanted to read to you. It is from a Japanese listener named Fujioka Toru, Fujioka Toru. And he says, "Dear Andrew and Jeremy, I just listened to Jeremy's English Tips #2 about repetitive listening and I like this series so much. I've listened to this episode more than 50 times. I memorized the whole episode and I can't wait for the next one."

So I thought this was awesome. It was cool to get this email this morning and he even included, Jeremy, a video of him shadowing your episode. So I'm gonna send that to you so you can check it out.

Jeremy: Oh my gosh, that's so cool. That's so cool. It's cool for me because I do this all the time with Spanish or Korean, and I never get to say anything to the people who I shadow. So it's cool to have this direct connection, sort of.

Andrew: Yeah, the interaction, it's really cool. So thank you guys for listening to this new series that Jeremy has launched here with Culips. We've been getting lots of good feedback, Jeremy.

Jeremy: Oh, great, that's awesome.

Andrew: If you haven't checked it out yet, guys, just go to Culips.com and you'll be able to find these episodes. We have two so far, and we'll be uploading #3 shortly. Actually, probably by the time this episode is uploaded, #3 or 4 will already be out. So, yeah, just go to Culips.com, you can find the links to them there.

Jeremy: **Thanks in advance** for listening.

Andrew: **Thanks in advance, TIA.**

Jeremy: I like that expression.

Andrew: Me too.

Jeremy: It's good when you're asking someone in an email for something that might be difficult. It's perfect for that.

Andrew: Yeah, it's perfect for that situation, I agree. I totally agree.

Jeremy, you just got back from Mexico, right?

Jeremy: Yes, last night. Late last night, actually.

Andrew: Oh, late last night. So you might be a little jet lagged, are you feeling jet lagged at all?

Jeremy: Not too bad. I'm feeling OK because it's only a 2-hour time difference.

Andrew: OK, so that's not so bad.

Jeremy: So right now it feels like a little later at night for me. It's 5:30 PM here, but it does feel more like 7:30.

Andrew: OK. Sometimes those small time differences can actually really impact your sleep and your, kind of, mental health for a couple of days, whereas the big time gaps, like where you go to the other side of the world, it's almost easier to get over those, I find.

Jeremy: Yeah, especially with Korea. If you're smart about planning your flight, you can time it so that you skip most of the jet lag from the US to Korea. But coming back is always very difficult to get over the jet lag, that's what everyone says, all the Korean people I talk to.

Andrew: Yeah, that's what I've heard, too, Jeremy, and that's been my experience, as well. But today we're not gonna talk about travelling to Korea or even jet lag. We're gonna talk about your trip to Mexico.

Jeremy: We're talking about my trip to Mexico today.

Andrew: Nice. And, guys, just to remind you: on our website, Culips.com, there's a study guide for this episode. So if you wanna check that out and follow along with the transcript while you're listening to us, then just visit Culips.com. You can give the study guide a download.

All right, Jeremy, so first question for you. Why did you go to Mexico? Was it business or pleasure?

Jeremy: Wow, good question. Mostly pleasure, but some business, we can say. For those who don't know, I have been studying Spanish for a few years now, so I kind of wanted to revive my Spanish. I had been on a hiatus from my Spanish study for a couple years, actually. For almost 2 years, I didn't do anything really with my Spanish.

Andrew: Wow. OK.

Jeremy: And then when we decided to go to Mexico this time, my wife and I, when we decided to go, I made up my mind to start studying again.

Andrew: Nice. You **caught the bug**.

Jeremy: Yes.

Andrew: Or **re-caught the bug**, perhaps.

Jeremy: Yes, I got the fever back. I got the fire going again. These are all analogies we can say for getting passionate about studying again.

Andrew: Again. So did you have lots of opportunities to speak in Spanish while you were there?

Jeremy: Oh, yeah. I feel very comfortable speaking in most situations, accomplishing things in public, you know, numbers, money, getting a taxi to take me there. I think my accent is pretty good, people have told me. So sometimes people ask me where I'm from, because they can't tell. Some people thought I was from Spain or from—there are some Mexicans who look like me, so I could be a native speaker.

Andrew: Right, you can kind of **blend in** a little bit, whereas I'm sure with Korean you can't really **blend in**.

Jeremy: Not at all. Cannot **blend in**, in Korean. So while learning Korean, I always felt very much like an outcast, but with Spanish it's nice to know that if I get good enough then I can sort of **blend in** a bit more. In fact, someone in public saw me and called me güero, which is like the word for whitey, I guess, like a light-skinned person.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: It's not a racist term like it sounds, like it sounds in English, but they just said ¡Hola güero! Oh, OK! I guess you're right. So it was fun in that regard.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: And we also travelled with my 2-year-old son, which was both very difficult and awesome at the same time.

Andrew: Was that his first time on airplane?

Jeremy: No, he's been on an airplane many times for someone his age, because we fly to go see my parents maybe every 2 months or so. And it's a very short flight, maybe 40 minutes.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: So he has gotten used to flying on planes.

Andrew: So what is it like travelling with a child? Do you do a lot of activities for your son, is that mainly what your focus is, or do you still do things that you are really interested in? Like, I imagine maybe your son wouldn't wanna go to a museum or a gallery, he might find that boring.

Jeremy: Yes. Yes.

Andrew: What's your itinerary like?

Jeremy: That's a great question, and it gives me an opportunity to explain a little bit about the city we went to. So we went to a city called Oaxaca.

Andrew: Oaxaca.

Jeremy: Oaxaca, yeah, it's fun to say that, right? It's spelled O-A-X-A-C-A.

Andrew: OK, so I have the feeling that this might not be a Spanish word, but it might be an indigenous word.

Jeremy: I believe so.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: And, actually, in this city there were a lot of things to do for children. There were children's museums, multiple children's libraries, lots of parks, free, open events for children. Painting plates, finger painting, musical instruments. Just—we were amazed at how many free, open events there were in this one short period of time that we were there. So almost every day, we did something for him.

Andrew: That's really interesting, because now that you mention it, my cousin lives in Mexico and she's married to a Mexican man and she has a child, I think who is also 2 years old, a little girl maybe 2 or 3. And I see my cousin's Instagram story updates every day, right? She's taking little videos of her daughter and posting them online. And it seems like there are lots of restaurants in Mexico that have playgrounds or play areas for kids, because a lot of these videos that I'm seeing of my cousin and her daughter are in restaurant playgrounds, and they seem really awesome for kids. Like, they're not just basic little dinky playgrounds, they're, like, really nice, cool places to play. Did you see any of those, too?

Jeremy: Yes, we saw many of those. And one of the restaurants we went to actually had a security camera in the kids' room, so with a TV screen near our table. So we watched him on the security camera to see if he's OK while we're eating. But my son still screamed "Daddy" almost every 5 minutes, or "Mommy," so we went down there to talk to him.

Andrew: That seems like that's a really great place for families and parents, then, and kids to have these kinds of facilities that maybe you don't see as much in other countries.

Jeremy: Yeah, Mexico is a very misunderstood country, I think. I won't say that it is completely safe everywhere you go. There are definitely cities and areas that are less safe. The closer to the US border you go, the more dangerous things can get.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: But I have spent significant time in Oaxaca, León, Guanajuato, Mexico City, and Cuernavaca, Cuernavaca is a city near there, and all of them, I never felt in danger at all.

Andrew: Well, that's good to know. I think, yeah, there might be the perception out there that Mexico is a dangerous place, especially if you tune into North American news like we do, right? Because there's a lot of talk about the drug war, and of course there's the whole "build a wall" thing. So we hear a lot about Mexico, we hear a lot about negative things. But that's also been my perception from, you know, hanging out with Mexican people, super kind, super friendly, and I've heard nothing but good things about Mexico. So that's good to hear that you've had a safe experience there, as well.

Jeremy: Yeah, I really enjoyed it. I can't wait to go back, especially to this city. And I'm even more committed to perfecting my Spanish, continuing to improve my Spanish now, because I think interacting with the local people in the language that I'm learning makes it real. That's ultimately, that is what my goal is when I learn a language, right?

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. That's why we can talk, right? So that we can communicate with others.

Jeremy: I think that with this podcast, with Culips, what we are all doing here is helping people to learn English. And English is different in the sense that English can connect you to anyone from any country. Whereas with Korean, at least, and with Spanish, too, it's a bit more narrow. You can only interact in Korean usually with Korean people and in Spanish with people from Latin America or from Spain. But English is spoken everywhere, so our goal, my goal as an English teacher and I think our goal at Culips, is to help connect the world with this language that Andrew and I happened to speak at a native-speaker level.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. I think that's probably why a lot of our listeners right now are listening to us, is because they wanna learn English to open the world, right? To open lots of opportunities for their personal lives and also for their professional lives, perhaps academic lives. English can be a great passageway to many opportunities. So that's really cool. And, Jeremy, sometimes I fantasize or I imagine a world where Korean was spoken in more places than just this peninsula that I'm on right now, you know?

Jeremy: Well, Korean people are everywhere. We found a Korean woman in Oaxaca making Korean food, and she said there were no other Korean people in the city. But we had a great time talking to her. She's the same age as me, so we had a lot in common and it was great.

Andrew: But just imagine—that's cool, don't get me wrong—but just imagine that there were, like, five different countries with kind of different cultures, but they all spoke the Korean language. Just as there's, like, England, Australia, America, could you imagine? That would be really wacky, wouldn't it?

Jeremy: That would be cool. I think that maybe we could say there are different areas in Korea that are almost like different countries because they're so different.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, that's true, that's true. I'm teaching a class at my university this semester for international students studying in Korea. So I have students from all over the world, from Africa, from many different Asian countries, from Europe, and they're all taking this English class, and the English level varies from student to student. Some students are at a native-speaker level and some students are right at the beginning stages of their English journey. But the common thing that we all share is that we all study Korean. And some of the students are way better at Korean than I am, and some of them are at about my level, but nobody's really terrible. They're studying in Korean at a Korean university, so they have pretty good Korean skills. And it's really fun before class and after class to chat with them in Korean, because I'm talking with Japanese people, people from Mongolia and people from Turkey and Morocco, and we're all speaking in Korean.

Jeremy: That's so cool. That's so cool.

Andrew: It's really weird, but it's fun. So this gives me a little insight into what it must feel like for an English learner to be able to experience different topics and meet different people that maybe you couldn't communicate with in your native language, but you can in a second language.

Jeremy: Language is what connects people, right? A speaker needs a listener, so we need language to connect to each other. And I think that's why I like being a language teacher and learning languages, because for me, personally, it has definitely changed my life for the better.

Andrew: Absolutely, I would agree with that statement 100%.

Jeremy, we got a little bit **off topic** from Mexico, but I enjoyed hearing what you did have to say about it earlier in the episode. Unfortunately, I have never been to Mexico and I'm **kicking myself** now. **Kicking myself** means I'm a little bit angry at myself, or I regret not visiting Mexico, because from my hometown in Canada to Mexico is maybe only a 3-hour flight. It's not very far. Yeah, just have to pass over Washington state, Oregon, California, and then, boom, you're in Mexico. So it's not a very far trip, but I just never visited Mexico. Now I'm living in Korea and Mexico is very far away. But it's at the top of my list for a destination I want to visit. So hopefully some day, sooner than later, I can make a visit there.

Jeremy: Well, I highly recommend Oaxaca if you do.

Andrew: Everyone, we'll leave it at here for today. Jeremy, thanks to you for sharing that story with us.

Jeremy: Happy to do so.

Andrew: And thanks to all of our listeners for tuning in. Guys, remember that the study guide for this episode, it's on our website, Culips.com. We're all over the place on social media, on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Just search for the Culips English Podcast and you can find us. That's it for now, we'll be back soon with another brand new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Bye.

Jeremy: Adios.

Detailed Explanations

Thanks in advance (TIA)

Informal expression

At the beginning of this episode, our hosts talk about Jeremy's new series and ask you to listen to it. After asking, Jeremy says, "**Thanks in advance.**" This is an informal version of thank you in advance. Both are expressions of gratitude used right after you've asked someone to do you a favour, answer a question, or provide information, but they haven't done it yet. It is considered a polite way to make a request.

TIA is an abbreviated way to write **thanks in advance**; **TIA** is more casual and usually used in online forums, text messages, or with very close friends.

Here are a couple more examples with **thanks in advance**:

Halide:	Man, I've been trying to find my notes from class last week, but I think I accidentally deleted the email. I really need them to pass the test on Friday!
Dorian:	Oh, man, that really sucks. I can lend you mine, if you want. I'll bring them to the game tomorrow.
Halide:	Really? That'd be awesome. Thanks in advance , man. You're a life saver.
Dorian:	No problem, dude.

Filipa:	Hello, Ms. Diaz, I am emailing today about the couch you've listed for sale online. I would like to purchase the couch, but I need to make sure it'll fit in our living room. I was wondering if I could get the length, width, and height, in inches? Thank you in advance. I look forward to hearing from you. Filipa
Rosa:	Hello, Filipa. The measurements are 36" high, 66" long, and 36" wide. I have a few other people interested in the couch, so please let me know as soon as you can if you would like to buy it. Thanks, Rosa
Filipa:	Hi Rosa. Thank you for your quick response. The couch is too big for our space, so I will not buy it. Thanks again, Filipa.

Catch the bug

Idiom

Catch the bug is a verbal idiom that means to develop a strong interest in something. In this episode, Jeremy mentions how visiting Mexico made him want to start studying Spanish again, and Andrew told him he **caught the bug**. You can also say you **got the bug**, **have the bug**, or **were bitten by the bug**.

This idiom is very close to another one, to catch a bug. Both use the slang term bug for germ. **Catch the bug** means the person has a new passion. To catch a bug means the person has been infected by a virus and is sick.

Here are a couple more examples with **catch the bug**:

Nathalie:	So, last week, Jordan was all, like, "You should try sailing with us," and I was, like, "Sure, whatever." I don't really like boats or water, you know?
Lydia:	Yeah, totally. Boats are the worst.
Nathalie:	Right? So anyway, I went, and it was totally fun. I've totally got the sailing bug now
Lydia:	No way.
Nathalie:	Yeah, I know. Me. Sailing. I'm going next week. It's gonna be so fun. You should come.
Lydia:	No, thank you. I don't wanna catch that bug , thanks. I'm gonna stay on the beach and work on my tan.

Denis:	I think my parents have the travelling bug . They're leaving for another trip tomorrow, this time to Holland.
Emil:	Didn't they just get back from Vancouver?
Denis:	Yeah, last week. They said it could be worse, that they could be gamblers.
Emil:	True. No one wants their parents to catch the gambling bug .
Denis:	I just wish they'd take me with them for once!

Blend in Phrasal verb

In this episode, Andrew tells Jeremy that he can **blend in** a little bit in Mexico. This meant that locals thought Jeremy was from Mexico as well, due to his appearance and the way he spoke. When someone or something **blends in** somewhere, they look or act similar enough to the other people, objects, buildings, etc. around them, so that it is as if they belong in that place.

Here are a few more examples with **blend in**:

Rocco:	Hey, Aaron! Would it be cool if we invite Ivan tonight?
Aaron:	Ivan? The tall guy from your gym?
Rocco:	Yeah. I was telling him all about the game and how far we've gotten, and he wants to see what it's all about.
Aaron:	I don't know. I mean, do you think he can blend in with our group? Won't he stand out?
Rocco:	I dunno. He's a pretty chill dude. I don't think he'll be annoying or anything.
Aaron:	Well, I guess. Sure. I'll let the others know.
Rocco:	Awesome! Thanks, Aaron. See you later!

Lucia:	Alexia? Alexia, where are you?
Alexia:	I'm standing right here, Lucia.
Lucia:	Oh, I didn't see you there. Your shirt matches the wall and you just ... Blended right in.
Alexia:	Ha, so it does. That's hilarious.

Off topic Adjective

During this episode, our hosts spent some time talking about how language connects people, which, as Andrew says, is a little **off topic** from Jeremy's trip to Mexico. The adjective **off topic** describes a conversation that has moved away from its original purpose to another purpose or topic.

In addition to **off topic**, you could say off track. **Off topic** is usually used in situations where there is a specific topic of discussion: classroom lectures, online forums, tutorials, etc. Off track is usually used during conversations that have a purpose, but aren't structured. For example, if you go to your colleague to ask a question but end up talking about a TV show you both like, you got off track.

Here are a couple more examples with **off topic**:

Mr. Yang:	And that's how you thread a needle properly. So, if you look at this ...
Andrea:	Mr. Yang?
Mr. Yang:	Yes, Andrea?
Andrea:	What does threading a needle have to do with electrons?
Mr. Yang:	Well, oh, dear. It seems I have gotten a bit off topic , haven't I? Sorry, class.

Jamelia:	Tommy, do you know where this client file is in the system?
Tommy:	Hey! How did dinner with your family go last night?
Jamelia:	It was nice! Really good to see my nephews again. It feels like ages since I saw those little guys.
Tommy:	They grow so fast, don't they?
Jamelia:	They really do. Your daughter is turning 10 soon, right?
Tommy:	Nine, but yeah. Next week. Sally has this crazy princess-themed party planned for her. But I've gotten off topic . What did you need?
Jamelia:	This client file. So, does your daughter have a favourite princess?

Kick oneself

Idiom

To **kick oneself** means to blame or criticize oneself for something one has done. When you **kick yourself**, you're finding fault with something you did and feel bad for doing it (or not doing it, depending on the situation). In this episode, Andrew says he's **kicking himself** for not visiting Mexico when he lived in Canada, because a flight from there to Mexico is much shorter than from his home in Korea to Mexico.

Here are a couple more examples with **kick oneself**:

Sylvain:	Are you OK? You've been really grumpy all day.
Francis:	Yeah, I'm good. Just frustrated.
Sylvain:	Why? Is work not going well?
Francis:	Not really, no. I hit reply all on an email the other day.
Sylvain:	Dude.
Francis:	Yeah. I've been kicking myself all day for not double checking who I was sending it to.
Sylvain:	Did you say something bad about someone?
Francis:	Yes and no. It wasn't the nicest, but it wasn't all that mean either. I just hate when people reply all. It was such a stupid thing to do.

Gabriella:	I can't believe I forgot to pack Lorenzo's lunch for the field trip. He's going to be so hungry when he gets home!
Daniela:	You've got to stop kicking yourself over this. You called the school and arranged for the teachers to buy him something. He'll be fine.
Gabriella:	I know, I know. But I packed a lunch! It's sitting on the counter at home right now. I knew I'd forget. I should have packed it right away.
Daniela:	Look at it this way ... Now you have a snack ready when you get home!

Quiz

- 1. When Jeremy and Andrew started talking about how language connects people, did they go:**
 - a) off the rails
 - b) off the wall
 - c) off topic
 - d) off to the left

- 2. What does it mean when someone blends in?**
 - a) they become the people, buildings, and objects around them
 - b) they mix paints together to create a new paint
 - c) they become more visible and obvious
 - d) they become very similar to the people, buildings, and objects around them

- 3. Why did Andrew say he was kicking himself?**
 - a) he didn't spend more time working on his Spanish
 - b) he spent too much time talking about language
 - c) he didn't visit Mexico when he lived in Canada
 - d) he didn't know how to spell Oaxaca

- 4. True or false? Thanks in advance is an informal phrase.**
 - a) true
 - b) false

- 5. Which of the following means to develop a strong interest in something?**
 - a) to catch a bug
 - b) to catch the bug
 - c) to bug out
 - d) to catch up with a bug

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever visited a place where everyone speaks one of your non-native languages? Were you able to blend in with the locals?
2. What is something you have done that you kicked yourself for afterwards?
3. When was the last time you were bitten by the bug for something? What was it?
4. Do you often have conversations that go off track? If so, why do you think that happens?
5. In some countries, it is very polite to say “thanks in advance,” but in other countries it is rude. Do you think it is polite or rude? Why?

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.d 3.c 4.a 5.b

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