

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Ekaterina Matveeva. She is a location independent entrepreneur, Amazon best-selling author, award winning poet, linguist, polyglot, and the founder of [Amolingua](#), an educational company focused on teaching foreign languages, cultural intelligence, memory training and public speaking. She is also the leader of [Lingo+](#), an Erasmus funded project that is set to train over 20,000 educators on how to teach in multilingual and multicultural environments. She has four master's degrees, speaks nine languages and understands 20 languages. She is also a retired memory athlete and became the first woman with Russian roots to ever compete in the World Memory Championships. She is also a contributor at Forbes, host of the TV show Lingua Break and a TEDx speaker. With over 100,000 views of her TEDx talk on YouTube. She was named one of the 30 under 30 most influential young leaders of Europe and Africa in 2019 and she mentors startup companies around the world. She has also been running teams of over 60 people remotely while traveling the world and has now spent time in over 40 countries.

Kate, welcome to the show.

Ekaterina Matveeva: Hey Matt.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you here. We need to set the scene and talk about where we are recording this from today. Unfortunately, we are not in person. I am actually in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador in Central America. And where are you?

Ekaterina Matveeva: I'm right now in Buenos Aires in Argentina.

Matt Bowles: Well, you and I actually met in Buenos Aires when I was down there last year speaking at the NOBA conference and we got to hang out in the city and just had an incredible time. But I am super excited to have you on the show because you have been doing some amazing and inspiring things. But I want to start all the way back. Can you share a little bit about where you grew up and as you were growing up. Can you talk about the impact of poetry in. In your life? Because I know you started writing poetry like super young at like 4 years old. And now you write poetry in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, even Arabic. And you've been winning awards for your poetry. But I would love for you to take us all the way back and talk a little bit about the context for where that all began.

Ekaterina Matveeva: My family is coming from different places. My father's side when we talk about my grandparents coming from Greece, my mother's side, my grandparents there coming from Poland. And actually, my parents grew up in Mongolia because my grandparents being completely different fields, industrial field and then economics were invited to Mongolia to help to develop those fields. And my parents spent all their school years so growing up all the time, like 10, 12 years in Mongolia. But they never ever met. They had lots of friends that they like shared. And then they met eventually in Soviet Union. And the end Soviet Union collapsed and I was born and I was born in Moscow, but I could have been born pretty much anywhere around Eastern Europe. And that's crazy. And I grew up during 90s, so I just turned 30. They always born in 1992. And you can imagine what was going on there. Literally like a civil war.

And I remember being like with my parents in Moscow and then with grandparents going somewhere like Ukraine, Poland, somewhere all around, somewhere in different, let's say, places. But eventually they opted for the base in Moscow for some time, I would say, because it was said maybe more stable, like business. You could run business there then as it was 90. So, it was really scary because of the mafia would actually come to our place with Kalashnikovs trying, you know, to, well, make deals. Whatever it was, it was super scary. I remember how we were hidden with my mom a few times, how we were hiding

from the mafia people. And it was like all over. If we talk about CIS countries, former Soviet Union, right. Like all the tank countries say this particular situation lasted for a few years in the region. So, it was super unsafe.

But any case with poetry would have it that my father, even though he's an engineer, who always had this creative nudge. So, he's been writing poetry, he still writes poetry. And he helped me. Like he gave me Pushkin. It's like Russian say, I don't know, probably greatest poet yet to read and explain to me some of the rules of poetry. And I started picking up and I felt I just caught it at some point. And step by step, that was one of the ways I would express my emotions and feelings. And that's probably how it also brought me to languages. Because after all, when you start feeling the word, you start feeling the rhythm as well as speech. We all have in each language, like different languages have their own arithmetic picture also. And then we have our personalities. So as soon as you start catching it, you can then write it down and you can compose something that would transmit your mood. How fast it is, how slow it is, there it is.

So, I would say that childhood was rough, but then it got better during my, I think teenage years. Because in teenage years, early teenage years, like still like probably like secondary school. There I had an opportunity get various like study scholarships and just go around Europe, I mean go with study groups around everywhere you would just go and you know, like how you would go and live with a host family. I had these experiences and there when you were like 14, 15 and you were kind of shaping your picture of the world, started getting me into the person who I am right now because I like, right, if we're going to France, oh actually you need to speak their language, right? You're going somewhere there, like somewhere like Netherlands.

Back in time, not many people spoke English. All right, so you need to speak Dutch, you're going to Spain, you need to speak Spanish and so on and so forth. And when I got back from one such trips, I remember was like at my parent's place and I just started dreaming. You know, I call it like it dawned on me every night during winter time. I would dream about the future, how I would build sort of like multilingual multicultural center where people just come and they would just get immersed into another culture and learn another language. Like kind of shaping that cultural map. And that was so detailed, so real. And I would just put it all down. I wanted to study different countries, speak different languages, just like it just kind of, you know, got instantly there.

Matt Bowles: You did a TEDx talk which now has over 100,000 views, where you talked about this concept of a language alter ego or a secondary linguistic personality. And I know that a lot of what you teach centers on the fact that learning a foreign language is not just about memorizing vocabulary and a grammatical structure, but it is deeply rooted in cultural intelligence. And therefore, through that comes out this secondary linguistic personality or this language alter ego. Can you share a little bit about how that works and also your personal journey on how you initially discovered and started to understand that?

Ekaterina Matveeva: I loved studying people, like being some sort of like anthropologist, watching people, observing, taking notes like you did every day. And then trying to mimic them, be like them, mingle with them. And I remember when I was studying a course on intercultural communication or cross-cultural communication, our professor told us that it's not about language, it's not about words, it's actually about how you walk. And if you can't walk and a local can't distinguish your local, then you won. Literally, you've managed to really belong, find a way to belong to local place. Yeah. Local crowd. And then after all, yeah, you can open your mouth, you can find the right dialect, accent, whatever, there.

But it all started with the way you walk. So, when you come to a new place, observe, see how people walk, try to find the rhythm of the place. As soon as you find the rhythm of the place, you start moving in sync. As soon as that moving in sync, people start perceiving you as a local. I went to Salamanca in Spain to kind of improve, like, enhance my level, get to really good to see one. When I came there, I just discovered my Spanish personality. Because sometime in the summer I was living there, spending all my time either with the locals or other foreigners, learning Spanish and just immersing myself into the local culture, just doing what they were doing, just going to a coffee shop and watching what locals would do and do exactly the same. What would they order, how would they order it, how would they bring their coffee, with what, how much time, what would they wear, etc.

And it was amazing in a way that kind of helped me to feel the mood, the atmosphere. Yeah. Of the town and then the country itself. Yeah, Ace. Yeah, like Spanish, let's say Spanish mood what is it? From there I believe if you actually look at pictures, some of my passport pictures, like visas, whatever, I started looking like a Spanish girl and my mom was like, oh, you're so Spanish now. And it was just because I really got into that I stopped speaking in other languages. Like, while I was in Spain, I stopped speaking other languages. I was speaking only Spanish. And that was it. It was as well as it was 2010, it was world Championship football, right. So, soccer, football, and Spain won. So, it was just, you know, when you get immersed as well into that culture, like sport culture, when the whole country celebrates in four weeks, it's just unforgettable. And that really affected me. So that's where the door opened.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk about the impact it had on you as you have studied all of these languages and you have immersed so deeply in all of these cultures? How has that entire process impacted the lens through which you now see the world.

Ekaterina Matveeva: If you think about Carl Jung, yes, there was Freud. Yeah. And then there was Carl Jung was talking about personalities, the Shadow, sub personality, etc. So, I believe that it's somehow connected to these personalities, how different parts of yourself can get manifested under certain circumstances, in certain contexts. And it feels like as different cultures have their fortes, in a way. Yes, some strong traits, like social traits, you can actually access this emotional trait in your personality that is connected to that language and culture. What's interesting, that some multicultural people sharing that when they go to therapy, when they, let's say, try to solve trauma, say in English, it turns out that the trauma took place when they were in Portugal, in the Portuguese culture, they were speaking Portuguese. And even though they somehow managed to solve it a little bit, the neuron synopsis, all these neural paths that are formed when trauma occurs, they are also kind of connected to specific language. And in order to reprogram yourself. And we're talking about. Yes, psychologist, psychiatrist.

So, it means that you need time and you also need language in order to change it, change behavior. And so, if it happened in another language and another culture in a different context, so most likely you need them to go to a therapist of that culture and that language and work through that trauma in that language in order to get to the same context. And then it will be one like, let's say, more effective. So, coming back to perception of the world, that's another thing. It's about perception of time, perception of space, sociocultural connotation, history, all these idioms and set phrases. So, let's say when we talk about numbers as well, perception of numbers, we know in western culture that 666 as quite unlucky number, right. To say at least.

But when you go to China, some of Asian countries, suddenly you discover that everywhere, wherever you see a shopping mall, a big plaza. Yeah, like big square. See that number? Isn't that scary? Right? Like what?

And it turns out that it's a lucky number there. The pronunciation of the number coincides with pronunciation, like of prosperity, different words. So, imagine that. And it's not just one-to-one example, there are many more. Therefore, when you start learning a language and getting more and more into another culture, you start adding all these options. Yeah, it's like different lancets. And what happens that when you start looking at a particular international event, you can look at it from different angles. And that's the beauty of it, because you don't have just one position anymore. You have like multi-Dimensional understanding of one universal unit. So, it's like more information. And some of this, let's say some of these opinions, maybe as well. Like, copy contradictory. And it's fine. We also may experience, like, contradictory emotions. It's okay. Like complex emotions or complex opinions.

Matt Bowles: I want to return to the discussion about poetry for a minute. You mentioned that as you were growing up, poetry served in part as a medium for expressing complex emotions and processing through challenging or traumatic experiences. And as you grew up and you started learning all of these different languages, you started writing poetry in all of these different languages. So, I'm curious, can you reflect a little bit on the impact of writing poetry in all of these different languages?

Ekaterina Matveeva: You know, it's not just about writing because it's, again, it's multidimensional. Because what's happening, you start connecting your feelings and emotions to certain languages, again, from certain angles. And what I love as well, about languages in this sense, like, again, cultures, there are certain terms, words, phrases and concepts. So, like untranslatable words. There's an amazing book which is called [The Meaning of Tingo](#). It's a collection of untranslatable words from all over the world. And when you get into it, so, for instance, in Spanish, there is this one word in Spanish and say, like bulimia. But it's not only bulimia, it's like a disease, right. It could be also used as a concept. It's an anguish. Like it's pain from a choice. When you have to make a choice and you have to choose only one thing, and it means that you lose the other, and that's a pain from it.

So, you can talk about this concept, about this feeling in that language, because you have access to that feeling. Because you can name it. Yeah. Or *saudade* in Portuguese, like Brazilian one. What is *saudade*? It's been very popular, I would say. Yeah. Especially if you've been traveling Latin America. Well, it's warning for somebody or something. Yeah, as far away. Like, they're different explanations. It's a very deep feeling. And it's not just like, oh, I miss someone. It's different. It's like it has different facets. So, you can talk. You could write about *saudade* because you again, you have access to that particular feeling because you can name it. And that's what's been happening that in all these languages.

I noticed that I would be writing about specific concepts, specific emotions, feelings, thoughts as well, that I could access through these languages. That would not necessarily exist in others. And I noticed that in some languages I would be more emotional and in some I would be more reserved. And probably I would write more about philosophy of life rather than lyrics. And I noted that in my Latin, British, English, any kind of poetry, I would be more reserved, would be colder than I would be Spanish or Italian. I would be just passionate, emotional. And this is also like talking about when we're in a real-life conversation, when we are writing, though, that's what's peculiar. Peculiarity of the intensity of emotions and feelings. Peculiarity of layers. It's like different layers.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask you for some tactics because you speak nine languages and you can understand 20 languages, which is unbelievable. Can you share some techniques that folks can start to employ in their own lives? Maybe on how to learn languages faster or more efficiently, or get to fluency

more quickly, or perhaps retain fluency in multiple languages at the same time? What techniques or tactics or tips can you share with folks that are interested in improving their language learning?

Ekaterina Matveeva: It's quite fascinating because also I've written books on that and I'm still writing. I'll write more. So first I also studied Latin, the Latin language, you know the old one? Yeah, that one. And it opened the door. You had the key, get to all the Romans and Germanic languages, etc. So, I can go to Spain so I can enhance my Spanish. And I loved Italian and I still love Italian and I love Italy. And I lived there, studied and worked different regions in different years. Italy, I grew up on Italian movies. And I'm sharing with you this because when you start learning the language, you need to find the connection with the language and culture. So Italian was for me, like in Rome was like from my childhood, Adriano Celentano, I mean, that was like, wow.

So back in time, me, Spanish, going to Spain, falling in love with Spain and then getting to like C1 level. Just like within a few months, during one year, I got from zero to fluent Spanish and just retaining it and continuing with English and Latin. And then making a decision to learn Italian on my own while still being overloaded with UNI and other languages, and then go to Italy, kind of repeat my experience with Spanish. That was crazy. But it required lots of discipline. So, what I did back in time, I learned Italian, imagining that one week, we have like 12 months in a year, right? So, I imagine that one week would be equivalent of one month. So, what it means I took 12 topics, main topics, like as a survival kit, when you start from zero, A1, A2. Yeah, beginner. And you want to get intermediate to B1. The 12 topics about myself, my family, hobbies, travel, all that stuff that you need when you come to a new country. I found texts from different, like textbooks, resources. I found texts, I found grammar, simple grammar, explanations, vocabulary.

And I would study every day a little bit. And I would have, like my workbook would be putting it down there. I would study text, I would get all these active phrases, set phrases, and I would try to write down my own story. So, if, let's say there was a story about Francesca from Italy talking about herself, I would be trying to do the same, like copycat, right. Mimicking her, that it was me. And then go to Italy. And when I came to Italy, I was practicing with locals and they told me, listen, you now have what is it Spagnolo, Spanish, Italian. Because obviously I would still kind of, yeah, try to use Spanish in some cases.

And it was just a game. I was doing the same like I did in Spain. I stopped speaking other languages and I focused only in Italian. My writing was not that good. I was learning. And then eventually. So, when I got to my master in Italy, I was perfectly fine, you know, doing presentations, everything, and still like working in Italian. And so, from Italian their it was easier. So, like with Spanish, it was easier when I was already studying in Spain. So, I got to Poland, I needed to pick up my Polish. I was exposed but I still needed to practice. Like, it took me like a couple of months just to be fluent, just for normal life again, how I took the topics that I needed, focused on them and practice speaking. Practice.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk now about becoming a memory athlete and maybe just start with explaining what that term means for folks that are not familiar with it and then how that came about.

Ekaterina Matveeva: Totally. And I think that also that could help people to if they want to learn languages or any kind of information. Yeah, like just to use it. We are jumping forward to 2014. I got recommended to check out company that was called [Memrise](#) and they still exist. They're really cool and app memorized. And I got introduced to their founder, Ed. So, time passed, I think a week or so. So, I was in London and Ed invited me to come and visit center because I mean, they had some sort of internship positions. And when I came and what was amazing team was composed different machine analysis and what they did because

they knew that I spoke all those languages, it started playing with me. Each of them would talk to me in their language and I would reply. And I visited them for a few days just to see how they work and to say they're cool. Because you could play the not only about languages, about I know, memorizing cards, memorizing numbers.

Anyways, and I started checking their team actually background and it turned out that he was a memory athlete. He was a champion. And he could memorize deco card like within 13 seconds saying stuff, mind blowing. And then he shared with me, you know, actually there are championships and there is one in London. Just like soon. I think we were talking in July, like championship was like in August. You actually need to talk to that guy. He introduced me just like talk to that guy because as you have all these languages, you have good memory. So maybe you can feel good at it. You never know. And I remember I got some sort of like tasks, whatever it was just, you know. And then I got. Yeah, I filled them in and then I got invited to well take part in my first championship. It was so crazy because when they came there, there were so many nerds, you know, nerdy people. Mostly men. Some of them were girls, different nationalities. It turned out people came from all over Europe just to take part in the championship. So since then, since that championship.

So, I got somewhere, I didn't come lost or somewhere in the middle. And I got invited to world Memory championship in China in the late in Singapore. And so, I took part in a few. And then I got part in a couple of TV shows as well. Kind of demonstrating some of the skills. That was really cool. What's important, I think that it develops your again imagination because you try to learn not the way how we learn at UNI at school, right? Not like cramming. You're actually using your associated memory or your space memory. And they're different tricks. If you feel that you are bad at imagination, there are lots of people who can say that and it's fine. Maybe visual memories, like visualization is not your forte. It's okay, you can develop it. You can develop it using their methods, associated methods. And it helped me a lot in languages and also like while traveling, you know, memorizing routes and some of list of tedious information. That's something that you can use for long term memory.

Matt Bowles: If people are interested in trying to start improving their memory, what are some tips or techniques they can start using right now?

Ekaterina Matveeva: So, you're traveling, let's say that you need to memorize your new phone numbers here because of SIM cards. Your credit card numbers with all the details, right? Like I remember mine, you know, I don't need to pull them out. So, what you can do, you can start with numbers and you can start creating associations, visual associations with numbers. And when you create visual associations with numbers, what could be one? One could be a stick. What could be two? Two could be a swan, what could be three, three could be a heart and so on. You know, what are your situations, Your personal ones, not somebody's. Yours from there, when you start putting numbers together, maybe in pairs or in threes, whatever you prefer. Like, whatever is easier for you to start. You turn these numbers into images, right? Your associations.

Remember, don't keep them static. You need to make them dynamic. Because our brain loves action. Our brain loves verbs. So, when you're learning languages, learn verbs, action, phrases. When you're learning numbers or you're imagining some sort of images. Yeah, like visuals. See what they are doing. Let's say if it's 12 and there is stick and swan, maybe stick is actually missing as one. You never know. It's like, it depends, you know, it depends on your imagination. Actually, violence, sex, anything taboo, forbidden, is good because then your brain memorizes better. I will never forget when we were trying that memory

championship. I was talking to a friend of mine from Ukraine, Hodi. And Hodi was like sharing with me in a naughty way how he was memorizing decks of cards. He was like, oh, dick. Another dick. Oh, orgy, this and that, you know, boobs. I was like, what? I don't want to hear that. No, stop it.

Anyways, so this is like about numbers, right? So then when you talk about places, there is a cool method. It's called a space memory. Like spacious. Right? Spacious memory, where you can connect a certain object, a certain imagery, a particular place. Especially if, let's say, if you know the way, let's say from home to the office, whatever it is, you really know place, then you can kind of use that journey. There's a journey method. You can use the journey in order to memorize some important information, maybe even your speech, because you can allocate. You can imagine that there are different stations, let's say the door steps, let's say a bus station, a tree. And you can like allocate their sum of concepts. Maybe even phrases. And when you are trying to, let's say, memorize your way home because you're in a new country, then you can use some associations and images. Instead of being like, oh, here's a street like Borges, and here's a street like *Salern*, whatever it is. Instead of the names, try to memorize some sort of notes, right. Graffiti. Something that stands out because that's how our brain will memorize it. Sometimes it's also smell. Yeah. Because we have different senses. Yeah. As well in tactile. So sometimes when I really need to memorize something, I can pinch myself and I'll remember.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to talk to you about some of your travel experiences. You have been nomading around the world for many years now. And you have been to a number of places that I have not been to. You just mentioned China. I have been to Hong Kong and Macau, but I have never been to mainland China. It's super high on my list. And I would love to hear how was your experience in China?

Ekaterina Matveeva: Okay, China. Been there a few times, different years. Live there. Shanghai. Shanghai is my favorite city in mainland China, actually. Imagine Hong Kong. This is one of my favorite places on the planet. I've been there many times. I've lived there in different parts of the city, different levels, and I just love it. I love that kind of fusion of nature and, well, business. Especially when you go in the conference, right. You can go to convention center and the end; you can go to one of the parks and that's incredible.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about your experience in India. Can you talk about why you went to India, what you were up to, where you went in India, and how was your experience there?

Ekaterina Matveeva: So, when I was studying at Warsaw, I got involved in debating. Yeah, University debates. And this is cool stuff. And it's quite popular in states in Europe. Parliamentary debates, like, I mean, Oxford type. And we founded our own club back in Russia, the UNI. And actually, it was crazy because they asked us, the university administration asked us to organize public debates. And as it was 2011, 2012, it was a very cute question of EU accepting Turkey into the union. And imagine that they asked us to throw that first public event. So, they were teams here pro and teams' con, right. And they even invited the Turkish ambassador to the room. That was just nuts. I mean, we were just starting. So anyways, from that event, I started getting invited to compete a little bit as well in debates and events over Europe, across Europe.

And then at some point, as I was also involved in organization of big events back then, like G20, for instance, in 2013. So, I got invited to organize European Debating Championship. That was in Manchester. And then from there again because same crowd, I got invited to India in Chennai, World Investing, Debating, Church. And it's exciting because, I mean, you're going there, you're Sort of like volunteer same time. I mean you get, you got covered. I mean travel your stay. So, it's amazing. And then you're like helping

as external committee. You're helping to organize it from different music. I eventually organized it I think three times. India, Malaysia and Mexico. And I got to the point that I would be a language officer. Yeah. Due to my expertise. So, I would be sorting out all the hundreds and hundreds of participants into certain categories. Yeah. Like of let's say language mastery, language fluency.

Anyways, so India, I met amazing people as well. When I went to Delhi, I met fantastic like people just like travelers. There were people from Afghanistan, very well educated who came to study at Microsoft. And they were showing me daddy, who could imagine, who would tell me that some point in my life I would be in Delhi at 2AM like yeah. Walking around with two Afghani guys feeling absolutely safe because they were speaking Hindi. They were speaking in as well other local languages. So that I would be fine, just walk around and enjoy the nightlife all the time.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. Well, you and I both spent time in west island, Africa in 2019. I was in Nigeria and Ghana and Ivory coast and Senegal. And you and I just missed each other by about a month in Senegal. I was in Dakar about one month before you got there. And I was just so enamored with the city and with Senegal overall. What a truly spectacular country. Really left an impact on me. But I would love to hear about your experience in West Africa.

Ekaterina Matveeva: I think it's one of the places where people are very close to nature. The whole cultural thing, the way how people are building up their lives, creating some processes, mechanisms and all reflects natural processes. Like they observe nature and then they mirror from nature. That's what's amazing. So sometime in July, I believe July 2018, I got, I started getting emails and I started checking and I discovered that they were writing to a number of entrepreneurs from Europe and from Africa, basically recognizing some of their achievements. And that year they decided to run their summit in the Gambia and they invited us. And I went first to the Gambia and then Senegal because as well part of the events was in Senegal.

And one of the things that really excited me was about, well, safari that you could go and actually stay in national park and live in Savannah. So, the gun bear being size of Jamaica has it all, has its own radio, TV. We were all brought, you know, like to all this press tour. We had conference and it was all amazing. But for me the best part was really going into the Wild. And what was special about it that when the main event was over, I just went for a few days deep into that savannah forest. I lived in special kind of camp. It was all very comfortable conditions. Like, I had him in a bath. All good. But you had direct contact with, like, animals there. That are coming to get some food or they are just passing by because of their habitat. I remember we were walking on the bridge because, yeah, you can't walk on the ground as they are. Well, snakes and all. And I saw that next to one of the houses, there was, like, a tree and there was a monkey. And, like, that's my house. And indeed, that was my house.

And, like, there were lots of monkeys every day hanging around my house. And there was an option to walk with lions. There was a huge territory in the park just for lions. And South African guys came with their methodology, how they were interacting with lions. Yeah. And brought in Gambia. And I did it. I spent mornings walking with lions. I just needed it. It was something special for me. It was more important than any kind of awards, any kind of conference. Just an opportunity to be there. It was amazing. It was just amazing. Something, you know, something clicked in me. Something changed.

So, when I got to Senegal, I noticed a difference because I could actually speak there in French. I could communicate with people. I had the already local friends from the conference. So, one of the top 30

leaders was a guy who eventually was a political refugee, like Gambian political refugee that had to flee to Senegal because he was minister of information, minister of something, first counsel of president. He even spent some time in jail because prime would put him. And the guy's amazing. And while sitting in Senegal with him and his friends, and they also have some sort of, like, coaching company, right? Like the coaching company. Imagine that. What I was witnessing, we're talking about 2019, how they were planning his presidential campaign in like, four or five years. And what's amazing right now, we are back in 2022. I can see now we're still like, you know, friends.

So, I can see that he's running for local elections for the parliament, and actually he's planning then to go and to run for president in a couple of years. So, Senegal, it was beautiful. What I loved when we were talking about their ancestors, what I really enjoyed when we were, like, sitting all together having dinner and they were sharing like, oh, I'm coming from this tribe. Oh, my grandpa, or my grand grandpa is coming from that tribe. Oh, we were actually like, our tribe was located on that border or like, on that border. And actually, our tribe, like, we spoke that language or that language. Oh, like we're coming. So, they know even, like, which tribe coming from. And this is like, amazing.

Matt Bowles: Definitely. All right, I also want to talk to you about entrepreneurship because you have been mentoring entrepreneurs and startups all over the world. And I would love if you can share a little bit about that journey. And one of the events that you have been involved with is the [Silk Road Startup](#) event in Iran, which is another country that is super high on my list. And I would love to hear about your experience in Iran.

Ekaterina Matveeva: All right. In 2015 in Andrew, because I spent quite a long time in Scotland because Kotlin supported me launching a [Amolingua](#), which is amazing. So back then, while developing, like making first steps with a [Amolingua](#), I took part in [3 Day Startup](#). It's an organization, nonprofit organization, based in Austin, Texas. Back in time, I mean, pre pandemic was mostly focusing on programs that would run just three days to help students launch startups. Yeah, like over the weekend. And after participating in that, I got invited to facilitate these programs That was fascinating. For me, it's like next step. So, I learned so much and it started facilitating [3 Day Startup](#). So nowadays I am an advisor there, but back then, so I was facilitating and I loved it so much because I would go, you know, to Portugal, to Colombia, like different places to throw it. Like one of my birthdays was like in Bogota in Colombia. Imagine, all these students, participants were singing songs to me, like, celebrating with me. Amazing. So, then I realized that I could actually do more.

And I started joining conferences, communities, just sharing, sharing some of the stuff that I was learning on my journey. As I was good due to theater and all with presentation skills that I was mastering and mastering, you know, and keep mastering. Now I started sharing that I realized that I am really good at the throwing master classes for entrepreneurs on particular topics. And it got to the point that I got invited to mentor startups and incubators and accelerators in different parts of the world. And one of them was a run. So, it wasn't just an event. It was actually a road trip around two weeks. I think I was in total the year, like two, three weeks, something like that. Because what we needed to do, we had to gather together with a bunch of entrepreneurs, investors from the region, Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Europe, and just go to five cities in Iran. Well, first mentor them, mentor startups, then give workshops and participate in competition, like judge them.

And then, yeah, like getting there getting to Tehran, and then organizing our trip, flying to Cameron and like, other cities, funny enough, I have a scarf that I bought 10 years ago in Palma de Mallorca, and it turned out

to be Iranian. It's one, like, one of my favorite scarves. And as soon as I run, they were like, oh, my God, you've got our scarf. Okay. And then I also took with me scarves that I bought in Shanghai. Like silk scarves, right? Like silk. I decided they're beautiful. I would put them on, like, cover my head. Also, I had to get my crash course in Farsi because so many people wouldn't be speaking English. And for me, I needed to get connected with the audience. So, my first sentences, let's say opening introduction, communication with the audience would be in Farsi. But I believe that if you want to do something in that country, like, you need to respect what they do. So official life is very strict. But as soon as you go kind of undercover, let's say somebody's home, it's completely relaxed, and it's almost like Western, Western world.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to talk to you a little bit about your company, [Amolingua](#). Can you share a little bit about the backstory, what led to the founding of [Amolingua](#) and then how you have built it and scaled it and what [Amolingua](#) offers today?

Ekaterina Matveeva: All right, 2010, 2011, I was already teaching myself. I started as well, teaching because I realized that if I teach languages, I can maintain them, like, retain them better and understand better and all. So, as I was already traveling so much because of the studies, I just told let's try Skype then. It was Skype then for Zoom, right? Yet I started teaching via Skype. So, I was one of the first ones, let's say, just because by necessity, under such circumstances. And from there, actually, I got back from China World Memory Championship. I kind of realized that I wanted to put together different components such as language, culture, cultural intelligence, memory training, whether it's public speaking, whether it's emotional intelligence, negotiations, whatever it is all connected. So, it was 2015. I had a blog back then, so blog was called Europe Online. Just like talking about opportunities for students going abroad, scholarships.

And we quickly got to the point of 20,000 views per month. Like, people were coming and it was like, all for free and cool. So actually, why not to take this blog and convert it in school? So that what we did, I got into an incubator in London. After that, I got invited to accelerate in Edinburgh. So, I kind of got back because I started here in Scotland, then I got back as well, accelerator there and then we hit in a year. So, we had top 20 startups all the world, which is crazy. And simultaneously same basically it was like the same month where I got UK Businesswoman award in one of UK competitions. And it all kind of put it together. Amazing momentum because we've got resources, we got some finance and some pr, some as well, like people kind of your human resources to really launch it. And we spent a few months, we got a gift, like, you know, a PR agent for a year and all.

So, we spent like a few months first searching for a name, then figuring out like repackaging and then properly launching it in March 2016. After that, we've been pivoting, we've been playing around, building platforms, been growing. And it got to the point that in the pandemic, of course we got to new level that we started launching regional, I would say teams. So, we kind of, yeah, like we've got European one, we've got Latin American one, Brazilian one, as well as the European one, CRS. And we just started focusing indeed on skills. So, for instance, there are so many entrepreneurs who would like to go global. Starting doing like English for entrepreneurs. All right. Now we're also thinking about Spanish for entrepreneurs, Minneapolis America, native entrepreneurs who like puts it together, language and skills and cultural intelligence, right.

Corporate training for folks that have international teams, talking about integrity in their teams, how to strengthen it and from there at this very moment we are in a special Scottish program which is called Unlocking a Mission. It was launched by the Prime Minister. And what's amazing, it's like MBA put together by Scottish government and Babson College in U.S. So, I just finished studying with them. It's amazing. It's

like number one in entrepreneurship in the world. Like, I learned so much and this allows us to scale next level. But me personally, as I say, I'm more like linguist, visionary. So, I have my mission here, where I'm coming from this point of connecting people, helping them to achieve their potential. And for me, [Amolingua](#), it's like something, you know, like left project.

And now that we've got as well [Lingo+](#) a second project, this is again because of the passion, because of the people and community gathering around who just told me, listen, you are like at the level now that you can actually start teaching teachers how to do this. And we got grant, we won grant. So European Commission trusted us with building training for teachers, like school teachers, like bilingual schools, multilingual schools, talking about all this multilingual, multicultural environment. And I'm enjoying it immensely because suddenly I have a platform where I can share all this knowledge. I can gather together with my colleagues, with other experts, and just talk about the stuff that's what probably fulfilling about it. Because no matter what happens, like, I mean, business side, obviously you're pushing it through and all still have this fulfilling component.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit about the location independent infrastructure of your business and how you run it remotely and maybe give some executive leadership to tips on how to manage a fully distributed staff around the world and how to build and grow a business completely remotely while traveling the world as a digital nomad?

Ekaterina Matveeva: Well, from the very beginning, I was location independent and the team was location independent. When I was an incubator in London, we were in co-works and space. I mean, in Edinburgh, like when we were accelerated, we were also in office space. And I absolutely hated it because me giving workshops, teaching, giving presentations, I need to be in a quiet space. Like right now I'm talking to you from my living room. And I enjoy it immensely. I need this quietness, stillness where I can work. So, for me, I would say it was cool in terms of people because again, from the beginning, when you started with a blog, you were online. My colleagues were in different countries and from the beginning, they were in different places.

So, you need to figure out about time zones. You need to understand really well how your colleagues or your employees are functioning in a way, what's better for them to have calls, meetings, whether it's in the morning or in the evening. For instance, when I was living in China, in Shanghai, so it was a huge time difference, right. So, I had to make sure that we could connect when it would be, let's say, my early morning or my late evening. So, here's the same. Right now, me in Latin America, part of the team in Latin America. Part of the team in Europe. Part of the team is actually like Siberia, like close to Japan. So, we have like immense time difference. So that's some of the things that you need to keep in mind as well. Like language barrier. We talk in different languages. With Tims, I have to talk, it depends. But like five, six languages depend on time because again, people are coming from different countries, different backgrounds. And from time to time when we are gathering, we may struggle because some people may not share the same language and then somebody will be translating as well.

But what's important, it's definitely structure. You need to figure out structure. Discipline. Discipline, meaning that you know by when and what must be done. And you need to communicate it clearly to everyone, patience. And then definitely take into account all these cultural traits. So, I'm also like learning it like with my own skin about deadlines, about the ways, how to give feedback because some cultures prefer direct feedback, some prefer to be polite. You need to take into account all of that and then if you see that there's some friction and one of departments team, well, you need to give a floor to all the parties

and see indeed what's the seed. Yeah. Of frustration. Let's say what's the issue why miscommunication is occurring. And the same as well about conflict management, crisis management and responsibility handling. Because again people coming from different backgrounds have like different attitudes. So, I would say that I'm still. But so far, I can say that it works if you put people from different cultures, different time zones into the same online work.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. Let me ask you one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into the lightning round. When you think back about all of the travel that you've done and the impact it's had on you, why do you continue to travel? What does travel mean to you?

Ekaterina Matveeva: I feel for me in the past, maybe like in my teenage times, it was like discovering the world. In my 20s, it was more about searching for something, mostly searching for myself, searching for my people, searching for a feeling of belonging. Though it was at some point, I think it's also part of growing up and maturity. You suddenly realize that actually home is within you. It's your body, it's yourself. You are a global citizen. So, you are actually belonging to this planet. You are belonging to your communities; you are belonging to your people. And my people, like after all those travels, my people like really good, deep connections. They scattered they're scattered across continents.

Matt Bowles: That is a great way to end the main part of this interview. And at this point, Kate, are you ready to move in to *The Lightning Round*?

Ekaterina Matveeva: I am.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. What is one book that has significantly impacted you over the years you'd most recommend people check out?

Ekaterina Matveeva: I mentioned it already, so [The Meaning of Tingo](#) is definitely one of them. It's about unique and translatable words. It's amazing.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right. Knowing everything that you know now, if you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Kate?

Ekaterina Matveeva: Just believe in yourself. I mean, that's it. I think in 1819, I was following my intuition again during Nairo, and things just fell into place. Wherever you are, just believe in yourself. Just follow orientation.

Matt Bowles: All right. Of all the places you have now traveled in the world, what are your top three favorite destinations you'd most recommend people to check out.

Ekaterina Matveeva: Well, as I've mentioned already, one of my favorite places on planet is Hong Kong. I really love it, and I was so sad about, well, being a political situation. When we talk about nature, one of the places that it's one of my favorites. Yeah, it's Iguazu Falls. It's something incredible. If you can go triple border, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay. Oh, my God. I just been back there like, just now, like in January. It was wow. And another place is Ushuaia. It's Southern Point, it's again, it's Argentina, you know, so interesting. Ushuaia was amazing. I was there last year. It's just fantastic place, full of magic. I saw their whales; I went to mansions. It was amazing. So, I highly recommend it. Even Google goes nuts because Google actually turns the map upside down and shows that you are at the top of the map.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Kate, what are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you've never been highest on your list, you'd most love to see.

Ekaterina Matveeva: I definitely want to go to Australia. Yes. I haven't been there and love it. Australia, New Zealand, I guess where's going, you know, the market. Polynesia, I guess. And well, I want to travel a little bit more through states because I've been mostly on east coast, but I still haven't been to west coast. A few places that have been invited so many times, but something would prevent me from going there. So, yeah, I'd love to go Canada.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right, Kate, at this point, I want you to let folks know how they can connect with you, find you, follow you on social media. And can you share a little bit about who [Amolingua](#) is best suited for and how folks can learn more about your company as well? How do you want folks to come into your world?

Ekaterina Matveeva: Amazing. Thank you. So, I'm on Instagram, on Facebook, so you can look up this *Ekaterina Matveeva*. You can check out my TED Talk, you can check out one of my books, which is called [Language Alter Ego](#) in English and Irish, Russian, different ones. As for [Amolingua](#), definitely check it out. I would say both [Amolingua](#) and [Lingo+](#), because [Amolingua](#) is mostly for professionals and entrepreneurs, especially if you're traveling right now, you're a nomad and you feel like you are lacking some of language skills. So, you really want to, well I don't know, improve your Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, mostly European languages actually also Chinese. Why not? We've got that. You can just turn to us and we will provide you with our personalized program.

So, we prepare bespoke program where we can bring you from zero to B1 intermediate or if you want to work in that language, B2 or C1 and short record times. And you'll have a team of tutors, you'll have platform everything. Just go there and if you need public speaking. Yeah, and we're talking about your pitch to win. Let's say that you are nonnative English speaker. We're more than happy to help you because yeah, we've been helping like hundreds of entrepreneurs in Eastern Europe and Latin America to get to the next level pitch, present whatever they're doing, their companies and [Lingo+](#), if for some reason you know, some schools or universities maybe you're teaching and you want to know more, you want to get trained professional development, just come over and train with us for free. That's the next goal to make an impact.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. All right, we are going to link everything up in [the show notes](#), all of Kate's social media handles as well as everything else we have mentioned during this episode. Just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#) and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode and there you will find all of the links. Kate, this was so amazing. Thank you for coming on the show.

Ekaterina Matveeva: Thank you so much for inviting me. That was such a pleasure.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody