

# Untold Italy Episode 123 - 5 quick tips for learning Italian

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 123.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

## Katy

Ciao, benvenuti friends. I thought today we could all parliamo italiano - speak a little Italian today. Learning some Italian for your trip is one of the very best ways to enrich your travel experience. There's so much satisfaction in ordering your very first gelato and getting a smile back from the server when you say what you once thought was a tongue twister - cioccolato per favore. You'll remember those micro-moments even more than you remember the gelato and believe me, I remember a good gelato!

As many of us are heading off on our Italian adventures soon, me included, I've invited my friend Michele also known online as the Intrepid Guide, back onto the show to share 5 quick tips for learning Italian for your trip fast. Our first episode with Michele is actually one of the most popular on our podcast which tells me you're all pretty keen to move beyond a simple ciao and buongiorno! I think getting some quick wins and practice in are key to building your confidence but let's hear what Michele has to say about getting your Italian travel-ready.

## Katy

Ciao, everyone. How are you today? It's Katy here from Untold Italy. And today we're going to be talking about Learning Italian and I have got my lovely friend Michele from the Intrepid Italian here with me today. Benvenuta Michele, welcome back to Untold Italy.

## Michele

Katy, thank you so much for having me here again. It's a real pleasure.

## Katy

It's always exciting to have you on the show. I love learning your tit bits for Learning Italian. But before we dive into all of that, can you let our followers know a little bit about you? Because some people might know you, but others may not. So let's hear your story and how you came to be teaching Italian.

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## Michele

Yeah, sure. So my name is Michele, but I'm actually named after my Nonno, which is grandfather in Italian. And there's a little bit of a story there which basically sort of set up my path in life, I guess, which didn't come until later in life that I decided to pursue my Italian heritage. So I am from Melbourne, Australia. My dad immigrated to Australia with his family after the Second World War. And years later, he met my mum, who's Australian, Irish, Lebanese descent, and had us three girls. And as tradition goes, you name your children after your parents in Italian culture. So my sister's got my dad's name and my dad's nickname and my grandmother's name. So my dad wanted to pass on the name of his dad, so my nonno and his name was Michele. But in Australia, no one knows that you can kind of spell Michele with one L, too. So that sort of basically set up my life because every time I go to Italy and they expect a male because they see Michele written with one L, they see me and they're like, oh, but you're a woman. And I'm like, yes, thank you for noticing.

## Michele

But I kind of have to explain a little bit my life story, a little bit about my dad and my nonno and all of this. And it's just a daily reminder of my heritage and my past, and it's something that I'm proud of. I like to have a name that's unique. But even though my dad was born in Italy and he immigrated to Australia when he was four, he only spoke the dialect at home with his family. So he didn't go to school. He didn't learn the grammar and all proper standard Italian and any of that. He spoke a dialect. So when he tried to speak Italian with my eldest sister, Victoria, he would have heated arguments, as you do with his parents, because his parents, who were educated in the school system said to him, no, that's how we say it in our dialect, you're actually supposed to say it this way. And he didn't know any better and he didn't know what to do. So he just decided not to teach any of us Italian. So growing up, when I would go and visit my grandfather because my nonna had passed away I would visit my nonno and I couldn't really communicate with him because he didn't speak English and he lived with my aunty and my zia and they would always speak Italian at home so there was really no need for him to ever learn English and he lived in the Italian community in Melbourne, Australia - so Brunswick, Carlton - massive Italian community there was no need to really learn English so when I spoke to him it would be gestures and looking at my dad like dad, what did he say?

## Michele

And then dad would chime in and it was fine for a while but I got really frustrated as I got a little bit older so when I was around seven, eight, nine I started to feel embarrassed that I couldn't communicate with him and that was a real shame especially because I felt an extra bond with him because I did have his name and I was named after him I could feel the affection and the love that he had towards me. He pinched my cheek and he'd cuddled me and he'd play like little games with me and play little tricks it was a really big special part of my life and he passed away when I was 17 and it was at that point that I really decided to

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learn Italian and I didn't know how to start. My natural instinct I guess the only way I knew how was to go to a bookstore and pick up a travel phrase guide and start flicking through the pages and I remember lying in bed that night after I got the book and just flicking through the pages and thinking why does that word ending that way, but that word ends in that way. And there was no real explanation about the grammar and it was just basically - here are all the phrases, memorize them. There was no way to break it down and actually okay, this is this and then if you do this it's because of this. There was no real method, it was just madness so I kind of had that on the back burner because I wasn't - in Australia at that age and aren't able to drive, you're not fully independent. I had a side job outside of school after hours and I started to save up a bit of money but it wasn't until my early 20s that I started to seek out Italian language courses - so night classes. So this was when I was at University I found a school where I could do one evening class and I finished that course but I didn't have the next level because there weren't enough students so then I was stuck again. Where do I go from here? And then a couple of more years went past and then I moved closer to - well my job was in Melbourne so I was spending more time in the center of Melbourne and there were more opportunities for me to find other classes. Fast forward a few years after that, I was learning Italian in a formal setting three days a week. I was spending every day of the two weeks of the Italian Film Festival watching all the movies. I would see up to three movies a day. I would leave work early to get there on time to get the 6 o'clock show and then wait around for the 9 o'clock show. So sometimes I did two movies in an evening. I would drag my mum out on the weekends to come and see some movies with me. And I was just trying to surround myself with as many Italian things as possible. I only wanted to go to Italian restaurants so I could overhear the waiting staff and also to pizzerias and hear the pizza makers talk amongst themselves. I was obsessed. I loved it. I loved every minute of it. And I felt so much happier being around the language, of being in an Italian environment. So I was about 24/25 when I reached an intermediate level. So B1, intermediate Italian. And it was at that point that I decided, look, I want this even more like, I think I want to move to Italy.

## **Michele**

So I mentioned it to my dad, and he's like, all right, do it. With his support, I moved to Rome. And it was a decision that he was like, I'm going to move to Rome, that's it's an indefinite decision. I'm not going there just for six months or a year. I'm just going to move there. That's it. So I quit my job after I had traveled to Italy for seven weeks just to sort of see if it was something that I could survive in terms of the language. And if it's something that I really wanted to do, I came back and I'm like, yeah, I definitely want to do this. So I quit my job. And then three months after that trip, I moved to Rome and I spent three years there. But unfortunately, even though my dad is Italian, he doesn't have his Italian passport because he was naturalized Australian and he can't get it back unless he moved to Italy to obtain it. There are different rules between different countries. Lots of people said, no, you can't get it back. Well, unless they change the rules again - I mean in my case - I wasn't able to. So that sort of cut my journey short in Italy. I wasn't able to get a visa to prolong my trip, so I decided to move here to London, which is where I am now. And then I started the Intrepid Guide, which is my contribution in terms of helping people to learn a language ahead of traveling

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abroad. And in more recent years, I've focused on learning Italian for heritage learners like myself, for people that have an Italian heritage but didn't necessarily speak the language growing up, and also those that just love Italy and want to have a more authentic experience and learn Italian, that they can connect with the locals and so they don't feel so clueless and sort of shy. And these awkward moments that you have when you don't know what to say. So that's what the Intrepid guide is and Intrepid Italian is - it's about using Italian and any language in general to really connect with where you're visiting and with the people that make it so special when you are traveling abroad.

### **Katy**

That's such a great story. And maybe you can tell listeners what your approach is and how you approach teaching Italian, because I think you've got - you've built your own special method for doing this based on a lot of trial and error, haven't you?

### **Michele**

Yeah. So I sort of gave you an example of travel phrase guides, which are just sort of like a dump of different phrases and different words. And you're just sort of given this list of words, but there's no way for you to remember it or make sense of it. And that's a real pity because as you know, Italian is so beautiful and it's a real pleasure to be able to speak it. So I wanted to create something that focuses on both a way to remember things, but also learning things that are the most important things and learning them first. There are so many words in the language, you don't need to know all of them to be able to use the language and to be able to have real conversations and have meaningful conversations and also to survive in everyday situation. So I create the - well I didn't create this 80 / 20 principle, but I've taken this idea and applied it to language learning. So for those that you don't know, the 80 / 20 rule is also called the Pareto principle, and it was coined by management consultant Joseph M. Juran, and he named it after an Italian economist. That's kind of a nice full circle.

### **Michele**

And his name was Vilfredo Pareto, hence the Pareto principal. Now he showed ( this was back in 1896) that approximately 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of the population. So he discovered this statistic, but it was Joseph M Juran that sort of could see that this ratio also can apply to other things in life. So if you're talking about like a website, you'll have like 80% of the traffic will go to 20% of the articles. That's drawing in the majority of the traffic. And you can apply this to language learning, too. So of all the words in a language, you don't need to know everything. But if you learn the top 20% of the language, you can use that to survive in 80% of the situations that you find yourself in. So that's what I use in my courses. So I have a travel specific course. So if anyone is interested in learning conversational Italian, you got a couple of weeks ahead of a trip. That is what I focus on. I focus on the top 20% that you'll need when you're traveling abroad. So how are you going to order your food? How are you going to ask how much something is? How do you ask for directions or recommendations, checking in at the hotel? So all like, the practical stuff is what you're going to be using 80% of

the time that you're there, right? And this is the stuff that I teach, the stuff that's the most important, that makes you feel a little bit more comfortable and confident in your decisions. And then my other courses which go in more in depth, which go from absolute beginner all the way up to intermediate and apply that same principle. But I also apply that to the grammar and the vocabulary that you learn. So, for example, you're not going to be learning the names of body parts or the names of items of clothing in your first lesson or even in the first course. That's something that isn't a priority. The priority is to get you speaking and to get you creating your own sentences, not just memorizing sentences and phrases, because if you can break down the grammar, then you can start to create your own. And that's where the real power and pleasure comes from. So after the first lesson, you can start to create your own sentences, your own phrases. And that's really exciting.

### **Katy**

I think what you do, apart from the structure of it, is you make it really fun. So I know you said you don't mention body parts, but I've been following you on Instagram, Michele. And you do actually mention a few body parts in some of your Instagram stories. But yes, Michele likes to have a little play with the words of Italian and definitely to get a taste of what the courses are like, definitely follow her on Instagram and YouTube, where she's absolutely huge. So you can get an idea of the style, because I think that's also really important, not just the method, but the style, because I think you need to really connect with whoever is teaching you to have the motivation to keep going. I think that's where I've always stumbled really in my language learning. And I don't know whether that's very common, but when I've had a really fantastic teacher, I've felt so motivated to learn. I had a really amazing French teacher at school, and she sadly actually just passed away. But she was so inspiring, and she would read us French poetry and we would learn about Rimbaud and Baudelaire and these teenage girls just going, "oh, this is fantastic". But it really did inspire us to learn more. And what I love about your channels that you, is you do make it fun, and you do teach the little quirks, the Italian language, which is a fun kind of bits. Yeah.

### **Michele**

The difference, like penne and pene.

### **Katy**

Yeah. We won't go into that right now.

### **Michele**

The thing you were referring to before with, like, body parts. That's basically what we're referring to. For those of you that don't know, like penne, two Ns P-E-N-N-E is the type of pasta, but if you don't pronounce that double N, then all of a sudden you have a male appendage and you have to laugh at yourself. We've all been there. I've made those mistakes, too. But it's those little mishaps and those little moments where you have to have a little

those are the things that you remember. And that's a lesson in itself. Yeah. It's part of the process and it's great fun.

### **Katy**

I love it. Now, Michele, Michele - a lot of people are heading off to Italy soon for a much longed for and delayed vacation. So I thought what we could do today is give everyone some quick tips on how they can get up to speed with Italian before they go. Are you up for that?

### **Michele**

Yes, absolutely. Let's do it. It's exciting. It's a good time to start traveling to Italy right now. It's good weather and beautiful.

### **Michele**

Okay, so, I'll start with the 80 / 20, because if you're short on time, the priority is definitely right. What am I going to be doing in Italy? What sort of things will I need to be able to say? So I always say, start with your biography, learning your autobiography, how to say My name is.. I come from... this is my partner. It doesn't need to be a super massive autobiography, just a few short phrases, because this is the sort of small talk that you have with people, especially if you know a little bit of Italian and you want to start to play with the language a little bit, or if you're arriving at the hotel and you want to say what your name is, if you have a reservation at a restaurant and you need to say what your name is, that's sort of part of your biography, right? So these are the sorts of things that will come up a lot when you're talking to people. So learning your biography. Learning how to order food, maybe any specific allergens that you have, or if you're vegetarian, learning those words and how to say that that's really important, or any ingredients that you don't like, or maybe for myself, knowing how to say I'm vegetarian is one of the first things I wanted to learn so I could always check 'vegetariano' - is this vegetarian, just to confirm that I wasn't getting fish or meat or whatever.

### **Michele**

So those sorts of things are really useful. And when you're in Italy, you're going to be eating a lot, hopefully, yeah. Asking for directions, especially if you're in Venice and you might get lost and you don't always want to or can rely on things like Google Maps. Sometimes it is just nice just to wander and not have a phone in your hand and use it as an excuse to ask people, "how do I get to?" So learning a couple of phrases, "how do I get to" and then understanding things like left, right, straight, or, you know, traffic lights, those sorts of just key vocabulary. Asking for recommendations, too, like where is a good restaurant? Or I always like to ask if I'm in a taxi or ask a taxi driver, what is your favorite place? When I first moved to Rome, I'm like, what is your favorite place in Rome? And then I would ask why? And that was just a really nice way to get a local tip, but also to start to see the place or Rome, in this case, through a local eyes. So that was really nice.

## **Michele**

Another thing, too, is buying things and paying for things. So if you're going shopping for grocery shopping or if you're out in the market or if you're in a store or if you're paying for a meal in a restaurant, these are all things where you need to pay for something. So if you need to ask for the bill, how do you say that? How do you ask if you can pay with a credit card? That's not always accepted, depending on where you're going and things like that. So those are the main areas that you can start to see that will cover you in a lot of bases by asking how much something is and can I pay cash or card? So there's not too many things that you need to learn to be able to have meaningful conversations. You might need to stumble your way through it, and that's fine. That's part of the process. But Italians are really understanding and they'll help you through it and they'll correct you. Or they'll ask you again, because not all Italians are able to speak English. It's a very small percentage. It's around 34% that can speak English, and then a very small percentage of that are able to speak it very well.

## **Michele**

So whatever effort you make, whatever vocabulary that you're able to learn in the time that you have will go a long way and it's always appreciated. And who knows, you may enjoy it so much that you may want to learn it more seriously, which is what happened to me that's the first one is to focus on the 20% of the vocabulary that you can use in 80% of the situations that you find yourself in. So that's the first place that I would start.

## **Katy**

I think that's really important, especially asking for recommendations. I love this one. And understanding what they're saying back, too. And taxi drivers, I don't know, they do know a lot of things, actually. They can be a little bit 'pazzo' crazy, but they also can be a font of knowledge. Now, just in another podcast episode of ours, just a few weeks ago, my friend Raffaella was telling us her top tip for getting local recommendations is to ask the Carabinieri or the police. Always ask them where they go for aperitivo. It's just like "I never thought of that". But it would be good to know. And I think you should probably learn the word *fo sir*, when you're talking to the Carabinieri.

## **Michele**

Yeah, that's great. Asking anyone that you feel comfortable speaking with and Carabinieri they're usually sort of standing around and walking around and yeah, that's a great tip right there for sure.

## **Katy**

All right. What's your second tip?

## Michele

Okay, so now that we know what to learn, now we need to start to learn it and to practice it. So there are two types of learning. There is active and passive learning. So active is when you make the time you sit down and like, right, this is what I'm focusing on. Passive learning is when you're, for example, you're washing the dishes and you're listening to a podcast or you're driving, you're listening to something. So it's basically you're doing two things at once and you're not fully concentrating on it. So while it is nice to listen to Italian radio and listen to music or listen to Italian films, unless you're actively participating in the process of learning, it's not going to get you to where you want to be. You need to have a nice mix between passive and active with a bit more focus on the active learning. So I know all of us are strapped for time. We want to be able to dedicate "yes, I'm going to spend 2 hours learning Italian today" or whatever. I would advise that you take it slow. You don't need to do it 2 hours a day every day. And that's impossible for most of us. It's impossible for me. So doing small bits every day is better than one chunk once a week. So say, for example, people that go to language lessons, you spend 90 minutes or 2 hours in a class on a Wednesday night like I did. And then the next week you would come back and you would have forgotten everything that you did last week. And you would spend the first half an hour at least trying to catch up and trying to warm up your brain. So if you have a trip coming up in two weeks time, my recommendation is that you start with ten to 15 minutes and just revise, say, your biography, do that, and the next day you focus on ordering food and remembering the vocabulary from that. And then on the third day, you would just quickly revise those first two days, and then you move on to the next part, which could be remembering how to ask for directions and recommendations. So you have that compounded effect where you're constantly going back and reviewing or revising what you've learned and learning a little bit more new material.

## Michele

So that's the idea with that. Does that make sense, in terms of making - and this is the active learning that I would focus on. If you're going if you have a trip in two weeks, you want to have more active and less passive learning.

## Katy

Yeah. I reckon I'm really good at the passive learning. Yeah, I totally am. It does help for sure. I can definitely just surrounding myself by Italian people and recently on a podcast, we've had a lot more local Italians on. And it does really make a difference just picking up some of the words. However, I noticed a huge difference when I have that little focus. And it's so true. I think sometimes we just set ourselves up for failure because we are setting these huge goals of like, yes, I'm going to do an hour of practice a night, and it's really difficult to do that sometimes. But 15 minutes is totally doable. Just got to set aside the time, schedule it into our calendars, and I think everyone can do that with 15 minutes.

## **Michele**

Yeah. And I think a lot of the hurdle comes with the getting started bit. I find that personally a challenge just with anything. But once you get started, it becomes a lot easier once you're in the motion or in the act of doing it because you find the pleasure in it. You're like, yeah, this is cool. I'm learning something new and it's like unraveling a puzzle and all of a sudden it makes sense to you. It's like, yeah, I can say a few things now, and that's a really fun moment to have. So if you can just suspend the whole "I can't be bothered" or the fear or the anxiety of getting started, you can just push through that or just suspend that thought for a moment and just start. It makes such a difference. Yeah. I try and think about, like, the Nike model. Just do it. Like, don't think about it too much, just get started.

## **Katy**

Yeah. I think there's actually one stumbling block, and I think you're going to talk about this next, which is the next tip that you've got. But there's one stumbling block for me, and it's how I sound. Like I get a bit embarrassed or a bit nervous about saying things out loud. But, yeah, you tell us what you think. I think it's important to have a different perspective, but that's always been my stumbling block with any language, in fact.

## **Michele**

Yeah. So the next one is, you know what to learn and set aside time for learning. It may need to start to put it into practice a little bit. You need to say it out loud because it's all well and good to see how something is written. But you also need to connect what your brain knows with your mouth and your tongue and the muscles in your mouth. As an Australian, my tongue is very lazy. We don't pronounce our Rs like Americans do. I can't even say the country Ireland without feeling embarrassed because we don't really even pronounce the R in Ireland, the country. So depending on where you're from, you need to be aware of the muscles in your mouth that you may not use in a certain way when you need to speak Italian. So it's really important that you know how to not only read or know what the word is, you need to be able to say it. So you need to start practicing. And you can practice this if you're traveling with someone, you can practice it at home to say a couple of phrases. Or as you're learning it, just say it out loud to yourself because it really does connect. It connects the dots in terms of what you're learning, and your brain will remember your voice when you say it. So if you are in the heat of the moment, so to speak, and you're trying to remember what was that word again, sometimes the brain will remind you what it is because you can hear what you sounded like when you said it when you were learning it. So that's a really important piece of the puzzle to help you to remember and recall something. So recalling is actually pulling it out of the filing cabinet and actually saying it. So these are the things that help you to connect the dots. So it's important to say it out loud, to repeat it to yourself or to someone else if you can.

## **Katy**

So, yeah, don't be embarrassed. Like you just have to go for it. It's one of those things. It's another kind of mental block, isn't it? And I think the more you practice and if you listen in Michele's courses, you've got different people saying the words. So you've got a male voice and also Michele's voice as well. And you can hear different the ways to pronounce it, and you can practice it really easily. Now, I just thought of something just then, actually, is that if you can use your phone to record yourself saying it, then you can have that as a memory jolt as well. And so there's some apps where you can add in your voice, and then if you're having trouble sleeping, you can put it on loop, and then you have that passive learning. I'm just throwing it out there.

## **Michele**

Yeah. Why not

## **Katy**

I might try that?

## **Michele**

And you can also use those things to look back on and realize how far you've come. That's really good, because sometimes we forget, especially if you want to go through a longer journey with learning a language and you feel like you've hit a plateau, but like, actually go back and listen to where you were a couple of weeks ago. If you're recording yourself, that is, or flipping through your notes and like. Yeah, that was easy. I've learned so much back at the time. It might have seemed really challenging. So that's a really good way to track your progress. I highly recommend doing that, too.

## **Katy**

All right, what's the next one? Number four

## **Michele**

yes. So the next one is writing things down now. We are so out of touch now, I feel especially myself, we've got our laptops, we've got our tablets, we've got our phones, and a lot of the time, I and I'm assuming most people would take notes on their electronic devices and we miss that connection now where we're writing things down. But it's actually - there's been some studies that have shown that you remember more when you actually put pen to paper because your brain is actively participating in interpreting and remembering that information. So often when we write it down, we're internalizing on a deeper level than if we were just typing it in on a Google Doc, for example. So this is really important for the memory, which is something that a lot of people have mentioned to me that they really struggle with. So now it's really important to focus on. Right, you know, what to learn, you're making time to learn

it - now let's look at ways how you can remember that. So these are just a couple of those things saying things out loud. And this one is writing it down. Writing it down means that you're actually participating in, right? This is the word I want to write down, and you're processing it on a deeper level.

### **Katy**

I think you're right. I think we do tend to default to digital solutions, but sometimes the good old pen and paper the old fashioned way is something that cements it in your mind. And I know a lot of - if you're listening to any life coaches or anyone that's giving anyone advice around mental health and stuff like that, they always say to write a journal. So maybe if you're writing a journal in the morning, can also write down a few little Italian words. I should write my journal in Italian. That'd be a doddle.

### **Michele**

Yeah. Whatever resonates with you. I'm not a real journal keeper myself, but I definitely have the patience and the time to write things down. In a time when I'm learning something, any language that I'm learning, even when I'm watching a film, I've got like the subtitles on in that language or whatever. If the speaking isn't in that language, I will have a pen and paper and I will write things down as opposed to just putting it on my phone. It's one of the things that has always worked for me. And yeah, I definitely recommend.

### **Katy**

Right. Well, you did promise us five. So you've got one more. What else can we do to learn Italian quickly?

### **Michele**

So this one is another memory hack. This is called a memory hook. I'm not sure if anyone else has called this a memory hook, but I call it a memory hook. So this is where we're trying to find a way to remember a word that is not familiar to us. So this is another basically a way that you can create like a mnemonic. So when you're learning, like, the colors of the rainbow, we're taught Roy G biv for all the colors of the rainbow, just create like a name out of it or how to remember the coordinates, you know the North, South, East, West. Never eat soggy wheatabix, these are the mnemonics and things that you need to create to help you to remember things. So for me, a memory hook is when you're looking at a word like, right, how am I going to remember this? And this is very much on a personal level, it will be different for everyone. But just to give you an example, so the word for he in Italian is lui. Lui. L-U-I. Okay, how am I going to remember this? You could look at the spelling. You can pay attention to how it sounds. Lui, okay. That reminds me of King Louis. Spelling is a bit different, but the pronunciation is there. And King Louis is he. He is King Louis. So that could be your memory hook. So you think about how do you say he again? I remember Louis King Louis. And then you sort of work backwards to what the answer is. So Louis is for me, my memory hook is King

Louis. Another one is Lei. Lei means she. Lei in a tiny is spelled L-E-I. Lei. How do I remember Lei? Lei-a. Princess Leia is she. She is Princess Leia. So these are the sorts of things that are really powerful because you create a little story around a word. And this is a great memory tool that all, like, memory champions use. They will adopt mnemonic techniques to help them to remember things. So this is what I touch on. And I have a module included in my courses about how you do and how you create these memory hooks. And there is no right and wrong reason. It's basically, if it works for you, perfect, that's all it needs to do. So another phrase could be, how do I ask, how much does it cost? "quanto costa". What does that sound like? Quantity. Q-U-A-N-T-O Q-U-A-N-T-O. So the first few letters the same in English, Quanto and quantity. Like, how much quantity? And then Costa sounds very similar to cost. How much does it cost? So quantity costs. This is the whole idea. It doesn't need to paint a complete or perfect picture. The idea is that it just jolts the memory and like, oh, yeah, that's right. Because sometimes all you need is a little clue or a little indication of what the word could be. And that's where the memory hooks come in.

**Katy**

What if you're a visual person? Does it work like that? A lot of people are very visual. Yeah. So can you sort of, like, have those visual associations between...

**Michele**

Yeah, absolutely. You can look at that as well. For me, it's more sound. I'm a visual learner, but most of the time, for me, it's the sound that I like to play on. But, yeah, by all means, if a word looks like something that you're more familiar with or it looks like the object itself. Yeah. Then absolutely, we can do that as well.

**Katy**

I'm just thinking of those great hairstyles of Princess Leia and as a mum of twins - when you were explaining that because I've got a boy and a girl who are twins. That's actually going to be really easy for me to remember that because Lui sounds a bit like Luke as well. So Luke and Leia.

**Michele**

Yeah, perfect.

**Katy**

Speaking.

**Michele**

Louie could be Lewis. It could be whatever resonates with someone that, you know, has that name. Yeah, for sure.

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## Katy

Okay. They're really great, Michele. I think that's a really good start to get people kind of motivated and get ready to go. So what should we do, though? I feel like, what do you actually do when you actually land? What happens? I think some people just freeze. I know I do for a little bit.

## Michele

Yeah, no, absolutely. And it's so natural because you're super excited, you're anxious to get there. I hope everything goes well. But you've also like, oh, I want to try and remember the things that I've been learning and not be put on the spot, so to speak. Like I said before, you just have to suspend those negative thoughts for a moment and just get the ball rolling. So for me to warm up, I like to start as soon as I board the plane, depending on where you're coming from. Of course, if you're getting a train from France or wherever. But if you're boarding a plane, usually the cabin crew, someone will speak Italian and you'll see it by the little bags. They might have a little flag on their name tag. So you can start to practice as soon as you board the plane. It could be a simple Buongiorno or it could be Grazi when they pass you your meal. It could be anything just to warm you up. And they might stop and say, oh, you speak Italian. And then you can say, oh, I know a little bit. And then you might have a little interaction there and you might learn a new word from that interaction. You could say, oh, how do you say this word? Or maybe if you're stuck on the pronunciation, you could say, oh, how do you pronounce that word again? Or you can just check, is it pronounced this way? And these are the sorts of interactions that will help you to build more confidence. I also like to start speaking with the immigration officers because they look so bored out of their brains. They say, "next", you give them your passport. You look at them, you maybe smile. I like to say I like to greet them in Italian and they'll look at me and they're like, oh, they'll see my Australian passport. And they're like, oh, you speak Italian? And then I just start like a little interaction there. And I do this in any place that I go to, especially if I don't know the pronunciation or it's a bit tricky. And I'll ask them, do you pronounce it this way? And they're like, no. Or sometimes they'll give me like, oh, we say it this way. But actually if you go like 2 hours to the south, they say it this way, and then all of a sudden you're learning more and you're getting a little bit more out of just a typical boring experience. Someone checking your passport can really turn into something that you can remember forever. That's the whole point of learning a language. Right. You don't need to be perfect. You just need to have fun with it. You just need to throw it out there and see what comes back. Because those are the moments that we travel for. Those are the ones that you remember. You don't remember queuing up. You remember the person that you spoke to in that queue.

## Katy

Yeah, exactly. That's such a great analogy. I think a lot of people might be surprised given that I'm talking a lot for my job, but that I do get nervous when I'm talking in another language. And it's a lot of self talk and just saying, just go for it. And the beautiful thing about Italians

is they just really appreciate it when you try. And that's not true of every nationality, but in Italy, they really appreciate it. And so you're probably going to get a big smile back and someone's going to help you even from the immigration people. Yeah.

### **Michele**

Sometimes they'll ask you where you're from. So you know your biography, "I'm from Australia or I am Australian". Like, "oh, I've got a cousin there" or "my friend just moved there with his family" or "I've got a cousin in New York" or "oh, yeah. I've been to Canada once". They'll find a way to make it feel like you're family and it's fabulous.

### **Katy**

That's the feeling that we want. And I think beyond just the beautiful sites and the culture and the history and the food, even, it's that feeling of belonging that I think a lot of people crave when they go to Italy. And you can certainly get that when you try and speak a little. Okay. So, Michele, this has been fantastic. How can everyone follow you and learn some more Italian if they like the way that you teach?

### **Michele**

Yeah, sure. So I have two Instagram accounts. The one where I teach Italian and I have daily lessons is called *intrepiditalian*. So that's where you can find me. I do like really short daily lessons. That's basically like you were saying before, they're a bit more fun. And just to sort of keep it light hearted, it's really hard to teach it to you in a 1 minute reel on Instagram, which is what I do. So you get like the proper structure when you join the courses. So if you want to find out more about the courses and you can go to my website, *The intrepidguide.com*, and then there's a link in the navigation which has a list of all the different courses that I have. So you can choose from a travel Italian course or you can choose from the more in-depth ones with all the courses. They come with lifetime access so you can learn anywhere, any time on any device which means that you only pay once. You don't need to keep paying to play, like you do when you go to traditional classes where you have to keep paying if you want to keep learning. These courses give you everything that you need and it's just a matter of you finding time as and when you can to learn so you can watch the videos themselves. You can also download the audio and listen to it as more passive learning. So if you're driving or commuting and you can't sit in front of a screen but like I said, it's always good to have a balance between active and passive learning and it also comes with access to me and a private community where you can get feedback and support and ask any questions.

### **Katy**

Access to you hey. With your cheeky little sayings. I love it.

**Michele**

It's important to feel like you have support and that you can ask any questions.

**Katy**

Absolutely. I think sometimes if you get a bit stuck in anything you just need to be able to reach out and get some expert advice. What I really love about your approach is it's super fun and you forgot to mention that you have a YouTube channel as well which is very popular.

**Michele**

Yes, I do. That's called *intrepiditalianwithmichele*. Michele with one L so that's where I share more in depth lessons and you get an idea of my teaching style and also Italy travel video guides so I've just posted one about my time in Venice So that's where you can find me there as well.

**Katy**

She's very modest, everyone. Michele's just won a very prestigious award for her YouTube channel so we're very proud of her and it's wonderful.

**Michele**

Thank you.

**Katy**

You should go check it out and of course, we're going to put all of the details of how you can connect with Michele into our show notes and so you can get started straight away on your Italian. Grazie Mille Michele, this has been so much fun as always. Thank you.

**Michele**

Thank you so much, Katy. It was a real pleasure. Alla prossima!

**Katy**

I hope you had fun with those quick tips and have a little plan to get yourself up to speed with your Italiano in the coming weeks. Michele's course - *How to Master Italian for Travel FAST* is a great way to put some structure into your learning and have the confidence to order that chocolate gelato like a local.

There's also a heap of resources on our *Untold Italy* website to help guide your Italian language studies. Of course, you'll find a link to those and to Michele's course in our show notes at *Untold Italy*

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Grazie Mille, to all our listeners and subscribers and especially to our Untold Italy Amici, friends of the podcast, for your ongoing support, we're so excited to share our love of Italy with you. If you haven't heard about Our Untold Italy Amici group, this is where our friends of the podcast gather. Each month our Amici access a bonus podcast episode exploring extra special secret places and experiences of our favorite guests, a private online community with special access to me to help with trip planning and also lots of other goodies. So if you love Italy and want to go deeper exploring its untold regions, towns and cities come join us our amici - [untolditaly.com/amici](https://untolditaly.com/amici)

That's all for this week, next week we're going to the undiscovered Tuscan town of your dreams with glorious piazzas, pretty shops and vistas and barely another visitor in sight - plus you can get there by train easily from both Florence and it's not Lucca! That's enough spoilers you'll need to Stay tuned for this true hidden gem next time on Untold Italy but until then it's Ciao for Now