



More than words: Real Life Stories

1. What is your name and what course are you studying?

My name is Athanasios (Nate). I am currently studying my Master of research course in translation and interpreting at the university of Surrey full-time and occasionally doing some freelancing on the side.

2. What languages do you speak?

My native language is Greek and I can also speak English, German, and French.

3. When did you decide to learn another language and why?

I started taking English lessons when I was 10 and I learned German when I lived there for a couple of years after completing my first degree in Greece, in 2015. German is a language I fell in love with and, while for some people it is easier to learn a second language when they are younger, I found my grammar knowledge very helpful in the learning process. Finally, I learned French

as part of my undergraduate in modern languages, at the university of Surrey as well.

4. How has being able to speak more than one language helped you in your personal life?

Honestly, I cannot imagine my life without knowledge of the English language. Since I was extremely young, I have been using it to understand foreign media like songs, movies, or video games, and to chat with people online. It has also helped me in my academic life, as Greek literature is sometimes not sufficient for all fields. When I moved to Germany, speaking English helped me settle but things really got easier when I could recite some basic phrases in German. Apart from convenience, the natives do appreciate it when an Ausländer speaks their language. All of my additional languages made me appreciate the culture of its speakers more. Every culture is unique but

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speaking the language associated with it is a key to fully appreciate it. And in a mystical way, learning more languages somehow improves the ones you have already learned; maybe Chomsky had it right all along!

5. Has being able to speak another language opened any doors for you?

Working is communicating and communication is language. Before coming to the UK, I had worked in various restaurants (my other passion) and whether it was communication with the staff or with clients, languages do and will come in handy. If you are a positively competitive type, they can also make you stand out. My foreign language knowledge helped me in being efficient in my first customer service role, working with my team and in my tasks. Additionally, even if you don't need your spoken languages for your main work, you never know when a foreign language speaker will

suddenly be needed, and it's good to be there and rise to the occasion. I believe I have now decided that I want to work with languages and freelancing has been a great opportunity to utilize my knowledge.

Translation, transcription, transcreation, and copywriting are some of the tasks I have worked on, but the options are limitless. Especially nowadays with crowdsourcing platforms and search engine and machine translation optimisation, the need for foreign language speakers is growing.

6. What has been the most impactful thing about learning a language on your life to date?

I feel like the path I have taken, in my studies and my work, would not have been possible without learning a language. That, and being able to understand song



lyrics in the original language;
priceless!

7. What is your favourite foreign language word or phrase and why?

I like the French phrase “La vache!” which literally means the cow and I suppose it is used in a similar way as “Holy cow!” Very useful.

8. Is there another language you would like to learn?

When I have some more time, I will learn Russian because it is much different to what I already know, and it will be a challenge.

9. If you could give one piece of advice to students thinking about learning another language, what would it be?

Every person is a different learner, but I think that knowing grammar is necessary for a more conscious study. Also, studying daily is important and the beginning might seem slow but once you pick up the pace, it gets fun!

10. What has been the most unexpected benefit of learning an additional language?

This is a very niche situation but I enjoy traditional baking and occasionally recipes are localised or modified in English. Being able to do some research on the original recipes yields a completely different result sometimes.

11. Can you give an example where knowing another language has helped you progress in a way that would have been harder without having that skill?

Knowing a language is directly or indirectly related to a huge number of aspects in life. Intercultural communication is very important, you learn to respect and surpass any communicational obstacles. That expands your circle and any opportunities that come with it.