



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

My name is James George, and I am a third/final-year East Asian Studies student at the University of Manchester. I also serve as a language teacher for the Japanese Society at the university.

2. What languages do you speak?

I speak English (Native), Japanese and Mandarin (Beginner).

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

I wanted to learn another language when I was about 15. My girlfriend at the time was doing Japanese classes at her school and it sounded interesting, and I found out I had a knack for it. Before that though, my favourite class in primary school was French, as my mother spoke it (but was not native).

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

My language skills have provided me with various opportunities. My pen-pal for the last several years has been in Chiba, Japan, who on numerous occasions has helped me with my Japanese (as I have with her English). Other than influencing my career and educational prospects (which empowered me to strive further in school/college), when attending university (and after travelling through-out Japan), I felt I was able to connect with several international students from both Japan and China, and how to respectfully involve myself with their backgrounds and cultures.

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

When abroad in Japan, the skills I had learnt assisted massively and made me feel more confident with native speakers when in areas where English would be difficult.

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

I constantly say “そうね” (Sou ne) meaning “Got it”. (Formally, it means “I see”).

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

I am striving to learn Korean and German at some point in the future.

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

Be dedicated and accepting of correction and/or failure.

Languages are hard, but if you stick to it, you will do great.

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

Career Opportunities and friendships for sure. Whilst remaining linear in my aims, language skills have definitely helped me feel more valued in certain groups.

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

In my teaching abilities. Demonstrating those skills at both university and college will look amazing on application forms when applying for teaching jobs.

11. **At what point in your life did you realise the value in knowing another language was?**

When attending university, so about 19. The skills and level of understanding of things that are not your own is crucial to the best social development in a person.