



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

I'm Sophie, a 4th-year undergraduate student studying German and East Asian Studies at the University of Manchester.

2. What languages do you speak (native and additional languages)?

I speak English as my native language and am fluent in German, with a good command of French. I am also a beginner in Japanese.

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

When I was in primary school, I first started learning German, and I was initially drawn to the language's unique sounds. However, as I delved deeper into studying the German language, I discovered that it offered so much more than just an interesting collection of sounds. I was able to explore new cultures and connect with individuals from diverse

backgrounds, and the complexity of German grammar and structure pushed me to think and express myself in ways that I had never considered before. As time went on, my passion for German continued to grow, opening a world of possibilities and a richer understanding of the world around me.

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

Having the ability to speak multiple languages has presented me with opportunities to connect with individuals from various parts of the globe and establish meaningful friendships, which have enriched my understanding of the world. Conversing with someone in their mother tongue has not only allowed me to gain a deeper insight into their culture but has also created a sense of mutual respect and admiration.

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

Undertaking a work placement in the beautiful city of Dusseldorf, located in western Germany, as part of my degree program during my year abroad was truly unforgettable and has had a lasting impact on me. It provided me with the opportunity to apply my language skills in a professional setting and gain invaluable insights into the German business culture, as well as to explore the city's vibrant atmosphere, stunning architecture, and rich cultural heritage. Additionally, I had the chance to make lasting friendships, which further enriched my time in Dusseldorf.

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

I really like the German word 'Glühbirne' because it combines 'glühen' (meaning 'to glow') and

'Birne' (meaning 'pear') to describe the shape of older light bulbs. This word is an excellent illustration of the creative and distinctive word formation present in the German language.

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

Yes, I would love to learn Spanish. With over 500 million speakers across the globe, it's an incredibly practical language for communication and travel. But what really excites me about Spanish is the richness of the cultures and traditions associated with it. I'm keen to dive deep into the history, art, music, and literature of Spanish-speaking countries, and to form meaningful connections with the people who speak this beautiful language.

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

Learning a new language is an incredibly rewarding experience that opens a world of endless possibilities. To all students considering learning a new language, my advice is to not let the fear of making mistakes hold you back. Mistakes are a natural part of the learning process, and you can use them as opportunities to improve.

Additionally, immerse yourself in the language as much as possible. Listen to music or podcasts, watch movies and TV shows, and engage in conversations in the language you are learning. This will help you to develop a better understanding of the language, as well as the culture and people who speak it.

Most importantly, have fun! Give yourself credit for your progress

and celebrate your successes along the way.

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

Learning a new language, or multiple languages, can have a remarkable impact on your linguistic abilities in both the language you're learning and your native tongue. I found that learning an additional language exposed me to new vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, which significantly enhanced my communication skills. Moreover, the cognitive skills I gained while studying a foreign language, such as memory retention and problem-solving, were transferable to my native language, resulting in an overall improvement in my ability to communicate effectively.