



# More than words: Real Life Stories

**1. What is your name and what is your course of study?**

Emma Lee, BA German and Politics.

**2. What languages do you speak, are interested in, or that you relate to in any way?**

My mother tongue is English, however I've been exposed to a lot of languages throughout school. I studied French and Spanish in primary school and then German, Japanese, and Spanish at secondary school. I pursued German for my A levels and loved it. I am nearly at the end of my second year studying German at university!

**3. At what point in your life did you realise how important and how valuable knowing multiple languages was?**

Very early on. I grew up in London surrounded by hundreds of languages, cultures, and religions every day and therefore I quickly understood the importance of

being able to communicate with others.

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

It has given me amazing opportunities, new friends, and a much wider sense of community. It's also a real confidence booster when you communicate successfully with someone not in your mother tongue. It fills you with a sense of pride. Learning other languages has also taught me the importance of the global community.

**5. How do you think knowing more than one language has helped you, or will help you, in your professional life?**

It has definitely opened doors for me, for example it has given me the opportunity to work abroad for a year as part of my degree. I have also gained amazing work experience through my love and passion for language learning

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which in turn has developed my leadership, communication, and organisation skills.

**6. What career/s do you hope to go into in the future?**

International politics/European politics

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

The opportunities it has given me; travelling, working, teaching/mentoring and making new friends.

**8. What has been the most unexpected benefit of learning languages during your life?**

It has guided me to the career path that is meant for me. I always knew I wanted to go into a career in politics, but learning languages has given me an insight into the relations and political systems of other countries and this is now what I aspire to work in!

**9. What has been the most challenging aspect of learning languages during your life?**

I faced so many obstacles in my route to pursuing German GCSE and A level. At my school it was put in an option block with other subjects like Geography and Art, and I had to sacrifice taking Art to carry on German. My school then decided to stop offering German A level so I had to move to another school and leave all my friends from secondary school behind to keep doing German.

**10. What is your favourite word or phrase in a language other than English?**

*'Il dolce far niente'*- it means the joy/sweetness of doing nothing. I think it's a beautiful phrase and is something to remind you that when everything feels hectic and stressful, you need to put your mind to rest - something to live by, I think.

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**11. Are there any other languages you wish you could speak?**

I would love to be able to speak Italian. Some of my favourite books and TV programmes are Italian and I would love to be able to read the original versions and watch without subtitles. It is also such a beautiful language.

**12. How has being an MFL Mentor supported your journey with languages?**

It has encouraged me massively to pursue the encouragement of languages in the wider community. It is a policy area I would love to work in when I graduate. It has also given me the confidence in my own abilities and given me a sense of pride in what I can achieve.

**13. Has anyone or any one particular moment or thing inspired you on your language learning journey?**

My GCSE German teacher was a huge inspiration to me and really

encouraged me. Without her help I wouldn't be in this amazing position I am in now. My Dad also inspired me. Listening to him speaking German was probably my initial motivation because I wanted to be able to communicate with others like he could!

**14. Do you have any funny stories to share about your language learning experiences?**

At the beginning of learning German, when I would ask a cashier how much something cost, I would often misunderstand their response. It turned out on many occasions that I wasn't always getting the figure right resulting in spending three times the price I initially thought I understood!

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

Just do it! It can only ever open doors for you, it will never close them!

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