



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

Jasmine Thethi, English Lit and Spanish.

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

My first language is English. I then started to study Spanish at secondary school and became fascinated with the way that the language was so similar and yet so different to English.

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

I grew up in a bilingual family (a lot of my family speaks Punjabi to some degree) but I am not bilingual, so I have grown up hearing other people speak different languages, I was just never taught it.

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

Knowing a new language has made me so curious to learn about new cultures around the world, I am fascinated with the different customs and traditions that people have.

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

For me, learning a language has given me confidence to do new things, and I can communicate effectively with other people.

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

When I see things written down, I always surprise myself with how many words I know. I think I don't really know a lot of Spanish and then I watch a TikTok video and I realise that actually, I know more than I think.

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

I personally really struggle with grammar. I am starting to get the hang of it, but it has taken a lot of practice!

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

Echar agua al mar. It means 'it is pointless' but literally translates to 'to throw water in the sea'. Every time I see this I can see someone throwing a little cup of water into the sea and it really makes me laugh.

9. Are there any other languages you wish you could speak?

I would love to learn a language with a different alphabet, like Mandarin, but I have also debated learning Punjabi recently as that is the language my family speaks.

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

I was lucky enough to deliver my workshops face to face, going into the school and meeting the students. It has reminded me of how my language journey started and how much I enjoyed my lessons.

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

I was super lucky through school because I had an amazing Spanish teacher. She was so encouraging and always made Spanish fun and interesting by playing games and listening to music. If it wasn't for her, I would have given up with Spanish a long time ago and I would not be studying it at university level now.

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

I used to watch LOADS of Dora the Explorer, a TV show which taught kids basic Spanish. I became obsessed with the show to the point that I learnt to count to 10 in Spanish before I could in English (which my parents were very confused by). Now I am doing a degree in Spanish so I think Dora has had quite a deep impact on me!

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

Don't worry about getting it wrong. I have been studying languages for ages and I still get things wrong. Just go for it and have confidence. There is nothing wrong with faking it at times until you make it!

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