



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

Lucy Lewis, International Relations with Spanish.

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

I speak English as a first language and Spanish as a second. My best friend in college was a native Spanish speaker and she inspired me to continue learning. Now I will be studying abroad in Madrid next year! The Russian language also interests me mainly due to its link to classical music and culture.

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

I realised during my A level's that knowing multiple languages could give me exciting opportunities as well as opening my world up to different people. However, I would encourage people to realise the

importance of being multilingual at a much younger age.

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

It has changed my worldview, made me more tolerant and understanding towards other cultures, and above all it has let me appreciate the hard work people put into communication. Now I aim to pursue my dream of living in Spain and taking up more languages.

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

Knowing more than one language has made me realise that I can move to different countries and work for multilingual organisations. As a social person, having these kinds of international working opportunities excites me.

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

I hope to become a diplomat, which requires multiple languages.

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

The opportunities presented to me, it's as simple as that. Knowing a second language is like entering an exclusive club where you can communicate freely, receive job offers and gain a totally different understanding of the world.

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

Gaining so much more knowledge. It is easy to assume that what you already know in English is the scope of your knowledge until you start consuming material in other languages. This type of experience proves that learning a language expands your learning and does not limit you.

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

Learning a second language through study and not having contacts or family that speak it. It demands determination, effort and patience. However, the hard work certainly pays off.

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

'*Sobremesa*' literally means 'over the table', but it refers to the conversations you have with friends and family after dinner. Culturally, food is important for the Spaniards so having this word in their language reflects that cultural importance.

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

I wish I could speak Russian. The language is complex and I would love to be part of the world that comes with it. I feel like Russian culture is generally

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misunderstood, so learning the language would help me understand it.

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

Being an MFL mentor has helped me stay connected with Spanish, and I'm excited to have it with me for the rest of my life.

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

My friend's abuelo was talking to me in Spanish (at that point I couldn't speak very well) and he asked me how the water was. I replied "no". It took me a couple minutes to process what he had actually asked me!

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

Try to avoid feeling frustrated when you cannot read Dostoyevsky or Marx in the original languages, or if you make mistakes in casual conversation. The language learning process is a slow one and it takes time to perfect anything.

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