



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

Miraj Rahman-Blake, BA German and Japanese.

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

I am a native English speaker. I did German at GCSE and it is now half of my degree. I also study Japanese. Since joining the Spanish Italian and Latin American society, I have learned some Spanish and Italian too. I speak a little Swedish due to having met some Swedish friends online.

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

There have been many experiences, but I think the first one was when I was in Turkey as a small child with my mother and my grandmother. I was around the city and heard people speaking Turkish and I thought it sounded

interesting. I also thought it sounded a bit like Russian and presumed the languages must have been related. I now know how wrong I was, but it was an experience that definitely led me to a love of languages.

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

Being able to communicate in multiple languages has massively helped me. It once got me through a sticky situation at German airport security and has definitely granted me personal relationships I would not otherwise have developed.

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

Being able to read Cyrillic has helped me in one of my jobs, and I have seen many graduate jobs for which at least one other language is a desired quality.

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

Diplomacy, financial services, journalism.

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

Coming to university. There are so many people here who speak so many languages, and being exposed to them all is wonderful. I have also found people I can practise my languages which is always a bonus.

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

Getting free drinks at a bar in Gran Canaria because I ordered in Spanish and made small talk.

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

Getting to grips with kanji in Japanese, and some of the grammar.

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

Dumm gelaufen. It is a German phrase that basically means stuff happens as in bad stuff happens. Often the word "stuff" in that phrase is swapped for a ruder word beginning with S.

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

I wish I could speak Urdu because my extended family hail from South Asia and it would be nice to be able to connect with that part of my heritage on a deeper level.

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

It has made me consider languages from many different perspectives, including the perspectives of people who are not as interested in languages as I am.

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

My friends Anna and Fabian keep me on my toes with my languages.

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

I was at German airport security coming home from a school trip. It was carry on luggage only and I had a full bottle of water in the bag and the lock was broken. Naturally, this was an issue. The following exchange was entirely in German: "You need to open your bag." "Yes, I know, but this here (the lock) is broken, I cannot open it." "Yeah but you need to open it. Unlock it." "As I said, I cannot open it because it is broken." We went round in circles on this a few times and then my teacher gave me a paperclip to try to jam the lock. This didn't work. At this point, the scary German border agent got his multitool out and gave it to me to

try to open the lock, which worked! I am entirely convinced that had I not spoken German I would have lost my luggage. It was very funny.

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

Practise. Find people and simply practise. We are so lucky in the age of the internet, having the population of the planet within reach. You will be able to find friends online or in your community either who are learning the same language as you, or already speak that language and will help you practise, or speak that language and is learning English. These are the people you can make friends with and practise, practise, practise!

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