



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

Wish, MA Developmental and Therapeutic Play.

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

My first language is English. I learned Tagalog (Filipino) in school. When I was an undergraduate student, I learned Spanish, German, French, Japanese and Korea. I had to learn enough academic German to write my entire undergraduate dissertation in German. I have worked in Japan and Quebec so my Japanese and French have both improved through exposure.

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

When I started to work in multinational companies like Coca-Cola and Lufthansa, and much more after I started teaching

English as a second/foreign language.

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

It has enabled me to travel the world. It has widened my social network and has opened my mind to a lot of ideas from different cultures. I believe I understand more about the world now. Languages have enabled me to have a more fulfilling and rewarding life.

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

I have worked for multinational companies in marketing and human resources management. International FMCG and aviation companies need multilingual people, so it was extremely helpful then.

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More importantly, I have been teaching English as a second / foreign language to students from different cultures for over a decade now and my students benefit from my multilingual background. I find it easiest to teach English to students whose native languages I have studied myself because I'm able to explain any language differences to them more efficiently. I've also taught English to Korean immigrants in the Philippines, to Japanese students in Japan, to various students of different language backgrounds in the French-speaking Canadian province of Quebec, and to asylum seeker refugees and other immigrants from different native language backgrounds in the sanctuary city, Swansea in Wales. I wouldn't have been able to achieve so much without my multilingualism. My language skills give me the capacity to help other people too, so my professional life has been very rewarding.

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

I hope to continue teaching English (ESOL) in further education or higher education settings. I also want to become a researcher in applied linguistics, combining what I know from neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, language education and developmental psychology to contribute to social science research and innovation. I also hope to increase my presence in charity work, focusing on essential language services for asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants in the UK.

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

It has enabled me to travel the world and live in various places in Asia, North America and Europe. I have tremendous personal and professional growth from all these experiences. Words are not enough to describe how much

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languages have made me grow as a person.

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

When I was a child, I never expected or imagined I'd live in different countries and travel the world. I didn't know what was waiting for me out there, a whole new world of opportunities. Trust me, there are more opportunities out there for everyone who is bold enough to learn new languages and explore different cultures. It all starts with a small spark to learn about languages.

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

The fear of sounding silly or even stupid when using languages other than my native languages. Once I got over that and accepted that everyone has to go through a phase of embarrassing language

production and reception skills, I thrived and survived.

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

Kintsugi. In Japanese it means repairing things that are broken by using gold lacquer. It involves mending things so they would become more beautiful despite being broken, as things that are damaged don't necessarily have to be thrown out, rather they are maintained and accepted, and valued all the same. I appreciate the poetry in that.

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

Arabic, Mandarin and Korean. I'd like to speak at least one language from each continent. I have students who speak these languages, so it would be beneficial for them if I could understand their native languages too. That would help them learn English more efficiently - as a

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teacher, I have to learn other things, too!

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

I loved how I was able to learn some Welsh from the MFL training. And it has been an honour to share stories about my personal and professional life with the young people of South Wales. It makes me want to learn more languages so I'd have more interesting stories to share.

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

I was a member of the international exchange organization, AIESEC, during my first year in university. They made me understand that there's more out there to learn and explore. barriers that confined or limited me to my local community.

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

In the Philippines, we have this rice cake called "puto", which is very popular. I do enjoy having a puto however puto in Spanish translates to a rude word. I enjoy seeing my Spanish friends laugh. It was amazing to see them take photos of the packaging and send it to all their friends and family.

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

Learning is always going to be worth it because even if you are unable to reach a certain level of fluency, you would always have a better understanding of cultures and diversity in the end. In this day and age, you need this to open doors and thrive out there. Language learning is just how things start. So much more awaits you after.

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