



## More than words: Real Life Stories

**Alice Bacon is a business developer living in Paris, winning international projects and clients in the electricity and renewable energy sector.**

I began learning French in secondary school and found it hard to grasp until I joined a school French exchange in Year 9. During the trip I remembered much more than I thought I would and realised I could string sentences together.

The more I spoke, the more I realised how much people appreciated me making the effort, which motivated me to keep learning. After studying French at GCSE, A level and university, and completing a work placement in Paris during my degree, I went back to the city to work full-time.

Speaking French has helped me gain work experience worldwide, and opened up a lot of job opportunities. My current company, an international engineering firm, works with both English-speaking countries and French ones, including in Western Africa.

Being away from home hasn't always been easy, but being able to speak French helps me navigate cultural differences and unforeseen situations, as well as connect with people and make friends. Paris is such a beautiful city, with an incredible culture and food. Sometimes I really do feel like Emily in Paris!

I do still make mistakes – like the time I went to an open day at the Palais de l'Élysée, where French president Emmanuel Macron lives. He was there taking photos with people as I arrived. In French there are two forms of you: “tu/toi” which is informal and for friends, and “vous” which is for people you don't know, or who, often, are older than you. I asked Macron for a selfie using “toi.” He smiled to hear I was English and making an effort, and gave a nice smile in the picture too!

To anyone trying to learn a language, I would say: don't be afraid to make mistakes. Most people will never laugh at you. Instead they will be touched that

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you're trying. Keep practising and it should begin to click.

**Languages:** English (first language), French, Spanish.

**Favourite foreign phrases:** "Ce n'est pas tes oignons!" This French phrase means "It's none of your business" and literally translates to "These are not your onions!"

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