



## More than words: Real Life Stories

### **Mohamed Ragab's second language has brought him work, love and a family.**

English was compulsory for me at school in Egypt: unlike some of my peers I found it challenging and enjoyable. At the same time, we were introduced to the radio station BBC Arabic. I loved the broadcasts and decided I wanted to be able to listen to the BBC in its native English...

After school I decided to carry on learning English and I'm glad I did: it has been life-changing in many stages of my life. English was my chosen subject as an undergraduate, it opened doors for me in Egypt's tourism industry, got me travelling the world to Europe and Australia, enabled me to secure a job at the British embassy in Cairo, and after a few years at school I was listening to the BBC in English!

Having a second language is not only helpful in business. Mastering speaking in different subjects has helped me gain friends all over the world. Almost nine

years ago I moved to the UK and today I am married to someone whose first language is not mine! We have two boys who mainly speak English but I am in the process of teaching them Arabic. I am keen for them to be able to speak multiple languages too.

I would tell anyone thinking about taking up languages not to hesitate: allow time and do not be afraid or ashamed when making linguistic mistakes. It's normal, and correcting those mistakes with courage and resilience will help you learn.

**Languages:** Arabic (first language), English, French

**Favourite foreign phrase:** I like the phrase "what is done cannot be undone" from Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*. It resonates with big concepts in Islam and philosophy. I find it a helpful statement to remember in certain situations.

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