



More than words: Real Life Stories

Vickie Houlihan is a recruitment consultant, whose life has been changed by languages.

I was lucky enough to attend a secondary school that specialised in languages. I learnt German and Spanish right through to A Level, then started Italian years later at university.

My personal life has changed immeasurably from being able to speak multiple languages. I met my boyfriend in Germany while studying there as an exchange student. He's Italian, I'm English and between us we speak four languages!

I now work in a role where I can directly use my German language skills. I am helping my team to grow into a European market. Knowing languages gave me a head-start before I even had an interview or met the hiring manager.

Today, when travelling to different countries I feel confident, as I know I can talk to local people and pick up phrases. I can immerse myself in their culture.

Learning languages is one of the single most joyous, fulfilling things I've ever done, it has opened up the world to me in ways I couldn't always imagine when I was learning at school. It brought me friends from all over the world, taught me empathy, and helped me build better relationships.

If I could give students some advice, it would be to not lose sight of what languages can offer you. Even though it can be tough at the start, once you have the framework, keep going! Remember, it's not vital to be fluent but being able to speak and understand other languages will allow you to see the world in colour where it was previously black and white. I'm truly grateful every day for what learning languages has given me.

Languages: English (first language), German, Spanish, Italian

Favourite foreign phrase:

"Hamsterkauf" in German. It means "panic-buying" and conjures up the image of a hamster storing food in its cheeks.

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