



More than words: Real Life Stories

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

Maryam Awawdeh, PhD
Bilingualism

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

I was born and raised in the West to Arabic-speaking parents so I speak Arabic at home and English at school. I took French at GCSE but then decided to go to a German-Jordanian University (in Jordan) where I learned German. I am currently learning Spanish and Welsh at university while pursuing my PhD in Bilingualism.

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

From a young age, I have always loved languages and I aspire to become a polyglot. Knowing multiple languages can open so many doors for you.

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

As a Muslim, knowing Arabic is a vital part for building a spiritual connection with God as both the Quran and prayer are in Arabic.

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

Professionally, it has opened the door to a PhD in Bilingualism. Being bilingual, I am able to use my own skills and experiences to enhance my research.

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

Lecturer in Bilingualism

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

Learning languages has helped me to communicate with people

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from different cultures and countries.

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

The ability to interact and build relationships with people from different backgrounds that speak other languages.

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

Being consistent and practicing the language so I don't forget it. Also, pronunciation and grammar rules can be challenging.

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

"InshAllah" – it's an Arabic phrase from the Quran and it means "God willing". We use it any time we plan to do something because it will only happen if God wills.

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

Japanese because I love the food and would love to visit Japan and order food in Japanese.

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

I've been able to share my language journey with students who want to learn languages, but I've also learned a few things from the students and presentations too.

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

The benefits of knowing more than one language - communication, travel, and cognitive benefits.

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

In English, we would say "I wear make-up" so when I was speaking to my friend, in Arabic, I said I am wearing make-up. BUT in Arabic, that doesn't make sense: the verb would be "to put" so I should have said "I put on make-up" not "I am wearing make-up". It was a funny learning curve for me.

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

Be consistent. Even if it's just five minutes a day, do something related to learning another language – whether it's memorising a new word, or listening to a video, song or podcast in the other language.

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