

My Love of Language

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I'm not ashamed to admit that I absolutely love learning languages. As a 16-year-old, I am fortunate enough that I have been given ample opportunities at school. I have studied French, Latin and Spanish to GCSE and have advanced my Spanish studies to A-level. Whilst my passion for language may not be typical for a boy of my age, languages just feel normal for me. I adore exploring the history and culture of language, uncovering the changes that have occurred over the years.

I feel lucky that my teachers have been engaging and pushed me to discover more: I have fond memories of French trips in Year 8 to Normandy, using my knowledge of French gastronomy to purchase a *tarte tatin* in the local boulangerie, or debating the importance of cultural sites throughout Spain with natives. I love language lessons in school and my favourite aspect has to be conversing and speaking, although it seems unpopular amongst teenagers! I was enticed at the A-Level taster day, when we went on a local treasure hunt to find items, using clues in a foreign language. My teachers' excitement for language has affected me, and I have been exposed on numerous occasions to the culture and diversity of countries.

However, one crucial aspect for me has been the use of language at home, which has inspired my language progression. My family's heritage lies in India, in the North-Western state of Gujrat. In 1983, my dad moved to the UK and both he and my mum speak Gujarati. Gujarati is a beautiful language, and my favourite thing about it is the varying dialects found within the state. For example, I hail from the region of Saurashtra, which is known for its unique accent. There is variance among speakers which provides diversity and, as our ancestors used to say, 'Baar Gaamey Boli Badlaay' which can be literally translated to 'Dialect changes after every twelve villages'.

Gujarati also allows me to converse with my grandparents, meaning I can maintain a relationship with them, and learn about my culture and heritage. I can talk to them about my day and ask them about their lives, and so age and language have no boundaries. Sometimes my parents might lament my ability because I understand their private conversation! I'm the middle child, and I've learnt that the world for middle one in Gujarati is 'vuchlo' so when they use it, I know they are talking about me. My Gujarati has other benefits for me: in the educational context, my linguistic experience at home has greatly assisted my language learning ability. Gujarati and Spanish actually have many similar words, and both are Indo-European languages. The relationship between the two can be seen in the pattern of basic words. For example, 'pagar' means 'to pay' in Spanish, and in Gujarati 'pagar' means 'wages' or 'salary'. By learning Gujarati at home and using English every day also, I already have a solid understanding of grammatical rules and vocabulary, which only strengthens my ability. I also have been able to recognise linguistic patterns, and have I think, a greater understanding of how I learn new words, making it easier for me to pick up a new language. I think that speaking a second language at home also means that I am used to seeing different cultures and customs, which only heightens my interest.

I personally see my ethnicity as a blessing. Using a second language at home has driven and supported my passion for languages and has also helped me considerably in an educational sense. It allows me to keep in touch with family and understand my culture to a greater depth and to feel like the person I am.