



Lisa's story

My languages story began with holidays abroad as a child in Spain, being fascinated by the culture and language, and by learning French at middle school which I loved.

My language story nearly ended when I went to secondary school and had to start French all over again. I found it boring and demotivating, and I seriously fell out of love with French. (We did "make up" later but that's another story!)

My language story - and my passion - was reignited by the wonderful Señora Sánchez-Richardson, an enigmatic and formidable Colombian who inspired and fascinated me. I loved learning the Spanish language but it was her anecdotes about *el sereno*, *la sobremesa* and other titbits of culture and daily life that captured my imagination. Her passion was infectious; she was a bit of a maverick and as a 'conformist' when it came to rules, this was intoxicating!

Choosing to continue studying Spanish at A level was no brainer and I went on to study Spanish and Catalan at Sheffield University.

I'd always wanted to be a teacher, specifically a middle school teacher with a language specialism. Sadly that wasn't an option and I wanted to share my love of languages so I did a PGCE in secondary languages so I could be 'just like Señora Sánchez-Richardson.' I'd been teaching Spanish and French at a 'challenging' comprehensive school for a couple of years when I received a message from Luz (I found it hard to think of her as Luz but she said I couldn't call her Señora forever!) She'd moved schools after I'd left, and was telling me she was retiring and I was to apply for her job as Head of Spanish. Not 'you could' but 'you must.' So I did. And got the job. And a new journey began.

Why do I share this?

Firstly, I became the teacher I am, in love with Spanish and passionate about culture and context being vital to language learning, thanks to a brilliant dedicated teacher.

Secondly, she told me I must join ALL ... which I did. And that was the best piece of advice (*well, instruction!*) she gave me.

And thirdly, as a teacher now, I always remember that you never know what your teaching will inspire in others. I now work with an ex-pupil from the primary school at which I teach. I taught him Spanish throughout KS2, he went on to continue language learning at secondary school, and later trained to be a primary teacher with a language speciality.

Passing on the language love!