

Many Ukrainians grow up knowing both Ukrainian and Russian, and I am no exception. I attended a Ukrainian school where I studied Ukrainian and English from early childhood. When I was a child, I enjoyed writing short poems in Russian, as everyone in my family speaks this language. My mom used to read them, gently correcting my mistakes and explaining basic grammar rules.

When I was in 5th grade, German was added to my list of subjects. My teacher was very kind, and her classes were engaging. At that time, I had difficulty pronouncing the rolled “r” sound, as it is pronounced in Ukrainian or Russian. I used to think it was a flaw, however, when I started learning German, I turned it into an advantage. Because of this peculiarity, it became easier for me to pronounce the German “r”.

In 2021, I suddenly began learning Korean. My cousin, who was interested in K-pop, introduced me to Korean culture. Shortly after, my mom found a tutor, and I started my journey. Unfortunately, I had a very busy schedule and had to stop learning Korean, but it was a great pleasure to explore this beautiful language.

After the full-scale war began, my family and I moved to a small, cozy town in Poland. We stayed there for four months. During that time, I had the opportunity to attend a Polish school with local students. I made a few Polish friends who made my stay much more enjoyable. Thanks to them, I was able to pick up Polish quite quickly. I believe that learning a language is not just about the language itself, but also about people and personal connections.

After four months in Poland, my family and I moved to Ireland. This country has greatly changed my perception of languages. Here, I attended secondary school, where I was introduced to what is often called the language of love — French. Catching up in French was quite challenging, as my classmates were already familiar with much of the curriculum, while my English level was around A1. My French teacher was very kind and supportive. She provided me with helpful resources, and I worked hard to keep up. Although it was mentally demanding, I did my best to achieve good results in the Junior Cycle exams.

At the end of 3rd year, I became friends with one of my classmates, who introduced me to Japan. In 5th year, I switched from French to Japanese, which became a new chapter in my life. I realised that many things that inspire me are connected to Japan — fashion, music, art, mentality, religion, cuisine, and nature. All of these aspects of Japanese culture feel very close to me. The Japanese language has become an essential part of my life.

I have learned that when studying a new language it is important not to focus only on vocabulary and grammar, but also on cultural context. Some phrases cannot be translated directly, and in order to understand them properly, it is necessary to understand the mindset behind them.

As I would like to study Japanese in the future and become an interpreter, I found a university course that suits me perfectly. However, one of the entry requirements is a H4 grade in Spanish, French, or German. Motivated by my goal, I decided to start learning

Spanish outside of school just five months before the Leaving Certificate exams. I found a tutor and have already completed my Spanish oral exam, which went very well.

Because of my previous experience with languages, I find it easier to understand grammar, and I have noticed similarities between Spanish, Russian, and English vocabulary. Learning Spanish in such a short time is still a challenge, but I believe that with genuine motivation, anything is possible.

Every language is a unique experience. Through learning languages, you discover not only words and grammar, but also cultures and ways of thinking. That is why having a genuine interest is essential when learning a new language.