

Public Health Worker

Name: **Ilana Sherer**

Profession: **Medical Student/Public Health**

Number of years in this line of work: **2**

Native Language: **English**

Other Language(s): **Spanish**

1) What languages do you know? How did you learn them? (At home, At school, etc.)
Spanish--learned entirely at school

2) What is your profession?

Medical student, used to be a public health worker

3) Describe a "typical" day as a public health worker. How do you use your language(s)?

I used Spanish all the time when patients would call in or come in for help getting or understanding Spanish at health clinics and in the emergency room helping patients who didn't have English. I use Spanish all the time to interpret for patients who don't speak English, and I also serve mostly Spanish-speaking patients, doing history and physicals and answering questions.

4) What do you enjoy about it?

It works my brain in interesting ways, and also helps me get to know people in the language.

5) What language do you think in? English

6) What do you think helped you the most in mastering the foreign/second language?

Studying abroad in Spain and volunteering as a hospital interpreter in the US both helped.

7) What opportunities have knowing another language provided in your life, or otherwise?

The opportunity to work independently, without relying on interpreters, getting selected for jobs that I not have gotten otherwise, getting to know people without language barriers.

8) If you had the time to learn another language now, what language would you choose?

French, because it is similar enough to Spanish to make it easier, and it's the next most common language in the US.

9) How do you think your life would have turned out if you had never learned a second language?

Less rich, less ability to travel independently, less career options, more dependence on others in places where I don't speak the native language and have to rely on translators. I never would have understood what they are saying or the cultural context behind what someone says.

10) In your opinion, are there more career opportunities for people who speak a second language?

Yes, but it depends what you want to go into. In the US, you can have lots of career opportunities if you speak a second language.

11) What do you think you would be doing if you weren't becoming a doctor?

Probably still working in public health.

12) What advice would you give to somebody who wants to go into medicine? Which specific languages should they learn?

Spanish is incredibly useful. Depending on where you live, Portuguese, French, Chinese, and Japanese are also useful, depending on the immigrant population.