

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IS A

May 2022

SUPERPOWER

CAREER & CREATIVITY THROUGH LANGUAGE



- **EDA UZUNCAKARA ON TEXTBOOK LANGUAGE LEARNING**
- **DIY TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION IN A SECOND LANGUAGE**
- **ROADMAP TO REACHING GOALS WITH GLOBAL TEAMS**
- ***AND SO MUCH MORE!***

People in Corporate America are not necessarily aware that many successful professionals they work with learned to command English in academic settings located in their countries of origin. A perfect example is Eda Uzuncakara, VP Program Manager at JPMorgan Chase & Co, who was born and grew up in Turkey. She came to the U.S. to pursue a master's degree after completing her undergraduate degree in Turkey, where the education was in English. Before going to college, Eda's English learning experience throughout her childhood and teenage years was limited to textbooks.



Having learned English through formal language instruction, Eda could follow classes and live in an English-speaking country like the U.S. However, she had to learn the everyday usage of the language and focus on expressing herself beyond the textbooks. "I started keeping a journal in English. I read not just textbooks but newspapers, magazines, fiction - anything that came my way," Eda shared. "I watched movies without subtitles. I took creative writing classes, which helped me improve my grammar and find my voice in English," she added. Eda also credits her ability to build friendships with people from all over the world who didn't know Turkish, to her language learning experience because English was the only way to communicate with them.

Today, she manages IT programs that require the participation and collaboration of global teams. Eda's language skills are crucial for her to perform her job. "I need to be concise at work when I run meetings," she states. Her responsibilities include running status updates, deep-dive sessions, and retrospectives. "I run the message that I want to give in my head before a meeting and write down the key points, and then run the story again in my head around the key points that I identified. I repeat this exercise until I am comfortable with the key points," Eda explains. She then sends out the agenda and goals with supporting materials in advance. Her final objective is to achieve the goals

set for each meeting, so she pays close attention to not only the words spoken by other team members, but also what she says. After the meeting, Eda shares meeting notes along with clear action items. All of this communication is conducted in English and in various forms: speaking, reading, and writing.

"Knowing English changed my life," Eda declares. "Being bilingual brought in richness to my life. I have had a chance to explore the world from different perspectives. I am a global citizen. If I hadn't learned English in college, I couldn't have come to the U.S. for a master's degree, which led me to having a career in the English-speaking world."

Now with 20+ years of experience in the U.S. - working on Wall Street, in IT, and as an entrepreneur (she owned a successful bar and restaurant in Manhattan for a few years) - Eda understands that learning a new language requires adoption of its own system and culture, which opens up a whole new world of opportunities.



Finding her voice in a new language also meant publishing her writing in English. Eda published a collection of her short stories last year - *Jumping on the Drips*. She enjoys fiction and reflective writing during her spare time, where she can explore her imagination and put it into detailed descriptions and stories. She also uses her mother tongue every day. "I enjoy experiencing the world in two different languages in-depth," she says contently. She recommends picking an exciting story to tell and writing it in the new language. Another tip she shares is to read the story out loud and rewrite it at a later time to help perfect not just the writing skills but also the process of thinking in the second language. "Like any other skill to master, practicing is essential for learning a new language. If you build your practice around your interests, mastering the language will come naturally. The foreign language will not be foreign anymore."