

**ELLA ATHANASSIOU:**

*“I am proud of my heritage and speaking many languages makes me a well rounded person”*

**INTERVIEW: ANNA ARSENIS**

*Ella hello. Tell me a few things about yourself.*

I am 8 years old, turning 9 in November. I was born in Sydney and attend Sans Souci Public school. I am in grade 3 and have lots of friends. I play the clarinet and I also like playing lots of sport. The sports I play are Tennis and swimming, as well as Nippers at Brighton Beach during the summer. I love the beach and my Dad takes us there nearly every weekend in the summer!

*Tell me a few things about your family.*

My Mother, Ulrika was born in Sweden and moved to Australia in her late 20's to study & work. She speaks German, Swedish & English. My Father was born in Sydney, Australia and he speaks Greek and English, but my Greek grandparents migrated to Australia in the early 1960's. I have a brother Jack, who is almost 4 years old. We travel to Europe every 2-3 years to visit family and holiday as well. Both my parents have travelled a lot and they also appreciate other cultures.

My Mother currently studies Criminology at University, she is very active and likes to keep fit. My Dad is a Media Sales Director and he is very active as well, and plays Waterpolo for the University of NSW, swims and likes to surf.

*When did you first start having interest in learning languages?*

When I was 2 yrs old, because my Mum and Dad encouraged me to speak Swedish and Greek. My Mum always spoke to me in Swedish when I was small and I became more interested in languages. Also at the age of 2, we went to Sweden for 2 months to see all my relatives and I needed to speak the language to communicate with my cousins and my language skills took off from there.

*What is your reason for learn-*

*ing a language? Some reasons are practical, some aspirational, some intellectual. What motivates your studies?*

My Mum & Dad wanted me to learn Swedish and Greek, so I can talk to my Swedish and Greek relatives. I am proud of my heritage and speaking many languages makes me a well rounded person, with an open mind.

I actually learn Greek at School (Sans Souci public) and Swedish after school at the Community Language School: Swedish School.

*What is your favourite word in Swedish?*

It is Mormor & Morfar, which means Grandmother and Grandfather

*What is your favourite word in Greek?*

Yiayia & Papou, which



means Grandmother and Grandfather.

*What other language would you like to learn?*

Spanish

*What language do you speak at home?*

Mainly English and then some Swedish with my Mum, and a little bit of Greek with my Dad or when my Yiaya comes over.

*Do you find yourself getting confused with different languages?*



No I don't get confused. I can switch between languages easily, as I have grown up in a multilingual household. I am used to it now!

*Do you believe children pick up a new language easier than adults?*

Yes they can. I remember when I was 2 and again when I was 5, we went to Sweden for a holiday to see my relatives and I picked up the language very quickly, and in just 2 weeks, I was fluent.

*Would you like to travel to a country to learn the language?*

Yes I would like that. This is the best way to learn any language. Because you have to speak it all day everyday and then you start to think in that language.

*What are the benefits of language learning?*

The benefits are, that you can communicate with people from other countries, like my relatives and it also broadens your mind and gives you more confidence when you travel abroad. By learning and understanding another language also makes it easier to learn more languages and express yourself.

*What material do you use to learn a language? Books, cds, videos....*

I read Swedish & Greek books. I also watch Swedish Videos and kids programs, which my Grandfather & Grandmother send me from Sweden. I have a lot of Pippi Longstoking DVD's, (a Swedish Kids programme). My Mum used to also watch

these when she was a child back in Sweden.

*Do you teach your friends words in Swedish?*

Sometimes! I teach my best friend a few words. Also when we were in Sweden on holidays, my Dad would ask me to translate some words for him.

*In which language do you express yourself better? They say that if you talk to someone in 'their' language it goes to their heart and not just to the head. Having that in mind, which is 'your' language?*

I express myself best in English.

*What are your dreams for your future?*

I would like to be a teacher, as I like to talk and communicate with people.

*Tell me a few things about the award you received a couple of weeks ago...*

I received the Ministers Award, for Excellence in Student Achievement. This was a very exciting moment for me and I was really proud to win such an award. I also had to deliver a speech in Swedish in front of 1000 people, I was a little nervous, but I did easily in the end and really enjoyed the experience. My Mum, Dad, Brother and Yiayia (Grandmother) come to see me pick up the award, which was at the University of NSW. It was a great to be a part of the Ceremony and fun to wear the Swedish national costume.

*Ella thank you for your time. I hope you have a wonderful and successful future.*

