

How To Learn German in Germany When Everyone's Speaking English To You

André Klein · Friday, June 15th, 2018



So you've downloaded a couple of German apps, read some books, picked up a few phrases, and then you finally get on that flight to Berlin or Munich, eager to put all of your efforts to use.

You're going to Germany after all. What better place to learn German?

Well, ...

It turns out that Germans really love speaking English. In fact, they love it *so much* they'll use any opportunity they *can* to practice or simply show off.

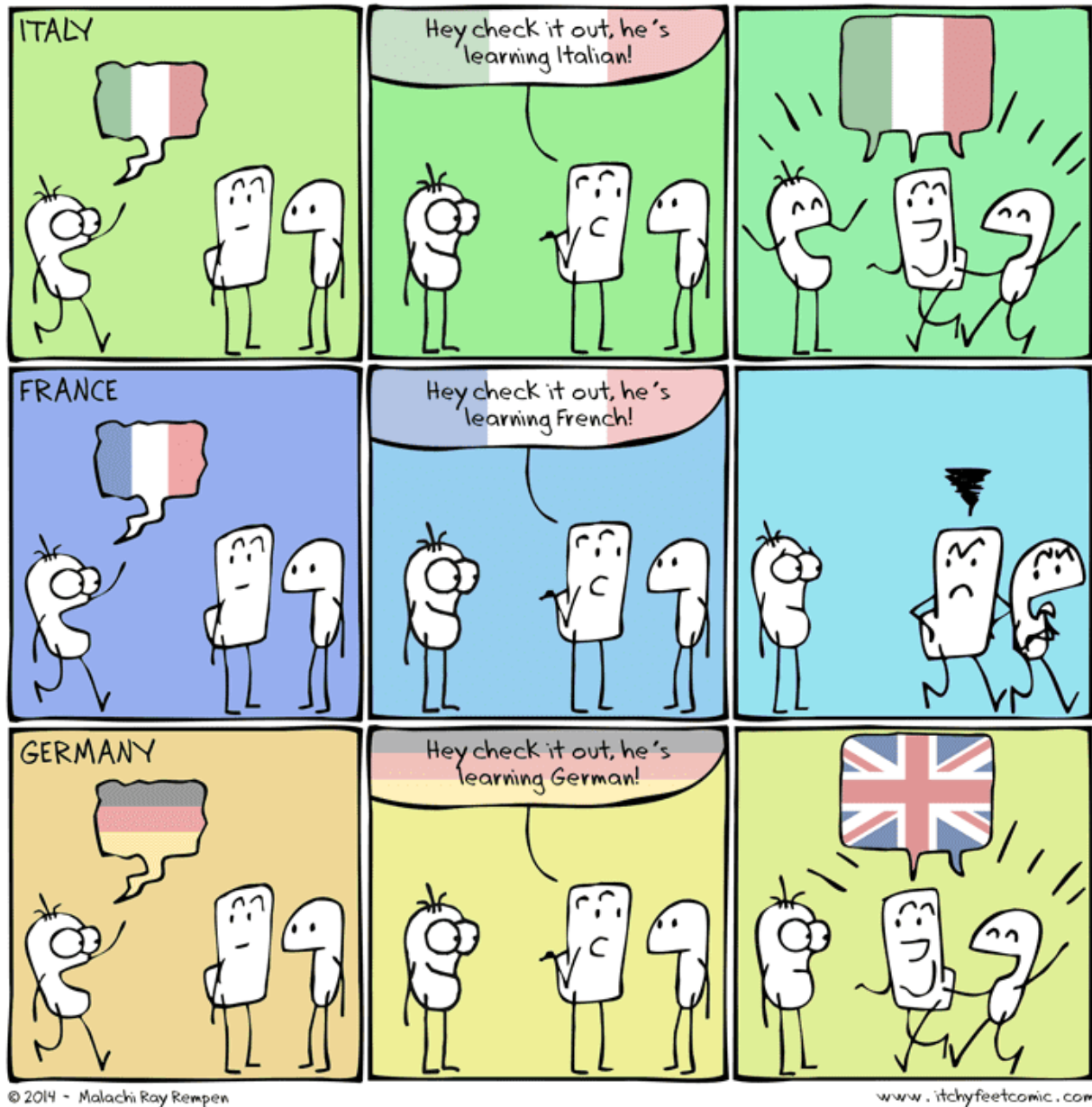
I've even heard stories of two Germans meeting abroad and actually *preferring* English ...

Which is great for them and their English proficiency, but not so great if you're trying to learn German!

That's why in this post, I've listed a few strategies you can use to do the seemingly impossible: **get Germans to talk German to you.**

But first, a comic by Malachi Ray Rempen ([itchyfeet](http://www.itchyfeetcomic.com)) which is painfully true:

ITCHY FEET



Talk Deutsch To Me

The easiest thing you can do is to simply *ask* Germans to speak German to you. They may think they're making your life easier by switching to English, but in the end it's no help at all. So if they *really* want to be helpful, tell them how!

Instead of getting frustrated and wasting valuable practice opportunities, just ask. Here's how:

- **“Entschuldigung. Könnten Sie bitte Deutsch mit mir sprechen?”** – “Excuse me, could you please talk German to me?” (formal)
- **“Entschuldigung. Könntest du bitte Deutsch mit mir sprechen?”** (informal)

You could add something like:

- **“Ich lerne Deutsch und brauche mehr Übung.”** – “I’m learning German and I need more practice.” or
- **“Ich bin Deutschlerner und will mein gesprochenes Deutsch verbessern.”** – “I’m a German learner and want to improve my spoken German.”

They may still prefer to answer in English, either because they’re too impatient to wait for you to process what they’ve said, because they don’t want to slow down, or repeat themselves, or because — Germans being Germans — they want to be 100% sure you understood everything precisely as they said it.

But even if they won’t heed your request, you can still continue speaking in German to them! The main point here is not to give up!

Put differently, since you can’t always rely on people to speak German to you, you’re going to have to be more proactive in your own speaking efforts.

Dropping the “Super” And Going Rural

Farmers markets can be a great way to do some healthy shopping and improve your German conversation skills.



Supermarkets are everywhere in Germany and the [food](#) prices are among the lowest in the Western world. But after putting all your goods onto the conveyor belt and hastily stuffing everything into your bags as the cashier is hurling eggs, milk and drinks at lightning speed, there's not much speaking practice to be had, except for a mumbled **"Hallo"** or **"Schönen Tag noch!"** ("Have a nice day!"). If you use self-checkout terminals, it's even worse, since it requires virtually no human interaction.

So next time you're low on cheese, bread and vegetables, why not simply visit your local market instead? Even the smallest towns in Germany have a **"Wochenmarkt"** (weekly market) and in big cities like Berlin you can go to a different one every day.

The prices may be slightly higher than in the supermarket, but consider going to your local farmer's market an investment in your German practice.

- Especially with dairy and bread being sold from behind booths you're going to have to ask the merchant: **"Ich hätte gern zweihundert Gramm Cheddar, bitte."** – "I'd like to have 200 grams of cheddar, please."
- Products may not always have a price tag, so again, you're going to have to ask: **"Wie viel kosten die Tomaten, bitte?"** – "How much are the tomatoes, please?"

- If you have questions about something, you can't just read the package. Again, you're going to have to ask: "**Ist das Schweinefleisch?**" – "Is that pork?" or: "**Entschuldigung, ich habe eine Allergie. Sind Erdnüsse in diesem Brot?**" – "Excuse me, I've got an allergy. Are there peanuts in this bread?"
- Some of these encounters may even turn into little conversations. Yes, Germans are *not* big on small-talk, but on a market there's generally more opportunity for conversation than under the harsh neon glow of a giant supermarket.

Verbalize All The Things! Read Signs And Ads Everywhere

This is a strategy which is less focused on interaction but it'll still help you familiarize yourself with German pronunciation. Plus, you can do it anywhere!

When you're strolling through the city, or sitting in a bus or train, there are [German signs](#) and ads everywhere. Try to read them and verbalize them in your head. Even if you don't always understand each and every word: how would you pronounce them? You can also take notes and check on [Forvo](#) or with a native speaker to see if you got the pronunciation right.

Or even better: ask your German teacher or classmates! Wait, you haven't taken German classes yet?

Free German Courses & Classes



German classes work. And they don't even have to cost anything.

This may sound obvious, but taking German classes will be one of the most effective ways to get some speaking and listening practice.

In Germany, education is considered a fundamental basic human right. That's why getting a university degree is basically free. And while there are many different German courses and classes offered by private schools and institutions which can be very costly, you can also find free (or subsidized) German courses at your local *Volkshochschule* (adult education center).

Here are selected offers from various cities. Click through the courses for more details:

- [Berlin](#) (German classes sorted by level and topic)
- [Hamburg](#) (integration courses and German classes)
- [Munich](#) (language, integration and naturalization)
- [Cologne](#) (general language courses category)
- [Frankfurt](#) (link to search results. Click "Sprachen" to filter language courses)
- Google "Volkshochschule [City] Deutsch" for other cities.

While none of these things will force Germans to speak German to you in daily life, you'll still make the most of being in Germany while trying to learn the lan-

guage.

Just don't get too frustrated! Here's another comic by [itchyfeet](http://www.itchyfeetcomic.com) that perfectly describes the situation:

ITCHY FEET in Germany



source link

