

2 Podcast Why Learn German

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1. Welcome

[00:00:16] Welcome to the better German podcast. I'm going to introduce myself just a little bit because the podcast is very new, this is one of the first episodes. I'm a German teacher. I have been teaching German for almost 17 years now, and I have decided that I want to help more people than those students that I have been working with directly so far.

So one of the things that I am starting in order to do that is this podcast!

[00:00:51] Let's jump into this topic or into this episode. I'm going to talk in this episode about "Why learning German?". I've decided that should be one of the first episodes because, maybe you're looking at learning German or not, then I'm going to give you some reasons why you should learn German. I'm – more towards the end – also going to talk about "What is not a good enough reason to learn German?", or maybe even, how are you not going to learn German.

2. Reasons to Learn

[00:01:27] Probably most of my students, so far learn German because they live in a German speaking country. If you are living in a German speaking country, and don't speak German then that's probably the first obvious reason. But, it's not that obvious because, I'm located in Vienna, Austria, which is one of the three main German-speaking countries, but a smaller one. Austria only has 9 million people in it, Germany has many more than that. But still, particularly in Vienna, there is a lot, there's actually quite a big English-speaking community, that does not necessarily speak German. Most of them, or maybe you are one of them. are working for companies, whose conversational language is English. And they maybe don't require their employees or not all of their employees to speak German.

[00:02:37] Vienna is a university town. So we have somewhere around 250,000 students. Maybe I'm not 100% correct. This could be a pre-corona number, but I'm pretty sure it's in that area. And, not all of them speak German. I'm going to go a little bit more into that later on, how that is even possible. However, I want to say living in Austria or planning to live in Austria, particularly if you want to stay here for long a time, or in Germany, even if you have a job right now, that allows you to work and you do not need German right away, I highly suggest that you learn German for various reasons:

1. First of all, the international community in Vienna particularly, is quite big and, you may have the feeling of never needing to speak German. Maybe there's even a community that speaks another language. However, I think you will be able to enrich your experience a lot when you speak German, there are a lot of people, in Austria that speak English quite well. But still, in German, you can communicate with them on a different level. It could happen, for example, if you go out with friends or if you have a group of friends that speak English, still they could speak German with each other. Maybe they will try to be friendly, but it's still going to be communication on a different level. So I would definitely say if you, learn to speak German, it will allow you to communicate with, Austrians or other people that live in Australia and speak German natively.
2. [00:04:48] I also think, overall Austria is relatively friendly to foreigners. But of course, like anywhere in the world, unfortunately, there are some that are not as friendly, with people coming from other cultures. And in my experience, this is linked very much to language. And it makes sense because if you can communicate with people in their language, your affinity for one another generally immediately increases.
3. [00:05:27] Austria's main language or official language is German. There are exceptions to that, in certain areas of the country, there are minority languages. For example Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian. But this is only in certain parts and English is not one of them. When you need or want to deal with anything official, it is always very well-advised and much easier for you, if you speak German. Of course, there are lawyers and agencies that speak English. But even if you're lucky and you meet a person, an official who speaks English and whose English is good enough and who's willing to talk to you in English, it could get them into trouble because all the legal texts and laws are in German. So if they advise you in English and they tell you something incorrect because their English isn't perfect, then they're possibly going to get in trouble. You're much more independent and it's much easier for you if you actually speak German.
4. If you want to travel and maybe you don't even live in Austria or in a German-speaking country, and you don't have any plans to, but you want to visit these areas. Literally, all German-speaking countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg have beautiful scenery, beautiful landscapes and beautiful cities. So they are definitely worth visiting. And, even just a little bit of German, or an intermediate level of German will get you a long way.
5. [00:07:33] Particularly when you're in the countryside, we have quite a lot of dialects, German dialects, and they're challenging. Learning some German will help you a lot if you are travelling. And if you like these areas, if you like cities, if you like city-hopping, or if you like hiking, then that could be a very interesting thing or skiing. Skiing in Austria is great! In very touristy areas, people will speak English very well, most likely. However, if you speak a bit of German, this can open a whole new range of places you can go to that you probably wouldn't have gone to. *You will never get the real flavour of these places if you don't understand any German.*

6. [00:08:37] If you are in Austria, let's say maybe you have a job and you don't need to speak German for your current job, I highly advise you to learn German anyway. I have seen this in students or people that I've met or read about in forums and groups – They came here on jobs where they didn't have to learn German. But then at some point, decided to change their job or were unlucky and lost their job. And then it was challenging to find a new job. You have a larger possibility of jobs you can get, even if you have already been to Austria and have work experience here and if your German is good for working in Austria, obviously your German should be actually very good. If you are very good in German, it even opens a whole new range of jobs that you couldn't get otherwise. Jobs where you specifically need to be bilingual. For example, to work or have it job in a company, an Austrian company, that does business with English speaking countries.
7. [00:10:03] There is another very specific reason, why you could learn German – if you want to study in Austria. As I mentioned before, Austria is a university city. We have about 250,000 students. The student fees, even for foreign students, are relatively low compared to many other countries. And if you want to study – start with the bachelor – there is hardly any bachelor studies that are offered only in English. If you want to study a bachelor, it's a good idea to learn German. And it's a good idea to start learning German way earlier than that. Because in order to study at a university, you need a very high level, specifically a C1 language skill level.

There is another episode coming up, one of the next episodes, that explains the different levels of language certificates that exist. It's not only for German, but I'm doing this particularly about German. Just so you're not in the dark about it. A1 is the easiest level. That's the first level you will get when you start learning a language and it would be the equivalent of being able to speak in very short sentences about your immediate environment and it goes A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. And C2 is the highest level that would be basically equivalent to a well-educated native speaker.

[00:11:47] So anyway, so if you want to study in Austria and you want to study for a bachelor it's something that you need to apply for. It's mandatory, that you have a C1 certificate. You usually can do that in Austria. However, as I said, it's not a walk in the park. There's quite a lot of learning that needs to go into that. However, if you have it, obviously you have a great experience because you studied in a different country and you learned an additional language on top of whatever else you studied. Maybe you already did a bachelor's and you want to do a master's. There are quite a lot of master's degrees in Austria you can do, where you actually technically do not have to speak German, because they're delivered in English. However, in that case, that is an entirely different reason why you should learn German. If you do that and you come here – the master's degree usually takes two years – and you'll immediately start learning German as you'll be submerged in the culture and you'll need German to navigate your new lifestyle. If you are interested in staying in Austria or another German-speaking area, again, the likeliness of getting a job is much higher, if you speak German. Yeah, I think the number one reason that I see – which isn't an official poll – but the number one reason

that people are having trouble finding a job in Austria, if they're English speaking (or another language) is the fact that they are not speaking German. So if we look at that from a more positive point of view, when you learn German or when you speak German, your chances of being employed are much higher.

3. What Isn't a Good Reason to Learn?

[00:13:51] I want to mention an obvious thing and that's starting us on the next topic, "What's not a good reason to learn German?"

This may sound interesting at this point in time, but if you want to get certain visas in Austria, you also need to have a certificate of a certain level of German. For example, if someone marries an Austrian and he's not a European Union member, then he needs to do an A1 and an A2 exam. And if you want to get citizenship in many cases, you also need to prove your German level.

That being said, I want to say something that I have experienced a lot. There are many learners of German that I have met or communicated with that are very interested in passing certain German exams. I highly advise all of my students **not to learn just to pass an exam**. Because what happens? I've seen it. I've seen it many times and I have students who learnt only to pass an exam, whichever exam it was and they passed the exam. And, then they don't remember the information... they don't know German. I think that's very sad because they put work into it. Maybe you've experienced that from your own school time. Or maybe you have even had the same thing that you learned for an A1 or A2 German level exam and worked hard. Maybe you passed. There may have been a point where you experienced some disappointment because you weren't actually able to speak German after that or communicate in German. So I would highly like to advise you to maybe look at a different approach when you learn, even if you have to do an exam. Don't ever ask the question when you learn a certain thing, "Okay, is this going to come in the exam? How am I remembering this for the exam?" But take another approach. Take the approach of, "**How can I apply this? How can I use this? Is this something I'm going to be able to use to communicate with someone?**".

Very important: I think in order to do that, you have to have some reason or motivation why you want to learn German, whatever that is. I gave you some very general possibilities, but maybe you have more personal ones, whatever it is for you, **why do you want to learn German?**

This could be: "I've always wanted to visit Vienna. And when I visit Vienna, I want to have the full experience and be able to talk to everyone." Or maybe there is a girl or a guy that you like, and you would like to talk to them in German or, you want to get a good job. But in any way, keep in mind German is a language. Obviously. And whenever you learn German. Look at, "Is this going to help me?" Or "How can this help me in achieving this purpose that I want to communicate with people in this language?" And never just learn for an exam, even if you have to pass an exam, we've probably all been there. I've also been in a situation where I had to pass a certain test. But still, I was trying to always keep my own learning discipline in, to not just try to learn things verbatim for the test. But really always look at,

“Okay, good. How am I going to apply this?”.

It looks as if it may take longer to do that, but on the other hand – Hey, when you're already spending time to learn, you might as well actually learn. Learn in the sense of getting something out of it and achieving something.

4. In Closing

I invite you to, first of all, when you attempt or start to learn German, really for yourself, define what is your purpose. Why do you want to learn it? This is probably true for anything, not just German. For any language, for anything you learn, but particularly when you want to learn German, Never just learn for an exam!

[00:19:28] And let me know how you're doing with this. Is this a point for you? Are you lacking motivation? It could be, that maybe you tried to learn, and you had your motivation fully in place. And then you hit a wall. So if that's the case. I'd be very happy if you subscribe to this podcast. Stay tuned with me. I'm going to go into exactly those things as well. What could have kept you from learning? But this is a point to start with. And let me know if there is something you can do with this.

5. Take Action

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If you liked it and it was helpful for you, please share it with other people and let them know that this exists. And if you are looking for a course and you want to learn German online, then you can, of course, find all the info as well on www.bettergerman.info

So, see you there and see you in the next episode.

Bye bye!

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