




The moment I thought I was fluent... and realized I wasn't

This week, I wanted to share something more personal. A story from before I became a French teacher - when I thought I spoke English... until I moved abroad.

I've recorded it for you as a short podcast episode in French (around 3 min) — and you can download the written version in French as a PDF. The English version is just below.

If you've ever felt lost in French, I hope this brings you some comfort.



 You can start by listening without reading, then use the French transcript or English version to check your understanding.

Go at your own pace. There's no one right way, just choose what feels helpful to you today.

 Listen in French

 Download French PDF

How I *Thought* I Was Fluent - Until Dublin

Where it all began

I started learning English the old-school way, with pop songs and a dictionary. Back in the 90s, I'd spend hours with my walkman, rewinding Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston, trying to catch every word. No internet. No lyrics online. Just me and my Harrap's dictionary, scribbled with notes.

Academic confidence

Later, during my linguistics studies, English became part of my daily life. I was reading academic papers, writing essays, giving talks in conferences. In my mind, I was fluent.

Then I moved to Dublin

And everything changed. I couldn't understand anyone — not in shops, not on the street. The accent, the speed, the slang — it wasn't the English I knew.

And I couldn't speak. I froze. I avoided phone calls. I left conversations with headaches. When I *did* talk to people, I didn't feel like myself. My humor was gone. I couldn't finish a sentence. I felt blank — and stupid.

When real learning began

And yet, that was when I truly started learning English. Not through exercises or essays, but through doubt, confusion, and constant effort. I had to speak, with real people, about unexpected things, without a script. Every conversation felt like a challenge. My brain was always on.

I never quite got used to the Irish accent. Eventually, I moved to London, then to the U.S. Things got easier, but it took years before English stopped feeling like a daily struggle.

What I was missing

And during those years, I kept craving two things:

Support : someone to talk to about what I was going through.

Structure : a space to pause, get feedback, and understand what was working and what wasn't.

Why it matters today

That experience shaped everything I do today. Because now, I see so many French learners going through the same thing. They study. They try. They know so much already. And still, real-life French feels like a wall they keep hitting. That's exactly why I created *Studie*, to offer what I wish I had back then.

Not just lessons, but **guidance**.

Not just content, but **connection**.

A space to grow, with support and clarity, especially when the path gets messy.

If this is you...

If learning French ever feels discouraging or overwhelming - you're not doing it wrong. Language learning isn't a straight line from A to B. It's more like a spiral: full of detours, doubts, and unexpected breakthroughs.

And the good news?

You don't have to do it alone.

PS: This story isn't about choosing between structure and immersion, because most learners don't have that choice. It's about what happens when we're suddenly faced with real-life language - fast, messy, and unexpected - and how much we need guidance to make sense of it.

Merci de m'avoir lue. If it resonates with you, feel free to reply - I'd love to hear it.

À bientôt,

Marie

The Studie Club

You're receiving this because you signed up for my weekly French tips, audio, and resources to help you understand and speak French with confidence.

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Studie

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