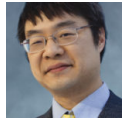


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Raymond Chen

A friend of mine is taking a vacation to Germany with her husband, and she asked me for help in booking a guest room in a seminary in one of the cities they will be visiting. I translated her initial inquiry into German, and she e-mailed both the English and German versions to the manager. The response was entirely in German. For the next few days, I translated the responses from the residence manager to English, then translated my friend's replies back into German. Finally, all the details appear to have been settled, but my friend was somewhat concerned that the residence manager may be in for a bit of a surprise to learn that neither she nor her husband speak German. (Well, her husband studied it for a year in high school and has been working through [free German audio lessons courtesy of Deutsche Welle](#).) She asked me to make a little note at the end of her final message to set the manager's expectations:

P.S. Wirklich sprechen wir kein Deutsch. Diese Briefe wurden von unserem chinesischen Freund übersetzt.

My friend had invited me to join her on the trip when she started planning it, but I declined at the time. In retrospect, I should have accepted. It probably would have been a lot of fun. Yesterday, [Michael Puff](#) remarked [in a comment](#), "Wenn du mal nach Deutschland kommst, lass es mich wissen, dann treffen wir uns mal und sprechen nur Deutsch." ("If you ever come to Germany, let me know and we can meet and speak exclusively in German.") Thanks, Michael for the kind offer, aber ich vermute, dass ich keine Probleme haben werde, in Deutschland Gelegenheiten zu finden, nur Deutsch zu sprechen. ("... but I suspect that I won't have any problems finding opportunities in Germany to speak exclusively in German.")

(I'm joking! I'll be sure to let everybody know [when I go travelling](#) and am willing to meet up with people.)



[Raymond Chen](#)

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