

Advent Calendar 8 - "The Purge - Election Dative"

by German-is-easy - Thursday, December 08, 2016

<https://yourdailygerman.com/common-mistake-using-mir/>

Oh boy, that title :).

So... what's behind door number 8? It is ...

a bug fix

I want to tell you about one very common mistake that lots of learners are making and see where it comes from and how to avoid it.

Which mistake?

Overusing Dative, in particular *mir*.

You all know phrasings like these:

- Das schmeckt *mir*.
I like that (in context of the taste of food).
- Das gefällt *mir*.
I like that.
- *Mir* ist kalt.
I'm cold.

In the beginning, this is just a really weird way to say things, but as you get a bit more comfy with German and cases, you get an inkling that *mir* often translates to *for me* or *to me*.

And you're like "Hah, gotcha Dative case. I sooo figured you out." and you start using it.

1. German grammar is hard *for me*.
2. This restaurant is expensive *for me*.
3. That sounds weird *to me*.

1. Deutsche Grammatik ist *mir* schwer.
2. Dieses Restaurant ist *mir* teuer.
3. Das klingt *mir* komisch.

But German's just like "That was pretty good... NOOOOT. **evil laugh**". The proper phrasing is like it is in English.

1. Deutsche Grammatik ist schwer *für mich*.

2. Dieses Restaurant ist teuer *für mich*.
3. Das klingt komisch *für mich*.

Using the Dative (mir, dir, ihm...) is not super wrong; but it's not idiomatic and sounds strange. It's a mistake many intermediate learners are making, and I've seen it in quite a few of your comments, too. So... for these general statements of opinion, you'd use *für mich*, not *mir*. Oh and *für dich* instead of *dir* and *für ihn* instead of *ihm* and so on.

Cool. This would be a great moment to end the post. I mean... we're done, right? The mistake is fixed. Well... German has an extra twist in store for us. A really, really stupid, random, nonsensical twist. Get this:

- Das ist *mir* teuer.

We've learned that this is wrong, or at least unidiomatic. So it would make all the sense in the universe if the following were also unidiomatic.

- Das ist *mir* zu teuer.

Well... it's FINE. This is proper idiomatic German that people speak everyday. Let's take a different example.

- Die Musik ist *mir* laut.
- Die Musik ist *mir* zu laut.

The first one is wrong-ish, the second one is fine. Makes no sense, I have no idea why, but that's how it is. Oh... and of course there are a few exceptions like "Das ist *mir* recht. (That's fine with me. /That suits me well.)" where ONLY *mir* is idiomatic. But you'll pick those up along the way. And after all... this really isn't a big mistake or anything. So don't worry too much about it. It's more something for the perfectionists among you :).

Cool... so this was our little bug fix for today. How is it? Have you made this mistake before? Or have you heard native speakers say it (I think there are some regional dialects that do it)? Or do you have a crazy crackpot theory as to why this is the way it is? Let me know in the comments and win today's little giveaway (I'll pick winners "between the years" so after Christmas is over) Have a great day and bis morgen.

Oh... in case you want to practice, here's a little exercise.

Just translate the following sentences. If you want you can type your solution in the comments and I will correct it.

1. *That sounds wrong to me.*
2. *The movie was too long for her.*
3. *To me, the wine smells like tobacco.*
4. *To me, the wine smells too much like tobacco.*
5. *That seems odd to me.*

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