

Language App Embraces 'Copycat' Label, Says Imitation Is How Humans Actually Learn

Bootstrapped founder builds \$10K/month platform around a method most teachers discourage



Copycat Cafe Logo

DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY, December 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Naming a company after an insult is

unconventional. Benjamin Houy did it anyway. Today, his French learning platform rebrands from French Together to [Copycat Cafe](#). The name is deliberate: Houy's entire method is built on copying native speakers.

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Benjamin Houy, Founder of Copycat Cafe

"Everyone told me not to call it Copycat," says Houy, a native French speaker who has been teaching the language since 2011. "It sounds negative. But that's exactly why it works. We've been taught that copying is cheating. In language learning, copying is the entire method."

Why Copying?

The approach draws on research into how humans acquire language. Babies spend two to three years imitating sounds before producing original sentences. Applied linguist Matt Kessler has observed that app-based learners often "struggle with production: speaking and writing" despite strong receptive skills. Duolingo's own internal

research shows French pronunciation as users' weakest subscore.

Copycat Cafe addresses this with a method called Watch, Copy, Chat. Learners watch native French speakers at slow and natural speeds. They copy what they hear while AI scores their pronunciation from 0-100%. Then they practice conversation with an AI partner that offers real-time corrections.

"The biggest barrier to speaking French isn't grammar," Houy says. "It's embarrassment. People stay silent because they're afraid of sounding stupid. Our AI lets them fail in private until they're ready."

Students typically improve from 60% to 90%+ pronunciation accuracy within 30 days.

From Blog to App

Houy started French Together as a blog that grew to 357,000 monthly visitors. When Google algorithm changes [reduced traffic](#) by 70%, he taught himself Ruby on Rails and rebuilt the business as a subscription platform.

"I woke up one morning and it was just gone," Houy says. "Years of work disappeared because of an algorithm update I had no control over."

Instead of shutting down, he rebuilt. Today the platform generates over \$10,000 in monthly recurring revenue with 1,031 paying subscribers, profitable from day one with no outside funding.

"Losing everything was the best thing that happened. It forced me to build something I actually controlled."

Houy holds a degree in Applied Linguistics from Paris X Nanterre and has authored two books on French learning.

Expansion Plans

Mobile apps for iOS and Android are in development. In 2026, Copycat Cafe will expand into Spanish, Italian, and German using the same imitation-based method.

"The method works for any language," Houy says. "We proved it with French. Now we're scaling it."

About Copycat Cafe

Copycat Cafe is a language learning platform focused on spoken fluency through imitation and AI-powered pronunciation feedback.

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