

Analysis of influencing factors on the learning effectiveness of Chinese beginners of German

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Abstract. This article presents an in-depth analysis of the difficulties faced by German language learners based on a survey of their learning obstacles. The survey findings reveal the impact of individual factors such as gender, age, and interest on learning outcomes among German learners. Additionally, the study focuses on the potential influence of learners' prior language learning experiences, particularly Chinese and English, on the German learning process, as well as the impact of their foundation in Chinese and English on learning German. By comprehensively analyzing these factors, the article uncovers the multiple challenges faced by German learners during the learning process and provides valuable insights for the formulation of German language teaching and learning strategies.

Keywords: German language learners, learning difficulty, individual factors, influence of Chinese and English learning on German language learning.

1. Introduction

In today's era of globalization, mastering one or more foreign languages is particularly important for personal development and social interaction. According to the "German as a Foreign Language Worldwide" survey report, more than 15.4 million people worldwide are currently learning German [1]. In China, with the continuous deepening of opening up to the outside world, foreign language education has ushered in unprecedented development opportunities. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Germany in 1972, bilateral relations have continued to deepen, with particularly close economic and trade cooperation. Germany is an important trading partner of China. The two countries have no fundamental conflicts, are economically interdependent, and are both major international players. The stable development of their relationship provides good political conditions for learning German in China.

Currently, German is one of the foreign language options in the National College Entrance Examination and an indispensable part of China's higher education system for foreign languages. There are currently 118 universities in China that offer German language programs, and many institutions offer public German courses. This has not only greatly enriched educational resources but also made significant progress in teaching methods and curriculum design. Language is a bridge for communication. Germany is an advanced industrial country with the fourth largest economy in the world and a powerful education nation. Therefore, to acquire German technology, the country needs talents to study in Germany. The German government has implemented lenient policies for studying abroad, improved university curricula and systems, strengthened German language teaching and cultural dissemination, and the number of Chinese students studying in Germany has increased annually [2].

However, despite the positive development trend of German language education in China, research on the learning difficulties faced by German language beginners is still inadequate. Beginners often encounter various challenges when learning German, such as vocabulary memorization, grammar comprehension, and pronunciation mastery. If these difficulties are not addressed promptly and effectively, they can not only affect learners' enthusiasm and learning outcomes but may also constrain the further popularization and development of German language education in China. This paper aims to delve deeply into the learning difficulties of Chinese beginners of German, analyze their causes, and propose corresponding solutions.

2. Literature review

According to relevant statistical data, the number of Chinese people learning German is relatively small, and the level of German education is low. As teaching progresses, the number of learners gradually decreases. Most students are not very interested in learning German and are unaware of the influence of German culture, leading to fewer students studying German. The methods for learning German are limited, and the grammatical structure of German is complex, making it difficult to learn. This often leads to learners experiencing frustration, losing interest in learning German, and even giving up on studying it. There is a lack of teaching resources for German, and students lack practical experience. Traditional foreign language teaching methods focus on grammar as the main thread, with teachers emphasizing the teaching of grammatical knowledge while neglecting the importance of oral expression. Most language teaching is geared towards exams, lacking a good language environment. This results in most students not being fluent in German oral expression and facing difficulties in practical application [3].

The reviewed literature mainly focuses on the impact of English and Chinese on German language learning. These studies explore the learning difficulties of German learners through a deep analysis of the grammatical, vocabulary, and pronunciation differences and similarities between German and English, as well as between German and Chinese. From a historical perspective, the close relationship between German and English is evident [4]. Research has found that German and English share similarities in various aspects, with around 8,000 identical or similar vocabulary words. English vocabulary entering German is divided into two forms: loanwords and loan translations. The similarity in pronunciation and spelling between English and German can cause confusion for learners, which is a major challenge when learning German. English and German share some phonemes, but their pronunciation is not entirely the same, which poses difficulties for learners who are already familiar with English pronunciation [5]. This similarity interferes with German learners, who need to overcome language habits formed by English to avoid confusion in German learning.

On the other hand, the differences between Chinese and German are more significant, especially in terms of grammatical structure and pronunciation. From the perspective of language structure, Chinese does not have morphological changes and is known as an "isolating language," while German is a "fusional language" with highly active morphological changes. For Chinese learners, the first challenge is to overcome pronunciation obstacles. Some common German pronunciations do not exist in Chinese, especially the uvular trill [r], which is particularly difficult for Chinese students to master. Secondly, they need to overcome the interference of their native syntactic system, such as speaking German with Chinese word order [6]. These fundamental differences pose considerable challenges for Chinese native speakers learning German. German learners not only need to overcome language habit barriers in the process of learning German but also need to practice pronunciation extensively due to the significant differences between the Chinese pronunciation system and German.

Although these studies provide diverse perspectives to explore the difficulty of learning German, they often neglect the differences among learners themselves. Factors such as gender, age, and learning background may all influence German learning, but these factors have not been fully considered in the existing literature. Future research can further explore how these individual differences affect the German learning process and how to develop more effective teaching strategies based on learners' characteristics. The impact of English and Chinese on German learning is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires comprehensive consideration of both linguistic differences and learner characteristics. Future research can further expand this field to provide more comprehensive and profound guidance for German teaching and learning.

3. Research design

3.1. Research questions

Most Chinese students do not learn German as their first foreign language, so they often encounter many learning obstacles when choosing to learn another language. For Chinese beginners of German, having a foundation in Chinese and English can have certain influences on learners in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and other aspects. Exploring the factors affecting the learning effectiveness of Chinese beginners of German will help improve the design and implementation of German language teaching. To this end, this research will focus on the following questions:

1) How do German beginners understand the differences in verb positions between Chinese, English, and German sentences, the differences in meanings of the same words between English and German, and the mastery and differences in German pronunciation influenced by Chinese and English pronunciation?

2) Are there significant differences in German learning effectiveness among individual factors (gender, major, age)?

3) What is the extent of the impact of existing Chinese and English language backgrounds on German language learning?

3.1.1. Research object

The target population of this study primarily consists of university students studying German (including both German majors and non-German majors learning German), as well as some graduated German learners. They mainly come from the Guangdong Province region.

Initially, the researcher distributed survey questionnaires through social media (WeChat) within the group of German major university students. After some time, the researcher broadened the data collection scope and used the Xiaohongshu app to distribute questionnaires to non-acquaintance social groups, ultimately collecting a total of 86 valid questionnaires.

3.2. Research tool

This study referred to the questionnaire on "Attitudes of German Beginners towards the Influence of Already Learned English on Their German Acquisition" developed by Zhang Yue[7] and Liu Hui-lan's research on the analysis of errors made by beginners of German[8], and designed the "Survey on Language Barriers of German Learners in the Initial Stage of Learning German". Table 1 gives the dimensions, question sets, and corresponding question numbers of the survey questionnaire.

Table 1. Language Barriers Faced by German Language Learners in the Early Stages of Learning German

Dimension	Subdimension	The content description
Basic Information for Individual and Language Learning	Population Information	Gender, Age, Major
	Language Learning Information	Language Learning Order, Time Spent Studying English, Level of English Proficiency
	Information on German language learning	The starting time of German language learning, the duration of German language learning, current level, learning interest, satisfaction, difficulty level, and learning expectations.
The Impact of Language Background on German Language Learning	The influence of English on German	English knowledge, English thinking, cultural background, communication skills.
	The influence of Chinese on German	Chinese knowledge, Chinese thinking, grammatical structure, word meaning, cultural background, pronunciation and intonation.
German Proficiency Test	Grammatical differences	Differences in Prepositional Usage, Verb Positioning, and Sentence Structure
	Semantic differences	Synonym Differences
	Pronunciation differences	Pronunciation differences

4. Data analysis

The total number of respondents was 86, with a male-to-female ratio of 1:1.9. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.860, indicating a high internal consistency reliability of this questionnaire. Cronbach's α coefficient is one of the commonly used reliability coefficients, which is used to measure the degree of consistency among various items in the questionnaire. Generally speaking, the closer the Cronbach's α coefficient value is to 1, the better the internal consistency of the questionnaire and the higher the reliability of the questionnaire. This also means that the items in our questionnaire are correlated to some extent rather than independent, and it also indicates that the design of the questionnaire is effective and can accurately reflect the true situation of the respondents to a certain extent. The KMO value of validity analysis was 0.798, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value was 830.093, and the df value was 300.000, which could preliminarily determine that there was a strong correlation among the variables in this questionnaire.

The results of cluster analysis showed that the respondents could be generally divided into a group with strong language learning ability and a group with weak language learning ability. Among them, the group with strong language learning ability had English proficiency that could meet the requirements of CET-6, German proficiency that could cope with the B2 level required for studying abroad, and had high expectations for future German learning.

4.1. Basic Information of the Investigation Subject

4.1.1. Personal Basic Information

According to the survey data, male respondents accounted for 34.88% of the total, while female respondents accounted for 65.12%.

The number of respondents under the age of 18 was relatively small, accounting for only 4.65%. The age group of 18-22 was the main group of respondents, accounting for 50% of the total. The age group of 23-26 accounted for 33.72%, and the age group of 27-30 accounted for 11.63%.

Most respondents began studying German at university, accounting for 45.35% of the total. A considerable number of respondents began studying German in middle school and high school, both accounting for 22.09% of the total. A small number of respondents began studying German in elementary school (4.65%) or after work (5.81%).

German majors accounted for 41.86%, while non-German majors accounted for 58.14%.

4.1.2. Basic Information on Language Learning

From the survey data, it can be seen that 68.6% of the respondents learned languages in the following order: Chinese first, then English, and finally German.

In terms of English proficiency, respondents also showed different levels of learning status and ability. 31.4% of respondents had a low level of English proficiency and were unable to pass the CET-6 exam at all. 25.58% of respondents had a moderate level of English proficiency and may have some basic English skills, but not enough to easily pass the exam. 43.03% of respondents had a high level of English proficiency and were able to easily pass the CET-6 exam.

The statistical results show that there is a significant difference ($p=0.017<0.05$) in the reported ability to "navigate the CET-6 exam with ease" among respondents of different age groups.

4.1.3. Basic Information on German Language Learning

The German language proficiency of the respondents exhibits a diversified feature. Among them, 53.49% have a lower level of German, which may indicate that they are still in the initial or basic stage of learning; 11.63% of the respondents have a medium level of German, which means they may have already mastered some basic grammar and vocabulary, but still face some difficulties in practical application; 34.88% of the respondents have a higher level of German, which means their German level has reached B2 and they can communicate fluently in daily life.

In terms of the difficulty of German learning, most learners think German learning is relatively difficult. Among them, 4.65% think German is very easy, 43.02% think German is quite difficult, and 22.09% think German learning is extremely difficult.

In terms of their expectations for German learning, most learners have high expectations for their future German level. Among them, 46.51% expect to reach a fluent communication level in German.

In terms of their interest in German learning, most learners have some interest in German learning. Among them, 19.76% have low interest in German learning, 24.42% have moderate interest, and 55.82% have very high interest.

Their satisfaction with their German learning is all relatively high, and the respondents think German learning is relatively difficult. They have high expectations for their future German level.

4.2. Results of the German Proficiency Test

The overall correct rate of the respondents in the German proficiency test was 48.2%, indicating that their German proficiency was relatively low, consistent with the general situation of German beginners. Based on the analysis of the results of the German proficiency test, significant differences were found in the following five aspects among the respondents:

4.2.1. Grammatical differences

The results of the tests on grammatical differences indicate that the average correct rate of the subjects was 52.5%, higher than the overall test correct rate. Specifically:

1) Prepositional Differences

In terms of the mastery of the differences in the use of prepositions between Chinese, English, and German, the questions were simple ones of moderate difficulty (a total of 2). One of them was "choose the correct German sentence according to the Chinese meaning" - she often gets angry about trivial matters. The other was "choose the correct German sentence according to the English meaning" - she often gets angry for trivial matters. The correct rate of the respondents in answering the first question was 74.4%, while the correct rate in answering the second question was only 53.4%. This shows that for learners, it is harder to master the differences in the use of English prepositions and German prepositions.

2) Verb Differences

In terms of the mastery of the differences in the positioning of verbs between Chinese, English, and German, the questions were moderate difficulty ones (a total of 2). One of them was "choose the

correct German sentence according to the Chinese meaning" - this meeting is very important for us. The other was "choose the correct German sentence according to the English meaning" - This meeting is very important for us. The correct rate of the respondents in answering the first question was 33.7%, while the correct rate in answering the second question was 79.1%. For learners, the influence of Chinese verb positioning on German verb positioning is greater. In terms of the differences in sentence structure between Han, English, and German, the questions are considered to be of high difficulty (a total of 2 questions). One of the questions is to select the correct German sentence according to the Chinese meaning, "He is living well in Beijing." The other question is to select the correct German sentence according to the English meaning, "He lives well in Beijing." The respondents had a correct rate of 32.6% for the first question and 41.9% for the second question. For language learners, the Chinese sentence structure has a greater impact on the German sentence structure.

4.2.2. Semantic differences

The results of the semantic difference test show that the average correct rate of the subjects was 6.4%, which is very low. Among them, 1 medium difficulty question required to write the meaning of "Gift" in German and English, without allowing the use of a dictionary. 64 of the respondents did not answer the question (accounting for 73.6%); 7 of them were unable to distinguish between the meanings of "gift" in German and English (accounting for 8.0%); 4 of them knew that the meanings were different but could not correctly answer the question (accounting for 4.6%); and 5 of them knew the meanings and answered correctly (accounting for 5.7%).

There was also a high difficulty question that required the meaning of "Rock" in German and English. 62 of the respondents did not answer the question (accounting for 71.3%); 9 of them were unable to distinguish between the meanings of "rock" in German and English (accounting for 10.3%); 2 of them knew that the meanings were different but could not correctly answer the question (accounting for 2.3%); and 6 of them knew the meanings and answered correctly (accounting for 6.9%).

4.2.3. Pronunciation differences

In the section of mastering pronunciation differences between English, Chinese and German in the test, there are two simple questions. One is to choose the correct German pronunciation of the word Argument, and the other is a true/false question that says "the [V] sound in German is a 'lip-biting' sound, which can be pronounced as 'Wu' in Chinese." The correct answer rates for these two questions are 86.0% and 41.9%, respectively. Compared to the first question, the correct answer rate for the second question is lower.

There are also two medium-difficulty questions. One is to give the German pronunciation of the word System, and the other is a true/false question that says "the letter B in German is pronounced as [be:], [e:], which is a monophthong, and cannot be pronounced as the word 'cup' in Chinese." The correct answer rates for these two questions are 48.8% and 73.3%, respectively. Compared to the first question, the correct answer rate for the second question is lower.

4.3. Analysis of Individual Variability

4.3.1. Gender differences

According to statistical data, among those who learned German first and then English, the proportion of male students (33.33%) is higher than that of female students (17.86%).

Female students spend slightly more time on independent German learning ($M=1.68$, $SD=0.765$) than male students ($M=1.50$, $SD=0.630$), indicating that male students may be more proactive and committed in their German learning. At the same time, the proportion of male students with high German proficiency (30%) is relatively higher, further proving their advantage and achievements in German learning.

In terms of interest, the proportion of male and female students who are interested in German is similar (mean values are 3.57 and 3.50 respectively), both showing enthusiasm and interest in German

learning, which indicates that gender is not a decisive factor in German learning interest, and people's love for German is not limited by gender. Female students think that German is difficult at a relatively higher rate (25%) when evaluating the difficulty of German learning.

From the perspective of learning expectations, the expectation of male students for German learning ($M=3.73$, $SD=1.461$) is slightly lower than that of female students ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.250$). This shows that female students do not have a clear and strong goal and pursuit for German learning, and they have higher expectations for future language learning and application.

4.3.2. Professional diversity

In terms of time investment in autonomous German language learning, German major students clearly spend more time and effort. This may be due to the fact that they have received a more systematic and in-depth German education, and therefore pay more attention to autonomous learning and practice.

However, although German major students invest more time ($M=1.58$, $SD=0.649$), 41.67% of them study for over 1 hour, while 50% study for less than 1 hour, their overall German language proficiency is not particularly outstanding. This may be because learning German not only requires time investment, but also effective learning methods and sustained interest.

What is surprising is that non-German major students have a higher level of German language proficiency ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.616$) compared to German major students ($M=2.17$, $SD=1.444$), and 28% of non-German major students can easily exceed the B2 level required for studying abroad. This may be because non-German major students are more flexible in choosing their learning content and methods based on their own interests and needs, and therefore achieve better learning results.

The interest of German major learners in German learning ($M=3.42$, $SD=1.204$) was on average lower than that of non-German major learners ($M=3.64$, $SD=1.156$), which may also be a factor affecting their level of German. Interest is an important driving force for learning, and a lack of interest may lead learners to lack motivation and persistence in the learning process. In terms of the perception of the difficulty of German learning, German major learners feel that learning German is more difficult. This may be due to the fact that they have come into contact with more in-depth and complex German knowledge, thus feeling a greater challenge.

4.3.3. Differences in Learning Across Different Age Groups

There are significant differences in autonomous learning of German among students of different age groups ($p=0.021<0.05$). Among them, German learners aged 18-22 invest significantly more time. This age group of students may be in a stage of strong curiosity and strong learning ability, so they are more willing to invest time and energy in German learning.

There are also significant differences in German proficiency among students of different age groups ($p=0.002<0.05$). Among them, the proportion of high-level German learners is relatively higher among those aged 27-30. This may be because with age growth and accumulation of learning experience, their German proficiency has improved significantly.

As for interest in German, there are no significant differences among students of different age groups. Among them, German learners aged 18-22 and 23-26 show greater interest. At the same time, the proportion of learners with high interest in German is quite large in all age groups, which shows that there are many people of all ages who are passionate about German learning.

There are no significant differences among students of all age groups in terms of difficulty of German learning. This indicates that German, as a foreign language, has a generally high learning difficulty, and learners of all ages may face certain challenges.

In terms of learning expectations, there are significant differences among students from different counties in Ningling ($p=.029<0.05$). Among them, learners aged 18-22 have higher expectations for German language learning. They may have higher expectations and aspirations for future language application, career development, or cultural exchange, and therefore show stronger motivation and expectations in their studies.

4.4. Analysis of Language Background and Differences

4.4.1. The Impact of English Learning on German Learning

In the study, participants were asked about the impact of English knowledge on the German language learning process. The results showed that English had an influence on various aspects of the German language learning process, including language foundation, cultural awareness, learning strategies, psychological factors, and practical application skills. Specifically:

- 1) The average effect of English knowledge on German learning was 3.49, with a standard deviation of 1.082.
- 2) The average degree of unconsciously using English thinking in learning or applying German is 3.62, with a standard deviation of 1.097.
- 3) The average impact of English language proficiency on German learning or use is 3.74, with a standard deviation of 1.042.
- 4) The average impact of English cultural background and knowledge on German learning or use is 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.234.
- 5) The average impact of English learning methods and strategies on German learning or application is 3.59, with a standard deviation of 1.211.
- 6) The psychological factors formed during the process of English learning (such as self-confidence, patience) have an average impact on German learning or application of 3.44, with a standard deviation of 1.174.
- 7) The average impact of practical application ability in English on German learning or use is 3.47, with a standard deviation of 1.081.

Overall, these data suggest that English has a moderate impact on German learning at multiple levels, with a slightly higher impact at the linguistic foundation level and a slightly lower impact at the cultural cognition level.

4.4.2. The Impact of Chinese Language Learning on German

In the survey, participants were asked about the impact of Chinese knowledge on the German language learning process. The results showed that Chinese has an influence on the German language learning process in many aspects, including grammar structure, vocabulary learning, cultural background and thinking patterns, reading habits, and pronunciation and intonation. Specifically:

- 1) The average effect of Chinese knowledge on German learning is 2.92, with a standard deviation of 1.276.
- 2) The average degree of unconsciously using Chinese thinking in learning or applying German is 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.299.
- 3) The influence of Chinese grammar structure on German grammar learning is on average 3.33, with a standard deviation of 1.297.
- 4) The average degree of translation and countermeasure for Chinese vocabulary is 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.166.
- 5) The cultural background and way of thinking in Chinese have an average impact on understanding and applying German of 3.48, with a standard deviation of 1.195.
- 6) The Chinese reading habits contribute to an average difficulty level of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 1.195 in adapting to the structure of German texts.
- 7) The influence of Chinese pronunciation and intonation on German spoken expression is on average 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.234.

These data indicate that Chinese has a moderate impact on German learning at multiple levels, with the influence of cultural background and thinking patterns being slightly higher, while the overall impact of Chinese knowledge on German learning is relatively lower.

Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the reports of the subjects of different age groups regarding the impact of Chinese knowledge on German language learning ($p=0.028<0.05$). Among them, the age group below 18 has the least impact ($M=1.75$, $SD=0.957$), while the age group of 23-26 has the greatest impact ($M=3.38$, $SD=1.237$).

5. Conclusions and Discussion

5.1. Research Conclusion

By summarizing the results of data analysis, the following research conclusions can be drawn:

1) The overall level of German proficiency among the surveyed participants was low, but their interest in learning German was high, and they generally considered German to be a difficult language, especially in terms of grammar, semantics, and pronunciation. The results of the German proficiency test showed that the correct rate of the surveyed subjects in terms of German proficiency was generally low, indicating that German beginners generally face significant learning challenges.

2) Individual differences were significant. Gender differences, men and women showed significant differences in terms of time spent on German learning, learning expectations, and perception of German proficiency, but gender was not a decisive factor in terms of interest in learning German. Professional differences, German major students spent more time on German learning, but non-German major students performed better in terms of German proficiency and interest in learning German. Age differences, there were significant differences in terms of time spent on learning, proficiency in German, and learning expectations among different age groups, and students aged 18-22 showed higher levels of learning motivation and expectations.

3) The language background has a significant impact. The impact of English learning on German learning is moderate, with English having a medium impact on German learning in terms of language foundation, learning strategies, psychological factors, etc. This impact is particularly evident in the interference of language knowledge reserves and English thinking on German learning. The impact of Chinese learning on German learning is relatively low, with Chinese having a certain impact on German learning in terms of cultural background, thinking patterns, etc. However, the overall impact is relatively low. The grammar structure and pronunciation habits of Chinese pose a certain challenge to German learning.

5.2. The Challenges Faced by Chinese Students in Learning German and Suggestions

Chinese students face the problem of interference between their German studies and English studies. In Germany, it is very common for people to speak English, so Germans often communicate in English in foreign trade. At the same time, the number of German-funded enterprises in China is quite limited, so the domestic demand for German major graduates is not large. With the continuous increase in the number of German major graduates in recent years, the situation of oversupply of talents has already formed. For example, the employment situation of the 2009 German major graduates from Shandong University, among 29 graduates, 10 chose to pursue further education, 13 were employed, and the remaining few had not found a job by the time of graduation, the employment rate was less than 80%. Compared with other minor languages, German major graduates have shown relatively mediocre performance in employment in recent years, and it is expected that this situation will not change fundamentally in the short term [9]. Therefore, this paper believes that the following issues need to be given sufficient attention.

The study of German is difficult, at least for two reasons. One is the complexity of grammar. German grammar structure is complex, with varied word forms, which is a huge challenge for beginners. This study found that participants performed poorly in understanding the differences in prepositions, verb placement, and sentence structure, especially when compared with Chinese and English. The second is semantic confusion. While German and English share some similarities in vocabulary, there are also many differences in meaning, which can easily confuse learners. Additionally, some German words have an unclear correspondence with Chinese, which adds to the difficulty of learning. Another difficulty is pronunciation. The pronunciation system of German is quite unfamiliar to native speakers of Chinese, especially certain specific sounds such as the alveolar trill, which require a lot of practice to master. The phonetic system, pronunciation method, and phonetic features of the native language can have a significant impact on the acquisition of a new language, especially pronunciation acquisition [10].

The survey results show that those who start learning German in high school and university spend about the same amount of time on self-study German, and they spend more time on self-study than those who start learning German in primary school, middle school, or after work. In earlier educational stages, students may face more academic pressure and have difficulty devoting enough time to self-study German. In terms of language proficiency, the proportion of high-level learners among those who started learning German in primary school is significantly higher, further proving that early exposure to foreign languages has a positive impact on language learning. Additionally, those who started learning German in primary school and middle school show the highest interest in German, which may be because they developed a strong interest in German during their studies and were more motivated to learn it. Regardless of when they started learning German, a very high proportion of people consider German difficult to learn, which may be related to the grammar structure and vocabulary difficulty of German, or factors such as learning methods, resources, or environment. Those who started learning German in primary school have higher expectations for German learning, meaning that they have developed a deep emotional attachment and expectation for the language in the early stages of exposure to German, and therefore have more motivation and goals in their studies. This discovery has important implications for educators and learners alike.

For those with lower interest levels, they tend to invest more time in German language learning. As interest levels increase, the amount of time spent studying begins to decrease. This may mean that although they still have some interest in German, other factors (such as study pressure, time management, etc.) may cause them to spend less time on it. For those with higher interest levels, the amount of time spent studying further decreases. Individuals with a high level of interest in German tend to have a higher level of proficiency in the language. In the group with high interest levels, people generally believe that German language learning is relatively easier. When people have a strong interest in German, they are more motivated to learn and master it, so they feel that the learning process is relatively easier. In the group with lower interest levels, people tend to believe that German language learning is relatively more difficult. This may be because they have lower interest in German and lack enthusiasm and motivation for learning, which makes them feel that the learning process is difficult. In some cases, even those with higher interest levels may find German language learning difficult; similarly, those with lower interest levels may find it relatively easier. And individuals with stronger interest in German language learning have higher expectations for their future proficiency in the language. The impact of interest on German language learning for German language learners is also a critical factor. When some of them learned further that although most of the previous graduates had entered companies related to Germany or German, the knowledge and skills learned at school related to German or Germany were not used much in practice, and in fact, the relevance of the work to German or Germany was not very high; while some of the urgently needed knowledge and skills, such as English communication ability, German-English translation, office automation, and computer hardware and software technology, were relatively weak. This made them feel confused about the main learning objectives of the German major. Of course, they would encounter various setbacks and difficulties in their German studies, and when these difficulties exceeded their expectations, when short-term learning goals such as exam passing and grade-level attainment lacked a smooth transition to long-term career planning, or when they struggled to find employment or internship opportunities but were unable to secure a host company, they would also face problems such as weak learning motivation, unclear learning direction, and insufficient learning confidence [11].

In terms of individual differences, male students may have higher initiative and dedication in German language learning, while female students have higher expectations for German language learning, which may reflect the difference in learning motivation and strategies between genders. In terms of professional differences, German major students may spend more time on learning, but non-German major students may achieve better learning outcomes due to their flexibility in choosing learning content and methods. This shows that systematic learning time and effective learning methods are equally important. In terms of age differences, young learners have higher learning motivation and expectations, but their German level will also improve as they grow older and

accumulate more learning experience. This suggests that we should develop teaching strategies suitable for learners of different age groups in our teaching.

Furthermore, the language background also has a significant impact on German language learning. As English is a language that is closely related to German, it provides convenience and interference in German language learning. Traditional learning concepts hold that German is a minority language with a much narrower scope of application than English, so Chinese children from primary school age start to have initial contact with English learning, with some children learning some basic English knowledge under the guidance of teachers in kindergarten. From primary school to middle school and then to high school, Chinese middle school students' learning journey of English knowledge will generally last for 12 years, which is the best period for language learning. Long-term unified learning has deeply embedded the learning mindset, learning methods, and learning habits into every student, and the impact of English language learning mindset on these students who are about to start learning other professional languages is definitely profound. The pronunciation rules, reading techniques, and grammatical factors of English words will definitely bring unfavorable impact on these students' learning of German language. Learners need to overcome the inertia of English language thinking and at the same time utilize the foundation of English language to accelerate their learning of German. Chinese also has an impact on German language learning. The differences between Chinese and German are significant, especially in grammar structure and pronunciation. Learners need to strive to overcome the interference from their native language while leveraging the cultural background and thinking patterns of Chinese to enhance their understanding and application of German.

This study investigates and analyzes the difficulties German language beginners encounter in their learning process, revealing the challenges of German language learning and its influencing factors, providing useful references for the formulation of German teaching and learning strategies. Future research can further expand this field by exploring more factors that influence German language learning and proposing more specific and effective solutions.

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