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ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.30.10

DIFFICULT LEARNING OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE DUE TO MASTERING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE GRAMMAR OF THE MACEDONIAN AND GERMAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

In order to be able to say that we successfully speak and write German, like any other foreign language, it is essential to master its grammar. If we are honest with ourselves, then we will admit that in elementary school, in our mother tongue classes, the part when we had to learn the grammar of the Macedonian language was the most difficult to master, at least for most of us. Mastering the grammar of the German language is not easy for our students, because they cannot make this process easier if they make a comparison with Macedonian grammar.

In this paper, we will examine the difficulties in learning the German language due to mastering the grammar, which is very different compared to ours. Whether students, when faced with this problem, are demotivated in their desire to learn the German language, is the subject of research in this paper. Based on the results that we will obtain from the conducted research, we will draw the conclusion of the paper. Learning German poses a significant challenge for Macedonian students due to the substantial grammatical differences between the two languages.

The research aims to identify and analyze the main obstacles that arise in mastering German grammar, especially in the areas of cases, genders, word order, and verb tenses. Through a comparative analysis of grammatical structures in the Macedonian and German languages, the paper examines typical mistakes made by learners and the reasons behind them. Special emphasis is placed on the influence of the mother tongue on the acquisition of a foreign language, as well as the need for adapted teaching methods and didactic approaches that take these linguistic differences into account.

Keywords: learning German, mastering grammar, difficulties, grammatical systems, contrastive analysis

INTRODUCTION

Macedonian people have a rich history in all areas of life. We can boast of numerous successful people who build their careers all over the world. But along with the praise, we as a people have one common negative trait, and that is that "if we fail in our goal or intention, we always look for the blame in others". Here we would like to clarify a situation among parents whose children are learning German. Namely, their child is having a hard time learning German, because of a teacher who does not know how to teach it. If these parents did just a little research into the German language, not only about the course of instruction, but also the content that the teachers teach and how dedicated they are to additional training and seminars, then they would certainly change their opinion. It is this problem that teachers face that was the reason for the topic of this paper, where we will try to clarify in more detail the grammar of the German language, that is, the segments that are different from the grammar of our native language.

A brief overview of the grammar of the German language

In this section we would like to give a brief overview of the complexity of German grammar. As previously mentioned, no foreign language, and in our case German, can be said to be able to speak or write, if its grammar has not been mastered. In learning German grammar, students cannot help

themselves much if they make a comparison with ours, Macedonian, because there are differences that can confuse them.

Students learning German are often advised to learn German nouns together with their definite article, because the definite article of a noun corresponds to the gender of the noun. However, the gender of 80% of nouns can be recognized by the meaning or form, especially the last few letters of the noun. Nouns in German have three specific genders (masculine, feminine and neuter) and are declined according to cases and grammatical numbers. All nouns are written with a capital letter.

In the German language, there are four grammatical cases according to which nouns, adjectives, and pronouns change. The cases are:

- nominative (Nominativ/Werfall),
- genitive (Genitiv/Wesfall),
- dative (Dativ/Wemfall) and
- accusative (Akkusativ/Wenfall).

The case of a particular noun depends on the grammatical function of the noun in the sentence.

Nominative (Wer oder was?): the subject of the sentence, the doer of the action.

Genitive (Wessen?): the possessor of something, or the object of certain prepositions.

Dative (Wem?): the indirect object, as in the case when the object is given to someone or the object of a certain preposition.

Accusative (Wen oder was?): the direct object, the thing that directly receives the action, or the object of a certain preposition.

Today, the use of the genitive case is still rare in the spoken language of the people who speak the language, often replacing it with the dative case, similar to the Faroese cognate German. But the genitive case remains almost mandatory in written communication, public speeches and in everything that is not explicitly colloquial in German, and is still an important part of the German Bildungssprache (educational language). In television programs and films, you can often encounter a mixture of the two cases, the dative as a substitute and the regular genitive, depending on how formal or "artistic" the program is supposed to be. The use of the dative as a substitute is more common in the southern German dialects, while Germans from the northern regions (where at that time Luther's Bible in German was taught as a foreign language) use the genitive much more often. Although it became quite common not to use the genitive when formally required, a large number of Germans knew how to use it and generally did.

The dative governs the indirect object and location in a sentence.

The sentence “Ich gebe meinem Sohn einen Hund” (in Macedonian „Му давам куче на синот“)) contains the subject “ich”; the verb “gebe”; the indirect object “meinem Sohn”; and the direct object “einen Hund”.

Why is “einen Hund” a direct object and not an indirect object? Because “einen Hund” is what corresponds to the action of the subject and “meinem Sohn” is what is acted upon or the specific location of the subject.

The case of the noun after a preposition is determined by the preposition. In German, prepositions are powerful enough to change what follows to be the subordination of the type of preposition and can be difficult to master. The reason for this is that prepositions are designed to give direction, location, intensity, etc. to a sentence. The way a Macedonian speaker would point can be quite different from the way a German speaker would point. Perhaps these few examples will clarify this:

MACEDONIAN: Книгата е на масата. Постерот е на ѕидот.

"На" is a preposition. In this context, in Macedonian we understand "on" in the sense of contact between two surfaces.

GERMAN: Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch. Das Poster hängt an der Wand.

The meaning is the same – “на”. But still, these are two different prepositions “auf” and “an”. But why are there two prepositions? Because “auf” is used when it comes to horizontal contact, and “an” is used when it comes to vertical contact (Helbig & Buscha, 2001).

The declension of adjectives depends not only on the gender, number, and case of the noun it modifies, but also on whether it has no article or whether it has an indefinite or definite article.

In German, there are twelve different ways of forming the plural. Those who learn German as a foreign language learn the plural of a noun together with the noun. Although many feminine nouns form the plural correctly, many masculine and neuter nouns do not have a correct plural. For example, some plurals are formed with an "n" and some with an "en", some with an umlaut and an "e" or an umlaut and an "en", other plurals are the same as the singular, some with an "er" or an umlaut and an "er". Many pronouns taken from other languages are pluralized with an "s" (for example: Restaurant = Restaurants).

Nominal phrases in German generally consist of the following components in the following order: article, number (basic or ordinal number), adjective(s), noun, genitive attribute, position(s), relative clause, reflexive pronoun.

"Die dritte umwerfende Vorstellung des Schillerdramas in dieser Woche in Hamburg"

(Третиот зачудувачки перформанс на Шилеровата драма оваа недела во Хамбург)

The nominal phrase is often found in a relative clause. Apart from their highly modelled forms, relative pronouns in German are less complicated. There are two variants. The first, more common usage is based on the definite articles der, die, das, but with special forms in the genitive (dessen, deren) and the plural in the dative (denen). And the second, more literary and used for emphasis, is the relative usage of welcher, welche, welches. Both usages model according to gender, case and number. They take their gender and number from the noun they model, but their case is taken from their function in the sentence.

Das Haus, in dem ich wohne, ist sehr alt.

(Куќата во која живеам е многу стара.)

The modified forms depend on the number, case, and gender of the corresponding noun. The articles have the same plural forms in all three genders.

In relation to nouns, cardinal numbers are placed before adjectives, if any. If the number is relatively low, it is usually not combined with the indefinite article in the plural (for example einige or mehrere). Personal pronouns in the first or second person are placed before numerals. Personal pronouns in the third person can be used with numerals.

Adjectives in German usually come before the noun they modify. Adjectives in German have endings that depend on the case, number, and (in the singular) gender of the noun phrase, but there are actually two groups of endings, called strong and weak endings. Each group depends on the type of word that follows the adjective, and sometimes also on gender and case. Like articles, adjectives take the same plural endings in all three genders.

Third-person pronouns can be used as a replacement for nominal phrases. They have the same gender, number, and case as the original nominal phrases. This also applies to other pronouns.

Verbs in German can be divided into weak, with a dental consonant change, or strong, representing a vowel gradation (ablaut). Most verbs of both types are regular, although a large number of subgroups and anomalies occur. The only totally irregular verb in the language is "sein" (to be). However, in German as a foreign language textbooks, strong verbs are often classified as irregular. There are fewer than 200 strong and irregular verbs, and there is a tendency for strong verbs to gradually become weak.

In German, many verbs have a separable prefix that can be disconnected from their root. Examples include aussehen, to appear or look, and vorstellen, to imagine or imagine.

Peter sieht spitze in seinem Anzug aus.

(Петер изгледа згодно во неговата облека.)

Lori, kennst du meine Frau? Ja? Wer stellte euch vor?

Лори, ја познаваш ли жена ми? Да? Кој ти ја претстави?(Кој ве запозна?)

Modal particles (Abtönungspartikel) are parts of speech that are often used in spoken German. These words affect the style of the sentence, rather than conveying a specific literal meaning. Typical examples of this type of word in German are doch, mal, halt, eben, nun, schon, eh or ja. Many of these words also have more basic, specific meanings (for example: "ja" yes, "schon" already), but in their modal use this meaning is not directly expressed.

The sentence structure in German is somewhat more complex than in other languages, with phrases properly placed for both interrogative and dependent structures.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The subject of this paper's research is whether students become less motivated in learning the German language due to difficulties in mastering grammar.

As a problem of this research, I single out the opinion and attitude of some parents regarding the difficulties in learning the German language among their children, the blame lies with the teachers who teach it.

The aim of the research is to see how mastering the grammar of the German language could be facilitated in order to facilitate its learning.

Based on the subject of research, the methodology used during the research is determined, and the methods will be combined depending on the content, i.e. the element being researched.

The research is developmental in nature, with the aim of determining whether children from our city and the wider region face learning difficulties in mastering the grammar of the German language.

According to the content, this research is social, as it treats a phenomenon that is occurring at the same time in the Southwestern region of the Republic of North Macedonia.

According to the time duration of monitoring the research phenomenon, this research is transferable, as it will be realized in a short period of time, in different places, under different conditions.

Primary and secondary research is used to prepare the paper. Secondary sources refer to professional literature, scientific papers in the field of foreign language curricula, in theory and practice.

The general scientific methods used in data processing are:

Analytical-synthetic method - analysis of certain phenomena, breaking them down to their basic parts, grouping them according to common characteristics and, based on that, drawing and presenting new specific conclusions.

Inductive-deductive method - establishing general conclusions through individual specific views and observations, and vice versa, arriving at new specific conclusions through general views.

Descriptive method - as a procedure for describing or presenting the subject of scientific research with scientific interpretation and explanation is one of the goals of science (along with prediction and explanation). The descriptive method, as the name suggests, describes objects and phenomena. Descriptive methods can be observational methods, surveys and case studies. Descriptive research can be explained as a description of the state of things at the moment when the researcher observes them without changing any of the variable elements. In doing so, various aspects of a phenomenon or object, their characteristics and/or behavior are described. A large number of scientific and professional literature and specific research by prominent experts from the country and abroad are used in the description.

Statistical method - the collected data were statistically processed, interpreted and then analyzed, based on which appropriate conclusions will be drawn about the researched phenomenon. The statistical method and its application will enable sorting and organizing the previously collected data according

to various criteria, all of which will be supported by statistical tables and graphical displays in order to more easily and clearly determine the relations of conditionality of this phenomenon.

For the purposes of this paper, analysis was used as a procedure, which, with the help of a survey questionnaire, allowed for the collection of data for the research of teachers and parents in the Southwestern region of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The obtained data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

- Methods of scientific knowledge

The interpretation of the obtained data is based on several methods of scientific inference, namely:

a. basic procedures of scientific inference

- analysis;

б. auxiliary procedures of scientific inference:

- comparative analysis.

Staffing plan: Teachers and parents were surveyed at random.

Timeline: The research was conducted from April 2025 to June 2025 according to the following schedule:

1. Technical preparation of the survey questionnaires;
2. The survey questionnaires were delivered and answered by randomly selected respondents.
3. Collection and classification of the survey questionnaires.

The results of the research will be beneficial for parents, teachers who teach foreign languages, but also for the entire social community.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The research included 200 randomly selected respondents, some foreign language teachers, some parents of students and some students. They were sent questionnaires electronically, consisting of three parts: demographic data, suggested answers and assessment. The completed questionnaires were sent again by e-mail. After they were processed, conclusions were drawn.

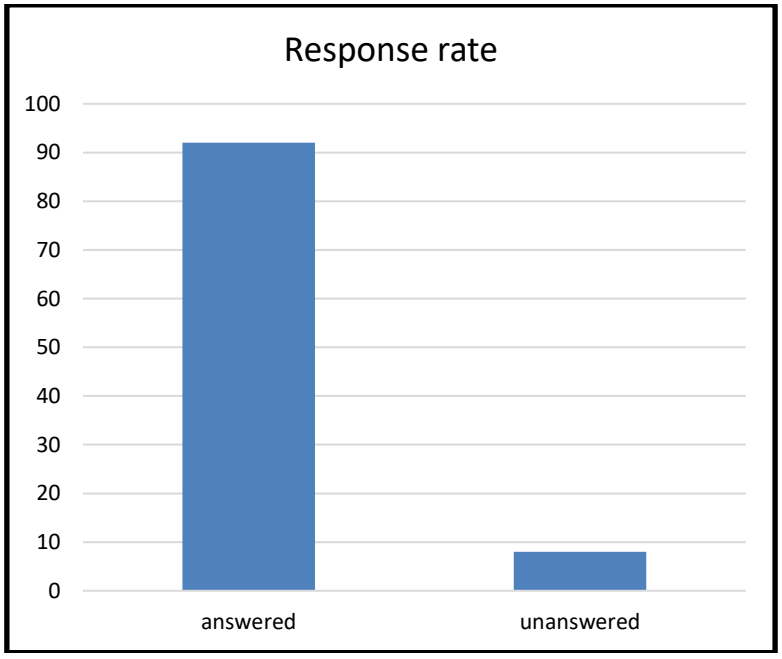


Chart No. 1. Structure of respondents according to the response rate to the survey questionnaire

From the survey questionnaires sent to the respondents, foreign language teachers, parents of students, and students, we received a response rate of 92%, a percentage with which we can be satisfied because this topic has aroused great interest among them.

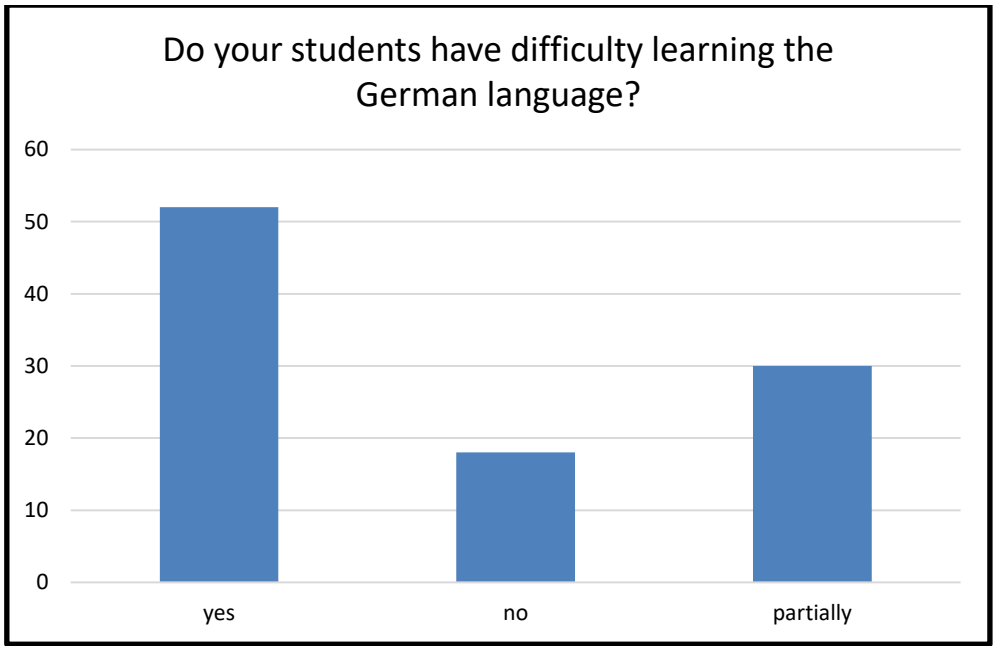


Chart No. 2. Do your students have difficulties learning the German language?

The survey question posed to the respondents – teachers, which reads: Do your students have difficulties in learning the German language? The results we obtained are graphically presented in Chart No. 2. As can be seen, the majority of the total number of respondents, i.e. 52%, gave an affirmative answer, 30% declared a partial answer, and the smallest part, or 18%, gave a negative answer.

We can conclude that more than half of the teachers who were the subject of our research stated that their students have difficulties learning the German language.

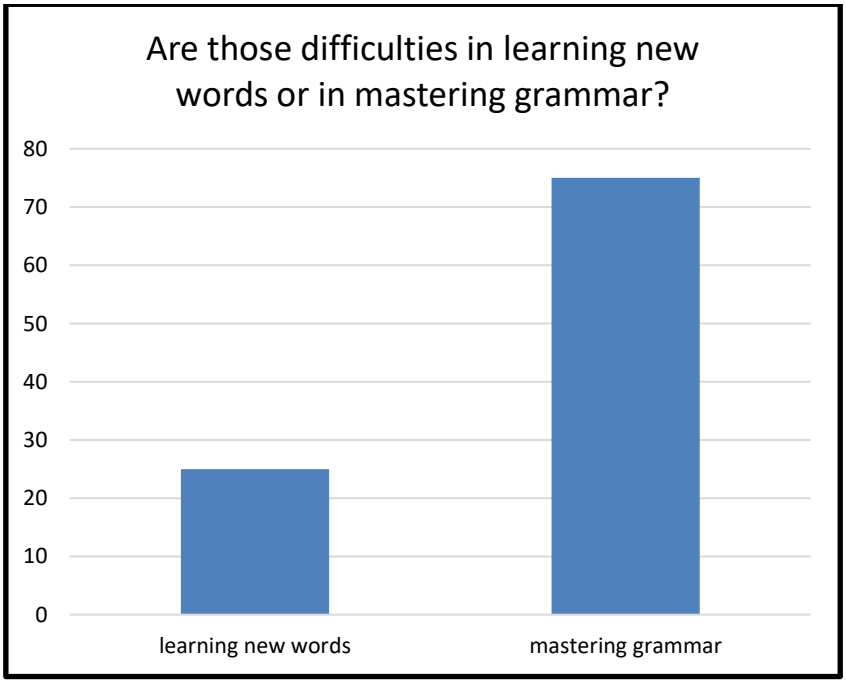


Chart No. 3. Are these difficulties in learning new words or in mastering grammar?

The next survey question that was sent to teachers complements the previous one and refers to the clarification of the difficulties in learning the German language. Is it more difficult to learn new words or to master grammar? Three quarters of the total number of respondents - teachers, or 75%, stated that their students have difficulties in mastering German grammar. One quarter or 25% stated that their students have difficulties in learning new words.

These results are graphically presented in Chart No. 3.

It can be concluded that teachers have realized that most of their students have difficulty mastering the grammar of the German language, and this makes learning the language more difficult.

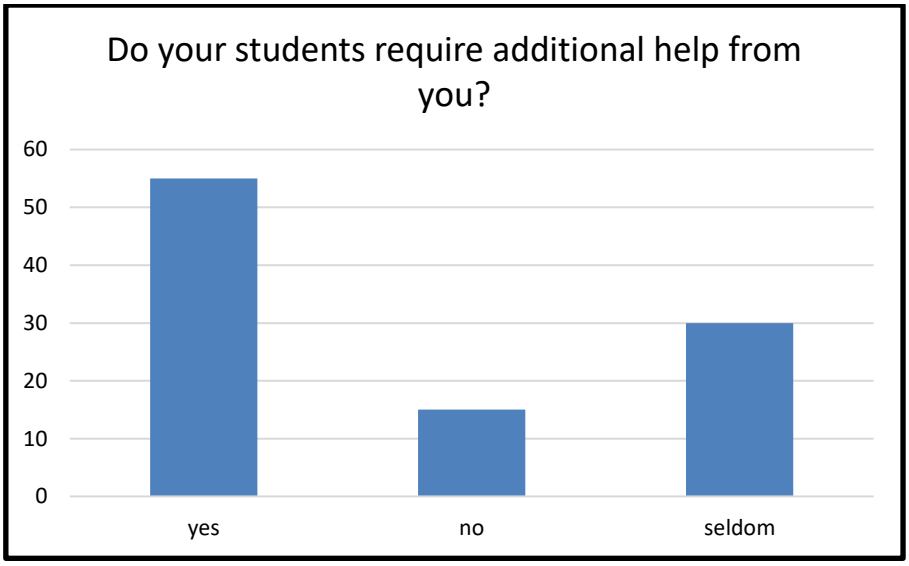


Chart No. 4. Do your students require additional help from you?

Do your students seek additional help from teachers to cope with difficulties in learning the German language was the next survey question submitted to teachers, and it complements the previous two. As we can see from graph no. 4. which presents the results of the teachers' responses, 55% of them stated that students seek additional help from them. 30% stated that this help is rarely requested, and the smallest part or 15% stated that the help is not requested.

We can conclude that half of the teachers stated that their students require additional help from them in learning the German language.

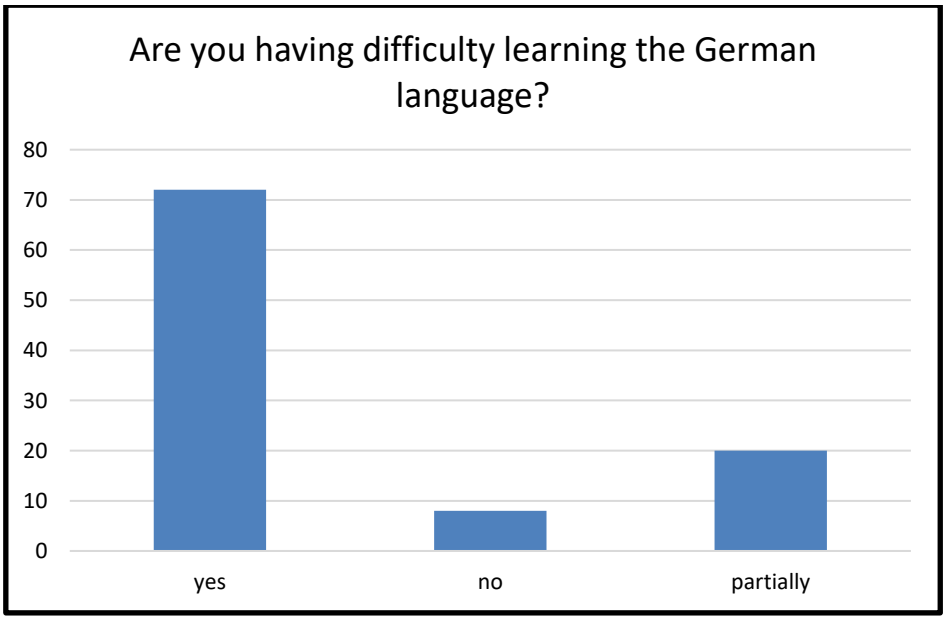


Chart No. 5. Do you have difficulties learning the German language?

The next survey question that was submitted to the respondents – students who are learning the German language, concerns the difficulties in learning the language. As we can see, a very high percentage, 72% of the total number, stated that they have difficulties in learning the language. 20% of them stated that they have some difficulties, and only 8% stated that they learn the German language easily.

These results are graphically presented in Chart No. 5.

We can conclude that two-thirds of the students reported having difficulty learning the German language.

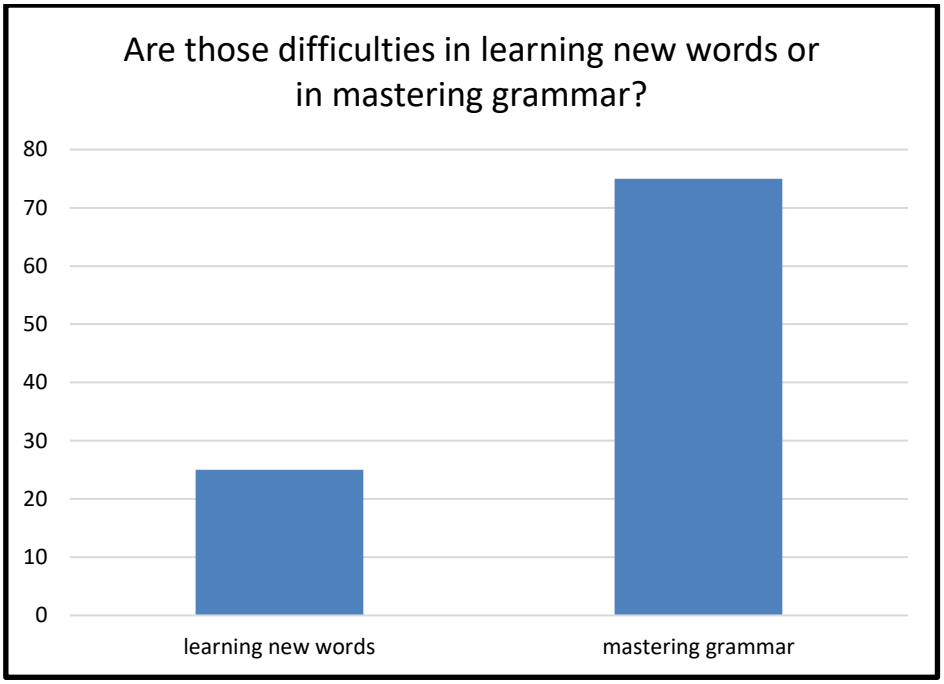


Chart No. 6. Are these difficulties in learning new words or in mastering grammar?

The next survey question that was sent to the students complements the one that was asked to their teachers, and refers to the clarification of the difficulties in learning the German language. Is it more difficult to learn new words or to master the grammar? Three quarters of the total number of respondents – students, or 75%, stated that they have difficulties in mastering German grammar. One quarter or 25% stated that they have difficulties in learning new words. These results are graphically presented in Chart No. 6. If a comparison is made, we will see that the answers to the same question asked to teachers and students are identical.

It can be concluded that two-thirds of students have difficulty mastering the grammar of the German language, and this makes learning the language difficult.

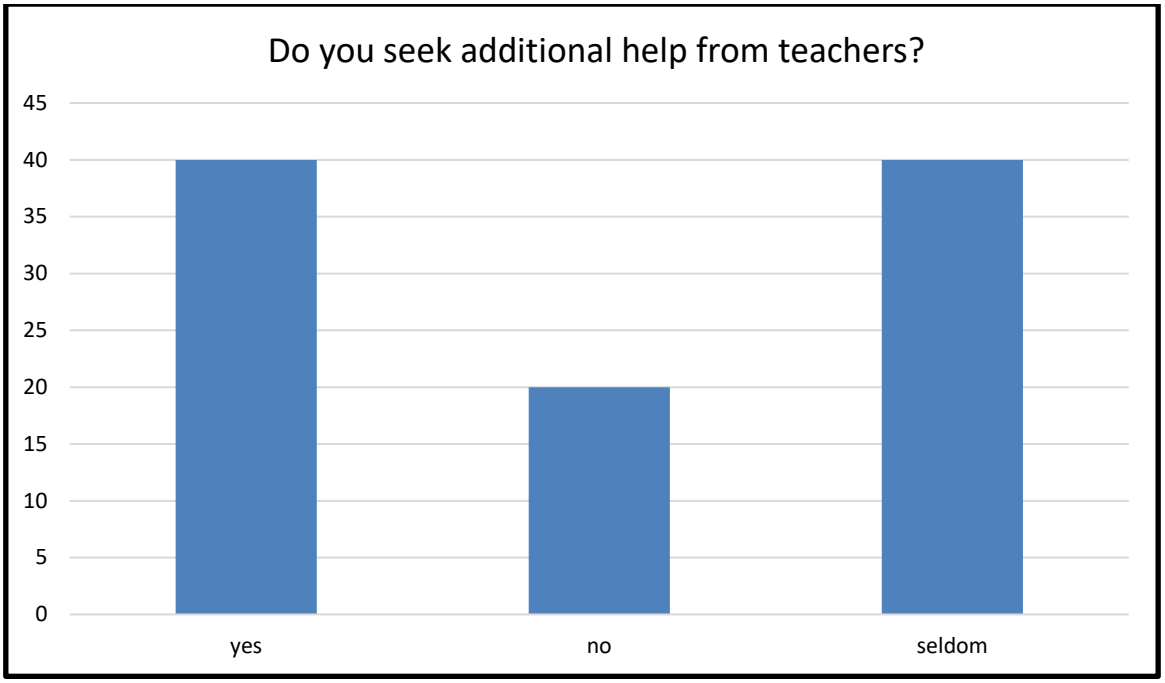


Chart No. 7. Do you ask for additional help from teachers?

To overcome difficulties in learning the German language, whether students seek additional help from their teachers was the next survey question, and the results of their responses are graphically presented in Chart No. 7.

As can be seen, an identical percentage of 40% of students stated that they require additional help, that is, they rarely request it, and 20% stated that they do not need that help.

We can conclude that although students stated that they need additional help in learning the German language, they seek that help from their teachers.

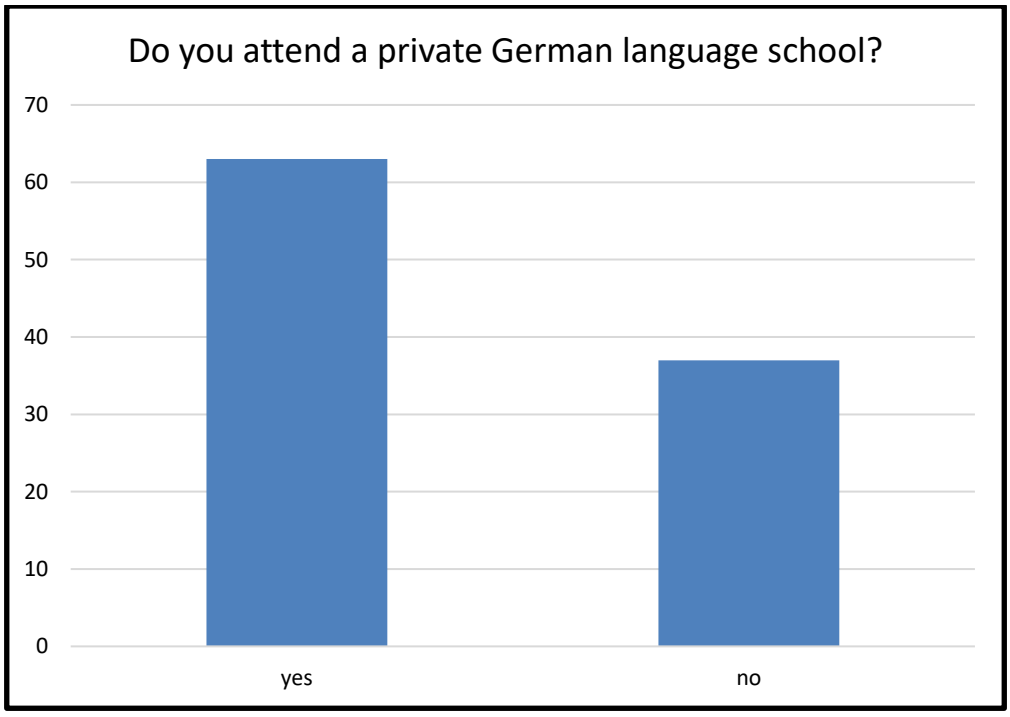


Chart No. 8. Do you attend a private German language school?

Whether students see visiting private foreign language schools as a help in overcoming difficulties in learning the German language was the survey question answered by the students who participated in our research.

More than half of the total number of respondents or 63% stated with a confirmed answer that they attend foreign language schools. One third or 37% stated that they do not attend these schools.

These results are graphically presented in Chart No. 8.

Based on this, we can conclude that more than half of the students stated that they attend private schools to overcome difficulties in learning the German language.

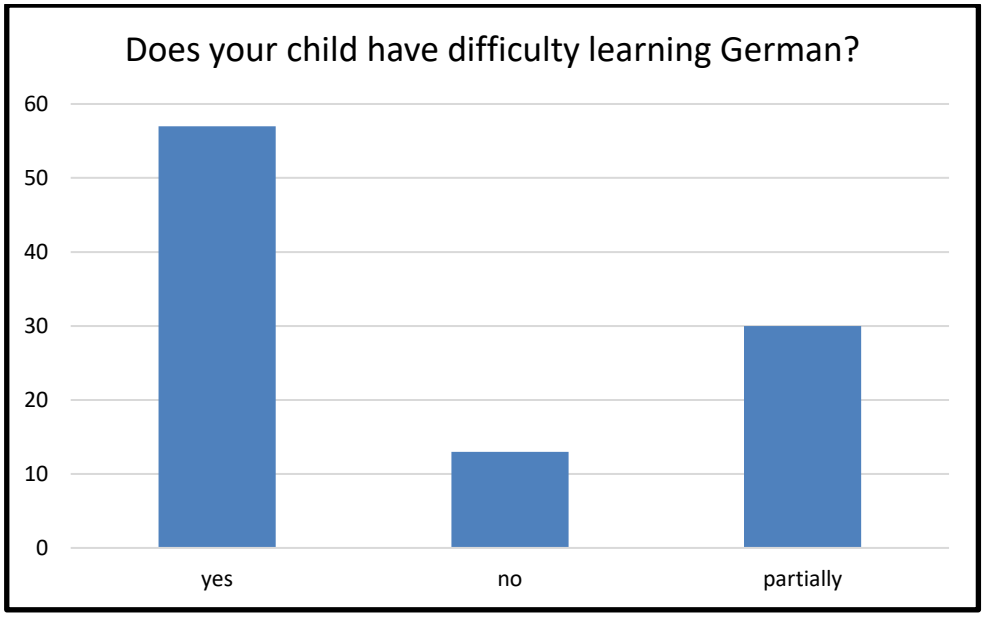


Chart No. 9. Does your child have difficulty learning the German language?

Chart No. 9. contains the results of the statements of the respondents – parents of students learning German, to the same survey question that was previously asked to their children and to teachers who teach German. As we can see, 58% of the total number responded with an affirmative answer, 30% decided with a partial answer, and the smallest percentage or 12% gave a negative answer, i.e. that their children do not have difficulties in learning the German language.

We can conclude that more than half of the parents stated that their children have difficulty learning the German language.

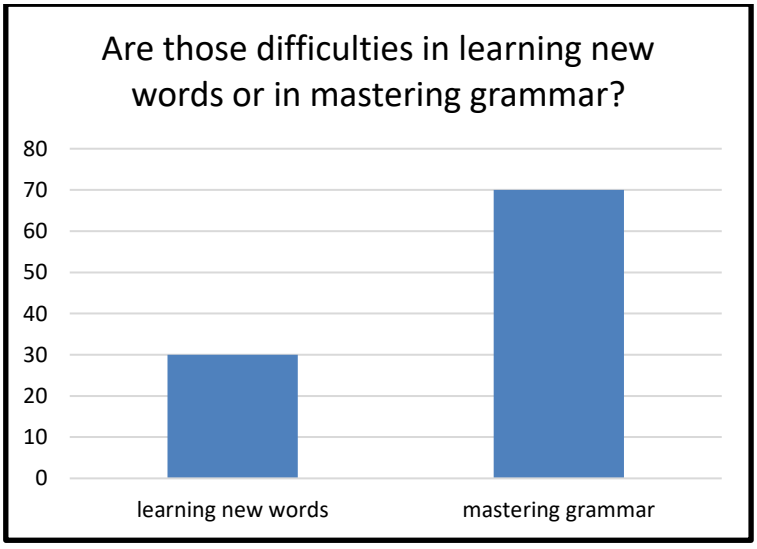


Chart No. 10. Are these difficulties in learning new words or in mastering grammar?

The next survey question that was sent to parents complements the previous one and refers to the clarification of the difficulties in learning the German language. Is it more difficult to learn new words or to master grammar? More than two-thirds of the total number of respondents – parents, or 70%, stated that their children have difficulties in mastering German grammar. One-third or 30% stated that their children have difficulties in learning new words.

These results are graphically presented in Chart No. 10.

It can be concluded that parents have also realized that for the most part their children have difficulty mastering the grammar of the German language, and this makes learning the language more difficult.

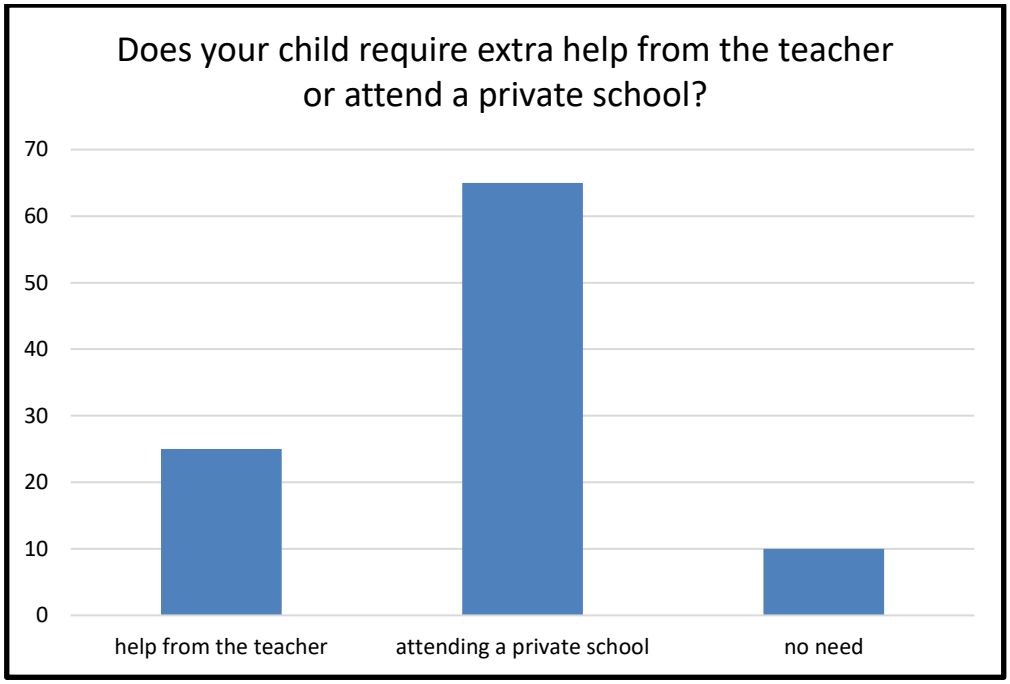


Chart No. 11. Does your child require additional help from the teacher or attend a private school?

The last survey question that was submitted to parents concerns their choice for solving the problem related to overcoming difficulties in learning the German language.

Chart No. 11 graphically presents the obtained results.

As we can see, the smallest percentage, or 10%, of the total number of parents who were the subject of the survey stated that their children do not seek additional help in learning the language. One third, or 35%, stated that their children seek help from their teachers, and the largest proportion, or 65%, stated that their children attend private schools.

We can conclude that more than half of the parents stated that their children attend private schools to facilitate learning the German language.

CONCLUSION

Learning a foreign language cannot be called an "easy process" because children are learning a language that is not their native language and is not a language they hear every day. Some authors agree that this process will be successful if quality teachers are involved. Some say that the process is conditioned by the students themselves, and some say that the family and living environment have an influence. In my personal opinion, this process cannot be successful without the simultaneous inclusion of all three previously mentioned factors.

In order to facilitate learning the German language, we conducted a survey involving German teachers, their students, and parents.

According to the results of the research conducted, we can draw several conclusions:

- From the survey questionnaires sent to students, foreign language teachers, and parents of students, we received a response rate of 92%, which in my opinion is a satisfactory percentage because the topic aroused great interest among them.
- More than half of the teachers who were the subject of our research stated that their students had difficulties learning the German language.
- Teachers have noticed that most of their students have difficulty mastering the grammar of the German language, which makes learning the language difficult.
- Half of the teachers reported that their students seek additional help from them in learning the German language.
- Two-thirds of students reported having difficulty learning the German language.
- Two-thirds of students have difficulty mastering German grammar, which makes learning the language difficult.
- Although students have stated that they need additional help in learning the German language, they rarely or only rarely seek this help from their teachers.
- More than half of the students reported attending private schools to overcome difficulties in learning the German language.
- More than half of the parents stated that their children have difficulties or have some difficulty in learning the German language.
- Most parents have noticed that their children have difficulty mastering the grammar of the German language, which makes learning the language more difficult.
- More than half of parents reported that their children attend private schools to facilitate learning the German language.

As my recommendation based on the research conducted and the results I obtained from it, I would like to state the following:

- To find a way, through the joint efforts of parents and teachers, to make it easier for students to learn the German language.

Only in this way will students be able to overcome the difficulties in learning the German language, be motivated, and successfully learn this foreign language.

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