

## Are Some Languages Harder to Learn and Teach Than Others?

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**Abstract :** The author believes that modern spoken languages should be equally difficult (or easy) to learn, since all normal children learning their native languages do so at approximately the same rate and with the same competence, progressing from easy to more complex grammar and syntax in the same way. Why then, do some languages seem more difficult than others? Perhaps people are referring to the written language, where it may be true that mastering Chinese requires more time than French, which in turn requires more time than Spanish. But this may be marginal, since Chinese and French children quickly catch up to their Spanish peers in reading comprehension. Rather, the real differences in difficulty derive from two sources: hardened L1 language habits trying to cope with contrasting L2 habits; and unfamiliarity with unique L2 characteristics causing faulty expectations. It would seem that effective L2 teaching and learning must take these two sources of difficulty into consideration. The author feels that the latter (faulty expectations) causes the greatest difficulty, making effective teaching and learning somewhat different for each given foreign language. Examples from Chinese and other languages are presented.

**Keywords :** learning different languages, language learning difficulties, faulty language expectations

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