

## Bringing learning strategies to the student: The FSI language learning consultation service

**Madeline Ehrman**

*Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State<sup>1</sup>*

**Introduction.** The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) provides full-time intensive training in some sixty languages to adult members of the U.S. foreign affairs community. Students at FSI are about forty years of age on average, and about two-thirds are between thirty and fifty. They come from a variety of agencies, ranging from the Department of State and the U.S. Information Agency to the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce. Training generally includes five to six hours of daily contact time and homework; courses are twenty-four to eighty-eight weeks in duration, depending on the difficulty of the language for English speakers.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, FSI language students tended to be relatively field independent and analytic in style (Chapelle 1995; Chapelle and Green 1992; Ehrman 1996b, 1997; Witkin and Goodenough 1981); that is, they could quickly pick out what was important to learn, reconceptualize easily, and work well with material out of context. They were often accomplished language learners who had a good control of learning strategies needed for their classroom training. They were able to pick out quickly what they needed to focus their learning on and concentrate, without becoming distracted. They worked well with grammar and vocabulary with minimal context.

In recent years, however, the student body at FSI has become increasingly heterogeneous in terms of language learning aptitude and learning style. Many more students than before are field dependent (i.e., have difficulty working with material out of context and in setting learning priorities). Such students often learn material in context well, however, especially if they have some “scaffolding” support from the training program in the form of direct explanations, drill and practice, and the like. A substantial number of other students are both field dependent and not very adept at making use of language in context and authentic material (created by native speakers and readers for native speakers and readers). Many entering language students at FSI are more naïve than their predecessors about how to learn languages. Thus, there is now a greater need to help students develop effective learning strategies.

**History of the Learning Consultation Service.** Like other institutions, FSI initially attempted to offer group workshops in learning strategies. As in other cases, this approach was found to be ineffective: students had widely differing needs, and the learning strategies and suggestions introduced at the beginning of language training were not necessarily available later when they really needed it (Chamot and Rubin 1994; Rees-Miller 1993, 1994; Wenden 1995). A new way to help students with learning strategies was required. A number of institutions, many of them outside the United States, have tried training students to achieve autonomy as learners and then work with a variety of materials and programs partially on their own (Benson and Voller 1997; Dickinson 1995; Fitzgerald, Morrall, and Morrison 1996; Wenden 1991). This approach would have required more curriculum revision and teacher development than FSI could support at the time. Instead, FSI needed a way to provide learning strategies assistance within the existing full-time intensive training structure. Ideally, the teachers would be the source of strategy intervention, on a “just-in-time” basis. However, FSI has more than 200 language teachers, and it was unrealistic to attempt to bring all of them to the point where they could make sophisticated learning strategies interventions in a short time.

Instead, based on Ehrman’s experience working with other government institutions (box 1) and on the results of research conducted at FSI on learning styles (Ehrman 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Ehrman and Leaver unpublished), we chose to work through learning style diagnosis and a small group of carefully trained specialists who would work with students and teachers to help meet students’ needs. Over time, it is planned that increasing numbers of classroom teachers will become familiar with the learning style models and the concepts in use, as well as the learning strategies associated with the various styles. This is an evolutionary process, and not every teacher is equally adept at using styles and strategies to advise students. The role of the specialists will therefore continue to be critical.

There are four separate roles in this program, which has been formalized recently as the Language Learning Consultation Service (LCS). Staff in all of the roles work together to make the LCS succeed. The first is, of course, the classroom teacher, who focuses on daily instruction and the immediate learning of the students. Second, the language-training supervisor oversees the work of the teachers, provides general structure to the curriculum, serves as section administrator, and may work with students who have special needs. Third, there is a small corps of “counselors” working in the central administration who administer and interpret the learning style questionnaires when students arrive. Finally, in many sections there are specialists called learning consultants who advise and advocate on behalf of students. Most of these are experienced teachers who have been trained to provide follow-through for the diagnostic learning style information gathered when students arrive. They also use information about learning styles to advise students on effective learning strategies for various kinds of learning tasks.

**Box 1. History of the learning consultation initiative**

1988–1989	Ehrman worked with DLI on design of a pilot consultation service (Lett and O’Mara 1990).
Early 1990s	CIA Language School experimented with a similar initiative and still provides advisory services (Lea Christensen 1998, personal communication).
1991	FSI’s School of Language Studies began its Language Learning Profiles Project, which consisted of research into individual differences that affect language learning. This research continues at a low level.
1993–1995	FSI attempted to provide group training to students in learning strategies with variable success, limited by the wide variation of student needs that made workshops impractical.
1994–1995	Occasional requests for assistance emerged from the Language Learning Profiles Project; training supervisors began to refer “problem” students.
1994–1995	The French Pilot Project was the outcome of a re-evaluation of how FSI designs and implements language courses. As part of the Pilot Project, Ehrman designed the role of learning consultant and trained the first two learning consultants.
1995–present	The French Pilot Project was expanded to other languages and renamed Accelerated Personalized Training (APT). The formal learning style diagnostics that proved most useful in the Language Learning Profiles Project were integrated into the APT initiative, as was the Learning Consultant role.
August 1995	A formal invitation to participate in the Learning Consultation Program was extended to all entering students for the first time. Those not in “APT” languages were encouraged to work with one of the “counselors” whether or not they were having difficulties, in order to enhance their learning.
May 1999	The program has two “counselors” (and two in training) who interpret results of the diagnostic questionnaires in individual consultations. (Ehrman still does the group sessions and the special cases.) Between forty and ninety students from every input group go through the entire process.

The Learning Consultation Service is now available to U.S. government employees who are not in FSI language training and is listed in the FSI annual schedule of courses.

Content made available by  
 Georgetown University Press,  
 Digital Georgetown, and  
 the Department of Languages and Linguistics.

Because they provide much of the follow-up advice on learning strategies, the learning consultants are the key to the success of this program. A summary of their role is provided in box 2. The remainder of this paper focuses on the “counselor” and learning consultant roles.

All incoming students are introduced to the Learning Consultation Service and are invited to participate in it, whether or not they are having trouble with their language learning. They are urged to use the service to find out how to make better use of their time at FSI. They are offered confidentiality, and participation is voluntary. Some participate in the LCS program as part of their initial training, but they are free to decline to participate. Others take the initiative to request the service; still others are referred to the LCS by their teachers, language training supervisors, or learning consultants. Box 3 displays the learning consultation process. Box 4 shows the number of consultations and the languages that used the Learning Consultation Service in 1998.

#### **Box 2. About the Learning Consultant**

- Most learning consultants are teachers. A few are training supervisors.
- Each learning consultant serves a high-enrollment language section, for example, Spanish or Russian, or a group of low-enrollment languages, such as the languages of the Baltic region.
- The work of learning consultants complements that of the two general “counselors” who provide the individual feedback and special consultations in Research, Evaluation, and Development.
- Learning consultants are familiar with the diagnostic scales; they usually receive special training to understand them.
- Learning consultation is a standard feature in accelerated personalized training (APT) programs.
- A learning consultant’s group has formed to share ideas and tips on dealing with challenges and to discuss special cases. This is so successful that some training supervisors are requesting that non-consultant teachers attend for the staff development value of the experience.

#### **Learning Consultant responsibilities:**

- Sits in on the individual feedback session with the student and participates in discussion with the counselor and the student about how to use the information gained from the questionnaires.
- Conveys relevant information to the student’s teachers (with student permission).
- Consults periodically with the student to enable the student and the teaching staff to use the information gained through the diagnostic process for the student’s benefit.

**Box 3. The Learning Consultation Process**

1. *Making the Consultation Service available.* Students are invited on input day to participate in the Consultation Service. They are assured that
  - it is voluntary; and
  - it is for people who are not having trouble as well as to help those who are.
2. *Completing the diagnostic questionnaires:*
  - If in languages participating in the accelerated personalized training (APT) initiative, students complete the questionnaires on their first day of training.
  - Others may “walk in” to the Research, Evaluation, and Development Division at any time and are given the questionnaires at that time.
  - Language sections sometimes refer students who are having difficulties.
3. *Group sessions:*
  - After scoring, general information about the questionnaires is provided in large-group sessions to students who complete them at the beginning of training.
4. Other students receive the general information in individual sessions with ‘counselors.’ *Individual sessions:*
  - Students in APT programs may sign up for individual feedback sessions. They usually have a section representative present.
  - “Walk-in” students always have individual sessions at which they receive the general information about the questionnaires.
5. *Follow-up:*
  - in the language section: the system works best if the student’s designated Learning Consultant takes responsibility for ensuring that information is used to the student’s benefit by other teachers and by the student (e.g., advice on preparation and classroom strategies).
  - Individual students: Students may choose to return for follow-up consultations on special learning strategies or management of anxiety, for instance.

The Learning Consultation Service is a key component of accelerated personalized training (APT), another FSI initiative to enhance the quality of the training students receive. APT has four strands: individualization, flexibility, multiple ways of delivering training (including educational technology), and attention to specific professional language use needs. Individualization begins with comprehensive analysis of student learning styles that is exploited throughout training by students and teachers to maximize learning efficiency. Students are empowered to make

**Box 4. Learning Consultation Use in 1998**

<i>Total number of participants</i>	388 students
<i>Participation as a regular part of training program</i>	16 languages
Albanian	
Dutch	
Finnish	
French	
German	
Greek	
Hebrew	
Italian	
Polish	
Portuguese	
Romanian	
Russian	
Spanish	
Swedish	
Ukrainian	
Turkish	
<i>Self-referrals and referrals from language section</i>	13 languages
Amharic	
Arabic	
Armenian	
Azerbaijani	
Bengali	
Cambodian	
Chinese	
Czech	
Japanese	
Korean	
Serbian	
Thai	
Urdu	

effective learning choices and make sure that their ongoing needs are met. Programs participating in APT provide choices and options in the curriculum; the self-knowledge that students achieve through the LCS and the appropriate support provided by counselors and learning consultants promote greater learner autonomy. It is believed that this kind of individualization and opportunity for making choices will help develop employees who can continue to learn in much less structured settings overseas.

**Procedures.** In almost all cases, students complete a set of questionnaires (see Box 5 and Ehrman 1996b) that evaluate learning styles and highlight the individual's preferred learning strategies in the classroom and on their own. All students read and hear explanations of the questionnaires, and they can then request an individual feedback session that focuses on what the questionnaire results mean for them. In language programs with learning consultants, the consultant attends that session, so that the counselor, the student, and the learning consultant can discuss what the questionnaire results mean for the student. The learning consultant is then expected to continue communicating with the student throughout his or her training, ensuring that individual needs are met and providing on-the-spot strategy suggestions. Some students return to the counselors for additional expert strategy consultation on such topics as managing anxiety.

**Learning strategies.** The general learning strategy model in use in this program is from Schmeck (1988): the LCS calls student attention to the distinction between surface, achievement, and deep strategies. Surface strategies are those that are needed to get a job done and no more. Achievement strategies are those that result in a good grade or build relationships with teachers or other students. Deep strategies make associations between what is new and what is known and among concepts and experiences. Deep strategies are the ones that most directly result in long-term retention, although achievement strategies can make use of deep strategies possible. For example, a discussion with one's teacher (achievement strategy) might result in suggestions for effective "deep" learning techniques.

**Diagnostic instruments for styles and strategies.** The LCS uses a biographical data questionnaire to learn about the student's educational and language-learning history. This simple questionnaire serves as the base for finding out a great deal about how the student has gone about learning languages, what has worked well and what has been difficult, and the student's feelings about language learning. The other instruments currently used are the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), Motivation and Strategies Questionnaire (MSQ), the Ehrman and Leaver Learning Style Questionnaire (E&L), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and the Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire (HBQ).

*The Modern Language Aptitude Test.* The MLAT (Carroll and Sapon 1959) has proved useful for addressing learning strategies in individual conferences with students. It has five subscales ("parts") that are used for examination of styles and preferred strategies. The parts are listed in the appendix to this paper.

Learning strategies are of particular importance in part V of the MLAT. The interviewer calls the students' attention to strategies when discussing this paired associates exercise in which the test taker must learn twenty-four foreign language words in a short time. Because it is a complete task, it can be interpreted as

<b>Box 5. Diagnostic dimensions and instruments currently used</b>	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Instrument(s)</b>
<i>Biographic background</i> age education (level, subjects, GPA) previous language learning experiences special problems (e.g., vision, learning disability)	Biographic Background Questionnaire
<i>Personality factors</i> Extraversion-Introversion Sensing-Intuition Thinking-Feeling Judging-Perceiving Tolerance of ambiguity  Field sensitivity	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire (HBQ)  Ehrman and Leaver Style Questionnaire, HBQ
<i>Perceptual and cognitive styles</i> visual-auditory-kinesthetic field independent-dependent field sensitive-insensitive  impulsive-reflective random-sequential polyactivity	Some examples: Motivation and Strategy Questionnaire Ehrman and Leaver Style Questionnaire Modern Language Aptitude Test subscales  Ehrman and Leaver Style Questionnaire Ehrman and Leaver Style Questionnaire Motivation and Strategy Questionnaire
<i>Language learning aptitude</i> (cognitive factors)	Modern Language Aptitude Test
<i>Motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy</i> motivation self-efficacy as a language learner anxiety perfectionism	Motivation and Strategies Questionnaire
<i>Learning strategies</i> open-ended vs. closed-ended activities preferred specific learning activities (in and out of the classroom)	Motivation and Strategies Questionnaire

providing some information about (a) student word-learning strategies and (b) certain metacognitive strategies of planning a task, keeping an appropriate pace of learning, and evaluating one's progress. (The metacognitive activities are done so rapidly that most students are unaware that they are doing them.)

MLAT part III (spelling clues) is a highly speeded exercise that can also provide useful information about how students manage a task. In this part, students must decode an English word in unusual spelling and select the closest synonym from a list of four possibilities. One of the most interesting findings to come out of part III is the tendency of some students to perseverate in an approach that is not paying off for them, instead of shifting to a more productive one. This kind of information emerges when the counselor asks students what they did on each MLAT part on which they received a low score.

The MLAT also provides information about learning styles that affect student learning strategy choices. The most important feature of the MLAT for learning consultants and others involved in the consultation process is that it examines field independence using verbal stimuli rather than the visual-spatial ones that are usually employed. For example, high scores on MLAT parts III (spelling clues) and IV (words in sentences) suggest the ability to make use of field independent strategies, that is, seeing what is important, setting immediate processing priorities, and reconceptualizing what is presented (Ehrman 1996b, 1997, 1998b). Students who have a field independent approach usually need relatively little help with strategies for analysis and direct learning, though some may not learn well through material in context. Students who respond well to material in context often do considerably better on MLAT part II (phonetic script) than on parts III and IV. Such students, if they do not have field independent skills, may need assistance with extracting selected material from the context or dealing with decontextualized material. Some students, usually the best classroom language learners, do well across the board on MLAT parts II, III, and IV, and show both field independence and the ability to learn successfully from rich contexts. (See Ehrman 1998b for more information use of the MLAT in language counseling.)

*Motivation and Strategy Questionnaire.* Additional strategy information comes from the motivation and strategies questionnaire (see Ehrman 1996b). This questionnaire has a section in which respondents can endorse or reject a set of fairly common classroom activities. In another section, they indicate how much they use a variety of study approaches, such as jumping right in to a task. This information is used to corroborate other information from other instruments specifically aimed at learning styles, but it is also used to address learning strategies directly.

*Ehrman and Leaver Learning Style Questionnaire.* A self-report instrument that focuses on learning style, the E&L (Ehrman and Leaver unpublished) is an experimental instrument that explores cognitive styles, specifically those that

relate to the dimension commonly called “global-analytic.” Ehrman and Leaver (unpublished) have reconceptualized this dimension, renaming it “synoptic-ectenic” to avoid using terms already in use with other meanings. (“Synopsis” refers to processes done almost unconsciously so that the knowledge or insights come to awareness with relatively little effort; “ectasis,” the Greek opposite of synopsis, refers to processes that take either considerable conscious control or rely on outside structure.) The base construct is represented by ten subscales such as synthetic-analytic, random-sequential, and leveling-sharpening (box 6 and table 1). During the interview, this questionnaire sometimes evokes discussion of learning strategies. For example, an interviewer may suggest building sentences to a student who self-reports a strong preference for analyzing but who needs to develop more “synthetic” skills.

**Table 1.** E & L learning style questionnaire, v.2: Descriptive statistics for subscales and general score (N = 375)

Scale	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Range
Analog-digital	13.6	3.8	14	14	3-27
Concrete-abstract	12.0	4.1	12	12	3-26
Field independent-field dependent	13.6	4.2	13	12	3-24
Field sensitive-field insensitive	12.7	4.6	12	12	3-26
Global-particular	14.1	4.3	14	12	3-26
Impulsive-reflective	14.7	4.9	15	12	4-25
Inductive-deductive	16.6	4.7	17	17	3-27
Leveling-sharpening	13.8	4.0	14	12	3-25
Random-sequential	16.4	4.8	16	16	3-27
Synthetic-analytic	13.9	5.2	14	12	3-27
E&L General Score	35.8	12.6	32	32	11-90

From Ehrman and Leaver 2000. Note: lower scores indicate synopsis.

**Box 6. E&L Learning Style Questionnaire: Subscale Definitions**

**Field sensitivity** *as learning style*: prefers to address material as part of context and often picks up material by “osmosis.” It relates to wholes that cannot be disassembled. It can be compared to illumination by a floodlight that shows the whole scene.

**Field insensitivity**: makes little or no use of the whole context and often excludes “incidental” learning.

**Field independence**: *as learning style*: prefers to separate material from context. It can be compared to a spotlight that focuses sharply on one thing, in contrast to field sensitivity.

**Field dependence**: relies on context and does not select out what is important for focus.

**Random (nonlinear)**: follow internally developed order of processing.

**Sequential (linear)**: follows externally provided order of processing.

**Global processing**: attends to gestalts and “big picture”; is aware of “forests” (vs. trees), oriented toward processing from the “top down.”

**Particular processing**: attends to discrete items and details, is aware of “trees” (vs. forests), oriented towards processing from “bottom up.”

**Inductive**: goes from specific to the general, generalizes from experience.

**Deductive**: goes from the general to specific, applies generalizations to experience.

**Synthesis**: comprehends through assembly of components into a constructed whole.

**Analysis**: comprehends through disassembly into components.

**Analogue**: qualitative or metaphoric approach to interpreting experience.

**Digital**: quantitative or literal approach to interpreting experience.

**Concrete**: interacts with the world directly, learns through application, often physical, of knowledge. Experiential.

**Abstract**: interacts with the world through cognitive constructs, learns from formal rendition of knowledge. Theoretical.

**Leveling**: often does not notice disparities and may seek to reduce them; looks for similarities. Tends not to notice articulations within composites.

**Sharpening**: notices disparities and seeks to explore and account for them. Tends to be aware of componential structure.

**Impulsivity**: reacts quickly in acting or speaking with little or no conscious “thinking it through”; acts on “gut”; thought may follow action.

**Reflectivity**: “thinks it through” before action; often does not trust “gut reaction”; action usually follows thought.

The E&L addresses field independence and a related concept, “field sensitivity.” Field independence is often contrasted with field dependence, which can mean either lack of field independence or a responsiveness to picking up material in the environment in a broad, almost osmotic way. In order to avoid this ambiguity, Ehrman (1996b, 1997) contrasts field independence with its absence (field dependence), and on a different scale, contrasts field sensitivity, that is, responsiveness to the surrounding environment, with its absence (field insensitivity). A student can be both field independent and field sensitive, one or the other, or neither. (The best language learners are often both field independent and field sensitive; that is, they can work with material that is not embedded in context or can see what is most important, and they can also pick up language in a relatively global way from being exposed to it.) Field sensitivity is closely allied to the constructs measured by MLAT part II and the Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire. The E&L adopts Ehrman’s (1996b, 1997) model of field independence versus field dependence and field sensitivity versus field insensitivity.

*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire.* The MBTI (Myers and McCaulley 1985) and the HBQ (Hartmann 1991) are personality instruments. Although they do not directly address learning strategies, they reflect learning styles and have substantial implications for strategy choices. The MBTI, used for second language acquisition research since 1989 (Ehrman and Oxford 1989, 1990), has scales that address extraversion and introversion, sensing (concrete and practical) and intuition (symbol- and meaning-oriented), thinking (logic-based decisions) and feeling (values-based decisions), and judging (closure-orientation) and perceiving (open-ended). All of these have classroom implications; specific relations between MBTI scales and learning strategies are outlined in Ehrman (1989).

The HBQ addresses the distinction between thick and thin ego boundaries. This scale is operationally defined as the relative need to compartmentalize one’s experience. Thick boundaries reflect a need to keep aspects of personal experience separated and compartmentalized; they are often associated with intolerance of ambiguity. Thin ego boundaries are usually associated with receptivity (including languages and foreign cultures), but people with thin ego boundaries may encounter learning difficulties if they cannot set priorities in what to learn or impose cognitive structure on input. (MLAT parts III and IV provide some information about this ability.) In terms of strategies, thick boundary learners tend to rely most on drilling and conscious control of material, whereas thin boundary learners may respond well to language presented in rich, even naturalistic contexts. (Findings for the HBQ and second language learning are treated in Ehrman 1993, 1996b, 1998b.)

**Two students.** The following two contrasting cases illustrate the concepts used in the Learning Consultation Service. Jennifer and Geoffrey learn very differently and present widely varying challenges to their teachers.

*Jennifer.* Jennifer is an “extroverted sensing thinking judging” type (ESTJ) on the MBTI, which means that she prefers to learn in concrete ways and to focus on practical topics. She does not like open-ended activities, and she likes clear ground-rules. She works hard and completes her assignments on time. Her overall MLAT score is in the FSI mid-range; her highest part scores were on parts I (number learning) and V (paired associates), suggesting relative skill in oral comprehension, mnemonic strategies, and possibly metacognitive strategies. She reports “thick” boundaries on the HBQ, consistent with her MBTI type (thick boundaries on the HBQ tend to correlate with MBTI sensing, thinking, and judging). In her individual interview, she confirms considerable intolerance of ambiguity. She says that she feels frustrated when she deals with language she does not fully understand and cannot find correspondences between the target language and English. On other questionnaires and in her interview, she adds that she wants to be prepared ahead of time, likes repetition and a clear outline of the curriculum that the program follows. Jennifer prefers to learn one thing at a time and not move on until mastering a point. She has a tendency to be a perfectionist. She does not like unclear or ambiguous assignments, such as reading unfamiliar material, or “read this story.” These characteristics are consistent with a largely “ectenic” learner, and indeed, she reports preferences for deductive, sequential, and “digital” (literal) learning approaches. Jennifer’s English vocabulary and general knowledge fall somewhat below the FSI average. She says, “Without a classroom ritual set down, I sometimes get confused. And I want to know what to do when I walk out of class.”

*Geoffrey.* Geoffrey contrasts with Jennifer in a number of ways. He is essentially a “synoptic” learner, in particular liking holistic and “analog” approaches to learning (through metaphors and stories, rather than literal). However, he is not extreme in this respect. An “introverted intuitive feeling judging” type (INFJ) on the MBTI, he likes a certain amount of “creativity” in his classroom activities. He enjoys interacting with others and tends to be motivated by getting to know the people of the target culture better, interacting with them informally as well as formally. Although he likes global learning strategies (beginning with the “forest” then proceeding to the “trees”), he does not much want to design his own program, as might a more extreme “synoptic” learner who scores high on induction and nonlinear learning.

Geoffrey, like Jennifer, scored in the mid-range on the MLAT. His peaks were in parts I (number learning) and II (phonetic transcription), which support his context-oriented learning style. His lower scores on parts III (spelling clues) and IV (words in sentences) suggest a field sensitive but field dependent learner; this is confirmed by his self-report on the E&L. Geoffrey thus wants some external structure, but he can manage with considerably less than Jennifer, and he is much more comfortable with ambiguous, naturalistic input than she. His average

total score on the HBQ suggests a moderate tolerance for ambiguity. “Thin” scores on items indicating tolerance for lack of neatness and preference for soft edges tend to predict tolerance for linguistic ambiguity, at least among FSI students. His control of English vocabulary and general knowledge are well above FSI average.

A relatively concrete (experiential) learner, Geoffrey likes to demonstrate knowledge by doing something “real” rather than through paper-and-pencil activities. In the same vein, he likes field trips and simulations. In general, he is comfortable with such open-ended learning activities as finding and reporting on news articles. He favors learning strategies that involve making associations between what is known and what is not, and he rejects mechanical drilling and rote memorization.

Geoffrey appreciates a well-designed syllabus but can manage reasonably well when the teacher deviates from it. He summarizes his approach by saying, “Give me a lot of language, in stories, in conversation, and in role plays. But I want review and help making sense of it all, too.” Jennifer and Geoffrey can be placed in the same class, but teachers will have difficulty giving both of them what they need. Both of them may need to accept that they cannot have everything exactly as they want it, and the teachers can meet their individual needs much of the time. In addition, the teachers can work with them to tailor homework and self-study activities to make use of their strengths and to “stretch” their styles to less comfortable domains. For example, both learners may need work on coping with the kinds of unstructured situations that they will meet daily after leaving the classroom and arriving at their overseas posts. (This will be something less of a stretch for Geoffrey than for Jennifer.) The teachers are helped in dealing with these two students by the fact that Geoffrey will tolerate and even appreciate a considerable amount of the external structure that Jennifer depends on, whereas a more extreme “synoptic” learner might chafe with the drilling and following of the syllabus that both of these students like.

The information about Jennifer and Geoffrey presented above, and more, would come out during the individual feedback session that includes the counselor, the student, and the learning consultant. The learning consultant would then provide some of the information to take the information to Jennifer’s and Geoffrey’s teachers, with their permission, and continue to work with them to help them learn as effectively as possible. The learning consultant would begin with Jennifer by finding ways for her to study in ways she finds comfortable, but during the training program, the learning consultant would work with her on coping more effectively with ambiguous input and with working out ways to learn when there is no clear syllabus. The learning consultant would find ways to get a rich context to Geoffrey so that he could begin his learning in a way he finds effective and then work with him to help him in the areas he finds less comfortable so that he can increase his flexibility as a learner.

**Conclusion.** There is much yet to be done to allow the FSI program to reach its full potential. The LCS program needs to make training of learning consultants more systematic, and more quality control is needed. Some students receive more follow-up from their learning consultants than others, so some standardization of learning consultant functions is needed. The teaching staff as a whole should become more knowledgeable about the styles and strategies models, so that they can help their students at appropriate moments in the classroom, rather than waiting until a learning consultant or a central counselor can intervene. We continue to seek ways to make the learning styles and strategies models more accessible to the teachers and their supervisors through formal workshops, training of individuals, and application to work with students having difficulty.

The Learning Consultation Service was designed to meet the specific needs of FSI's intensive, high-stakes language training for foreign affairs personnel. Other programs, such as the usual non-intensive teaching done in university language programs, would probably address individual needs in other ways, such as self-access centers. Even in programs in which learner autonomy is the center of the learner training, however, well trained advisory staff can help with the necessary "scaffolding" that precedes full autonomy, and various learning style models can prove useful to different students. Some of what we are learning at FSI may thus be of use to other programs, no matter what their structure and mission.

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APPENDIX. MODERN LANGUAGE APTITUDE TEST PARTS

Part	Name of Part	Description (from the MLAT Manual; Carroll and Sapon 1959)
I	Number Learning	This subtest requires the examinee to learn four morphemes and interpret them in combinations that form numbers; it is entirely orally delivered. The manual describes it as measuring part of memory and “auditory alertness.”
II	Phonetic Script	Examinee selects a written equivalent (in phonemic transcription) for an orally delivered stimulus. The MLAT manual describes the sub-test as dealing with the ability to associate a sound with a particular symbol, memory for speech sounds, and mimicry of foreign language speech sounds and sound combinations.
III	Spelling Clues	In this entirely written subtest, an English word is presented in a very nonstandard spelling. The examinee must select the correct synonym. Vocabulary items are progressively more difficult. According to the manual, scores on this part depend largely on a student’s English vocabulary and to some degree on ability to make sound-symbol.
IV	Words in Sentences	The stimulus is a sentence with an error. The examinee indicates which part of another sentence matches the designated part. The subtest is entirely in writing. It is described as dealing with the examinee’s sensitivity to grammatical structure. No grammatical terminology is used, so scores do not depend on knowledge of grammatical terms.
V	Paired Associates	The examinee learns twenty-four foreign words with their English equivalents. This subtest is said to measure the examinee’s ability to memorize by rote.

**NOTE**

1. The content of this article does not represent official policy of the U.S. Department of State; the observations and opinions are those of the author.