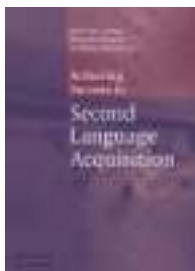


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Achieving Success in Second Language Acquisition

Betty Lou Leaver, Madeline Ehrman, Boris Shekhtman

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Chapter

3 - Learning styles and learning strategies pp. 65-91

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3 Learning styles and learning strategies

Preview

This chapter introduces you to the concepts of learning styles and learning strategies. These are important concepts that we will refer to throughout this book and have, in fact, made allusion to in chapters 1 and 2. Learning styles and learning strategies affect the nature and quality of learning, whether or not the learner knows anything about these concepts or not. Therefore, it is better to have an understanding of them, so that you can consciously use this information to good advantage. Topics in this chapter include:

Definitions of learning styles and learning strategies.

- **Learning styles.** Learning styles are habitual patterns of perceiving, processing, or reacting to information.
- **Learning strategies.** Learning strategies are the specific actions one takes and/or techniques one uses in order to learn.

Kinds of learning styles. This chapter divides learning styles into the following categories:

- **Sensory preferences.** Sensory preferences refer to the channels through which we perceive information which consist of visual, auditory, and motor modalities, as a minimum.
- **Cognitive styles.** Cognitive styles refer to individualized ways of processing of information. Many models of cognitive styles have been proposed. This chapter presents the E&L Construct in detail; this particular model organizes most of the work on cognitive styles into one system of cognitive profiles.
- **Personality types.** These are another kind of learning style. Since they involve affective (emotional) factors, they are discussed in chapter 4, along with other affective variables.

Learning strategies. In addition to memory strategies, which were discussed in chapter 2, and communication strategies, which will be discussed in chapter 10, there are comprehension strategies and production strategies. This part of the chapter is divided into the following subtopics:

- **Deep and surface strategies.** This dichotomy includes strategies that require maximum thinking (i.e. much cognitive activity and attention); these are called deep strategies. There are also other strategies that require minimal thought; these are called surface strategies.
- **Taxonomies of learning strategies.** A number of authors have attempted to organize the myriad of possible learning strategies into systems, or taxonomies. Several of these are overviewed here; for the learner who wants more information about learning styles, any one of these taxonomies is worth exploring on one's own.

- **Comprehension strategies.** Specific strategies are useful for achieving success in listening and reading activities in the classroom and in real life. Some of those are presented in this chapter.
- **Production strategies.** Specific strategies are useful for achieving success in speaking and writing activities in the classroom and in real life. Some of those are presented in this chapter.
- **The relationship between styles and strategies.** There is a close relationship between styles and strategies. Individuals with one set of styles, for example, probably use very different strategies from those with another set of styles.

Use of learning resources. This section explains how to make good use of the aids that you have at your disposal. These include dictionaries, flashcards, and more.

Learning styles and strategies: a definition

When you run into trouble in completing an assignment or in making progress in general in gaining proficiency in your foreign language, it is often useful to look at what you are doing when you learn. The activities and techniques you use to learn are called *learning strategies*. These strategies tend to fall into various groups, which are considered to represent a more abstract set of tendencies that we call *learning styles*. Learning styles are convenient shortcuts for talking about patterns of what an individual is likely to *prefer* as a learner. For example, some people like to follow a syllabus or textbook chapter by chapter when they learn. This approach is referred to as *sequential* style because people with this style like to follow a sequence of predictable or predetermined steps to get where they are going. The contrasting style is called *random*; people with a random learning style tend to prefer to follow whatever thread of learning seems relevant or interesting at the time. Their sequence is not predictable, often not even to them. So random and sequential are *styles*, or habitual, general approaches for which the observable behaviors are certain specific learning *strategies*, such as looking for patterns within a mass of information (random), remembering events by putting them into chronological order (sequential), or any of the memory or other strategies that were presented in chapters 1 and 2.

sequential vs. random
style

Keep in mind that no one can actually *see* a learning style. Instead, we see behaviors that seem to have something in common and we *infer* a style. The same behaviors can be interpreted in various ways, as we will see later in this chapter. For example, a preference for reading over talking can indicate a visual style (rather than auditory), a preference for introversion (versus extraversion), and so on.

Learning styles

Learning styles come in several flavors or, using a different metaphor, we might say that there are a number of ways to slice the learning-style pie.

Leaver (1998) suggests that we slice it in at least four ways: sensory preferences, cognitive styles, personality types (see chapter 4), and environmental needs. For some people, one of these categories may be more important than others. For other people, the categories have more or less equal valence.

Sensory preferences

Sensory preferences are sometimes called kinds of memory (as in “visual memory”), KAV (referring to the types of sensory preferences: kinesthetic, auditory, or visual), and perceptual styles. They are the physical channels through which students take in and perceive new information: ears, eyes, and touch, and directly relate to the perceiving (or attentional) aspects of cognition. The typical categories used by specialists in learner differences are visual, auditory, and motor – these are described below. Sometimes, though, you might also hear the word *haptic*. Haptic learners use their hands and their sense of touch to learn through how things feel to them. Examples include working on a foreign alphabet by tracing sandpaper letters, using block letters to spell out words, and forming letters with clay. There are also categories for sense of smell and taste, but these are minor styles. We describe the most common ones here.

Visual learning

Visual learners acquire new vocabulary primarily through sight; they understand grammar better when they can read about it in a book. Leaver (1998) defines two kinds of visual learners: imagists and verbalists.

When imagists hear or read something in a foreign language (or in their native language, for that matter), they see a picture of what they have heard or read. In other words, they make an image of it. They understand through that image, and they typically store the information in their memory as an image. The image, then, is more likely to help them recall the words or grammar than is a verbal prompt.

Verbalists, on the other hand, see words. If they hear the French word, *soleil*, for example, they will not necessarily see a picture of the sun; that is what the imagists would do. Rather, the verbalists will see the letters s-o-l-e-i-l in their heads. Verbalists store the letters, and when they have difficulty remembering a word, they can usually remember the initial letter or some of the letters in it. They do not associate the word with an image but with the letters that compose it. For verbalists, reading is a key to remembering – much more so than with imagists. Verbalists, not surprisingly, are much better at correct spelling (and very likely the winners of most spelling bees are verbalists or people who have learned the kinds of memory strategies that come naturally to verbalists).

Visual learners can cope with and even take advantage of non-visual activities that come up in the classroom by applying strategies that are used by auditory and motor learners or by turning an auditory activity into a visual one. An example of the former is using rhythm or ditties (as mentioned in chapter 2) to remember new vocabulary words. An example of the latter is remembering phrases for a

imagists vs. verbalists
(both visual learners)

role play by imagining that you can see these phrases on the ceiling, then reading them aloud.

Auditory learning

Auditory learners acquire new information through sound; they hear grammatical endings, and they associate new words with sounds they already know. Even pitch, tempo, and intonation provide them with clues to the meaning of what they are hearing, and they are very quick to learn to make these differences when they are speaking the foreign language. Leaver (1998) divides auditory learners into two groups: aural learners and oral learners.

Those of you learning tonal languages: how does your learning style affect your acquisition of tone?

Aural learners learn by listening to others. They tend not to take notes in class because they usually remember what they hear. They are usually pretty good at listening comprehension tasks; can figure out either the essence of broadcasts and films or the details contained in them – or both, depending on their learning style; and have generally pretty good accents.

Oral learners learn by listening to themselves. Oral learners, then, like to talk. Talking and hearing themselves talk is often essential to their ability to comprehend information and store it in memory. Whereas aural learners need auditory *input*, oral learners need auditory *output*, which becomes their input. Simply put, they get to learn by hearing when they hear themselves speak. As classmates, they can be perceived to be interruptive because they talk “all the time.” However, if they were to stop talking, the quantity and quality of their learning would diminish.

If you are an auditory learner, you may become confused or impatient if you are asked to learn through written materials. Most auditory learners have varying tolerances for visual input. Since much of language learning is visual, with a good half of the activities that students are asked to accomplish being reading and writing, chances are that you will have to learn to cope with non-auditory requirements. You can do this by using some of the same strategies that visual learners use or by turning a visual requirement into an auditory one. An example of the former would be to learn how to encode sounds into letters and words. One way to facilitate this is to ask your teacher or a native speaker to record some of your reading texts for you – then read them as you listen. To turn visual activities into auditory ones, try reading aloud or subvocalizing (saying the words to yourself under your breath); you can use this latter strategy not only when you are reading but also when other students are answering in class.

Motor learning

Motor learning is sometimes called kinesthetic learning. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, doing so does not represent an accurate description of learning style information. Kinesthetic preferences are only one kind of motor learning. Quite obviously, given the terminology, motor learners acquire new information through movement. The differences among motor learners, according to Leaver (1998), are based on the kinds of muscles being used: gross motor muscles (arms, legs, or whole body) or fine motor muscles (fingers or hands).

CASE STUDY

Problem

Marilyn is usually alert and interested, but sometimes she finds herself drifting off in class. She is vaguely aware of the need to do more than read and speak, but it wasn't until she heard about learning styles that she started to suspect that she is a motor learner. Now that she may have discovered at least one possible cause for her lapses of attention, what can she do about it?

Possible solutions

- (1) Marilyn can volunteer for movement tasks, from the mundane job of passing out papers to going to the library to research a disputed word.
- (2) She can work on flash cards, making her own cards rather than buying them ready-made.
- (3) Marilyn might take the initiative in proposing and organizing excursions or role plays.
- (4) She would do well to enlist her teacher's support for the occasional change in routine to enhance the learning environment for her.

How could you help a motor learner in a lecture course?

Figure 3.1

Kinesthetic learners are in perpetual motion. They use their entire body for learning. In language classes, role plays and total physical response activities (those that require some kind of physical response, such as carrying out commands) help them learn and remember new vocabulary and grammar.

Mechanical learners like to write. They also like to draw and doodle. In class, their fingers are rarely idle. They learn by taking notes, writing compositions, and even copying.

Unfortunately, most classrooms are not well set up for the motor learner. Much work is done in the same seat with only occasional breaks. If you are a motor learner, you may need to find ways to move while seated. One way you can do this is by using your hands. Some kinesthetic learners, while preferring to use their arms and legs, find that taking copious notes can provide enough activity to keep them from fidgeting. (By the way, doodling really is okay as an assist to learning for mechanical and kinesthetic learners – but keep in mind that some teachers do consider it rude.) Let your teacher know that you like field trips and role plays. When studying on your own, find ways to move with the rhythm of the language, even to the point of dancing a little to sentences.

Cognitive styles

The terms *learning style* and *cognitive style* are found throughout the literature on learning. They are often used interchangeably, though some researchers make a distinction between them. In this book, we treat learning style

as a more general term. Cognitive styles, then, are specifically preferred forms of activity associated with information acquisition and processing.

As with other kinds of learning styles, cognitive styles are habitual patterns of processing information. In this case, we are talking about thought processes (as opposed to perceptual ones, as with the sensory preferences, or to emotional ones, as in the case of personality types).

Interest in cognitive styles is not new. Dating from the days of Hippocrates and his protégé, Galen (Itsines, 1996), the differences in individual approaches to learning have fascinated researchers. In the twentieth century, many new concepts were introduced to the field of cognitive styles research, and a number of kinds of pies (learning styles constructs) have been suggested. Some of your teachers may have introduced you to brain dominance (Torrance, 1980), Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) and being a master student (Ellis, 2002; Kolb, 1985), 4-MAT (McCarthy, 1980), Gregorc's Information Acquisition Inventory (Gregorc, 1982), Sternberg's mental government model (Sternberg, 1994), and the E&L Construct (described below). The latter incorporates many of the elements of the previous style models and is the one that is used throughout this book.

The E&L construct

The E&L model originated from dissatisfaction with existing approaches to cognitive styles, which were leading to misdiagnoses and confusion about the meanings of terms. Ehrman and Leaver (1997, 2003) selected a variety of cognitive style scales, most of them from the research and models mentioned in the above section, that were informative to them in their work with students. Looking for a way to organize the many concepts that had been floating about over the past twenty years, they sought – and found – overarching categories that could organize the various proposed cognitive styles into a streamlined model. They called these overarching categories *synopsis* (adjective – *synoptic*) and *ectasis* (adjective – *ectenic*), using the Greek words for a process that is holistic (*synopsis*) and extended and atomistic (*ectasis*). In foreign-language learning, synoptic learning is reliant on intuition and subconscious control whereas ectenic learning generally occurs under the conscious control of the learner. Each of these “poles” is composed of ten cognitive scales that are subscales in the E&L Construct. Thus, the E&L Construct can be graphically portrayed as shown in table 3.1.

As seen in the diagram, the umbrella scale is synoptic and ectenic learning. This scale is composed of subscales that reflect various aspects of synopsis and ectasis. Each subscale contributes different and important information to a learner's profile.

Descriptions of the ten subscales follow; they are listed in alphabetic order, with the synoptic pole named first. Consider yourself and what you are most comfortable with as you read the descriptions.

Table 3.1

synoptic learning	<i>(definitions)</i>	ectenic learning	<i>(definitions)</i>	<i>category source</i>
digital	<i>literal and factual learning</i>	analogue	<i>learning through metaphor</i>	<i>Ehrman and Leaver</i>
abstract	<i>learning through ideas and books</i>	concrete	<i>hands-on learning</i>	<i>Gregorc</i>
field independent	<i>decontextualized learning</i>	field dependent	<i>contextualized learning</i>	<i>Witkin and Goodenough</i>
field insensitive	<i>lack of osmosis in learning</i>	field sensitive	<i>learning through osmosis</i>	<i>Ehrman; Ramírez and Castañeda</i>
global	<i>oriented toward the big picture</i>	particular	<i>oriented toward details</i>	<i>Ehrman and Leaver</i>
impulsive	<i>simultaneous thought and reaction</i>	reflective	<i>reaction following thought</i>	<i>Messick</i>
inductive	<i>understanding rules from examining examples</i>	deductive	<i>learning rules, then understanding examples</i>	<i>Pierce</i>
leveling	<i>noticing similarities</i>	sharpening	<i>noticing differences</i>	<i>Holzman and Gardner, Messick</i>
random	<i>preferring to self-organize materials</i>	sequential	<i>preferring materials to be pre-organized</i>	<i>Gregorc</i>
synthetic	<i>assembling pieces into wholes</i>	analytic	<i>disassembling wholes into pieces</i>	<i>Kant</i>

(1) *Analogue–digital scale.* Ehrman and Leaver (1997, 2003) also introduced this scale. It addresses the degree to which a learner tends to seek connections of meaning among words, structures, or other units or, on the other hand, the degree to which a learner prefers to work at a more surface level.

- *Analogue* learners gravitate to the use of metaphors, analogies, and conceptual links among units and their meanings. These learners tend to have a clear preference for learning material in meaningful context.
- *Digital* learners take a more surface approach, dealing with what they can see or hear directly. Their understanding is generally literal and under the kind of conscious control typical of ectenic learners.

Sometimes, it is important to use metaphoric approaches; this can be especially important when learning in country where synoptic/analogue learners may have a distinct advantage. There are also times when it is appropriate to use literal approaches, e.g. rote memory strategies.

(2) *Concrete–abstract scale*. This scale was introduced by Gregorc (1982). He suggested an interrelationship between the concrete–abstract scale and the random–sequential scale (see below). The E&L Construct, however, treats these two scales as separate and subordinate to the greater, overarching categories of synoptic and ectenic learning. The concrete–abstract scale, in general, considers the amount of hands-on experience that an individual learner prefers.

- Concrete learners use real materials and examples for learning. They are hands-on, experiential learners. The learning (input, materials, procedures, etc.) are generally consciously controlled either by the learner or, more frequently, by the teacher.
- Abstract learners, on the other hand, prefer pictures and explanations. They learn through lecture and concept. They accept theory well. They are, in essence, “book learners.” Some are able to apply the book learning to real life easily; others have more difficulty doing so.

The venue of where you are learning a foreign language will determine whether concrete or abstract learning preferences will be advantageous or disadvantageous. In study abroad situations, as well as for field trips, synoptic/concrete learning can be a considerable advantage. On the other hand, when working nearly exclusively with a textbook, an ectenic/abstract style can have a distinct advantage.

(3) *Field independent–field dependent scale*. The concept of field independence has been around for a long time (Witkin and Goodenough, 1981). The usual instrument used to assess field independence is a test that looks at how rapidly a person can find a simple geometric field within a more complex diagram (i.e. can find a particular object within a larger object, known as “the field”). The more rapidly you can distinguish the object you are seeking from the field around it, the more field independent you are. You may have taken such a “hidden figures” test in your elementary school days. If you did not, you may have had a chance to self-check your preference for these styles by doing any number of puzzles that asked you to find hidden objects or animals in a picture. Figure 3.2 is an example of a hidden figure. Look at the shape on the left and find it in the shape on the right.

The concepts introduced by Witkin and Goodenough were more related to mathematics than to foreign language. More recently, some researchers have looked at the relationship between the Witkin–Goodenough concepts and success in foreign-language learning (Stansfield, 1989).

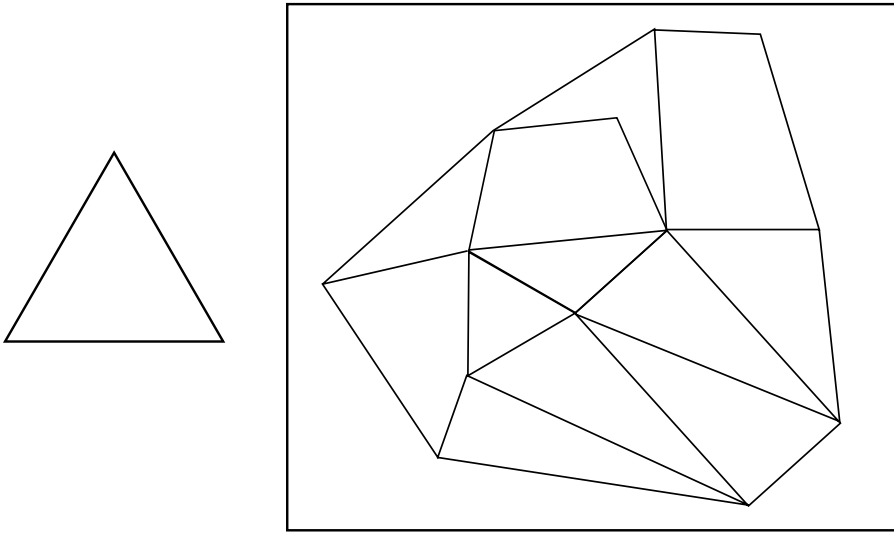


Figure 3.2 Sample Embedded Figure Test Item: Find the simple shape on the left in the complex figure on the right.

- Field independence, in foreign-language learning, means being able to select something of importance or interest for focus. The process is automatic.
- Field dependence, following Ehrman (1996, 1997), is construed as the absence of field independence.

Let us take some examples to see how field independence and field dependence influence language learning. Perhaps the study of plurals is on the docket in your class syllabus. If you are a synoptic/field independent learner, you will probably instinctively notice plural forms wherever you encounter them, without consciously searching for them. You may also find yourself unconsciously selecting plural forms that are new to you from among all those that you encounter and then organizing the different forms so that they are easier to deal with. If you are field dependent, then you may rely on your textbook, teacher, or syllabus to organize these forms prior to your setting about learning them. One of the most important functions of syllabi and instructional guidance is to point out the things that matter; if you are an ecnetic/field dependent learner, you can use these items to good avail.

More than the other dimensions, field independence is often considered to be an ability and is tested as one through hidden figure instruments. For purposes of the Ehrman and Leaver model, however, we are treating it as a processing preference. (To be sure, preferences often lead to abilities through frequent practice.)

(4) *Field sensitive–field insensitive scale*. In an effort to avoid the apparent pejorative implications of the term *field dependence*, Ramírez and Castañeda (1974)

coined the term *field sensitivity*. Ehrman (1996, 1997) built on preceding work on the field independence-dependence construct to unpack field dependence into two scales instead of one. These scales are (1) field independence vs. the absence of field independence (called *field dependence* in her system, presented above) and (2) a separate approach, for which she adopted the term *field sensitivity*, with the resultant scale being field sensitivity vs. field insensitivity. The difference between the two scales can be summarized in this way: whereas a field independent learner focuses on a part of the whole, a field sensitive learner stays aware of the whole learning environment, including social relationships and background phenomena, and absorbs a great deal from what is around and in language, i.e. from what is heard or read.

- Field sensitive learners use the full language environment for comprehension and learning.
- Field insensitive learners do not focus on the language environment but rather pay attention to a particular language element being studied.

Classrooms tend to be information-poor environments. This can be a problem for field-sensitive learners. If you are a field-sensitive learner, you can take advantage of your learning preference by finding opportunities to overhear the teacher talk to others, listening to native speakers talking on tapes or videos, reading, noticing posters, overhearing the questions and conversations of other students, and the like. All of these opportunities will provide you with the rich source of information, replete with all kinds of additional details and content, i.e. a “field” of information, that you may need for understanding new words and grammatical usages that you have not seen before.

Field-insensitive learners will probably fare better in classrooms that treat language as isolated grammar rules and vocabulary items for rote memorization than they will in classrooms where the teacher uses a communicative approach. If you are a field-insensitive learner in a communicative classroom, you might ask your teacher or peers to help you develop the kinds of strategies that you will need to take advantage of the wealth of additional information that accompanies the authentic texts and tasks that are typically used in communicative classrooms. For example, you might try to become adept at the strategies of applying background information, hypothesis formation and confirmation (for confirmation, you may need to look at the bigger picture), and finding supporting details for your hypotheses (looking for these will also help you start to use surrounding information on a regular basis).

(5) *Global-particular scale*. The global-particular dimension was first suggested by Ehrman and Leaver (1997). It refers to the learner’s breadth of focus.

- Learners who prefer global processing attend to an image as a whole (as opposed to its parts). For them, the most important thing is seeing and understanding the “big picture.” Informally, we often distinguish between people who “see the forest” and those who “see the trees.”

Global learners are the ones who see the forest and may miss the trees. They process information in a “top down” manner, focusing on overall meaning first and details later – if at all. If they miss enough details, the meaning that they “invent” can stray quite far from reality.

- Students who display particular processing are attentive to discrete items and details. They are aware of the various kinds of “trees,” rather than the forest *per se*. Their processing of information is “bottom up,” seeing the form first and the general meaning second. Sometimes the details become important to them independently of any relationship to larger concepts, creating a different kind of difficulty for them.

If you are a global learner, you are likely to want to start with an overview of the material, and, if very extreme in preference for global processing, feel that the job is done when the main ideas are understood. First, you should always ask for the overview since it will help you understand better. Second, having received the overview, spend some time thinking about the details and how they work together to build the big picture. For example, in writing you may want to re-read your work more than once because global learners often look at their own mistakes and see as they should have been written, not as they have been written. Sometimes, it is even better to do your writing at night and check it over in the morning when it is no longer fresh in your mind.

In contrast, if you are a particular learner, you will probably plunge into the specifics of the material at hand, focusing on the words, sounds, or grammatical components. If extreme, you may not take the details to a more abstract level where they are instances of generalities (e.g. you may try to learn the conjugation of each new verb you encounter when you could learn just 2–3 different patterns that would account for nearly all the regularly conjugated verbs) or relate them to a larger context (e.g. treating the sentences in a passage as isolated examples without understanding what they contribute to the meaning of the whole text). One thing you might like to do is prepare an outline of the content of any passage you are reading; that will force you to put the details into a larger format so that you will begin to see the big picture.

(6) *Impulsive–reflective scale*. Impulsive–reflective differences are yet another learning-style domain important to the classroom. This concept relates to the speed and manner of processing a response to a cognitive stimulus (Messick, 1984).

- Impulsive learners think and respond nearly simultaneously. They tend to complete their work more quickly but often with less accuracy than reflective learners. They often give facile answers.
- Reflective learners think, then respond. They tend to show more involved and deeper levels of thinking. Reflective learners more often than not work accurately, but their slowness sometimes means that work is incomplete.

In language classrooms, reflective learners experience the same kinds of problems that they experience in other subject-matter courses. Although many of them are highly accurate, they are handicapped on speeded tests that do not allow them to turn material over in their minds. In classroom exchanges, they may lose out to more assertive and impulsive classmates. If you are a reflective learner, you may want to look through your lessons in advance, predict some of the questions that will come up, and prepare your answers in advance so that at least some of the time you can compete with your impulsive peers. You may also need to learn to accept the fact that making errors in class in a foreign language is okay – there is really no way a foreign-language learner can avoid making mistakes at times. (In fact, if you think about it, many native speakers make small mistakes in their language performance at times.)

In language classrooms, impulsive learners generally do well. In language learning, however, impulsivity can lead to a lack of monitoring (paying attention to what you are saying). As a result, if you are an impulsive learner, you may develop ingrained habits of speaking with mistakes that you ignore, and this can lead to your being “stuck” at lower levels of proficiency. We call this phenomenon “fossilization.” If you find accuracy to be a problem for you, you might deliberately work on building a monitor by recording your own talk, then listening to it, correcting it, and saying it again correctly.

(7) *Inductive–deductive scale.* Induction–deduction differences were first used in the field of logic (Peirce, 1878), to indicate going from examples to hypothesis (induction) vs. going from hypothesis to examples (deduction). In foreign-language learning, induction generally means using examples to figure out rules and deduction as using rules to identify and understand examples.

- Inductive learners form hypotheses, then test them. They may only rarely seek teacher support. They enjoy seeing a multitude of examples and intuiting what the rule should be and sometimes cannot get enough examples during class.
- Deductive learners study the rules, then practice applying them to examples. They prefer to get these rules either from the teacher or from references. Like sequential processing, deductive processing can save some cognitive load (the amount of material the brain is expected to process simultaneously) because the learner does not need to work out the rules.

Whether inductive learning or deductive learning will be advantageous in a particular language program depends very much on the teaching method of the course. If you find yourself as an inductive learner in a deductive classroom, perhaps the most typical mismatch, there are some things you can do that will allow you to learn through your preferred style. For example, if the teacher’s explanations fill the quiet time you need for processing in your head and figuring

things out for yourself, do your induction in advance at home. Look through the next day's materials and learn whatever you can and want from them. That way, you will often have better control of your classroom output the following day.

If you are a deductive learner, you may experience difficulty sometimes in working with authentic materials, especially where you do not know all the words and have to "guess" some of them from context. One military officer we know who was in a foreign-language program insisted that he "did not become a captain by guessing." This is probably true, but some guesswork will be essential in foreign-language classrooms. You can use what you already know to guess better. If you are reading a text and do not know a key word, think about the subject matter and what you have read so far in the text. Based on that, what do you think the word might mean? If this does not help, think about word composition; can you guess now? If you are still lost as to meaning, let the word go. Read ahead in the text; it might become clear then. If you have access to a dictionary, you will probably find yourself wanting to look it up. That is okay. Other times, in real life, you may not have a dictionary, so try, first, to figure it out without a dictionary if you can.

(8) *Leveling-sharpening scale.* Leveling and sharpening represent an important difference in cognitive processing that has a substantial effect on how learners handle fine distinctions and how they remember information (Holzman and Gardner, 1959; Messick, 1984).

- When learning new information, levelers meld together information that may be distinctly different and come from a number of sources. Therefore, when it comes time to retrieve specifics, the details of the pieces that formed the melded concept are no longer available to the learner (Lowery, 1982). Levelers remove distinctions instinctively; frequently they see only similarities.
- Sharpeners look for distinctions among items. Everything that we said about levelers can be reversed for sharpeners. They readily retrieve details because they store them in different "compartments." They do notice differences, and they write well when the assignment allows them to use their tendency to notice and describe differences.

The leveling-sharpening distinction can be important for learning foreign language to very high levels of proficiency. Both preferences include approaches that are useful for language learning. Sharpeners often naturally notice and remember the subtle distinctions of form and meaning that characterize native-like language, especially if they have high language aptitude or previous language-learning experience. Levelers tend to notice the patterns in the language and, thereby, "see" the underlying linguistic system. Both approaches are useful for language learning, and sharpeners can teach levelers some of their strategies and vice versa to good avail.

Let us take a typical language-learning situation. You are assigned the task to write an essay about the differences between your country's political system and that of another country. As a leveler, you may find it difficult to write the essay not because you are a poor writer (perhaps you are a very good writer) but because you cannot find the differences. Similarly, if you are a sharpener and asked to write an essay about the commonalities between the two systems, you may experience difficulty with the nature of the task. Both levelers and sharpeners can build facility in accomplishing tasks requiring the opposite learning styles by using Venn diagrams before writing. Make a list of all the traits you can think about the two governments. If you find traits in common, write them in the section where the left-hand and right-hand circles of the Venn diagram overlap. Write the other traits into the left-hand circle if they pertain only to your government and in the right-hand circle if they pertain only to the foreign government. Using this technique prior to starting a writing assignment can help you develop style flexibility in the leveling-sharpening domain.

(9) *Random-sequential scale*. Random-sequential learning differences is the second scale that Gregorc (1982; see above) used in his four-dimensional model of learning styles (see the suggested reading list at the end of this chapter for bibliographic information on this model). In the E&L construct, the random-sequential scale is treated as a separate, independent subscale. This subscale refers to the amount of external organization that a learner wants or does not want.

- Random learners generally prefer to develop their own approach to language learning and organize assignments in their own way, often completing them in no apparent (to the outsider) order. (Likewise, in reading a novel, many random learners report reading the ending first or skipping out in the book. Extreme random learners have sometimes reported even reading the ending of a mystery before reading the story itself.)
- Sequential learners generally prefer to receive materials that have been organized in some fashion: a syllabus, lesson plan, or programmed tutorial. While they may adjust the organization to fit their own needs, these learners tend to feel uncomfortable when handed a collection of authentic materials with no guidance on what to do or how to use them. (In reading a novel, most sequential learners report that they prefer to start on the first page and read the subsequent pages in order; they generally do not understand why anyone would want to read the end of a mystery before reading the story itself.)

Both random and sequential learning have advantages in foreign-language study, and much will depend on the teaching method and textbooks as to whether one or another type of learner will be comfortable in the classroom. The World Wide Web is a random learner's paradise. If you are a random learner, you have

an advantage in your greater tolerance for surprises and the unexpected. Assignments of much authentic material (passages from magazines and newspapers, for example) will allow you, as a random learner, to use your learning preference. On the other hand, textbooks in which everything is presented as a series of steps can be boring and even confusing for you if you are a random learner. You might use some of your free time to read books that let you handle the same language features in a more random manner; e.g. if you are studying the past tense, you might read a historical novel or an essay about some aspect of history.

If you are a sequential learner, you may be daunted by the mass of input from the World Wide Web; in this case, you might ask the teacher to give you some questions to think about in advance before you go online, so that you can use your sequential style to advantage. On the other hand, unlike random learners, you may be very happy to have a textbook in your hands, especially one that explains everything in a step-by-step manner.

(10) *Synthetic–analytic scale*. The synthetic–analytic difference is another important domain. This difference refers to the directionality of processing: putting together or taking apart, and was first introduced into the field of philosophy (Kant, 1781/1998). The overall difference lies in whether you prefer to assemble old information to make something new or to take apart new information in order to understand it better.

- *Synthesizers* assemble something new (knowledge, models, stories, ideas, etc.) from known information. They do this by using the given pieces to build new wholes, e.g. making up new words, using typical roots and prefixes or rewriting a paragraph from a different point of view, using the sentences already there as models. Synthesizers typically put together disparate ideas easily and not only make sense out of them but also develop new models with them. Synthesis as a learning style has several characteristics: (1) hypothesis formation is experienced or intuited; (2) processing is unconscious; (3) process and product are simultaneous; and (4) the synthesizing learner goes from insight to construct.
- *Analyzers* disassemble known information into its component parts and are usually aware that the “big picture” is composed of small pieces. They like rules because they can break them down into component parts and use them to explain phenomena. They like word study because they can break the words into etymological pieces: roots, stems, affixes. Analysis as a learning style has several characteristics: (1) hypothesis formation is built up consciously; (2) processing involves discrete steps (setting up the hypothesis, looking at components, and organizing them); (3) process and product are experienced as consecutive; and (4) the analytic learner goes from construct to insight.

In language classes, if you are a synthesizer, you may well want to use or even play with new words or features of the language as wholes, rather than take them apart. So, faced with a list of new words, make up sentences or stories that go with these words to help remember them. You might also like to make up new endings for stories that you read or rewrite a story from another point of view, using some things you know and other things that you learn new from a text in the foreign language.

If you are an analyzer, on the other hand, you will probably want to zero in on what needs to be figured out, so that you can understand it and feel confident that it is “yours” before you try to use it. Some things you can try doing in order to use new words is to apply contrastive analysis (how these words look and act differently from words in English) and word attack (how you can break these words down into meaningful parts).

Learner profiles

So far, we have treated the E&L subscales as if they were even— or choices and the overarching categories of synopsis and ectasis as if every related subscale would be represented in a learner of one or the other style. In reality, the situation is much more complex. Each of the scales is a continuum; you would then be more or less synthetic or analytic, for example, not entirely synthetic or entirely analytic. If you think of the continuum as a line extending from the synoptic attribute (any of the ten subscales) to the ectenic attribute, you might find yourself anywhere along that line. For example, you might be in the middle when it comes to synthesis and analysis, which would mean that you probably are very situational in your preference – where synthesis is needed, you are more synthetic and where analysis is needed, you are more analytic. This kind of situational application is generally what is meant when someone refers to learning-style flexibility. On the other hand, you might find yourself at the extreme synoptic pole on the random–sequential line, which means that you are almost always random, even in cases where it might be more advantageous to be (or act) sequential.

When you find your scores for each of the subscales on the E&L construct, you will find that you have a unique collection of ten different styles. We call this collection your learning profile. Nearly everyone in your class will have a very different or slightly different learning profile from you.

You may notice some things that seem rather odd at first. For example, perhaps you are synoptic, but you are a sharpener, not a leveler. Since sharpening belongs to the ectenic pole, it does not seem to “fit” your profile well. Such profiles, however, are pretty typical. Most people are not purely synoptic or purely ectenic. Where the “impurity” exists is in one or more style preferences that fall into the opposite domain. Being able to see how many preferences “cross over” to the opposite learning style will tell you much about yourself as a learner, where your

CASE STUDY

Problem

Andrew has been a very successful student in almost all his classes. He is quick to zero in on what the teacher wants and find it, process it in his head, and produce it in exams. This makes for a high level of achievement in subject classes, but it is proving not to be enough in his language class. His program includes a great deal of authentic language through reading, listening and field trips where the language is spoken. He has a lot of trouble making fully effective use of the out-of-classroom portions because it all goes by too fast for him to use his normal pinpoint focus techniques. Andrew is aware that he will need to make the most of the language environment when he leaves the classroom and goes out to study and work overseas. How can he start preparing for this now?

Possible solutions

Andrew is probably field independent but field insensitive. He is good at pinpointing but doesn't do much in the way of naturalistic learning (i.e. learning from the environment). Listed below are some things that he can do now to prepare for situations that require field sensitivity.

- (1) Andrew and his teacher can do some advance preparation for field trips and immersions. They can imagine the situations Andrew will be in and think of things that he should prime himself to pick up one way or the other. Later, he can do this for himself.
- (2) Some form of relaxation may help Andrew feel less in need of getting everything. He is more likely to pick up material if he isn't trying too hard.
- (3) A listening or reading focus may be of help; if he is listening for descriptive adjectives, for example, his self-judging part may be distracted, permitting him to use more naturalistic learning.
- (4) Speaking with someone about the nature of language learning and the limitations of focusing on knowledge alone might help him see the importance of developing some new strategies that can be useful with authentic materials.

Figure 3.3

flexibilities are, and where you may experience some rigidity in your approaches to learning.

Your learning-style profile tells you even more. It shows you specifics about your approach to language learning and indicates in advance where you may have a mismatch with your textbook, your teacher, or the teaching method in your foreign-language program. Knowing where these mismatches occur means

that you can develop strategies for the opposite, needed style, a topic that we will be addressing in the next section of this chapter.

Learning strategies

Learning strategies is the term applied to the various behaviors or techniques we use to learn. Some are consciously employed, and others are automatic. As mentioned above, most learning styles are expressed by observable learning strategy behaviors. In a nutshell, learning strategies are:

- things we do;
- relatively easy to change;
- different, depending on our learning styles;
- effective or not effective for specific situations; and
- frequently under some level of conscious control.

Some learning strategies will be specific to each of the four skills. The receptive skills of reading and listening can share certain strategies, as can the productive skills of speaking and writing. Let's look at some concrete examples of learning styles in each of these areas:

- Comprehension/receptive strategies can include such things as using background knowledge, analyzing word parts, using context, asking for help, using a dictionary, and the like.
- Production strategies can include such things as adhering to the known, paraphrasing, using an authentic text as a guide, asking for help, using a dictionary, rehearsal, and the like.

Strategic thinking can make an enormous difference to learning success, especially outside the classroom, where there is much less direction. The key to strategic thinking is metacognition (cognition is thinking, and metacognition is thinking about thinking). Metacognition for strategy use includes such things as monitoring, evaluating, and refining your use of strategies and deliberately selecting appropriate strategies for specific tasks. Other metacognitive strategies include planning and rewarding oneself for specific kinds of progress. These latter strategies are perhaps the most significant way to achieve success in autonomous (independent) learning because it is up to the learner to decide what to learn, when to learn it and how (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). While strategic thinking may appear to be a conscious approach and/or attitude toward learning, for some learners metacognitive processes can be quite intuitive.

You will find specific learning strategies in several of the following chapters. Take note of those that seem like they will suit you or be useful to you and try

them out. Keep them in mind for when you find you need some new strategies later on, too.

Strategic competence

Strategic competence is the ability to select the appropriate learning strategies for the learning or communicative situation in which you find yourself. There are two ways of looking at strategic competence. One is from the point of view of learning; the other is from the point of view of communication. From the point of view of learning, we talk about *learning* strategies – those actions that help you to learn more effectively (see, e.g., Chamot and O'Malley, 1994; Chavarriaga-Doak, 1999; Messick, 1984; Oxford, 1990; Schmeck, 1988). From the point of view of communication, we talk about *communication* strategies – those actions that help you manage when you do not understand something or do not know how to express something, i.e. to cope with new and unfamiliar linguistic situations (Canale and Swain, 1980; chapter 10, this volume). In the case of both learning strategies and communication strategies, strategic competence refers to (1) being able to deal with situations where you are in over your head, and/or (2) taking control of your learning and linguistic behavior. The first kind of strategic competence is very important at lower levels of proficiency; the second kind is more important at higher levels of foreign-language proficiency.

Taxonomies

There are countless learning strategies, so many people find that it is helpful to group them when thinking about them or learning to use them. Over time, a number of different taxonomies (groupings) of learning and communication strategies have been suggested; some samples are given in Appendix B, along with information about tests to determine learning/communication strategy use. We suggest that you use one of these tests to see what learning strategies you are now using. Test results will tell you whether you have a wide set or a limited set of strategies; if the latter, you might want to think about trying out new strategies. Whether or not your strategy use is appropriate for your learning tasks will be determined through one of two means: (1) your success (or lack of it) in completing the task and (2) your teacher's observation of your strategy use.

Some taxonomies contain purely learning strategies; others combine learning and communication strategies. Taxonomies *per se* are of most interest to theorists and researchers. For you, the most important things are knowing about the strategies that are listed in each of them, using a variety of strategies in your language-learning endeavors, and selecting the one(s) that is/are most appropriate for any given learning task. The research on the “good language learner” (Naiman,

Fröhlich, et al., 1978; Rubin and Thompson, 1994; Stern, 1975) indicates that the number of overall strategies used in learning a new language is less important than that the proper strategies be chosen for each task.

Deep strategies and surface strategies

If you study the taxonomies in Appendix B, you will notice that many learning strategies are in the service of getting material into memory. Research (Schmeck, 1988) has shown that the most effective such strategies are what are called *deep strategies*. The opposite of deep strategies is *surface strategies*.

- Deep strategies make connections among things: unknown to known, among unknowns, new connections among knowns. These activities normally involve investment of personal energy and attention and thus impose something of an additional cognitive load. Examples of deep strategies include making associations among concepts, elaboration (making more of something than what you initially received, such as turning a sentence like *The house is on the corner* into *The white house with green blinds is on the corner of Main and Prospect*), and reconceptualizing into hierarchies or diagrams.
- Surface strategies do not make much of an investment in the material being learned. They are of a “just get it done” nature. Although they tend to be less useful for bringing material into long-term memory, they can be very helpful when there is something that needs to be dealt with in the short term. Rote memory is often a surface approach, because it may not make use of connections to other things. Reading through word lists without much thinking about the contents can also be a surface approach.

Use of deep strategies means more time spent on study while the associations and elaborations are made, but it is an investment with long-term payoff.

Let's look at what happens now in a classroom setting. The teacher assigns a reading; it has twenty-five new words, and there is a word list that follows that translates each word into English. As you read the article, you look back at the word list. That is a surface strategy. Later, you learn that your teacher might give you a quiz, and you are worried about knowing these twenty-five words, so you spend a half-hour memorizing the word list by first covering up the English and telling yourself the meaning of the word and then covering up the foreign word and, using the English as a prompt, writing it down. These are also surface strategies.

What, however, would happen if you were to take a different approach, one using deep strategies? In this case, when you encounter an unknown word, you do not look at the word list right away. You try to figure out the meaning on your own. If it is near the beginning of the article and you are not sure yet what

the article is all about, you could skim the article for that information (that is something that you might instinctively do if you are a synoptic learner; skimming is a strategy typically used by students with a global learning style preference); if you are an ectenic learner, you might put aside global meaning for a moment and look at the structure of the word. In doing so, you may notice that it has two parts – one part is an ending, which you recognize as typical for past tense and another part (the stem) looks like another word you know. Putting this information together, you can figure out the meaning on your own. If you are strongly ectenic, you will probably want to confirm your hypothesis by checking with the word list (reflective strategy). That is okay. You have used a deep strategy to get the meaning, and that meaning will probably stay with you much longer than through simple memorization. You may even find that it does not take you any time at all to prepare for that quiz because you have already learned the words in the process of figuring them out on your own.

Comprehension strategies

Comprehension strategies are used when you need to understand something that has been said or written. Perhaps there are new expressions in a text. You can use a number of strategies to understand them. You can guess their meaning from context; this is more instinctive for inductive learners. You can break the words apart and see if you can analyze their meaning; this is more natural for ectenic learners. You can apply background knowledge of the topic to determine what the limits on the range of possible definitions of these words would be; this is a naturally synoptic strategy. You could also look up the word in the dictionary – something that an ectenic learner is more likely to do than a synoptic one. These are all cognitive strategies.

You could use social strategies, too. Appealing for assistance from a teacher or a peer is just such a social strategy.

The taxonomies in Appendix B contain a number of comprehension strategies. So do chapter 10 and other chapters of this volume.

Production strategies

Strategies for production are used when you need to say or write something. There are a number of other kinds of strategies that can be used as well. Of those, at lower levels of proficiency, the ones that are most useful will very likely be the compensation strategies – how to communicate when you do not have the words to express what you need to be able to say.

One compensation strategy is to substitute similar words that you do know for words that you do not know. A friend of ours lived for a while in Spain with his wife who spoke only a little Spanish. He tells the story of her needing to buy a chicken at the market one day. She wanted the head and feet to be cut off, but

she did not know the right words, so she asked the seller to please remove the chicken's hat and shoes. He understood – and told this funny story to his friends. This was a compensation strategy.

In the case of analytic strategies, one might use description in lieu of a specific, unknown word. For example, if someone wants to buy a nail file, he or she might ask for the long, sharp thing for nails. One of the authors did just that in a foreign country recently – and learned the word for nail file in the process.

Many more learning strategies can be found throughout this book. In addition, Appendix B contains a list of taxonomies with sample strategies.

Using learning strategies effectively

How can you use learning strategies effectively? Let's take some examples. If you are an ectenic learner and you need to express something for which you do not have the words, then an analytic compensation strategy may be perfect for you. As in the case with the nail file, describe any aspect of what it is you want to say, and you will probably be understood. Then take note of the "correct" word for next time. If you are a synoptic learner, you could do the same thing, but probably a holistic compensation strategy would work better for you. Try using similar ideas and analogies, as in the case of the chicken and its shoes and hat. You, too, should take note of what the word is when you get it, but make sure you have it right. Often, synoptic learners come close but are not precise when they learn new things in real-life contexts. Ask again, if you need to. If you are not an auditory learner (regardless of your other learning styles) and you get this information in an auditory fashion, take the first opportunity you have to write it down (and, if necessary, to look it up in a dictionary). You will need to figure out for yourself which strategies are the most effective for you. You will get feedback on your strategy use by monitoring your success in specific tasks.

The influence of learning style on learning strategies

We have mentioned above that learning styles are expressed by learning strategies; they are what you can see and hear. Another way to look at it is that learning styles – habitual patterns of preference – influence choices of learning strategies. So, for example, the synoptic learner will prefer to get the gist of a listening or reading passage first, whereas an ectenic learner may want control of the specifics before seeing how they relate to the whole picture. Thus, the global (synoptic) learner will gravitate to top-down (big picture to details), and the particular (ectenic) learner will want to go from bottom up (details then whole). Of course both will need eventually to use the opposite strategies. If the ectenic learner never sees the whole picture, he or she will have a hard time navigating the language. If the synoptic never gets the details, she or he may flounder about in vagueness.

CASE STUDY

Problem

When he was asked to complete a survey about which learning strategies he uses in studying Urdu, Eric selected nearly all of the activities on the survey. He was puzzled by the fact that he was having trouble learning when he does so many different things to learn.

Possible solutions

Eric needs to understand that it is not the number of strategies he uses that makes a difference, but rather whether they are appropriate to the circumstances and done in a deliberate way. He can work on making this change in his approach by:

- (1) Working with a teacher or other helper to outline the different kinds of learning situation he encounters and then decide on the one or two most appropriate strategies for those situations to focus on until they become automatic;
- (2) spending more time developing his metacognitive skills of planning, monitoring, and evaluating, in order to pick the right cognitive strategies at the right time; and;
- (3) testing himself periodically to determine where and when he is having problems and determining what strategies will be helpful for those particular situations.

Figure 3.4

An important point to be derived from this example is that everyone needs some flexibility in the strategies used. (The term used for switching styles as needed is *style flexing*.) If you stick only to strategies that are consistent with your learning style, you are likely to find your learning quite limited. A good example is the sequential learner who never adopts random strategies. You can doubtless imagine the trouble such a learner may have in a situation where there is little English spoken and no teacher or syllabus. On the contrary, a random learner who never uses sequential strategies may waste a great deal of time with a new topic or skill that could be saved by following a tutorial or lesson series.

A note on using language resources

Probably the best-known resource is the dictionary. Dictionaries can be either monolingual or bilingual. Monolingual dictionaries are those that native speakers use. In English, these would be reference aids like the *American College Dictionary* or *Webster's Dictionary*. Bilingual dictionaries are made for language learners and for translators (although professional translators generally prefer specialty dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries, technical glossaries, and authentic texts on the topic in the foreign language). Bilingual dictionaries usually have two

sections: English–Foreign Language and Foreign Language–English, although some (the better ones) come in two volumes. Dictionaries and glossaries can be wonderful helps, or they can be the source of difficulties. It is all in how you use them.

General caveats in using a dictionary

For the most part, unless you are doing close translation work with specialized vocabulary, it is usually wise to use dictionaries sparingly. There are three reasons for this:

- inaccuracy in dictionary use
- inequivalence in languages
- inefficient use of time

Inaccuracy in dictionary use

Dictionaries, especially bilingual ones, can be very misleading. Words, in any language, have more than one meaning, and simply picking a word from a list may lead to the choice of the wrong word. This is less of a problem in looking up something you are reading or something you have heard. You can usually figure out which is the correct translation from the context. In speaking and writing, however, you can create texts that no one can understand or that are hysterically funny in the misuse of words. At the very least, if you select one word of several in a list in an English–Foreign Language dictionary. One can easily think of all kinds of words in English that can be mistranslated into another language. Think of something like “that’s a tall tale,” meaning it stretches the imagination and does not conform to reality. The word you are likely to find in any foreign-language dictionary is one about size – and in another language, which does not use “tall” to mean “far-fetched,” you will both confuse and amuse your reader or listener. In a case like this, you will need to look something up by meaning, not but expression, i.e. look up the word *far-fetched*, not the word, *tall*.

Inequivalence in languages

Sometimes reference aids simply will not work because a concept in one language does not exist in another language. Privacy, for example, is very important to people who live in the United States. Even our children ask for their privacy at times. In Russia, however, people would not understand what this is. There is no such thing as privacy, and no desire for it. It is an alien concept. Translating it is nearly impossible unless you know both cultures very well and *explain* it, rather than translating it. Similarly, there will be concepts in your target culture that do not exist in your native language, and until you get to know the target culture very well, you may not understand these concepts. In such cases, reference aids are not very helpful.

Inefficient use of time

If you have to look up every word you do not know, you are probably working with material that is too difficult. That is, its difficulty level is requiring you to spend more time in preparing to learn by finding meanings than in actually learning. This is an inefficient use of your time.

Ideally, you will be working with texts (written and oral) in which you know enough that you can guess at the meanings of the new items. It is best to try to guess at the meaning of the paragraph or passage, then of the sentences before looking up much of anything. We call this a “top down” approach, as opposed to a “bottom up” approach in which the reader uses the meaning of words to put together an understanding of the whole text. A top-down approach is essentially synoptic, but it is an approach that all learners will probably need when you are using language in real life, not in class or for homework. After you have taken whatever guesses you can, then select one or two words that, if you knew what they meant, might clarify large chunks of the passage. Look those up. Then try again to see if you can figure out what the passage and its components mean, and look up the next set of key items. Repeat a time or two. If you are doing “intensive” reading or listening, in which you need to understand a text thoroughly, you will go through this process more times than if you are seeking an “extensive” (broad understanding of a long text or texts).

Using the dictionary by learning style

Your learning style will have a direct influence on you prefer to use a dictionary. It will also probably determine how well you make use of the dictionary and when and how you use it.

Ectenic dictionary users

If you are an ectenic learner, you may feel a “tug” to use the dictionary for every unknown word. This is a natural feeling but not a helpful one. If you are very uncomfortable with the top-down approach (reading whole texts, getting the gist, and determining meaning of words from the gist), you can attack the task by noting all the new words and making some decisions about the ones that you want to look at first. It’s still best to do this with the context in mind, because even if you prefer bottom-up processing, you will still need to reach and deal with the text as a whole and with words you do not know and how they fit into the larger context.

Synoptic dictionary users

If you are a synoptic learner, you may find that you refer to the dictionary far too infrequently and trust your hypotheses far too often. Especially at lower levels of foreign-language proficiency, you may need a “reality” check of some sort from time to time; this could be the dictionary, your teacher, or other

resource (bilingual books are great reality checks for synoptic learners – they handle the language of the text better than dictionaries and let you swim on your own as much as you want).

Other resources

Other resources include grammar books, books and lists of verb conjugations, pre-made flash cards, and word lists, as well as the electronic resources available on the Internet. You will probably like some of these better than others; your learning style will probably play a role in these preferences. Like reading a text, you can use these resources in surface or deep ways. Surface strategies would include such things as glancing at the reference and learning by rote. Deep strategies would more likely involve the making of associations between the items or between them and what you already know.

Practice what you have learned!

1. Try this experiment. Write your name with your right hand, then write it with your left hand. Were you equally comfortable both times? Probably not. This is what it feels like to work in accordance with your preferred learning styles and to work in your non-preferred styles. Of course, you could learn to write with the opposite hand, and you can learn to work with non-preferred styles, but that will take time, practice, and the development of new muscles (strategies).
2. Using the E&L or any other learning styles scale, determine your own set of learning styles (learning profile). What does this profile tell you about how you might best go about learning a foreign language?
3. Pick one area in which you have experienced learning difficulty. Analyze your difficulties from the point of view of your learning profile. If you find there is a conflict between your learning styles and the learning styles required by the task, select 2–3 strategies from styles that are required for the task that you do not now use and find some opportunities to use them.
4. Using Appendix B to identify possible strategies, make a three-column list. In column 1, write those strategies that you use regularly, in column 2 those you use occasionally, and in column 3 those you never use. Over the next 2–3 months, try to move a couple of strategies from column 3 to column 2 and a couple from column 2 to column 1. Be sure to include the use of reference aids in these lists if you do use them.
5. Make a list of expressions such as “tall tale” that could cause problems with a word-for-word translation. Then, figure out how you could possibly look up ways to translate these. Check out your translation with your teacher or a native speaker.

Review

In this chapter, you considered a number of themes. The content of these themes can be summarized as follows:

Definitions of learning styles and learning strategies.

- **Learning styles:** habitual patterns of perceiving, processing, or reacting to information.
- **Learning strategies:** specific actions and/or techniques taken to learn.

Kinds of learning styles: sensory preferences, cognitive styles, and personality types (the latter, personality types, will be covered in chapter 4).

Sensory preferences: visual, auditory, and motor modes of perception

Cognitive styles: synoptic vs. ectenic traits

- **Synopsis:** concreteness, induction, field independence, field sensitivity, leveling, globality, randomness, synthesis, analogue, impulsiveness
- **Ectasis:** abstraction, deduction, field dependence, field insensitivity, sharpening, particularity, sequentiality, analysis, digitality, reflectivity

Learning strategies: memory strategies (chapter 2), communication strategies (chapter 10), deep and surface strategies, comprehension strategies, production strategies

Taxonomies of learning strategies: ways of organizing and grouping strategies (see Appendix B for specific strategies)

The relationship between styles and strategies: Each style category is accompanied by a range of strategies particular to that category.

Use of learning resources. This section explains how to make good use of the aids that you have at your disposal. These include dictionaries, flashcards, and more.

If you want to learn more about the topics in this chapter, you might consult the following sources: Chamot and O'Malley (1994); Claxton and Murrell (1987); Dunn and Dunn (1978); Ehrman (1996); Ellis (2002); Keefe (1982); Kolb (1985); Leaver (1998); McCarthy (1980); McCarthy (1996); Oxford (1989); Oxford (1990); Ramírez and Castañeda (1974); Rubin and Thompson (1994); Sternberg (1994); Torrance, Reynolds, Riegal, and Ball (1977).