Tailoring training to individuals
How aptitude interacts with language instruction methods

CHALLENGE
Language learners typically have a finite amount of time to reach their language learning goals. In order to optimize language training programs, CASL is aiming to help language instructors tailor training in accordance with student language aptitude profiles to meet future language use needs and address current language learning problems. CASL is also conducting a study to measure the effectiveness of tailored training.

APPROACH
The relationship between a learner’s cognitive abilities (aptitudes) and an instructional method (treatment) is known as aptitude-by-treatment interaction (ATI). The effectiveness of a method may depend on a learner’s aptitudes. CASL is using an ATI research design to examine the interactions between instructional methods and a learner’s profile of aptitudes.

Through testing and interviews, CASL researchers have identified individual learner aptitudes and specific learning needs. Now, in coordination with language teachers, CASL is developing instructional tasks that aim to leverage learners’ unique aptitudes to help them overcome specific problems encountered while learning critical languages. For example, the CASL researchers are currently exploring the problem of confusability of similar-sounding words to identify training techniques might help learners with different aptitude profiles to overcome this problem.

TAILORED LANGUAGE TRAINING INITIATIVE (TLTI)
Just two months into TLTI, one of the Chinese Mandarin learners achieved the goal of International Language Roundtable Level 3 in listening and Level 2 in reading. She will remain in the 5-month program to see just how far she can go!

More at www.casl.umd.edu/TLTI