Expanding the interrogation beyond communicative competence:
Theoretical, institutional, and professional considerations

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Outline

1. Review premise behind "Perspectives", *Modern Language Journal*, Summer 2006
2. Initial response to "Perspectives"
3. Expansion of the interrogation - Institutional, theoretical, and professional issues
4. Recommendations
5. Exemplification

"Perspectives", *Modern Language Journal*, Summer 2006

- "Interrogating Communicative Competence as a Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Study"
    - Underlying assumptions
        - interactive, transactional oral language ≠ language in humanities scholarship
        - interactive, transactional oral language ≠ integration of language and content
        - interactive, transactional oral language ≠ professional-level language abilities
        - Creativity and self-expression ≠ exploration of the Other

"Interrogating Communicative Competence as a Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Study"

- Challenges
  - Establish goals for collegiate FL education --> high functional multilingualism?
  - Disentangle different uses of "communicative"
  - Acknowledge and respect institutionalization of communicative notions in U.S. FL education

Initial reaction

- Author consensus on the effectiveness and appropriateness of Communicative Competence (CC)
- CC is a dynamic, elusive construct
- CC is a lower-level phenomenon
- CC is only one component of the larger picture

The larger picture

- Institutionally . . .
  - Divided departments
    - Goals
    - Instructional foci
      - Thematic emphasis
      - Modalities
      - Textual orientation
    - Personnel

Consequences of bifurcation

- Theoretically . . .
  - Divergent notions of language
- Methodologically . . .
  - Cross-sectional research
- Professionally . . .
  - Potentially bifurcated future professoriate

Recommendation 1

- Articulate educational goals for the four-year undergraduate FL learning experience that
    - are shared by teaching faculty;
    - reflect FL departments' central role in the university's humanistic educational mission;
    - draw on departmental expertise;
    - acknowledge student population.

Recommendation 2

- Develop and maintain a coherent curricular context that spans the four-year undergraduate experience
  - Acknowledgement and support of the long-term nature of L2 acquisition
  - Integration of language and content
  - Articulation across instructional levels
  - Implementation of consistent pedagogical practices
  - Assessment of curricular effectiveness

Recommendation 3

- Conduct longitudinal SLA research to better understand the phenomenon of collegiate FL learning
  - L1 literate learners
  - Textual thinkers
  - Intercultural critics

Exemplification:
Georgetown University German Department (GUGD)

- Shared, consensual goals:

  "to enable learners to become competent and literate non-native users of German who can employ the language in a range of intellectual, professional, and personal contexts and who can also draw from it personal enrichment, enjoyment, and formation"
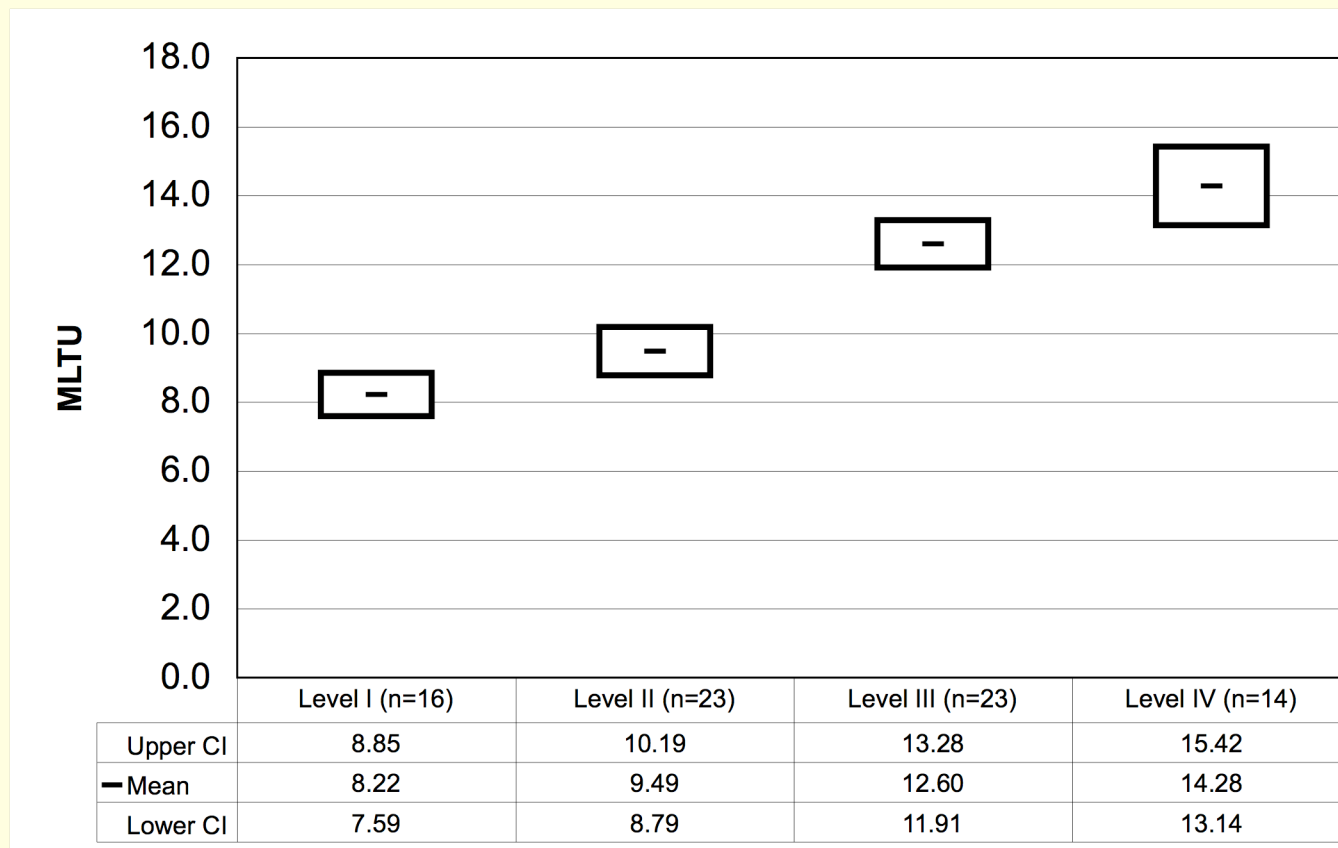
GUGD (cont.)

- Coherent curricular context
  - Integration of language and content through explicit literacy orientation
    - Focus on socially situated and culturally embedded language use via genre-based textual engagement
  - Principled sequencing of content
    - Primary-secondary discourse continuum
  - Publicly shared pedagogy
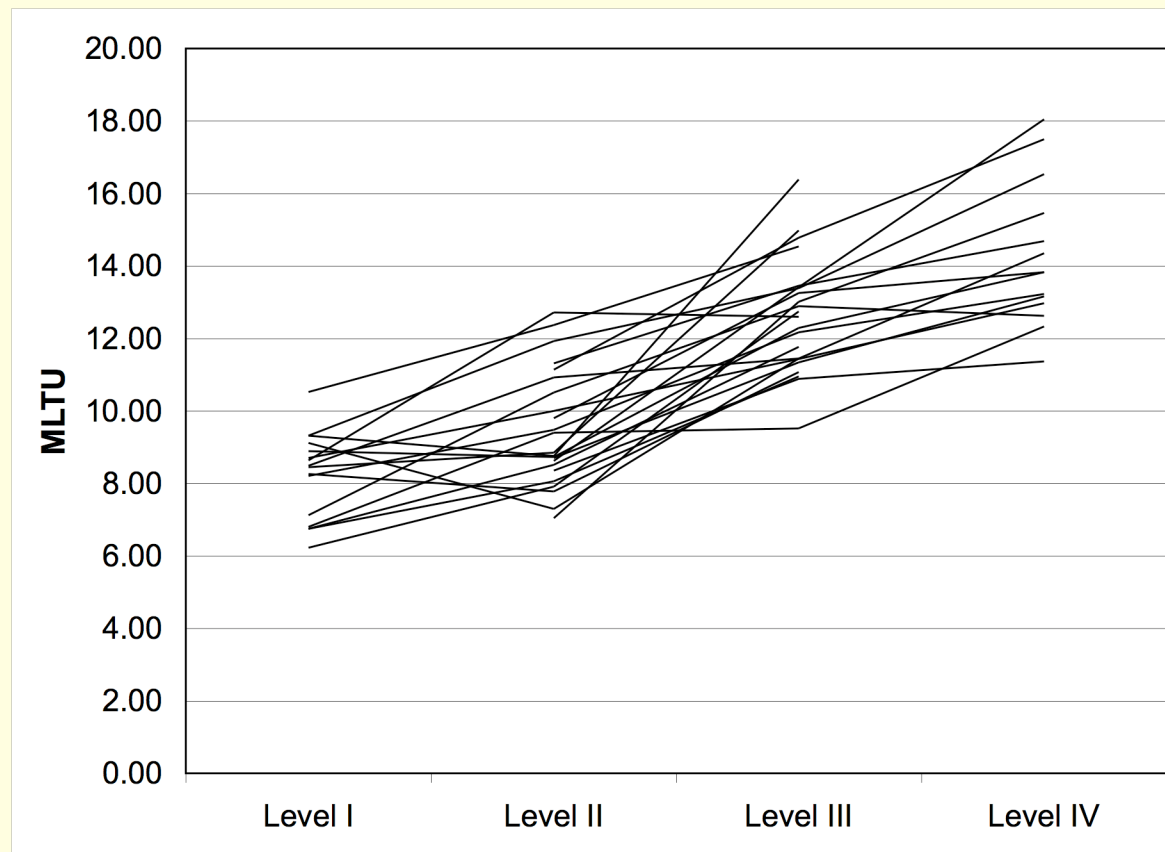   - Genre-derived tasks
  - Task-based assessment

GUGD (cont.)

- Longitudinal research
  - Development of syntactic complexity among learners who completed at least three consecutive instructional levels (N = 23)
  - Analysis of writing performance on end-of-level "prototypical performance tasks" (PPT)
    - Mean length of T-unit (MLTU)
    - Mean length of clause (MLC)
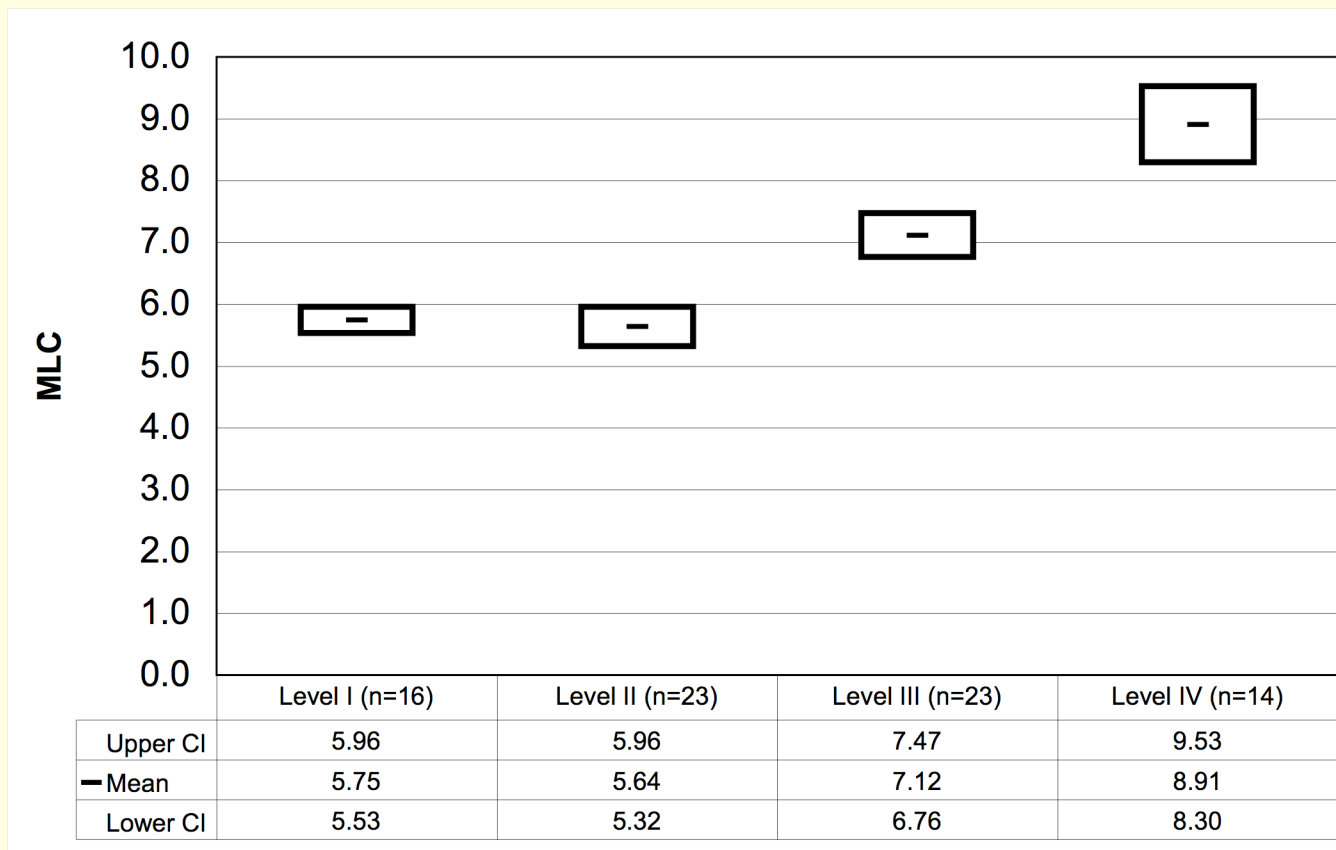   - Clauses per T-unit (CTU)
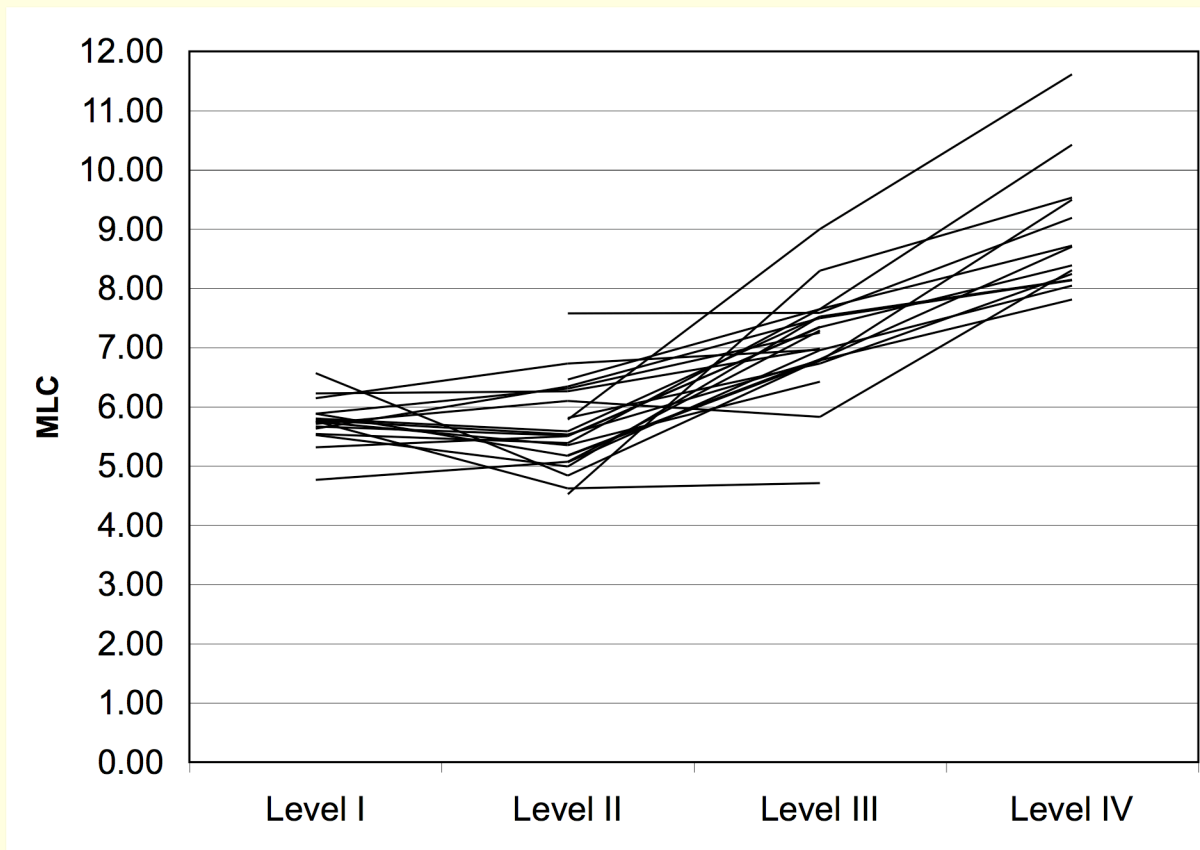
MLTU confidence intervals

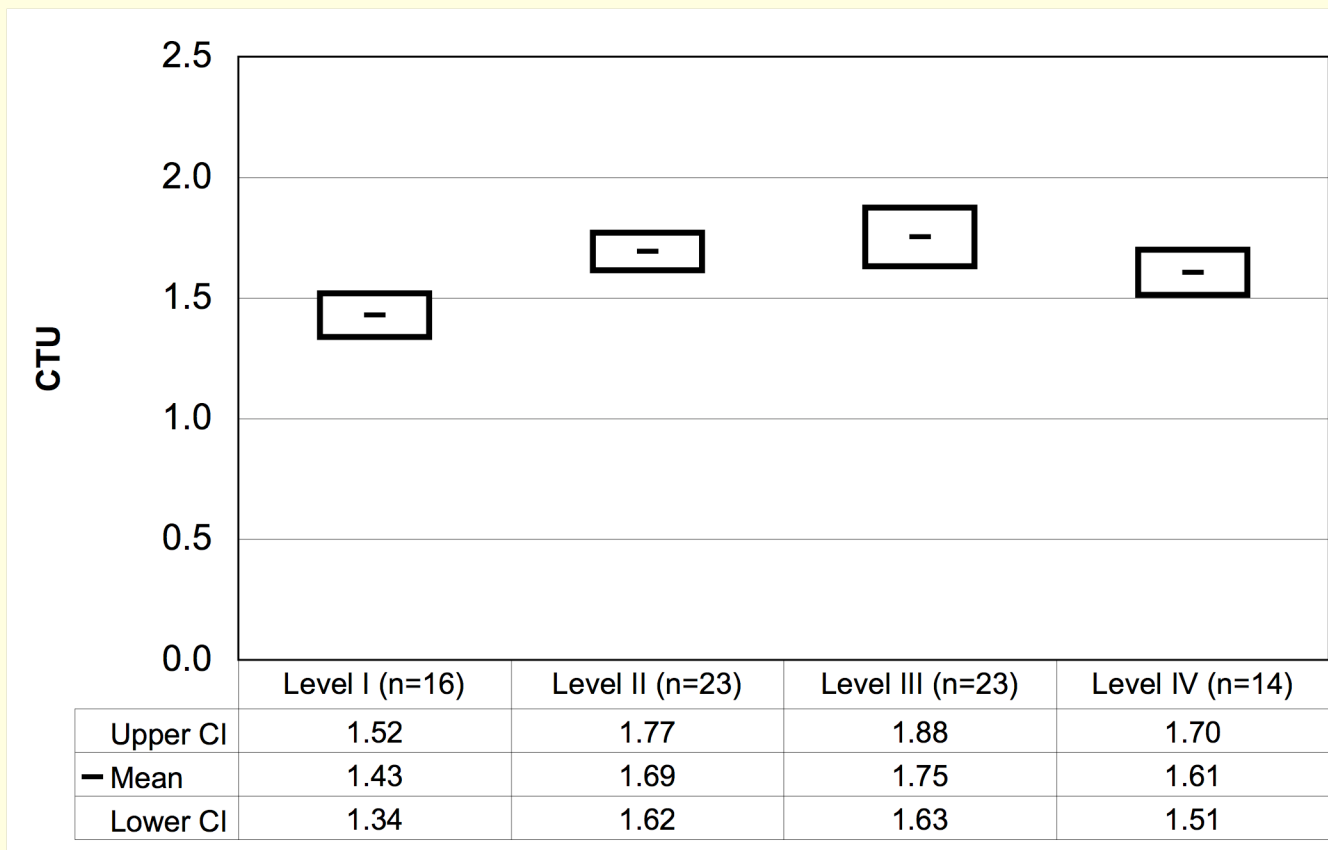|	Level I (n=16)	Level II (n=23)	Level III (n=23)	Level IV (n=14)
Upper CI	8.85	10.19	13.28	15.42
— Mean	8.22	9.49	12.60	14.28
Lower CI	7.59	8.79	11.91	13.14

MLTU growth lines

MLC confidence intervals

	Level I (n=16)	Level II (n=23)	Level III (n=23)	Level IV (n=14)
Upper CI	5.96	5.96	7.47	9.53
— Mean	5.75	5.64	7.12	8.91
Lower CI	5.53	5.32	6.76	8.30

MLC growth lines

CTU confidence intervals

	Level I (n=16)	Level II (n=23)	Level III (n=23)	Level IV (n=14)
Upper CI	1.52	1.77	1.88	1.70
— Mean	1.43	1.69	1.75	1.61
Lower CI	1.34	1.62	1.63	1.51

CTU growth lines
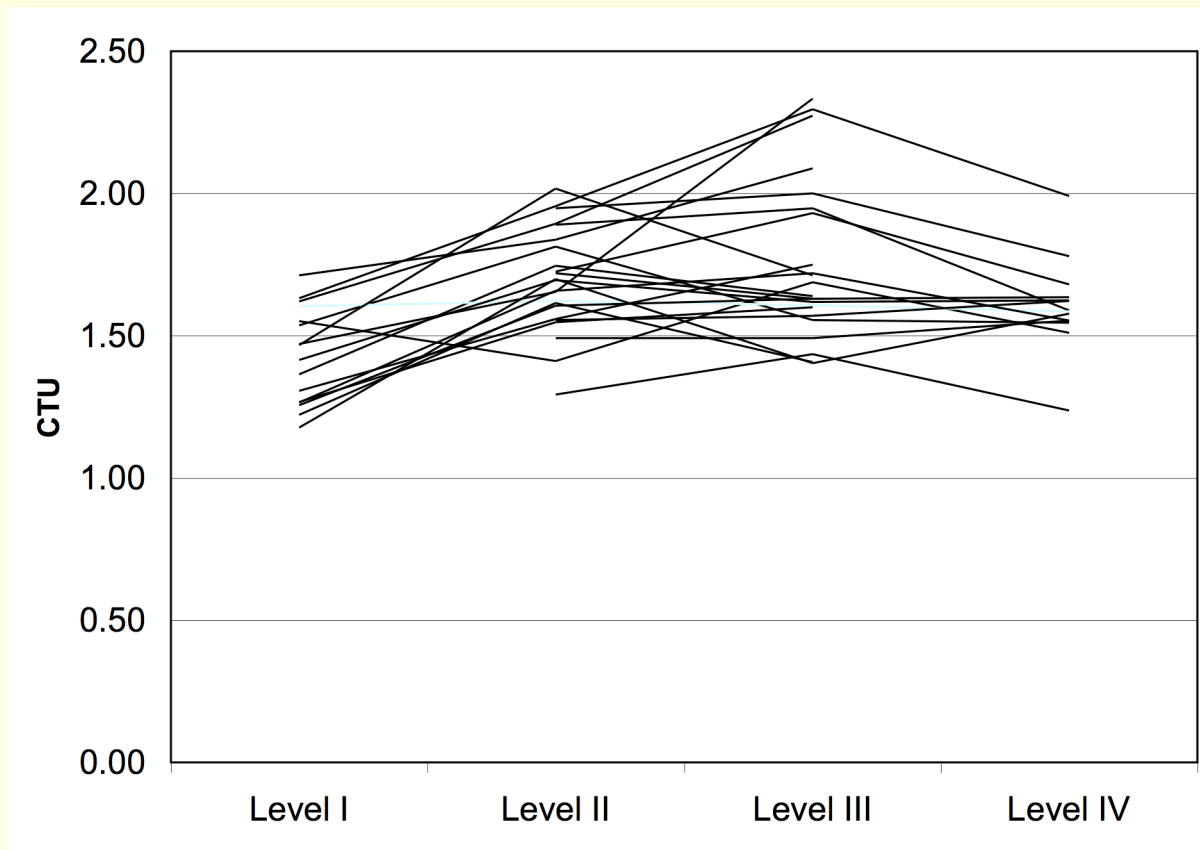
Parting thoughts on CC

- Cause or effect of structural dysfunction?
- Effective theoretical construct for collegiate FL curriculum construction?
- Productive research paradigm for understanding collegiate FL learning?

Thank you

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