APEC Second/Foreign Language Standards and their Assessment: Trends, Opportunities, and Implications

APEC EDNET SYMPOSIUM

APEC Human Resources Development Working Group

January 2008

HRD 01/2006

Produced by
Dr. Patricia A. Duff
University of British Columbia
Canada
patricia.duff@ubc.ca

For
APEC Secretariat
35 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119616
Tel: (65) 67756012 Fax: (65) 67756013
Email: info@apec.org Website: www.apec.org

© 2008 APEC Secretariat

APEC#208-HR-01.1

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 2

II. Contextualizing Policy/Standards Trends 2

III. Observed Policy/Standards Trends across APEC Economies 3

1. Theory vs. practice in policy/standards implementation 3
2. Ideologies related to language pedagogy and objectives: Toward communicative and intercultural competence 4
3. Use of English for content (subject matter) instruction 4
4. Age of introduction of English and other S/F languages 6
5. Better alignment needed between (high-stakes) assessment practices and standards 6

IV. Exemplary Standards "Frameworks": Language Learning Proficiency Scales for S/FL Learner Profiles 7

1. Some advantages of CEFR 8
2. Some limitations of CEFR 9

V. Other Issues Related to Assessment and Standards 10

1. Assessing language learners across APEC economies 10
2. Standards for teachers 13

2.1 21st century professional standards and competencies 13

2.2 Teachers' L2 metalinguistic knowledge and proficiency 15

VI. Conclusion 16

References 16

Appendix 18

APEC Second/Foreign Language Standards and their Assessment: Trends, Opportunities, and Implications

Patricia A. Duff
University of British Columbia
patricia.duff@ubc.ca

I. Introduction: Toward Achieving 21st Century Competencies in English and Other International Languages

With the intense globalization and human migration taking place within the Asia-Pacific region as well as beyond it, an appreciation of multiple languages and cultures and an ability to communicate effectively with people across languages, genres, cultures, communities, and using new digital media is crucial. To that end, high quality second/foreign language (S/FL)[1] skills, communicative competence, and intercultural sensitivity must be nurtured in 21st century global citizens. Teachers, for their part, as the ones guiding the learning process, must also have the requisite knowledge of S/FL teaching methodology and of language (as a structured semiotic system), and must also be proficient in the language of instruction.

The results of the APEC-EDNET survey of language learning standards conducted in Fall, 2007 and subsequent seminar presentations from the research meeting in Chinese Taipei in Dec. 2007, are summarized in the very comprehensive and useful document "APEC EDNET Project Seminar on Language Standards and their Assessment" (Chen, Sinclair, Huang, & Eyerman, 2008). That report and its source documents reveal a number of important trends. In this paper, I (1) analyze the trends related to S/FL policies and standards in the APEC region, (2) review the most promising existing standards for language learning, language teachers, and language teaching programs, and (3) consider related language assessment issues. One implication, for example, is that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR for short; Council of Europe, 2001) be adopted as a common reference framework across economies that can also help guide inservice and preservice language teacher education, curriculum reform, and assessment practices. The discussion in this paper centers around the standards for English first and foremost because of its global dominance and its crucial role across all 21 economies (both English-dominant and otherwise), and then consider implications for other S/F languages. Because of the diversity of APEC economies vis-à-vis the role of English as a second, foreign, or lingua franca language and the level of English proficiency already commonly attained in each economy (connected in part to the colonial legacy of English in the economy, its official status, and the necessary interaction between S/FL education and indigenous/community language education), it is necessary to consider the implications as rather general statements rather than as prescriptions for any and all economies.

II. Contextualizing Policy/Standards Trends

Language policies and standards typically evolve over time in response to world and regional politics and economics (e.g., industrialization, globalization, colonization, postcolonial

[1] I use the term "second/foreign language" (S/FL) throughout this paper as a shorthand that includes heritage languages and lingua francas as well. "Additional language" or "international language" would be more neutral terms, especially as it is often difficult to apply the terms SL or FL to contemporary transnational learners or to "SL" learners in first-language ethno-linguistic enclaves in otherwise "SL" contexts.

reform) as well as from grassroots local or regional concerns related to the validation and maintenance of community languages and the selection of preferred languages for wider communication within and across regions. Language policies and standards are naturally also often informed and shaped by research and developments in other parts of the world (e.g., drawing on the experiences of Europe, where trilingualism or "plurilingualism" is now an accepted educational and communicative objective, with English serving as the default first additional language) and by new political and economic alliances (again, in regions such as the European Union, with the accession of new member countries). Language policy practices have also been heavily influenced in recent years in some economies by new (perceived) international and domestic security threats (e.g., in the U.S. post-September 11, 2001), by changing immigration patterns (e.g., the influx of immigrants into both urban and rural regions in the U.S. and changing immigration demographics in other immigrant-receiving English-dominant economies), as well as by the desire for mobility of skilled and professional workers (Duff, 2004).

The resulting diversification of the ethnic and linguistic composition of workplaces and schools has also been the impetus for reforms in language (education) policies and standards. In APEC economies, perceived competition from neighboring economies has affected many economies with respect to the teaching and learning of English and there has been a concomitant surge in community and parental advocacy for effective English language teaching. Finally, the global impact of new digital information, communication, and learning technologies and intense economic competition and cooperation have also resulted in a serious consideration of best practices and standards in language teaching, assessment, and teacher education and in the use of new media to achieve economies' educational goals.

III. Observed Policy/Standards Trends across APEC Economies

In this section, I present a number of trends in language education among APEC economies captured by Chen et al. (2008) and the source documents and experts they consulted, and supplemented with my own observations and related research trends.

1. Theory vs. practice in policy/standards implementation

All APEC economies surveyed seem to recognize the need for better strategies both to *establish* and then successfully *implement and sustain* L2 learning policies and standards successfully. For example, Yoshida (2003), a well known scholar in English education in Japan, reported a few years ago in a policy section of the *Modern Language Journal* how in his economy the "espoused" policies related to English language education reform and the practical implementation of those policies and objectives have often been at odds, to the detriment of language learners and reflected to some extent in standardized test national mean scores such as on TOEFL (see Section V below). Such situations of policy-practice disjunctions and shortfalls are reported in other economies as well, such as Canada, which espouses national bilingualism through official language policies but has yet to demonstrate widespread success in implementing this policy (Duff, 2007). Bilingualism and multilingualism in Canada tend to be enjoyed by new-immigrant and long-established Francophone communities in Canadians to a much greater extent than by Canadian-born Anglophones. Thus, a recommendation based on this item is that economies should remain proactive and vigilant about the implementation of desired policies, providing sufficient resources, including training, in order to effect change in language education practices and in resulting language competencies, according to their priorities.

2. *Ideologies related to language pedagogy and objectives: Toward communicative and intercultural competence*

Chen et al.'s review of surveys completed by economies confirms the widespread and deep recognition of the socio-economic and political importance of effective English and other S/FL learning (e.g., in Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Japanese Arabic). It also conveys the current acceptance of high-level *communicative* and *intercultural* competence as standards for elementary school to tertiary education as well as for lifelong learning, competencies also reflected in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards (see Hadley, 2001) and in other current standards documents. The ACTFL Standards stress *communication, cultures, connections, comparisons*, and *communities* (see Appendix). All of these intersecting elements foreground the importance of increasing learners' global and local interconnectedness with individuals in other ethnolinguistic communities, and the need to improve students' awareness of their own and others' languages and cultures and their metalinguistic and metacultural analytic skills. They also underscore the notion that the communication objectives of teaching shouldn't be restricted to such mundane transactions as asking for directions or ordering food in a restaurant but, rather, that they should encompass oral and written skills targeting different genres, topics, audiences, purposes for communicating, and different sources of information as well. Above all, the survey results confirm that language can no longer be learned primarily for its aesthetic and literary value. It must be learned in a way that increases students' ability to participate actively in 21st century life in a globalized society.

3. Use of English for content (subject matter) instruction

A third significant trend internationally, and therefore one not surprisingly also reported by many APEC economies in the survey, relates to the use of English for content (subject) instruction. That is, the language is learned and then becomes the medium for learning about other subjects in immersion programs, mainstream curricula, and content- and-language-integrated-learning (CLIL) environments (also known as content-based language instruction in North America, CBLI). Thus, although the second trend reported that there is widespread affirmation that language must be learned for wider communication, it must also increasingly be learned to enable students to succeed in English-medium education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in some cases. In Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and HK-China, because of their British colonial history English is already widely used as a language of instruction. In English-dominant economies with a large influx of ESL students, growing numbers of English language learners are being mainstreamed into English-medium "mainstream" content courses (e.g., mathematics, social studies, and other mandated academic courses), often with relatively little language support once mainstreamed. More attention must be directed in those economies to how mainstream content-area teachers can effectively support these learners with both English language needs and their need to learn the mandated academic content and how ESL specialists can also prepare students for the transition from ESL coursework to content coursework. Non-English dominant economies, as well, are increasing the marketing and delivery of higher education through the medium of English, in part to attract fee-paying international students, but also to better prepare local students for 21st century competencies, skills, and mobility.

This shift toward content-based instruction in English (and/or other S/FLs) also reflects a major trend in the European Union (particularly in CEFR) toward expanding CLIL programs, especially for English but for other FLs as well. Part of the explanation is that, as learners start studying English from earlier grade levels, by secondary school they have sufficient

levels of proficiency to begin applying English to more substantive academic subject matter. In his very interesting book, *English Next*, Graddol (2006) describes this phenomenon, and especially considers the implications of this trend at the higher grade levels and in the postsecondary sector for English-dominant economies that have in the past sought out international students and for which English education has been a very important economic activity. These economies in the future will face increasing competition from non-English economies that can provide the same services closer to home and at a decreased cost to students. Another implication is that, where English (or another S/FL) is being used as a medium of instruction for non-native or not fully proficient learners of that target language, systematic and sustained attention must be paid to *language and literacy* across the curriculum and not just to *content* learning objectives.

Given this trend across APEC and other economies, it is important to recognize that a substantial amount of research has taken place on how best to simultaneously address linguistic and subject-matter learning across the curriculum that economies moving in this direction should be aware of (e.g., Mohan, 1986; Crandall, 1986; Johnson & Swain, 1997; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). Scholars in CLIL/CBLI (e.g., Mohan, 1986; Mohan et al. 2001; Stoller & Grabe, 1997) recommend that attention be paid to three interrelated aspects of language awareness that must be instilled in teachers (and students, in turn)—not only specialists in second language (L2) education but also first language (L1) educators--when delivering content:

(1) Knowledge structures and text types (rhetorical patterns) associated with different content: e.g., classification, compare-contrast, sequence, cause-effect, evaluation (Mohan, 1986; cf. work in Australia drawing on systemic-functional linguistics and genre studies that provide models and principles for the appropriate scaffolding of content-teaching through an additional language (e.g., Gibbons, 2002, who gives advice about ways of supporting school-aged English language learners in English-medium courses).

(2) Attention to corresponding language structures (e.g., nominalization in science: *evaporation, photosynthesis*; causal verbs); discourse markers representing the relationship between ideas (*then, next, furthermore, consequently, on the one hand... on the other hand*); genres (e.g., letters vs. reports vs. narrative essays); and variation across curriculum, registers (formal/informal, technical/general), and across vocational and professional fields.

(3) Graphic literacy: the ability to comprehend and produce visual representations of knowledge through graphic organizers which show logical or conceptual relationships among pieces of information, which reduce the linguistic burden of texts and facilitate new knowledge integration and retention. Some common examples commonly found in information texts are Venn diagrams, flowcharts, tree diagrams, cycles, sequence/chain of events and cause-effect visuals, problem-solution graphics, classification charts, and the like. Importantly, certain types of visual display are normally associated with certain kinds of texts (e.g., compare-contrast texts that have an accompanying compare-contrast table) and particular linguistic structures are also associated with those texts: e.g., *however, in contrast, on the other hand, similarly*, in the case of compare-contrast; *first, second, third, following,* etc., with sequence; *therefore, as a result, consequently*, with cause-effect.

As in the case of early-start language education (next section), the teaching of content through a language that is not the students' mother tongue, or even the teachers' mother tongue in many cases, requires very careful planning, preparation, scaffolding, and monitoring. Teachers must have very high levels of language proficiency and subject-matter competence in their content area and must understand how to support students' language/literacy and content learning objectives. Otherwise, content-based L2-medium education and its variants can be disastrous (Johnson & Swain, 1997).

4. Age of introduction of English and other S/F languages

A fourth trend reported by APEC economies since the last survey in 2003, and indeed observed in many other parts of the world as well, has been the gradual lowering of the age of first instruction of English in economies where English is a FL. Importantly, it appears that many economies recognize that both the intensity and duration of language instruction are as important as the age at which the language is introduced in the curriculum, and many economies are ensuring that students obtain at least two hours a week of English instruction (see Duff, 2004). In comparison, although the teaching of other FLs from lower grade levels has increased quite considerably in recent years in the U.S. and Canada, in many instances the number of minutes of teaching in the first few years is much smaller than it is for the teaching of English in non-English-dominant economies, and thus quite negligible in terms of impact (Pufahl et al., 2000). Some implications of this continuing downward pressure for the teaching of S/FLs from an earlier age are that more teachers need to be recruited, retained, and educated through preservice and inservice teacher education and language programs; there must be acceptable standards in place for criterion levels of S/FL proficiency on the part of teachers; suitable curriculum and materials are needed to implement effective language teaching; and the curriculum for younger learners must be articulated well with curriculum and assessment at higher levels (Cameron, 2003). An area of potential research in APEC economies might be the documentation of changes in S/FL proficiency (especially if high-stakes testing or proficiency instruments are the same as before), as well as attitudes toward the target languages, cultures, and peoples, by the end of secondary or high school now in comparison with documented levels of attainment under earlier policies, when English was introduced from later grade levels only.

5. Better alignment needed between (high-stakes) assessment practices and standards

In some Canadian provinces, as in many other parts of the world, there is a continuing and often insidious disjunction between curriculum and assessment, particularly in high-stakes school-leaving and university-entrance testing. Whereas the curriculum (e.g., for French as a second language in Canada) may emphasize communication, and especially the development of oral proficiency, school-leaving exams may not directly measure oral skills at all and may focus on psychometrically and logistically more easily measured knowledge sets, such as vocabulary and decontextualized grammar.

To give another example, Richard Watson Todd, a longtime scholar and educator in Thailand, recently bemoaned testing policies and practices in that economy with respect to English university entrance examinations, in particular (Watson Todd, 2007). He reported on the frustration of teachers, parents, and students with the use of multiple-choice exams primarily for assessing students' communicative English; unfortunately, one year when essays were introduced, explicit criteria for the assessment of the essays were not provided, thereby reducing their reliability. Such practices, Todd notes, again signal a mismatch between educational ideals (e.g., as encoded in the National Education Act of 1999 in

Thailand) and assessment practices, a situation certainly shared by many other economies around the world, and one that adversely affects English language education. Assessing knowledge in a more integrative and direct fashion has considerable associated costs, which is why more efficient and psychometrically reliable multiple-choice tests are often selected.

The argument could be made that these more "efficient" and cost-effective tests are good *indirect* measures of oral ability. However, they have very poor face validity in that regard. This trend of misaligned curriculum and assessment is very discouraging for students and teachers who, rather than embrace 21st century curriculum and standards or respond to the particular interests and needs of their own students, must teach to the standardized test. That is, the test leads to negative "washback" in teaching (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004) and is therefore not conducive to best practices in language education. Even if tests seem to indirectly measure a particular skill like speaking and writing, if those skills are not visible to potential test-takers or to teachers, they are unlikely to devote sufficient attention to their development. The tests' construct validity in the light of standards and curriculum developed with other explicit objectives is then easily challenged. It was largely in response to such concerns that the US-based Educational Testing Service (ETS) recently concluded its extensive redevelopment of the TOEFL exam after many years of research at ETS and consultation with the professional community of scholars and language educators. As a result, the Internet-based TOEFL now includes both speaking and writing components, whereas the Test of Written English was optional before and there was no test of speaking for general test-takers; other changes were also made. An expected consequence of that test reform will be a concomitant increase in attention paid to those skills in schools, in test-preparation centers, in related language teaching/learning materials, and in the consciousness of learners, teachers, and parents about valued competencies and skills—in other words, positive washback effects are expected.

IV. Exemplary Standards "Frameworks": Language Learning Proficiency Scales for S/FL Learner Profiles (e.g., Common European Framework)

The EDNET report by Chen et al. (2008) provides a commendable analysis of the following four well known and generally well respected standards for English and other L2 learning developed in different regions of the world:

- USA (ACTFL) – originally college-level, oral[2]
- Europe (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR) – broadest appeal
- Canada (Canadian Language Benchmarks) – adult workplace
- Australia (International Second Language Proficiency Rating) – adult primarily

Another standards documents not included in the report, which has a shorter history of development and implementation in any case and less related testing research, include the international organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages' (TESOL's) "ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students.[3]" These standards have a great deal in common with the four standards documents reviewed in terms of their underlying principles of language learning and language pedagogy, stressing language for communication, language for academic learning, and pragmatic or functional aspects of language use.

---

[2] See Svender & Duncan's (1998) guidelines for ACTFL use with k-12 learners.
[3] Available at: http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565.

The four standards documents listed above all benefited from a long period of incubation, considerable revision, expert consultation and research (from the testing community, language educators, and policy-makers), and many years of implementation. Not surprisingly, there was also a good degree of cross-fertilization among them, as many of the same expert consultants worked on them at different points since the standards were expected to reflect the state of the art internationally and not just nationally. Furthermore, all have much to offer APEC standards/practices, especially the CEFR (Buck, 2007; Byrnes, 2007; Chen et al., 2008). Below I elaborate on the CEFR specifically, which has much to offer APEC economies concerned with adopting or referencing a common metric of language proficiency should consider carefully.

1. Some advantages of CEFR

CEFR has had wide internationally impact and implementation and serves as an excellent model or reference point for APEC economies, although their local contexts are naturally quite different from those of European Union economies. CEFR has also spawned important new trends in assessment, such as the European Language Portfolio, giving students more agency in recording and reflecting on their own functional abilities and experiences with the languages in their repertoire. It encourages formative and summative self assessment, multilingual "biographies" and identities, and dossiers, all in the spirit of cultivating a "plurilingual" citizenry.

Excellent recent position papers on CEFR appeared in the *Modern Language Journal*, 2007 (Alderson, 2007; Byrnes, 2007; Little, 2007; North, 2007), pointing out both its strengths and limitations. In general, the strengths far outweigh any limitations. CEFR has three main levels of proficiency (A, B, C, with C the highest) and then proficiency distinctions within each level. It is generally lauded for being teacher-friendly and intuitive, using non-technical language that is easily accessible to non-specialists trying to implement it. It has been adopted by all countries in Europe and others far beyond Europe, such as New Zealand. The Council of Europe, which sponsored its development, wanted to facilitate the "mutual recognition of language qualifications in Europe," (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_EN.asp), and it has gone a long way toward doing precisely that. In addition, CEFR has demonstrated a positive potential impact on teaching and curriculum, as well as on preservice and inservice teacher education--and not just on assessment. It also has had a positive impact on stated learning outcomes. For example, in France, students are expected to attain "B1" standing (as "independent users") in their first L2 and A2 level (as "basic users") in their second L2. University graduates are expected to have reached a C2 level ("mastery", or near-native ability), the highest in the CEFR, in their L2.

Experts reviewing the CEFR also note that it has a favourable influence on classroom assessment, it is functional and task-oriented, and can also be applied to language learning for a variety of purposes: learning language for work, study, social activity or tourism, and so on. Finally, the CEFR's very positive orientation is often cited as an appealing aspect of its use for assessment, stressing what learners *can* do, rather than what they *cannot* do. It therefore is more motivating and encouraging for students than assessment criteria framed in terms of deficiencies or error types or other inadequacies. For example, as the table below, adapted from the Association of Language Teachers of Europe (http://www.alte.org), illustrates, at level C2-5, a student "*can* advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understand colloquial references and deal confidently with hostile questions." In writing, students "*can* write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and

accuracy". At the lowest level, A1-Breakthrough, on the other hand, students "*can* understand basic instructions" or "complete basic forms." At B1-2, about half way between the other two extremes and representing an intermediate level, students "*can* express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area" and "*can* write letter or make notes on familiar or predictable matters."

Examples of "CAN-DO" Levels from CEFL
(http://www.alte.org/can_do/general.cfm)

Levels	Listening/speaker	Reading	Writing
C2 – Level 5	CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.	CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.	CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.
B1 – Level 2	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements.	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.
A1 – Breakthrough level	CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.	CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.

2. *Some limitations of CEFR*

Despite these many attractive features of CEFR, the European context, as noted earlier, is certainly not the same as APEC's, with respect to the range and types of languages represented, the mobility of students and teachers, the official policies espousing multilingualism and immigration, and then the economic, political, and other relationships across regional economies. At present, CEFR levels are not anchored to any specific language (but have been translated into 23 European languages), therefore issues of transferability, or comparability of levels across languages must be explored to a greater extent. Within Europe, for example, many languages have familial links and learning other languages within the same language family is generally considered less time-consuming than learning typologically unrelated languages (e.g., see an oft-cited study by Liskin-Gasparro, 1982, summarized by Hadley, 2001, that supports this assertion). APEC obviously also represents a geographically much vaster area than Europe, in terms of potential mobility for educational purposes.

More daunting perhaps, is that, in practice, it is often difficult to get raters of tasks on tests to agree on the specific levels of speech or writing that they are assessing or targeting, especially across countries and distinct languages. For example, it is difficult to determine whether a particular task for either testing or teaching purposes is a B1 or a B2 task and similarly it can be difficult to assess whether students' performance is B1 or B2 level (Marianne Nikolov, personal communication, October, 2007, with respect to the adoption of CEFR and inter-rater training in Hungary; see Alderson, 2007).

Another critique of CEFR is that, although it was based on extensive L2 testing research and consultation with L2 teachers, it has not really been validated by parallel second language acquisition developmental data, for example monitoring how students progress from one level to another, if indeed that is how they progress. The levels make great sense intuitively but a stronger interface between testing research and second language acquisition research would further strength them. Alderson (2007) therefore suggests that the test data need to be verified with test corpus data. Alderson and Little (2007) point out that the CEFR has to date had more impact on the field of testing such as the Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE), and especially private companies' testing interests, than on official high school matriculation testing, curriculum design, materials, and pedagogy.

Other limitations of the CEFR are the following:

(1) It has been used primarily with young adults. With the introduction of foreign language teaching (and assessment) at earlier grade levels CEFR tasks or competencies likely need to be adapted somewhat.

(2) For content-specific learning (called "language of schooling" in Europe) rather than general-proficiency language teaching and learning, additional modifications might be necessary.

(3) Although it accounts for second-language pragmatics (appropriateness of language use), CEFR doesn't directly and explicitly take into account cultural or literary knowledge.

V. Other Issues Related to Assessment and Standards

1. Assessing language learners across APEC economies

The previous section highlighted the strengths and limitations of CEFR for potential adaptation in and across APEC economies. Certainly, it has numerous strengths. In considering the matter of adopting or adapting such instruments in APEC, a tension must be acknowledged between the desire to establish comparisons in learning outcomes (or standards) across economies/languages by using well-field-tested instruments, on the one hand, and the need for local autonomy, responsiveness to local contexts, and a sense of agency and ownership of policy/standards/practices on the part of local experts/teachers, on the other hand. Furthermore, borrowing curriculum or assessment instruments developed in a very different educational and geopolitical context does require a full understanding of how and why particular instruments were developed in the first place and how best to use or adapt them.

Within APEC economies presently, according to the 2007 EDNET survey, there are many approaches to testing: from local classroom-based and national standardized instruments to international standardized tests such as those developed by the University of Cambridge, UK. In general, it appears that most APEC language tests are locally developed, but ensuring that tests reflect curriculum contexts/levels and objectives well has been an ongoing concern.

One advantage of using an internationally standardized examination system is that it facilitates comparisons of results across contexts and helps establish the readiness of learners to study abroad or in second-language immersion programs, for example. However, again the

suitability of the assessment tool in the local curricular context must be established. Also, testers and policy-makers must decide whether they wish to assess students' achievement, based on the learning they have done in their coursework (favouring criterion-based assessment), or whether more global proficiency measures, independent of coursework, are sought. The latter would include such standardized tests as the U.S. Educational Testing Services' Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the UK/Australian administered International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Both TOEFL and IELTS are widely used standardized tests for academic English, for international or English-medium education, but their target audience is not school-aged learners but rather students aspiring to study in an English-medium university. That said, these large-scale international tests do provide interesting comparison data across countries/economies and reveal progress toward international English norms, especially referenced to postsecondary education. Of course, such comparisons must be interpreted cautiously, with full recognition first of all that different APEC economies have completely different histories—colonial, postcolonial, or other—with English as a second, foreign, international or lingua franca language; and second, that international standardized test-takers reflect just a fraction of English language learners in language, possibly skewing or inflating scores (based on "the cream of the crop") or reflecting differences in test-preparedness. The following table provides some data from the new Internet-based TOEFL for all test-takers from September 2005 to December 2006.

TOEFL Internet Based Test Results Sept 05-Dec. 06:
Section score (scaled) means by selected geographic regions and by native country
(Source: ETS, 2007, pp. 10-11)[4]

Native Economy (per APEC)	**Number of Examinees**	**Reading/30**	**Listening/30**	**Speaking/30**	**Writing/30**	**Total/120**
Chile	830	23	24	21	21	89
PR China	20,450	20	19	18	20	76
Hong Kong, China	2,763	18	21	19	22	80
Indonesia	1,875	19	21	19	21	80
Japan	17,957	15	17	15	17	65
Korea	31,991	17	19	17	19	72
Malaysia	920	22	23	20	24	89
Peru	1437	20	22	20	20	82
Philippines	5,882	20	22	22	21	85
Russian Federation	2,922	20	23	22	21	85
Singapore	144	25	25	24	26	100
Chinese Taipei	10,022	16	18	17	19	71
Thailand	3,886	17	19	17	18	72
Viet Nam	2,320	17	17	17	19	71

[4] ETS (Educational Testing Service). (2007). TOEFL® Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL Internet-Based Test: September 2005-December 2006 Test Data. Retrieved Jan. 7/08 from http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/TOEFL-SUM-0506-iBT.pdf. The nomenclature of the column on the left has been edited for APEC purposes.

Comparable data have been collected and are freely available online for IELTS and TOEIC as well, and from approximately the same time period (2006). Below the Academic IELTS data are reproduced rather than IELTS General test data, since the majority of test takers (80%) take the Academic version and it's similar in objectives to TOEFL. Selected APEC economies included in this table are highlighted.

IELTS Mean band score by most frequent countries or regions of origin (2006)

International English Language Testing System (IELTS): 9 Bands[5]

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
Bangladesh	5.58	5.38	5.38	5.62	5.55
China	**5.47**	**5.80**	**5.23**	**5.39**	**5.53**
Germany	7.44	7.23	6.75	7.26	7.23
Hong Kong, China	**6.70**	**6.75**	**5.91**	**6.06**	**6.42**
India	6.30	5.82	5.79	6.10	6.07
Indonesia	6.10	6.27	5.43	5.83	5.97
Iran	6.04	5.96	5.81	6.31	6.09
Japan	**5.87**	**5.86**	**5.33**	**5.80**	**5.78**
Korea	**5.87**	**5.87**	**5.36**	**5.72**	**5.77**
Malaysia	**6.93**	**6.85**	**6.13**	**6.41**	**6.64**
Nepal	6.34	5.79	5.71	5.88	5.99
Nigeria	5.65	5.84	6.22	6.93	6.22
Pakistan	5.83	5.58	5.49	5.86	5.75
Philippines	**6.68**	**6.27**	**6.18**	**6.74**	**6.53**
Russia	**6.49**	**6.48**	**5.98**	**6.68**	**6.47**
Sri Lanka	6.27	5.97	5.93	6.39	6.21
Chinese Taipei	**5.52**	**5.81**	**5.23**	**5.66**	**5.62**
Thailand	**5.82**	**5.89**	**5.28**	**5.70**	**5.74**
United Arab Emirates	4.99	5.10	4.86	5.43	5.16
Viet Nam	**5.59**	**6.01**	**5.56**	**5.70**	**5.78**

Again, these data only capture the mean scores of some of the highest-achieving students in those economies, specifically those who seek opportunities for further study (typically graduate study) abroad. They do not indicate the levels of typical school leavers.

In the teaching of Chinese, the standardized HSK Proficiency Test developed in Beijing and loosely modeled on an older version of TOEFL, is becoming more widely used both inside and outside of Chinese regions for learners of Mandarin. However, there has been insufficient research on its reliability and validity with heritage-language learners in North America, many of whom take it to demonstrate that they satisfy additional-language requirements. A variety of other standardized tests also reviewed by Chen et al. (2008) indicate the range of choices available for test takers who seek international validation of their L2 proficiency.

Whatever tests are used, it can be helpful to try to equate local tests with standardized ones or to map them onto instruments such as CEFR (e.g., Chen et al., 2008) to assist with interpreting results. Many European-language tests have already done so (e.g., French DELF, German TestDAF) and the Council of Europe publishes an online manual[6] to assist with this kind of equating or referencing to CEFR specifically. For example, some IELTS and

[5] IELTS is managed by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), with British Council and IDP Australia. Retrieved Jan. 8/08 from http://www.ielts.org/teachersandresearchers/analysisoftestdata/article382.aspx. Some "country/region" names have been edited to reflect APEC economies.

[6] http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/CEF%20ref%20supp%20%20intro%20sep.pdf

Cambridge English examinations are compared or equated below, with the column in the far right representing the CEF(R) levels. This kind of comparison would be very helpful across economies using data from their own standardized tests, and particularly for those economies that encourage mobility for educational and work purposes.

Comparisons of University of Cambridge Examinations and CEF(R) [7]

NQF=National Qualification Framework;
CELS=Certificates in English Language Skills;
BEC=Business English Certificates

IELTS	Main Suite	BEC	CELS	NQF	CEF
9.0					
8.0					
	CPE			3	C2
7.0					
	CAE	BEC H	CELS H	2	C1
6.0					
	FCE	BEC V	CELS V	1	B2
5.0					
4.0	PET	BEC P	CELS P	Entry 3	B1
3.0	KET			Entry 2	A2
				Entry 1	A1

Chen et al. (2008) include a table from Educational Testing Service mapping the new TOEFL Internet-based Test (iBT) onto CEFR. The CEFR level B-2, for example, corresponds roughly to the iBT TOEFL total score of 87-109, whereas C-1 is in the 110-120 range. Such mappings are obviously very helpful for nonspecialists who must try to interpret scores across contexts.

Turning to local or national standardized testing within economies, Chen et al. (2008) report on some very impressive, rigorous test development taking place in APEC economies, such as in Korea. For example, the G-TELF (General Tests of English Language Proficiency) in Korea is a criterion-referenced, task-based, diagnostic instrument, based on communicative competence that is suitable for EFL contexts. The test is relevant for general, academic and business settings.

2. *Standards for teachers*

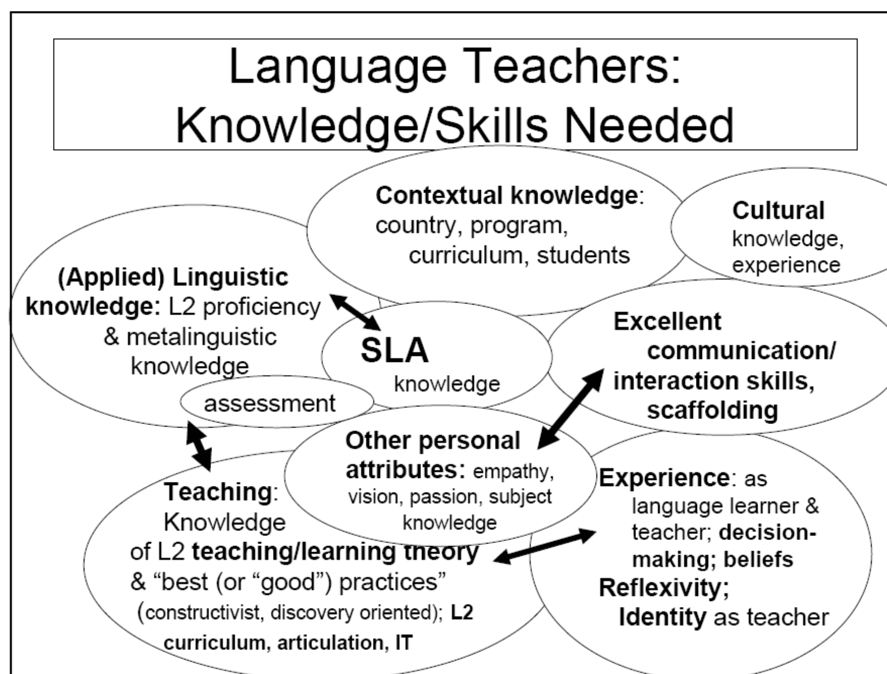
2.1 21st century professional standards and competencies

Up to this point, we have discussed ways of assessing students' competencies in additional languages, especially high-stakes international languages such as English. Here we turn to a discussion of standards for teachers, first in terms of pedagogical competencies for the 21st

[7] Retrieved Jan. 7/08 from http://www.ielts.org/teachersandresearchers/commoneuropeanframework

century, and then in terms of linguistic competency, which is naturally a subset of their overall competency as educators. Most APEC economies have their own standards and procedures for accreditation, assessment, and for professional development. They specify various criterion L2 proficiency levels and many professional knowledge parameters. Again, the question is, are there any widely agreed-upon standards or assessment tools that might facilitate mobility among teachers and also more parsimonious teacher development?

Based on my own work in language teaching and language teacher education for nearly three decades, I suspect that most people would agree that the constellation of knowledge and skills shown in the following figure are needed by language teachers:



They must have considerable knowledge of the curricular context in which they are teaching, must have a high degree of proficiency in, and metalinguistic knowledge of, their own language and of the language they are teaching (if different), they must understand the processes of second language acquisition and principles of assessment, and they must understand culture (e.g., as processes, ideologies, and behaviours shared by groups of learners). In addition, they must have a strong foundation in pedagogy: of best (or sound) teaching practices reflecting 21st century priorities, and they must be effective communicators who know how to organize classroom learning interactionally and in relation to course and curricular objectives. They must also have a number of personal attributes, such as self-discipline, empathy, vision, passion, and subject-matter knowledge; not just knowledge of language and language teaching but also knowledge of the kinds of subjects that students will learn about *through* language. And, ideally, teachers will learn to reflect on their own experiences as teachers in such a way that they improve in their online decision-making, in their planning and assessment, and that they develop identities as teaching professionals.

Some organizations are currently advocating for greater enforcement of, and compliance with, such standards in English language or other modern language programs. In Australia, Ingram (2007) outlines standards for teacher accreditation in use, such as those put forward by the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA, 2005,

Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of Languages and Cultures). It stresses and elaborates on the following dimensions:

- Educational theory & practice
- Language & culture
- Language pedagogy
- Ethics and responsibility
- Professional relationships
- Active engagement with wider context
- Advocacy
- Personal characteristics (AFMLTA, 2005, cited in Ingram, pp. 13-14)

Ingram (2007) reports that International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (referred to earlier in Section IV) are used to assess teachers' functional proficiency. The Australia Council of TESOL Associations lists 27 standards for teaching ESL, such as:

- Dispositions toward TESOL
- Understandings about TESOL
- Skills in TESOL

2.2 Teachers' L2 metalinguistic knowledge and proficiency

With respect to assessing language teachers' knowledge of their L2 (if not native-like), it is important to determine threshold levels required for different grade levels, and then determining ways of assessing these fairly and realistically. Proficiency assessment/standards for L2 teachers are also highly relevant for English-dominant economies in which trained immigrant teachers wish to be (re)certified to teach English locally. Again, having international standards or instruments for teachers' L2 proficiency can assist with mobility and also with cross-national/economy research.

In the United States, the powerful international association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), has recently provided some leadership on teacher standards, both within the United States and elsewhere, such as in China with Chinese teachers of English (China English as a Foreign Language Project).[8] Four recent publications in a series called *Integrating ESL Standards into Chinese Classroom Settings* reflect this trend: a Teachers' handbook on *Portfolio-based Teacher Development and Appraisal with Teacher Performance Standards* and books focusing on primary to senior levels. Similar standards for the teaching of Chinese as an international language, based on those developed for English, are also currently being developed (Jun Liu, TESOL Past President, personal communication, Nov. 2007).

Within the United States, TESOL has produced an elaborate description of the competencies English language teachers—and mainstream teachers of English-language learners in English-medium mainstream classes—should have,[9] and that teacher education programs should also focus on (TESOL, 2003)[10]. TESOL's model, officially endorsed by a powerful

---

[8] http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=366&DID=1983

[9] http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=219&DID=1689

[10] TESOL (2003). TESOL / NCATE program standards. Standards for the accreditation of initial programs in P-12 ESL teacher education. Alexandia, VA: TESOL, Retrieved Jan. 1, 2008 at http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/bin.asp?CID=219&DID=2135&DOC=FILE.PDF.

national accrediting body known as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), highlights four intersecting circles--*Language, Culture, Instruction*, and *Assessment*—with a fifth circle, *Professionalism*, at the centre. That model stresses foundations, knowing about language and culture, for example, and applications: planning for and implementing ESL and content instruction, and understanding principles and practices in language proficiency assessment, inside and outside of classrooms.

VI. Conclusion

There is considerable momentum at present toward establishing useful standards for language learning, language teaching, language programs and language teacher education programs, especially for English as L2, but also for other widely taught additional languages. At present, information is being shared across APEC economies vis-à-vis language learning, through ED-NET surveys and syntheses of that material. Additional information that would assist with standards-setting, standards comparisons and cross-referencing, and assessment would likely be beneficial to all stakeholders. Many sources point to the potential for using the European CEFR in particular as a reference point for APEC language teaching and learning standards, for teacher education, and for assessment. Other compatible standards documents for the accreditation of teachers and teacher education programs also identify key areas in which teachers need preparation, in addition to language proficiency.

Possibilities exist for increased communication and sharing of strategies for improving teaching and assessment across APEC economies by the demonstration and annotation of best practices using new technologies, in the manner that has been successfully done with mathematics education lesson studies. Although ongoing attention must be paid to L2 teachers' language proficiency standards and assessment across all economies, English-dominant-economies in particular must continue to find ways to motivate learners—*and teachers*--to study other languages, one way being through better instruction and the use of engaging online and other multimedia 21st century resources and subject matter. Furthermore, more study-abroad programs and student and teacher exchanges, co-op programs, service learning opportunities and better modeling of teaching by language teachers will serve students well, transcending their current circumstances to enable many future possibilities.

References

AFMLTA, 2005. Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training. (http://www.afmlta.asn.au).

Alderson, J. C. (2007). The CEFR and the need for more research. *Modern Language Journal, 91*, 659-663.

Brinton, D., Snow, M.A., & Wesche, M. (1989). *Content-based second language instruction.* New York: Heinle and Heinle.

Byrnes, H. (Ed.). (2007). Perspectives. *Modern Language Journal, 91*, 641-685.

Crandall, J. 1987. *ESL through content-area instruction*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Byrnes, H. (Ed.). (1998*). Learning foreign and second languages: Perspectives in research and scholarship.* New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Buck, G. (2007). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning teaching, assessment. A developing international standard. Paper presented at the APEC EDNET Project Seminar on Language Standards and their Assessment. Taipei, Dec. 3, 2007.

Cameron, L. (2003). Challenges for ELT from the expansion in teaching children. *ELT Journal 57(2)*, 105-112.

Crandall, J. (Ed.). (1987). *ESL through content area instruction: Mathematics, science, social studies.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Chen, H., Sinclair, P., Huang, S-y, & Eyerman, L. (2008). APEC EDNET project seminar on language standards and their assessment: Background research paper. Presented at APEC EDNET Symposium, Xi'an, China, January 16, 2008.

Cheng, L., Watanabe, Y., & Curtis, A. (Eds). (2004). *Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Council of Europe (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from the World Wide Web Dec. 31, 2003 at http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/0521803136txt.pdf.

Duff, P. (2004). Foreign language policies, research and educational possibilities: A Western perspective. Paper presented at the APEC Educational Summit, Beijing, January, 2004.

Duff, P. (2007). Multilingualism in Canadian schools: Myths, realities, and possibilities. *Canadian Journal for Applied Linguistics, 10*(2), 1001-1016.

Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graddol, D. (2006). *English next*. London: British Council. Retrieved Jan. 8, 2008 from http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-english-next.pdf

Hadley, A.O. (2001). *Teaching language in context*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Ingram, D. (2007). Standards in the context of teacher accreditation. Paper presented at the APEC EDNET project seminar on language standards and their assessment. Taipei, Dec. 2007.

Johnson, R.K. & Swain, M. (Eds.). (1997). *Immersion education: International perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liskin-Gasparro, J. (1982). *ETS oral proficiency testing manual.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Little, D. (2007). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Perspectives on the making of supranational language education policy. *Modern Language Journal, 91,* 645-655.

Mohan, B. (1986). *Language and content.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Mohan, B., Leung, C., & Davison, C. (Eds.). (2001). *English as a second language in the mainstream: Teaching, learning and identity*. New York: Longman/Pearson.

North, B. (2007). The CEFR illustrative descriptor scales. *Modern Language Journal, 91*, 656-659.

Phillips, J. (2003). Implications of language education policies for language study in schools and universities. *Modern Language Journal, 87*, 579-586.

Pufahl, I., Rhodes, N.C., & Christian, D. (2000). Foreign language teaching: What the United States can learn from other countries. Eric Document ED-00-PO-4609. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on Dec. 20, 2003. http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/digest_pdfs/0106-pufahl.pdf

Snow, M.A., & Brinton, D.M. (Eds.). (1997). *The content-based curriculum*. White Plains, NY: Addison-Wesley Longman.

Stoller, F.L., & Grabe, W. (1997). A six-T's approach to content-based instruction. In M.A.Snow & D. M. Brinton (Eds.), *The content-based classroom* (pp. 78-94). New York: Addison-Wesley Longman.

Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century. (1996). Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.

Swender, E., & Duncan, G. (1998). ACTFL performance guidelines for K-12 learners. *Foreign Language Annals, 31,* 479-491.

Watson Todd, R. (2007). The impact of evaluation on ELT. Paper presented at the 12th English in Southeast Asia Conference, King Mongkut University, Bangkok, Dec. 14, 2007.

Yoshida, K. (2003). Language education policy in Japan—The problem of espoused objectives versus practice. *Modern Language Journal,87,* 286-292.

Appendix 1

ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the United States (Standards, 1996)

Communication

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.
Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.
Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information.

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.
Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.
Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.
Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.