

A TESOL Symposium on English Language Teaching Standards

ULACIT
Panama City, Panama

Friday, September 18, 2009

Featured Speakers

Margo Gottlieb
Fernando Fleurquin
Kari Smith

Closing Session Facilitator

Debra Psychoyos

The TESOL Symposium on ELT Standards is sponsored by:

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TESOL Symposium on ELT Standards

OVERVIEW

Standards for ESL/EFL help teachers guide their professional development and classroom practices. Four experts in the field will give formal presentations and lead participants in the discussion of standards and related teacher preparation issues that focus both on the instructor and the instruction. The symposium will deal with all aspects of effective teaching: planning, instructing, and assessing.

The symposium will offer English language teaching (ELT) professionals from Central America and the Caribbean the opportunity to learn from each others' experience with professional development, while the four experts help them identify the qualities, skills, and practices that every teacher should pursue.

TESOL's affiliate, Panama TESOL, chose the theme for this symposium.

TESOL Symposium on ELT Standards

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

ULACIT
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Friday, September 18, 2009

8:30 am–9:30 am	Registration / Coffee and Tea
9:30 am–9:45 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks
	Mark Algren , 2009–2010 President, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
	Lizzie Garcia de Paredes , 2007–2009 President, Panama TESOL
	Virgilio Luque , Vice-Rector, Laureate International Universities Panama
9:45 am–12:00 pm	Featured Speakers: Introductory Presentations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margo Gottlieb • Fernando Fleurquin • Kari Smith
12:00 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm–3:15 pm	Featured Speakers: Concurrent Sessions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margo Gottlieb • Fernando Fleurquin • Kari Smith
3:30 pm–4:30 pm	Closing Session: Summary Followed by a Question/Answer Panel Session with the Featured Speakers
Debra	Facilitator: Psychoyos

SPEAKERS PRESENTATIONS AND BIOS

Are Standards Practical Tools for Personal and Professional Development for EFL Teachers?

EFL teachers and schools are constantly looking for alternative ways to promote professional development and to improve instructional practices and results. Standards can provide EFL teachers with a framework for personal and professional development. Using the *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* (TESOL, 2009) as a guide, nine EFL teachers identified expected and unexpected strengths and weaknesses in their teaching that were interpreted in relation to their personal beliefs, social contexts, and working environment. We will conclude the presentation with an analysis of the conditions that need to be met in order to empower EFL teachers to take ownership of their professional development.

Fernando Fleurquin, M.D., has been actively involved in ESL/EFL for more than 25 years, including training educators in teaching, assessment, and program administration in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. He is currently the Director of the English Language Center, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in the United States. Previously, he supervised the administration of the high-stakes English exams developed at the University of Michigan. For more than 20 years he worked at the Binational Center in Montevideo, Uruguay, as the Academic Director, teacher, teacher educator, materials writer, and examiner. He has participated in several EFL test development projects and has been a consultant for binational centers, educational institutions, and publishing companies. A medical doctor by training, he was selected as an evaluator for the Uruguayan National Quality Award. Fernando was a member of TESOL's Standards Committee (2002–2006) and co-presented in a 2009 TESOL Webcast on the Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults.

Standards: A Metric for Language Teaching and Learning

In the last decade, unprecedented numbers of language learners have entered classrooms around the world. Concomitantly, the expansion of the standards movement has enabled educators to apply a common metric to describe student expectations and performance. For teachers and administrators working in language education, this trend has translated into a vision for language teaching, and for students it provides a means of monitoring and documenting their learning.

This presentation speaks to TESOL's 2006 PreK-12 English language proficiency standards and how they serve as the anchor for curriculum, instruction, and assessment for language education. These standards have helped galvanize the role of language teachers in today's high-stakes educational environment and elevated the status of our profession. Personal insights and experiences with the standards illustrate how language teachers share a common bond across international contexts.

Margo Gottlieb, Ph.D., is Lead Developer, World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin and Director, Assessment and Evaluation, Illinois Resource Center. Her passion is designing standards-referenced assessment systems for English language learners. Starting her career as a language education teacher and administrator, she has been a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Chile and has provided professional development to educators internationally and across the United States. Her most recent appointment is to the National Technical Advisory Council for the U.S. Department of Education. Active in TESOL, Margo has chaired the PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards and ESEA Reauthorization Committees, chaired the Elementary Education Interest Section, served on the *TESOL Journal* Advisory Board, and has been a repeat instructor for summer academies. Her latest of many books and publications is *From Paper to Practice: Implementing English Language Proficiency Standards in PreK-12 Classrooms* (with A. Katz and G. Ernst-Slavit; TESOL, 2009).

Standards—of Help or Hindrance to Professional Development?

Standards have become the focus of education throughout the world. Some are in favor, but politicians and others, often educators, speak strongly against standards. In my presentation I briefly discuss the concept of standards, highlighting advantages as well as constraints through examples from various countries. Standards might lead to a reductive typology in teacher education, and the final part of the presentation focuses on the place of teacher autonomy in a standardized environment. If we succeed in finding a feasible balance between professional autonomy and responsibility, there is a good chance we will enjoy the strongly needed quantum leap in education and, as such, also in teacher education.

Kari Smith, Ph.D., is a professor of education at the University of Bergen, Norway, and the head of the university's teacher education program. She is involved with national research and development projects on teachers' classroom assessment practices and the role of portfolios as a communication tool. She is also involved with a national professional development project for Norwegian teachers in assessment for learning. She has acted as the coordinator for the Testing, Evaluation and Assessment special interest group for International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, and has served on the association's management committee. She has also been the coordinator for the Assessment Special Interest Group in the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction. Her publications and research interests are in areas of educational assessment, portfolio and self-assessment, assessment of teaching and professional knowledge and development of teachers and teacher educators.

CLOSING SESSION

Debra Psychoyos is a lifelong learner and a veteran educator with 27 years of experience. She is founder and executive director of *The ProEd Alexander Psychoyos Foundation in Panama* and currently a doctoral candidate with the Educational Leadership Cohort at the University of Missouri-Columbia. A recent Ploghoft Lecturer at Northwest Missouri University and TESOL facilitator at North Carolina State University in 2008, her diverse professional experiences include primary and secondary teacher; reading improvement specialist; student teacher supervisor; new teacher mentor; school psychologist; instructional coach; and university professor in the TESOL masters program at the Universidad Latina in Panama. Debbie was awarded Woman of the Year in Education in 2004 and Light of the Community in 2006.

A JOURNEY TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: USING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AS A TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EFL TEACHERS

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English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and schools are constantly looking for alternative ways to promote professional development and to improve instructional practices and results. Using the *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* (TESOL, 2009) as a framework for reflection, nine EFL teachers reflected on their need for professional development and identified strengths and weaknesses in their teaching. A variety of ways in which the standards can be used to promote professional development in EFL contexts are discussed.

Professional development (PD) is a demanding active process that spans teachers' entire careers and that requires their active involvement. All of us, ESL or EFL teachers, have engaged in different activities that promote our personal and professional growth. This paper illustrates EFL teachers' perceptions about their need for PD and describes the main conclusions that a group of EFL teachers reached after using TESOL's *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* (TESOL, 2009) as a tool to promote their personal and professional development.

WHO DOESN'T NEED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Like many other areas in our field, the concept of PD has changed significantly during the past few decades. In 1982, Freeman distinguished between *teacher training* and *teacher development*. Training refers to building specific teaching skills, and development focuses on the individual teacher—"on the process of reflection, examination, and change which can lead to doing a better job and to personal and professional growth" (p. 21). According to Lange (1990), PD refers to the "process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers" (p. 250). Underhill (1994) stresses the direct relationship between teacher development, the need to "see the larger picture of what goes on in learning" (p. v) and the results of the teaching-learning process. England (1998) proposes a model of professional development under the assumptions that it needs to be a coordinated effort and that it is a process that continues throughout the teachers' career. More recently, Freeman (2009) describes how the scope of second language teacher education has changed during the past 20 years. He says that it has gone from "a focus on training in knowledge and skills, to development of the individual teacher, to a broader examination of a common professional learning process and alternative conceptualizations of what was being learned through that process" (p.14). In this expanded scope of second language teacher education, the original concentric circles that represented training and development are part of a larger domain that includes research and conceptual arguments that inform professional learning and teaching. The last and broadest circle includes what he calls *operational questions*, which deal with teachers' identity, socialization, and situations of practice. There is no question that we all need new knowledge and skills that lead to professional growth and opportunities to address our operational questions.

There are many reasons teachers decide to take an active role and pursue PD goals. Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (2001) describe some of them: to acquire new knowledge and skills, to accept change, to increase income and/or prestige, to have power, to combat negativity and burnout, or to interact with colleagues and create networks. England (1998) considers PD essential to ensure accountability, as well as to improve instructional results, morale, and working conditions. Curtis (2008) cites reasons a school must promote PD activities, which include keeping the organization growing; creating communities of language teachers, learners, and administrators; and preventing burnout. For Christison and Stoller (1997), PD is at the heart of a quality ELT program.

Whether initiated by the teacher or promoted by the school, the personal PD that each teacher participates in has some general features that apply to all contexts:

- PD is a journey that teachers embark on even before they start their teaching careers. The journey is as relevant as the destination and begins when teachers choose the field they will work in.
- PD is a process that requires teachers' active desire to increase their awareness of the variables that affect their success as teachers and learners of teaching, to explore their experience as their professional knowledge and skills evolve, and to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions on their students' lives and the community.
- PD involves a conscious decision and requires active cognitive involvement on the part of the teacher.
- Each teacher's PD needs are different and vary according to the stage of the teacher's career.
- PD requires time.
- PD requires a supportive environment.

During my professional life, I have engaged in many activities that contributed to my PD. The activities I chose changed throughout my career. Some were activities that I chose to do by myself, such as keeping a journal, videotaping some classes, writing reflections on my classes, doing action research, presenting at conferences, or writing a paper to publish; I did other activities to comply with institutional requirements, such as compiling a portfolio as part of my performance evaluation. And I particularly enjoyed collaborative projects I did with colleagues and friends. All the activities I engaged in were part of my professional journey and contributed in different ways to improve my skills, knowledge, awareness, and autonomy as a teacher.

REFLECTION: A PATH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Reflection is a powerful tool that can empower EFL teachers to take ownership of their PD within any social or working environment. Bartlett (1990) suggests that teachers engage in a process of *critical reflective teaching* by asking “what” and “why” questions about their practice, thus exercising control over their teaching. Crandall (1994) describes the *reflective teaching model* as an exciting PD option in which teachers read about, share, observe, analyze, and reflect upon their own practice in order to improve it. Richards and Lockhart (1996) encourage teachers to develop a critically reflective approach to teaching, regardless of the method or approach they follow. According to them, teachers can learn a great deal about teaching through self-inquiry,

and “critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching” (p. 4). By engaging in this reflective process, teachers can explore what happens in their classrooms and consider ways to improve their teaching. Brandt (2007) argues that reflection is a powerful tool to develop self-awareness and to contribute to ongoing PD. Zeichner and Liston (1996) explain that a reflective teacher (1) examines, frames, and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice, (2) is aware of and questions the assumptions and values he or she brings to teaching, (3) is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches, (4) takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts, and (5) takes responsibility for his or her own PD. For Davies and Pearse (2000), constant reflection is the most important and profitable path to PD.

Wallace (1991) proposes a reflective model of PD to reach professional competence. *Received knowledge* (the facts, data, and theories associated with the profession) interacts with *experiential knowledge* (the knowledge obtained through the practical experiences of professional action) to inform teachers’ practice. With the aim of enhancing their professional competence, teachers can reflect on the valuable experiences of their classroom practice, thus generating the basis for new and different practices in reference to their own professional concerns. The cycle is thus perpetuated, gradually improving the quality of reflection and of teachers’ continued PD.

STANDARDS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Teachers, students, parents, administrators, policy makers, and the entire community can benefit from the definition of parameters that identify goals, procedures, best practices, or final results. Standards provide a framework for all stakeholders to understand educational processes and results. There are different kinds of standards in ESL/EFL education, and TESOL has played a crucial role in the development of new standards for the international community. I will discuss three examples.

Content standards describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to show in a certain program. The publication *ESL Standards for PreK-12 Students* (TESOL, 1997) provides content standards for elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Three goals are established for ESOL learners at all age levels, and each of them has three standards:

1. to use English to communicate in social settings
2. to use English to achieve academically in all content areas, and
3. to use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways (p. 9)

Program standards describe the resources, conditions, and features that a program needs in order to be effectively implemented. TESOL’s *Standards for Adult Education ESL Programs* (TESOL, 2003) is one example. The task force in charge of these standards defined nine components of a quality adult education ESL program:

1. program structure, administration, and planning
2. curriculum and instructional materials
3. instruction
4. learner recruitment, intake, and orientation
5. learner retention and transition

6. assessment and learner gains
7. employment conditions and staffing
8. professional development and staff evaluation
9. support services (p. vii)

Performance standards define performance expectations in different content areas and the instruments that will be used to measure performance. TESOL's *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* (TESOL, 2009) addresses a critical issue for teachers to use for personal and professional development: "What does the profession of English language teaching consider to be effective teaching?" (p. v). In fact, the book is designed to be used by teacher education programs and educational institutions to promote PD at personal and institutional levels. As the authors say,

Personal professional development results from a commitment to students and the acknowledgment that there is room for improvement at every stage of a person's career. The vignettes and the Performance Criteria . . . can facilitate self-evaluation and re-energize experienced instructors. (p. x)

TESOL's *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* explore eight main areas of teachers' performance. The first three standards are the core components of the student-learning centered model: (1) planning, (2) instructing, and (3) assessing. The other standards include (4) identity and context, (5) language proficiency, (6) learning, (7) content, and (8) commitment and professionalism. These performance standards are the guidelines that were selected for this paper, to engage teachers in reflective teaching and promote personal and professional development in EFL contexts.

CAN STANDARDS CONTRIBUTE TO MY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

To answer this question, nine EFL teachers were invited to use TESOL's *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* (2009) as a tool for personal and professional development, reflecting on how they interpret their teaching experiences in relation to their own personal and professional background, social context, and working conditions in order to make decisions to engage in PD activities and improve their teaching.

Nine teachers from three Latin American EFL centers responded to the invitation to participate in this project. Teachers (1) used the standards and the performance criteria for self-evaluation, (2) reflected on their teaching practice during 2 or 3 weeks using the eight standards as guiding principles, (3) communicated with the investigator about their reflections and daily decisions that affected their teaching and their need for PD, (4) used the same standards as a final self-evaluation, and (5) completed a final questionnaire about the process.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT EFL TEACHERS FACE?

Eight of the nine teachers who participated in this project had more than 10 years of experience in the field. Only one of the participants had started working in EFL within the last 3 years. All of the teachers who participated in the study have played more than one role: trainee, teacher,

teacher educator, academic coordinator, materials developer, among others. They identified a variety of challenges in their daily professional lives. Figure 1 shows a summary of the major challenges these teachers have faced in reference to their personal and PD.

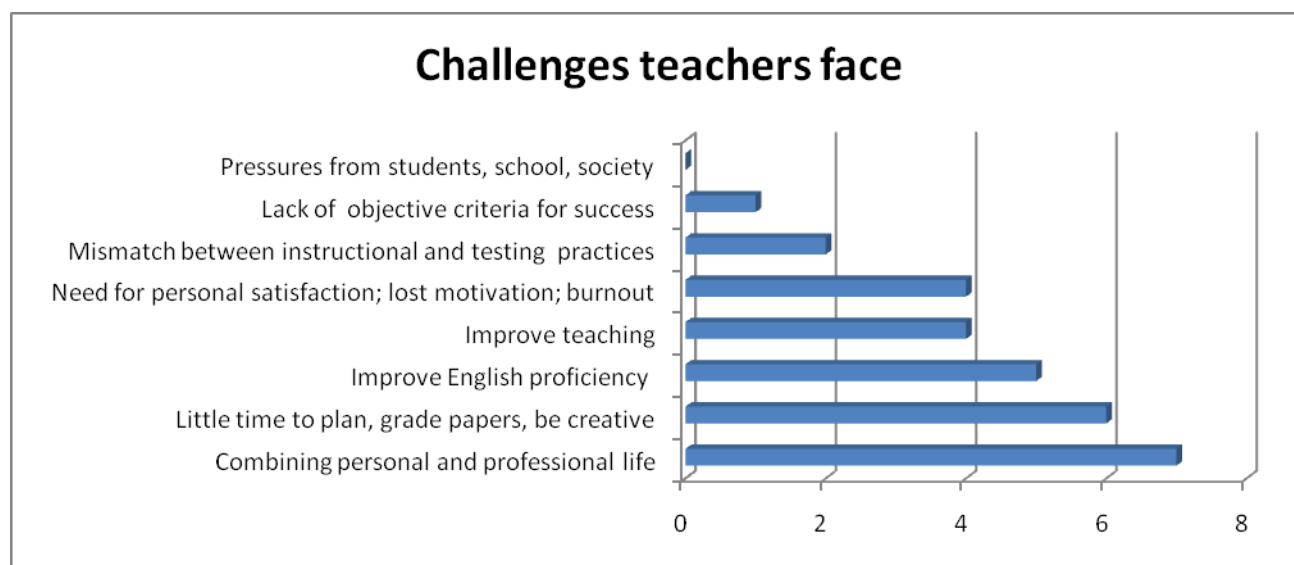


Figure 1. Personal and professional challenges that participants identified.

The most important concerns for this group of EFL teachers were combining their personal and professional lives; coping with the little time they have to plan, grade papers, and be creative; and improving their English proficiency.

HOW DID TEACHERS USE THE STANDARDS TO REFLECT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE?

Teachers who participated in this project reflected on their work using the performance indicators from the *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults*. For example, Standard 2: *Instructing*, is supported by four performance indicators: classroom management, instructor role, activities and strategies, and learner considerations. Each of these performance indicators is illustrated by a series of descriptors that show the desired performance. Using the rubrics provided with the standards, teachers can decide whether they approach, meet, or exceed the criteria under each performance indicator.

Table 1 shows the average of teachers' responses to all the performance indicators for each of the eight standards on a scale from 1 to 3. Based on this self-assessment, their shared strengths were related to the areas of *instruction*, *identity*, and *planning*. The standards with the lowest average were *assessing* and *commitment and professionalism*.

Table 1. Standards and Average Responses

Standard	Average
Standard 1: Planning	1.93
Standard 2: Instructing	2.06
Standard 3: Assessing	1.73
Standard 4: Identity	2.06
Standard 5: Language proficiency	1.83
Standard 6: Learning	1.89
Standard 7: Content	1.78
Standard 8: Commitment and professionalism	1.59

After working with the standards for the first time, teachers were asked to reflect on their initial self-assessment. Their main conclusions tended to fall into two groups. One group of teachers felt very satisfied about their performance as teachers. The following comments reflect two of these teachers:

“Considering the initial self-assessment, I have to recognize that I haven’t been doing it so badly.”

“As I kept working on it, I realized that we follow similar standards here as well. I was really surprised by this fact, and it helped me understand how we are connected to the teaching experts everywhere.”

On the other hand, another group focused on aspects of their profession that they felt they needed to continue developing. The following comments reflect that idea:

“I should spend more time considering all these aspects that TESOL considers as standards.”

“Observing the matrix I can easily identify that some of my professional weaknesses are related to Language Proficiency and Assessing.”

During the following 2 to 3 weeks, participants reflected on their classroom experiences using the standards as a guide. Some chose a specific standard and reflected on how the respective performance indicators were or were not reflected in a single class. Others commented on what happened in each class and then looked for explanations about their performance using the standards.

The main themes of their reflections were indicative of their concerns and needs. Participants’ reflections illustrated different perceptions about their identity, needs, interests, and expectations as teachers. For example, Teacher A focused on her students’ results and demonstrated satisfaction with her overall performance as a teacher, whereas Teacher B was more concerned about the complexity of the classroom experience and his need to find motivation for teaching. The following description illustrates how Teacher A feels about her strengths.

Teacher A is well aware of her strengths. She plans motivating activities and manages the group very effectively. She uses activities that she knows her students enjoy. Based on the teacher's description of students' participation and performance in class and on students' evaluations, she concludes that the class was very effective for high-performing and low-performing students alike. Students seem to respond very well to the teacher's lessons, and the teacher feels energized by these positive results.

HOW DID THE STANDARDS PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Teachers' comments on the usefulness of the standards were very positive. They reflected on the use of the standards and the performance criteria to help them improve their awareness, knowledge, and skills as teachers. In spite of the diversity of teachers' needs, all of the teachers found value in using the standards to guide different aspects of their PD. Table 2 shows some of their reflections, together with the range of potential uses for the standards according to the experience of these teachers. They noted that the standards were useful for addressing training needs of novice as well as more experienced teachers.

WHAT DID TEACHERS LEARN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

The teachers considered the process of reflective writing combined with the standards as a guide very effective for promoting PD. This combination can reveal participants' different stages of and needs for personal and PD. One of the participants, for example, focused on finding answers to a series of questions about her teaching, whereas another teacher was more interested in developing skills that would result in improved learning for her students.

Table 2. Possible PD uses for the Standards

Uses of standards	Teachers' comments
As a general guide for professional development	"I believe that the standards are very useful tools as they contain detailed descriptions of different aspects to take into account when thinking about our professional development."
To develop awareness	"I find it very useful to know the standards and performance criteria because they are a great tool that contributes to improve our awareness of our practices."
To confirm/support beliefs	"At the same time, I have realized that they are aligned with my personal criteria."
As a checklist for lesson planning or to observe classes	"The standards can be used as a checklist to use when planning lessons, and also when observing lessons and giving feedback to our colleagues."
To provide sense of accomplishment	"This questionnaire also gave me the opportunity to see and identify how much I have grown professionally. . . . I do feel I can do really well in some areas. That has given me a great sense of achievement and encourages me to keep on becoming a better teacher each day."
To promote action research	"I think these Standards and Performance Criteria can be of great help. There are so many aspects of teaching that sometimes we take for granted or that we just simply don't take into consideration. Having them on a list like this, in a way, organizes my ideas, makes me reflect on what teaching involves, and also makes me investigate on what I don't have very clear."
To help our students	"In my opinion these standards are very useful guidelines that help us organize our lessons in a way that can help our learners reach their goals."

After teachers had reflected on their classes for at least 2 weeks, they answered three final questions. Some of their responses are included.

1. What have you become aware of about your performance as an EFL teacher by participating in this project?
 - I have reinforced my awareness of the fact that as a teacher I am part of a huge community, sharing the same views, goals, and fears with many other unknown colleagues that struggle each day to carry out this profession. The TESOL Standards are the instrument that allowed me to realized how aligned I am with the rest of the teaching community.
 - I have become aware of some of my strengths as a teacher, as well as some of my weaknesses. I have become more conscious about all the different aspects that being an English teacher entails. I have developed this awareness by analyzing the performance indicators and the questions beside them. In brief, my participation in his

project has been very beneficial because it has helped me grow as a professional and this is going to be positive not only for me but also for my students.

- I have become aware that there are more aspects to teaching than those that meet the eye and that we must be informed so that we can become real professionals.
 - The standards are a very good summary of the main aspects that we have to take into account when seeking professional development. I could reflect about some points that I hadn't thought of, such as advocating for non-native speakers of English. I could value some skills that I have that maybe before I took for granted, and I found some inspiration to think about what to do to improve other aspects that still need improvement.
2. What are the main differences you found between the initial and final self-assessment you completed?
- I became more conscious of the many aspects that occur in just one simple classroom. I am also aware of the implications of considering students' identities by enhancing the cultures involved instead of just emphasizing the target culture.
 - There haven't been significant differences. But to my surprise, I could see that I "scored" a bit higher the first time. Maybe this is due to the fact that after observing my practice more closely, I was able to see that there are some areas I need to improve. This is interesting because I used to think I was doing well in such areas. For example, I realized that I need to consider the individual learners and be more respectful of the diversity in my groups when I plan my classes. I also observed that I have to be more determined when fostering students' autonomy and be more demanding, pushing them further beyond their comfort zones.
 - I found that in general, I am doing fine as an English teacher. However, there are some aspects that I still need to improve, and other aspects I have to keep on reading about.
 - In the first one I didn't know much about the standards, so when completing the second after all the reflections I found it easier to evaluate myself.
3. What can you tell other teachers about how to use the standards and their performance indicators for personal and professional development?
- I can tell them that they are necessary in order to optimize our performance as professionals because I think in our country teaching English is still not taken as a serious profession.
 - These standards are a useful tool to reflect upon our practices and to measure our performance. Our job is usually done in isolation, within the walls of our classrooms. Therefore we tend to be carried away by our daily duties. This may lead us to deviations in our teaching. The use of TESOL Standards, or any other that have

proven to be valid, is recommendable if we are critical of our job and want a down to earth evaluation.

- I could tell them that the Standards are very good to use for self evaluation, and also when doing peer observation. They could be used as the rubrics to evaluate teachers' performance, and they can provide food for thought to trigger discussions among teachers who work as a team and share their concerns about students and the teaching profession.
- In my opinion, every time we take the time to reflect upon what we are doing in class, and how well we are doing it, we have the opportunity to grow personally and professionally.

The TESOL *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* offer us the chance to reflect in a more organized and complete way. The standards comprise all aspects related to the teaching/learning process—being the first three standards: Planning, Instructing, and Assessing the only ones that we tend to focus on most of the times.

Thus, by using these Standards, we have the opportunity to focus on other aspects of our teaching. For example, I found Standard #6 very useful. This Standard focuses on Learning: how learners get to learn a language. In this regard, with the use of the standards and their performance indicators, I can better understand what it means to have a learner-centered classroom.

All in all, I am very thankful for having been considered for this project. Definitely, I am going to make use of all this material in order to continue growing personally and professionally.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to describe EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of standards as a tool to promote personal and PD. In spite of the fact that participating teachers worked in different countries and in different contexts, that they did not have the same level of background knowledge or experience in the field, and that they were in different stages of their careers, all of them felt that the standards used for this project were a useful and practical tool that contributed to their PD. All of them engaged in reflective writing tasks to describe, explain, and analyze what they did in their classrooms. The standards provided the framework for teachers to interpret the results of their own teaching. They identified many possible uses for the standards and recommended that other teachers use the standards.

Each of these teachers used the standards to assess their performance and to reflect on their classroom experience. Some of the reasons that they were interested in participating in this reflective process were related to their personal beliefs, social context, and/or working environment. Some of them wanted to improve their teaching skills, and others wanted to improve their students' learning. Also, one of the teachers reflected on the impact that negative feedback from a supervisor can have on the teacher's performance self-esteem. Another teacher mentioned that the standards helped her realize that she teaches "in a bubble" and needs to find

ways to “create and maintain a wider net of contacts.” Still other teachers found that the standards reinforced their beliefs about teaching and learning. One teacher’s need to socialize and share experiences with colleagues contrasts with another teacher’s need to be rightly appreciated and praised.

Many of the participants assumed that all teachers need a certain degree of shared knowledge in order to succeed. Some of the participating teachers felt that the standards provided this shared knowledge, which gives them security and confidence in their work. Many teachers felt reassured to know that what they were doing in their EFL contexts was what experts in the field recommended. The standards actually helped these teachers become more aware of their professional accomplishments and increase their self-confidence and autonomy.

The standards with the highest scores for this group were *Instructing*, *Identity*, and *Planning*. Considering the overall emphasis of teacher training programs on planning and instruction, it is not surprising to see these two standards on the list of teachers’ strengths. However, for a group of EFL teachers, it is surprising and encouraging to see that they also felt that they were doing a good job in terms of *Identity and Context*. This standard includes aspects related to adult learners’ identity and diversity, and the development of appropriate connections with the community, all of which are not always easy to consider in EFL contexts. The teachers participating in this project should be proud of their work on these areas.

On the other hand, the standards with the lowest average were *Assessment* and *Commitment and Professionalism*. Although assessment may require more formal training in specific skills and may be also coordinated at the institutional level, we teachers are responsible for our own commitment and professionalism. However, this standard includes performance indicators related to gaining and using knowledge, developing skills, and advocating. Few of the participating EFL teachers were aware of their role as advocates for their learners, and this standard brought this to their attention. Teachers who participated in this study may not feel satisfied about their performance in this area. In fact, this was the performance indicator with the lowest rating for the whole group. Some clarification may be necessary to help teachers know what they can do to become better advocates and which aspects of the standards may not apply to all contexts in the same way.

Is it really possible for individual teachers, who have different backgrounds, styles, and needs, to benefit from the same set of standards? EFL teachers found many ways to use the standards to cover the entire spectrum of their PD needs. According to this group of EFL teachers, performance standards such as the *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults* could be used

- as a checklist to plan lessons
- for personal and professional growth
- to monitor our teaching
- to measure our results over time
- to optimize our performance
- to appreciate our accomplishments
- for self-assessment purposes
- for peer observation

- as rubrics for teacher evaluation
- as topics of discussion for teachers' meetings
- to regain confidence
- to fight burnout
- to organize our reflections
- to help our students learn better
- to improve our profession

The combination of the standards and reflective writing proved to be an effective tool to develop self-awareness, a necessary step to improve teaching. Several participants illustrated this point. One of the teachers found the standards and performance criteria very useful "because they are a great tool that contributes to improve our awareness of our practices." Another teacher said during the initial self-assessment that using the standards and the performance criteria had "been very useful to become aware of the fact there are many areas [he] can keep on working and improving." Yet another participant found that the self-assessment "enhanced [her] awareness and [her] weak and strong points." One of the final evaluations explained that the performance indicators were highly relevant to promote reflection. Several teachers found the process of reflection highly useful and plan to continue using the standards on their own after the completion of this project.

All participants of this project showed they were all engaged in a "process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth" (Lange, 1990, p. 250) that characterizes the journey of our professional development. Reflective writing and the guide provided by the standards gave all these participants the opportunity to grow by identifying their strengths as well as areas for skills training and for further development, by inquiring into their own teaching practice and posing some questions for research, and by exploring opportunities for collaboration and inquiring into their particular situations of practice.

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STANDARDS: A METRIC FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRE-K-12 EDUCATION

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In the last decade, unprecedented numbers of language learners have entered classrooms around the world. Concomitantly, the expansion of the standards movement has enabled educators to apply a common metric to describe student expectations and performance within their contexts. For teachers and administrators working in language education, this trend has translated into a vision for language teaching, and for students, a means of monitoring and documenting their language learning.

This paper speaks to PreK-12 English language proficiency standards and how they serve as the anchor for curriculum, instruction, and assessment for language education. This generation of standards has helped galvanize the role of language teachers in today's high-stakes educational environment and has elevated the status of our profession. Personal insights and experiences with the standards illustrate how language teachers have come to share a common bond across international boundaries.

THE PREMISE BEHIND STANDARDS-BASED EDUCATION

Since the late 1980s, standards-based reform has been a driving engine of educational improvement for individual states in the United States and now, as we approach the second decade of this millennium, the country as a whole is on the brink of adopting national core academic standards. Born from the idea that standards are the vehicle for educational equity on a pathway to educational excellence for all students (Lachat, 2004; McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995), in hindsight it has become apparent that standards are but one aspect of a broader agenda to strengthen the educational infrastructure of an entire nation.

All the while, the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student population, pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12, has continued to escalate and permeate urban, suburban, and rural nooks and crannies. The impact of this changing demographic has never been felt so strongly as in individual schools and classrooms, whereas the response at state and federal levels has been tacit at best. If it were not for the 2001 federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (No Child Left Behind) mandating states to implement English language proficiency standards and extend accountability to the subgroup of language learners, there would be little acknowledgement at the national and state levels of the important role of language development in explaining academic achievement of this subgroup of students.

Twenty years have passed since the inception of the standards movement and a fundamental question still persists throughout the educational community: Do standards (and related

assessments) “support better teaching and transform schooling for traditionally underserved students or do they merely reify existing inequities?” (Darling-Hammond, p. 7). Because equity is a function of open access to educational opportunities and meaningful interaction with rigorous subject matter, we can only claim social justice in our schools when teachers and administrators are familiar with the unique linguistic and cultural characteristics of language learners and, in turn, use this contextual background information to help shape teaching and learning (Gottlieb & Nguyen, 2007).

As advocates for language learners, we have taken strides in improving the learning conditions for our students, but we haven’t gone far enough. Language and culture must be front and center in the educational accountability equation. The purpose of this paper is to challenge the status quo by reaffirming the critical role of this generation of language standards as a metric for all educators who touch the lives of language learners.

THE BIG PICTURE: A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO STANDARDS-REFERENCED LANGUAGE EDUCATION

No one educational innovation operates in a vacuum; rather, to be effective, it must be integrated into a well-conceptualized system. When contemplating a standards-based education system for language learners, first and foremost, there must be an interplay in the treatment of language and content (Gottlieb, 2006). An example of this relationship is depicted in Figure 1, an educational framework that centers on the interaction of language learners and their teachers where language (and content) standards are the touchstones within an iterative cycle of assessment, curriculum, and instruction.

The influence of content on language in planning and enacting standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment has been increasingly evident in language education. In fact, content-based instruction and assessment have come to be a recognized paradigm within elementary and secondary education (see, e.g., Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2000; Snow & Brinton, 1997). The acceptance in language education that social language is necessary but not sufficient for academic success and that language operates not in isolation but rather as the vehicle for students to access content has sparked a substantive change in the role of language teachers and teaching (Gottlieb, 2003; Kaufmann & Crandall, 2005). It is my contention that language standards have helped stimulate and sustain this change process.

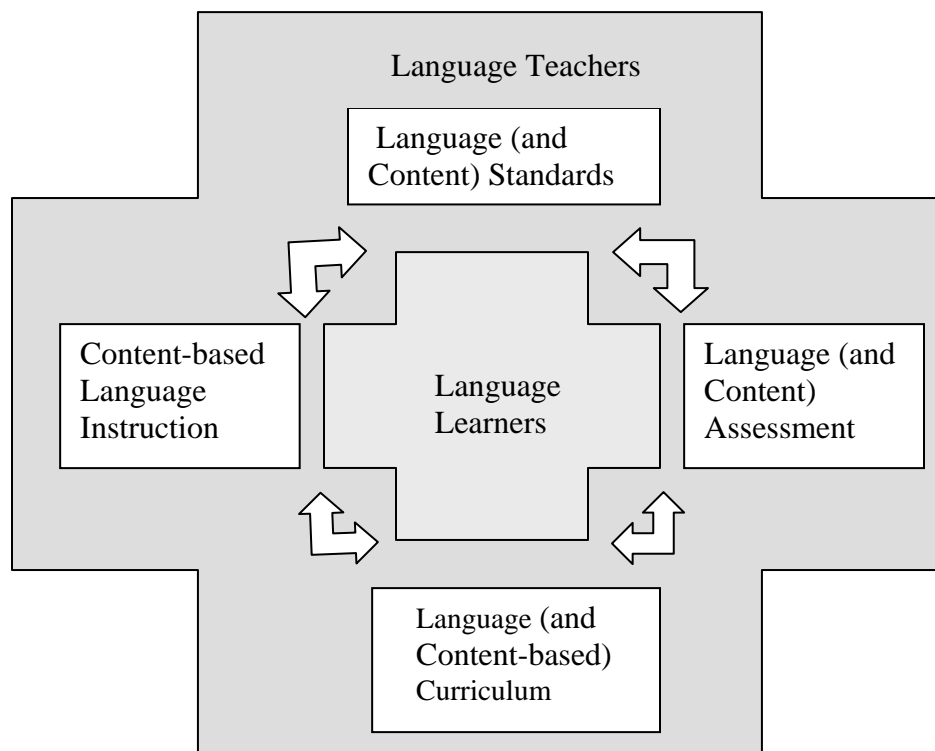


Figure 1. The interface of a standards-referenced educational system with language teachers and learners.

Language standards should provide direction and focus for teachers and students in language-centered classrooms. Integral to a language curriculum framework, language standards are the centerpiece of a three-phase process: 1. Previewing the context for language instruction, 2. Planning how language is incorporated into lesson design, and 3. Reflecting on how language learning has occurred (Gottlieb, Katz, & Ernst-Slavit, 2009). When language standards are systemically utilized for the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data that inform curriculum and instructional decisions for language learners, their impact can be strongly felt throughout the educational community.

PROFESSIONALISM: LANGUAGE STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In today's educational arena, standards underpin two key areas: assessment and accountability. In fact, language learners are subject to a double dose of accountability, both for their language development and academic achievement. In essence, language standards have been underutilized; standards-referenced language reporting, as currently construed, fails to adequately explain language learners' academic achievement. More often than not, the influence of language (whether native language or English) is not considered in students' content learning. As a result, schools and districts in the United States are being unjustifiably punished for students who, by definition, are not fully proficient in English (Wright, 2007). Paradoxically, according to federal guidelines, achievement on content tests impacts whether language learners meet state language criteria, while the converse—the influence of students' language proficiency on their academic achievement—is not acknowledged as part of the accountability equation.

Thus, the professionalism of language teachers is being unduly jeopardized for being unable to explicate the impact of language on achievement of language learners.

Accountability has been the driving force in the escalated use of student and teacher standards. Language standards, designed for language learners, are descriptive of how students use language, that is, student performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, at each level of proficiency or stage of language development. Academic content standards, intended for all students, outline what students at the various grade-levels are expected to know and be able to do in each content area, such as mathematics and science. Teacher standards describe the qualities of effective teachers and teaching practices.

Standards have infiltrated the field of education, impacting all students, language learners being no exception. Standards, by being a curricular anchor, instructional referent, and criterion for measurement, have facilitated the creation of aligned educational systems. The use of standards has touched multiple stakeholders, in particular, teachers and school leaders, and has permeated every aspect of schooling, including:

- curriculum and its alignment with assessment (Carr & Harris, 2001; Drake, 2007; TESOL, 2001)
- instructional practice (Agor, 2000; Davies Samway, 2000; Gottlieb, Katz, & Ernst-Slavit, 2009; Irujo, 2000; Smallwood, 2000)
- reporting of data (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004)
- grading student progress (Trumbull & Farr, 2000)
- student portfolios (Koch & Schwarz-Pettersen, 2000)
- professional development (Snow, 2000) and communities of practice for teachers and administrators.

Unlike other educational innovations which have waned and even disappeared over time, the standards-driven reform movement has maintained momentum. Its strength today can be attributed to the ongoing sharpening and evolution of educational theories and practices that are subsequently operationalized in the renewal of standards. Case in point, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) initially published its seminal *English as a Second Language Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* in 1997 and, as the field has matured, built on the knowledge base and expertise of a consortium of states to produce its 2006 *PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards*. Although language standards have remained steadfast to describing what students should know and be able to do at each level of proficiency, the underlying vision of *what* students should know and *how* that knowledge is measured has advanced substantively.

Language Standards for Language Learners

Language standards are expressions of language expectations of language learners as they move through a series of predictable stages on the pathway toward acquiring a new language. Generally descriptive statements that address the four language domains or modalities, language standards account for how language learners process or produce language for a given purpose within a given situation. In large part, language standards within English speaking societies have

been designed for linguistically and culturally diverse students requiring specialized instructional support in their development of English as an additional language as a conduit for achieving academic parity with their English proficient peers. The current generation of language standards centers on students' development of academic language requisite for navigating school and life.

Since 2003, I have been involved in the design, development, and implementation of English language proficiency standards for elementary and secondary students as lead developer of a consortium of more than 20 states housed at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin, as chair of TESOL's preK-12 Standards Committee, and as a course instructor for the Micronesian Institute at the University of Guam. Each new iteration of language proficiency standards has focused on the ongoing evolution of academic language as the theoretical base necessary for language learners to succeed in school. Having had the opportunity to work with literally hundreds of teachers and administrators, I have personally witnessed the gradual transformation of their thinking in regard to how to effectively educate this ever-growing school population of language learners through language standards.

Let's examine what constitutes language standards, in particular, TESOL's preK-12 English language proficiency standards. First, the five English language proficiency standards themselves:

English Language Proficiency Standard 1: English language learners **communicate** for **social, intercultural, and instructional** purposes within the school setting.

English Language Proficiency Standard 2: English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of **language arts**.

English Language Proficiency Standard 3: English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of **mathematics**.

English Language Proficiency Standard 4: English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of **science**.

English Language Proficiency Standard 5: English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of **social studies**.

Couched within the language proficiency standards is a full range of competencies of English language learners for five grade-level spans: PreK–K, 1–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Within each span, or grade-level cluster, are five language proficiency levels: (1) Starting, (2) Emerging, (3) Developing, (4) Expanding, and (5) Bridging. These levels scaffold, or build on each other, across the second language acquisition continuum based on four criteria of the *performance definitions*: (1) social and academic language functions: how students process or use language to communicate; (2) vocabulary: how students process or use general, specialized, or technical words, phrases, and expressions endemic to content; (3) grammatical structures: how students process or use language patterns associated with individual contexts or content areas; and (4)

discourse: how students process or use the language of discipline-specific genres (TESOL, 2006).

Figure 2 is a page reproduced from the TESOL 2006 preK-12 English language proficiency standards that illustrates how each standard is represented within a matrix. The matrix is formed by the five levels of language proficiency crossed with selected language domains, in this case, reading and writing. In each cell, or sample performance indicator, language proficiency is expressed as the *language* associated with the language function, the content stem or context of interaction, and graphic, visual, or interactive support. The five cells (across the levels of language proficiency), bound by a common topic identified in the left-hand column, constitute a strand of sample performance indicators. The matrix is framed by native languages and cultures that serve as a visual reminder to educators of the valuable assets and resources language learners bring to school as well as the lens through which their learning is filtered.

English Language Proficiency Standard 3: The language of mathematics

Grade Level Cluster: 4–5

Language Domains: Reading and Writing

Content Topics: Three dimensional shapes, polygons, & angles; data analysis

Standard 3 English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of MATHEMATICS						
Domain	Topic	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
READING	Three-dimensional shapes	Sort figures by characteristics and properties from labeled visuals or objects (e.g., three sides, four angles)	Match characteristics and properties from visuals, objects, and phrases (e.g., the corner or right angle of the square)	Distinguish among figures from visually supported descriptions	Construct or draw figures by following steps of visually supported text	Infer geometric relationships among figures from modified grade-level text
	Polygons					
WRITING	Angles					
	Data analysis	Label variables or sets from graphs, tables, or charts working with a partner	Formulate and answer wh-questions from graphs, tables, or charts working with a partner	Organize, display, and describe information in graphs, tables, or charts with a partner	Produce paragraphs using information from graphs, tables, or charts	Summarize and apply information in graphs, tables, or charts to new situations
NATIVE LANGUAGES & CULTURES						

Figure 2. An example of a matrix from TESOL's 2006 English language proficiency standards (p. 73).

Features of This Generation of Language Standards

The advent of the new generation of English language proficiency standards with which I have been involved this decade represents a major shift in focus and format. The following aspects of standards development and delivery have changed their orientation, and have influenced the way educators view language teaching:

1. the target audience: from language educators to all educators who work with language learners
2. the content: from social language with acknowledgement of academic language to an emphasis on academic language in conjunction with social, intercultural, and instructional language
3. their design: from lists of descriptors and sample progress indicators to a series of matrices with strands of related sample performance indicators that, as outlined in the performance definitions, exhibit an incremental increase in vocabulary usage, grammatical complexity, and amount of discourse
4. their presentation: from implicit to explicit treatment of the four language domains coupled with built-in visual, graphic, or interactive support into the sample performance indicators
5. their implementation: from isolated classrooms to cooperative teams of language and content teachers
6. their use: from a resource for language teaching to a metric for language teaching.

Taken in their entirety, these language proficiency standards can be characterized by their transparency, flexibility, and sustainability. The overall versatility of the components of the standards encourages their adaptation and use by educational communities that value learning language through content for their language learners.

Transparency

The matrix design, as shown in Figure 2, with its left-to-right orientation of the language proficiency levels from lowest to highest, makes the process of language acquisition comprehensible and intuitive to stakeholders. The entire developmental progression, which indeed may be a multiyear endeavor for language learners, is set forth on a single page and replicated across standards, language domains, and grade-level clusters. The frame around the matrices is an ever present reminder to educators of the substantive role of native languages and cultures in second language learning and their accompanying perspectives for learning. This clear delineation of how the standards are represented results in a teacher-friendly document that is readily transparent to educational stakeholders.

Flexibility

Although the five English language proficiency standards remain constant and fixed, every component and element representative of the standards is subject to change or transformation (Gottlieb, 2004; Gottlieb, Cranley, & Oliver, 2007; Gottlieb, Katz, & Ernst-Slavitt, 2009; TESOL, 2006). The reasoning behind this innovative treatment of how standards are expressed is twofold. First, as in large part the standards represent the language requisite for students to

access grade-level content, it simply would be an unmanageable compendium if every combination and permutation of academic content standards, to which the language proficiency standards are aligned, and academic language, the grounding of the language standards, were to be present in the document. Second, we value teacher voice and choice in curriculum development, instructional delivery, and instructional assessment. Educators should have the option to personalize and customize the implementation of the language standards to best reflect their teaching practices and individual circumstances.

Let's deconstruct a sample performance indicator of a language proficiency standard so that teachers can see their flexibility and latitude in constructing lessons and units of instruction.

Grade-level cluster: 6–8
 Standard 4: The language of science
 Topic: Weather, climate zones, natural disasters
 Language Domain: Writing
 Language Proficiency Level: 4. Expanding
 Sample Performance Indicator (TESOL, 2006, p. 85)
Narrate personal impact of features, conditions or occurrences of natural disasters around the world *using multiple sources* (e.g., *the Internet and family stories*)

In this example, all three elements of the sample performance indicator (SPI)—the language function (**narrate personal impact**), the content stem (features, conditions or occurrences of natural disasters around the world) and support (*using multiple sources*)—as well as the language domain and topic may be transformed through substitution or addition. So if a teacher in Panama is having her language learners study forest fires, it would be easy to swap that content stem with the broader topic of “natural disasters” and “Panama” for “around the world” while maintaining the elements of the SPI. Or if the teacher wishes to have students produce oral reports in lieu of written narration, then the language domain would switch to speaking; if she wants the students to conduct an investigation and present a PowerPoint on the topic, then the support might change to *using multimedia*.

Numerous configurations can be made from a strand of sample performance indicators. Therefore, for a given sample performance indicator, teachers must ask, “What is the language necessary for students to access the content required in this context at this level of language proficiency?” The language demands of the situation are, in essence, how the standard is exemplified and represented in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for these language learners. The situated language associated with the standard includes the sample performance indicator coupled with the three criteria of the performance definitions (vocabulary, syntax, and discourse).

Sustainability

A third quality of the language standards is their projected durability over time. Given their theoretical grounding from a confluence of related fields—education, linguistics, and social psychology—language standards have become a mainstay in preservice and in-service teacher education programs. Given their usefulness across settings, with their ability to transcend types

of language education programs, language standards have wide applicability for all age groups and language learners. Given their alignment with academic content and language tests, language standards have become indispensable in helping to explain the relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement for language learners. Given their support by school leaders as well as content and language teachers, language standards have gained acceptance across the educational community serving language learners. In summary, over the past decade, language standards have become the genesis for developing curriculum and instruction for language learning and the criterion for which measurement of that learning is based.

Standards for Language Teachers

Recently, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2009) has issued draft *English as a New Language (ENL) Standards* for accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. These twelve standards address a deep and rich knowledge base for preparing teachers for advancing and supporting student learning. The standards stress teachers' internalization of the language development process and its affect on the students' acquisition and command of subject matter. Through these standards, teachers are not only expected to understand the nature and character of students from a linguistically and culturally diverse perspective, but are also to be their advocates in a world that remains skeptical as to how to embrace its linguistic and cultural richness.

There is a philosophical concordance between the proposed standards for language teachers and those for language learners. Language teachers are expected to provide language learners access to grade-level curriculum through language while honoring their heritages; language learners from a myriad of linguistic and cultural backgrounds are expected to process and use their new language within the school-based curriculum across a variety of contexts. The symmetry between these two sets of standards is striking and reinforces the cohesiveness of the educational community as it strives to enhance opportunities for academic success to these historically underserved students.

Yet another set of standards impacting P-12 Teacher Education Programs are those from TESOL/ National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Since 2001, these two organizations have collaborated to ensure consistency in the preparation and licensure of educators from language education programs in the United States. These standards are represented by interlocking circles that form five conceptual domains: language, culture, instruction, and assessment, with professionalism at the core.

THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AND ITS ROLE IN LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Much of the theoretical underpinning for standards, whether for language teachers or language learners, has centered on defining the construct of *academic language*. In fact, during this decade, the reconceptualization of language standards and how they are operationalized in PreK–12 classrooms has helped codify the emerging paradigm that views academic language as the centerpiece of language teaching and learning. This shift in thinking and acting is reflected in how language education is conceived, delivered, and evaluated, how language teachers envision,

design, and implement curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and how language targets are formulated and shared with students.

The roots of the current construct of academic language can be traced to the seminal work of Jim Cummins (1981), who in the early 1980s, first distinguished social from academic language, and Bernard Mohan (1986), who first elaborated the interrelationship between language and content learning. Today, the notion of academic language has expanded in depth and breadth to represent particular contexts of interaction related to specific subject disciplines and genres, such as the language of scientific inquiry or the language of historical documentation (Schleppegrell, 2004). Academic language is connected to school where language learners must negotiate and master a complex system of linguistically bound ideas, concepts, and relationships within individual content areas (Gee, 2007). To say the least, academic language encompasses a multidimensional and multifaceted range of competencies that language learners must develop over time to reach academic parity with their proficient peers.

From a conceptual standpoint, I originally envisioned academic language as the intersection of social language and academic achievement within a Venn diagram (Gottlieb, 2003). The dovetailing of these constructs underscores the notion that for language learners, academic language serves as a bridge to achievement and, at the same time, is integral to content learning. By expanding this model to include students' native language proficiency and its potential impact on overall achievement, the notion of academic language becomes more inclusive.

Various frameworks have been posited that attempt to define the dimensions of academic language as they pertain to the schooling of language learners (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Bailey & Butler, 2002; Scarcella, 2003). In addition, research practitioners have begun to delve into classroom application by analyzing the language of the core content areas: language arts (Fisher, Rothenberg, & Frey, 2007), mathematics (Coggins, Kravin, Coates, & Carroll, 2007), science (Bailey, Butler, Stevens, & Lord, 2007; Fatham, & Crowther, 2006) and social studies (Short, 1996).

It is this thinking, sparked by the language education research, which captured my attention and imagination in formulating language standards and illustrating the scaffolding of language development by means of the standards matrix. Initially, I devised a model of academic language proficiency in the form of a cube where each side represented a dimension—language complexity, contexts of interaction, cognitive engagement, and instructional support—across the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Gottlieb, 2002). The dimensions identified in this model translated into the elements of sample performance indicators that serve as expressions of the English language proficiency standards: topics and content stems (contexts of interaction), language functions (levels of cognitive engagement), and instructional supports (visual, graphic, and interactive).

Today, the educational community as a whole is coming to consensus on the fact that students' academic language facilitates their ability to succeed academically. For without requisite use and control over academic language, students' opportunities for content learning are compromised (Francis, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006).

CURRENT PRACTICE: THE USE AND ABUSE OF LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Any educational innovation generates a range of policies and their consequent interpretation of use; the implementation of standards is no exception. Compounding the issue is the fact that there was already a history attached to academic content standards and when language standards came onto the scene some 20 years later, teachers had preconceived ideas of their value and usability. On the positive side, overall, educators have embraced language standards for their focus on language learners, a group historically marginalized by the general education community.

There are pros and cons of any educational movement. Some educators see educational reform as a challenge of the status quo and an opportunity to pursue creative endeavors. Language standards, as a contributor to the reform movement, have enabled teachers to have a vision and description of how the language development process unfolds. As a result, teachers are able to differentiate language by proficiency level and differentiate language for instruction to maximize students' opportunities to access content through language. At the same time, language standards have helped shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as continuity of educational experiences for language learners.

Other educators tend to be reductionistic and view educational reform through a narrow lens saying that standards, in attempting to make one size fit all, inhibit the creativity and ingenuity of teaching (Ohanian, 1999). This group of teachers and administrators most likely see standards as externally imposed by state and federal directives rather than as documents originated by teachers for teachers. For this group, standards become a vehicle for teacher compliance through static curriculum and standardized tests. Additionally, the unidimensional orientation of most standards fails to capture the linguistic and cultural richness that needs to be infused in teaching. Table 1 summarizes some of the advantages and disadvantages of using language standards.

Table 1
Potential Uses and Abuses of Language Standards

Potential Uses	Potential Abuses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A descriptive representation of the language development process to share with educators • A flexible, customizable document • A guide for language curriculum planning • The grounding for instruction and assessment for language learners • A communication tool for stakeholders • A resource for stakeholders involved in the education of language learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The sole interpretation of the language development process for language teachers ❖ A fixed, unalterable document ❖ The de facto language curriculum ❖ A narrow interpretation of instruction and assessment for language learners ❖ A mandate forced upon educators ❖ An albatross around educators' necks

Irrespective of which side you find yourself on in reference to language standards, you must admit that ultimately, having a common referent brings some sense of solidarity to language

educators and a yardstick for measuring student progress. This last section speaks to the ultimate goal of language standards: to disseminate clear information regarding the performance of language learners in their acquisition of social, instructional, intercultural, and academic language in school to the field of language education and the educational community at large.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS: A METRIC FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Standards-driven reform has been the engine that has fueled educational improvement while assessment has been the linchpin for educational accountability. Combining these two powerful forces, standards have, and continue to, set the bar on which student assessment rests. Standards-referenced assessment has become the criterion for measuring progress of students' language development and achievement, and indirectly, the barometer of teacher, school, and district performance. Without having this common metric for envisioning, enacting, and documenting what language learners know and are able to do, how can we meaningfully communicate our educational goals for these students and secure the needed evidence to advocate on their behalf?

Over this past decade, language standards have become foundational to language education and integral to the school life of language learners and their teachers. In fact, the introduction of language standards brings a conscious acknowledgement of an ever-increasing segment of the school population and their growing influence on curricular and instructional decision making. Language standards, in serving as the crosswalk to academic content standards, enable teachers and administrators to seamlessly connect students' language proficiency to their academic achievement.

Many stakeholders have become cognizant of the influential impact of language standards on guiding the teaching and learning of language learners. Teachers now set and share language targets for individual and groups of students based on grade-level language demands and language proficiency levels. Coordinators or directors of language education programs establish progress milestones and goals. Principals set benchmarks of language performance for each grade or their schools as a whole. And we cannot forget family members who must be informed of the language expectations for their children, how they are being measured, and the extent to which they are being met.

Language standards have altered the dynamic of educating language learners. Language teachers are being recognized for their critical role in furthering the development of their students' academic language and are succeeding in having classroom teachers share that responsibility. Language standards have also altered the dynamic of language learning. Language learners increasingly are having a say in defining their own language learning targets and assuming responsibility for achieving them.

In today's world, language teaching and language learning are becoming more synchronized as stakeholders become aware that language standards binds them together. Language standards, by being responsive to language learners' rich linguistic and cultural heritage and the value of their linguistic diversity, send a clear message that this generation of language learners can indeed succeed academically and contribute to our global society. It is my personal conviction that the

use of language standards, if viewed as a common metric for language teaching and language learning, can stimulate educational change, advance international understanding of academic language, and help unify the field of language education around the globe.

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STANDARDS—SUPPORT OR HINDRANCE TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

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The current paper briefly discusses what is perceived to be the major recent developments in teacher education in setting the context for the international discussion around standards for teachers. Some examples of standards for teachers and for language teachers from various countries are presented. Before dealing with possible impacts of standards, if they are of support or hindrance to teachers' professional development, the concept of professional development as used in this paper is clarified.

One of the major quantum leaps in teaching and teacher education in the last 50 years is, in my opinion, related to what Cochran-Smith (2004) calls the learning focus period which took place between 1980–2000. Teacher education focused mainly on developing teachers' critical reflections on theory, practical skills, and teaching experience, so that they were prepared to make independent, situated decisions in the classroom. Teachers were therefore encouraged to engage in systematic reflection such as action research, self-documentation of professional competence in teacher portfolios, and to participate in professional dialogues with academic teacher education institutions. The focus was on teachers' personal professional development and growth.

However, as Cochran-Smith (2004) points out, there is currently a danger that we are witnessing a new policy-focused era driven by outcomes and standards. The new tendencies are likely to reduce the quantum leap and have a reductive impact on the teaching profession. The purpose of this paper is to try to warn against blindly and uncritically jumping on the new bandwagon of standards, including standards for teachers.

STANDARDS

This paper uses the following understanding of standards, which draws upon Sachs' work (2003). A *standard* is a theoretical principle without reference to the particulars of a person or a context, and standards define a cumulative body of knowledge and set of competences. In a way, we can say that standards inform about what is important and are general achievement goals for all without specific consideration of personal differences and preferences.

Standards for Teaching

Standards for teaching are being developed in various places throughout the world, not only for assessment purposes, but also to meet demands for accountability with respect to teachers' mastery of a core body of knowledge and skills (Ozer, 1998). Standards reflect this core knowledge, and assessment of teaching is carried out in light of expressed standards. For formative assessment purposes, standards guide teachers' professional development (Koster & Dengerink, 2001; Smith, 2005).

Standards can also be a tool for approving teacher education programs (Spolsky et al. 2002) and for communicating goals of to the public (Apple, 2001). In summative assessment of teaching, standards serve decision-making purposes such as licensing and certification, and hiring or firing teachers.

Some International Examples of Standards¹

Scotland

The Scottish Executive has developed standards for teachers and for chartered teachers, an advanced certification reflecting professional growth. The Scottish standards focus on three key components which contribute to forming teachers' professional action:

- Professional values and professional commitments
- Professional knowledge and understanding
- Professional and personal attributes

(Scottish Executive, 2002, p. 1)

From the three key components, more specific actions, behavior, and demonstrations are listed. Examples of these are

- Demonstrating effectiveness in promoting learning in the classroom
- Demonstrating a critical understanding of educational assessment and its interpretation
- Demonstrating empathy and fairness, being caring and approachable

The Scottish standards are products of a lengthy process and draw on a rich body of evidence representing views of Scottish teachers and the wider educational community.

New Zealand

New Zealand has developed 12 standards based on which newly qualified teachers are certified and experienced teachers are recertified every 3 years (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009). The formulation of the standards is rather open, and they have been written in light of the country's two (or multi) cultural character: "The teacher shall demonstrate commitment to bicultural partnership in Aotearoa [Maori name for New Zealand] New Zealand" and "The teacher shall respond effectively to the diverse language and cultural experiences, and the varied strengths, interests and needs of individuals and groups of ākonga [Maori word for pupils]." The standards clearly express the professional responsibility teachers carry in maintaining the national values unique to New Zealand.

¹ American standards for teaching are left out in this very brief overview, not because they are less relevant, but simply because it is assumed they are familiar to the readers.

Norway

In Norway we have no standards for teachers; however, there is a national framework or teacher education which states five competencies (which are not further operationalised) all qualified teachers must have:

- Subject matter competence
- Teaching competence (didactical and pedagogical competence)
- Social competence
- Competence to change and develop
- Competence in professional ethics

The areas of competence link to Shulman's (1987) well known concept *pedagogical content knowledge*; however, only the first two are to a certain extent teachable in a teacher education program, whereas the other competencies are more related to personal characteristics than to measurable competencies. Unique to Scandinavia, and, above all, to Norway, is the central educational goal *danning*, representing ethical and moral aspects of education. The German term is *Bildung*. It is related to affective aspects of teaching, what Zembylas (2007) calls *emotional ecology*, the interplay between the understanding of emotional, pedagogical, and subject matter aspects of the teaching role. A similar concept is presented by the Finnish researcher, Sven Erik Hanssén (2008), in what he calls *teachership*.

Standards for Language Teachers

Specific standard for teachers of foreign languages have also been developed, and the following are two examples.

Israel

In Israel five domains form the core of standards for teachers of English as a foreign language:

- Content (e.g. language proficiency, literature and linguistics)
 - Learning and the learner (e.g., general learning theories, language learning in specific, learner diversity)
 - Teaching and the teacher (e.g., methodology of language teaching, teacher roles, curricula)
 - Assessment (e.g., standards, monitoring student learning, testing)
 - Classroom environment (e.g., management, environment)
- (Spolsky et al., 2002, p. 4)

Each domain requires specific criteria and benchmarks for evaluating the extent to which the standards have been met. There are, however, no clear assessment procedures in light of these standards; however, they serve as indicators when decisions about certification of English teachers are being made (Smith, 2005).

Europe

A rather comprehensive document relating to standards for language teacher education, the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education—A Frame of Reference* (Kelly, M., Grenfell, M., Allan, R., Kriza, C., & McEvoy, W., 2004)

has four focal points for language teacher education:

- Structure
- Knowledge and understanding
- Strategies and skills
- Values

The first point relates to the structure of teacher education, whereas the three last points are more related to standards for European language teachers in terms of professional knowledge, practical teaching competence and educational values. In light of the profile, a *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (Newby et al., 2007) has been developed, mainly intended for engaging future teachers in reflective self-assessment on “didactical knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages” (back cover). The focal points for reflection are

- The context of teaching
- The methodology of teaching
- Resources
- Lesson planning
- Conducting a lesson
- Independent learning
- Assessment of learning

These focal points form what most teachers and researchers would call the essence of teaching. But it is interesting to see that in many European documents the use of standards is less common; Europeans prefer to talk about *focal points*. Standards still seem to have a more negative connotation in Europe than in the United States. An exception from this orientation would be England (not the United Kingdom), a country where standards for teaching, presented as lists of competencies, has been criticized for having had a reductive impact on the teaching profession. The list of required performance competencies has recently been reduced from about 100 to about 30 (Stobbart, 2009), and teaching performance is assessed by ticking off items on the list. Such lists lead to a fragmentation of teachership (Hanssén, 2008), which limits professional autonomy essential to the profession. Teaching is contextualized, and teachers must be encouraged to make professionally responsible decisions without having to think of what competence their actions reflect.

Why Have Standards Become So Popular?

The main reason for introducing standards is the demand for accountability from stakeholders' side. Accountability is “part of the lexicon of politics and institutions” (Lee Smith & Fey, 2000, p. 334), and it “involves the requirement that one group provide an account or justification of its activities to another group in return for trust and privileges granted to the former by the latter” (Sachs, 2003, p. 177). In an educational context it means that schools and the education system at large provide evidence to stakeholders (parents, society, politicians) of the way the stakeholder's investment is spent and explicit goals achieved. In education, explicit goals are usually expressed as standards to be achieved. Standards have become the focal point of education, and achieving the standards have become its main concern.

How Are Standards Developed?

How standards are developed differs, of course, from setting to setting. In some settings, standards are developed within the framework of a dialectic process among various stakeholders, and draft versions of the standards are presented to the public for feedback. However, standards are often developed in a top-down procedure; they are decided by politicians who are looking for quick fixes to difficult and complex process questions. In the best case, the politicians have been guided and counseled by academics and experts in the field before they publish the standards, which from then on dictate teaching as well as learning. When a top-down procedure is used to develop standards, teachers are in danger of becoming mere technicians who carry out orders with little or no professional autonomy. The Danish researcher Krejsler (2006) uses the term the *postprofessional teacher* for teachers working under administrative and middle leaders who assess teaching merely according to financial and market-oriented values. In order to keep the job, the postprofessional teacher must document productivity (p. 302). There is much to be said in favour of choosing a longer standards development process, one which invites feedback from professionals and experts at all levels before a pilot version is put on “the market.” Such a development process strengthens the ecological validity of standards, and they are therefore more likely to be more positively accepted by teachers. An additional advantage of standards is that the development process itself often sparks a public discussion on education and teaching in general (Darling-Hammond et al., 1998).

It is difficult to find the optimal balance between using concrete standards as quality assurance for the teaching profession, and at the same time accepting that the holistic role of the teacher, teachership (Hanssøn, 2008), is not the sum of meeting each standard separately.

STANDARDS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How Can Standards Support Professional Development?

It would be unwise to neglect the many apparent advantages standards bring into education. First of all, standards serve as agreements about what is important in education, they point to a common core of knowledge and skills learners are expected to achieve. Additionally, standards serve as guidelines for teachers in carrying out their tasks and can serve as a means of communication between the educational system and the public. Published standards allow for accountability and public criticism, which is likely to trigger a public and professional debate about what is important. Any dialogue which invites a wider audience to participate is beneficial to the educational system as a whole and should therefore be appreciated by the professional educational community.

Moreover, standards are an essential part of any assessment activity. It is necessary to assess performance in relation to something, to the commonly agreed core of knowledge, to expressed standards.

How Can Standards Hinder Professional Development?

Clearly expressed standards are essential in designing the construct of good teaching, and they are a must when evaluating teaching. Some researchers, however, have warned against overuse of and reliance on standards (Apple, 2001; Burroughs, 2001; Delandshere & Arens, 2003; Murray, 2001). Murray points out that there is no consensus regarding standards, in spite of the fact that the teaching profession and the public are invited to engage in the development process and to comment on various drafts of standards before the final versions are published. Standards can easily narrow the view of teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith, 2001, 2008) and limit new initiatives and introduction of new ideas. When education becomes too market oriented (Apple, 2001) and focuses mainly on outputs (Cochran-Smith, 2001, 2008), the importance of affective aspects of teaching are likely to be diminished. An additional problem with explicit standards for teaching is that teachers engage in work-based learning, which accumulates to a large extent in private tacit knowledge and experience, also called *working knowledge*, *practical* or *craft knowledge* (Marland, 2001; Tyriälä, 2008). Van Manen (1999) claims that much of teachers' knowledge is embedded in the teacher's being in the three domains previously mentioned: behavioral, affective, and cognitive. Handal and Lauvas (1987) call this practical knowledge teachers' *practical theory*: "A person's private, integrated but ever-changing system of knowledge, experiences and values which is relevant to teaching practice at any particular times" (p. 9). It is difficult, if not impossible, to articulate this type of teachers' professional knowledge in terms of general standards. Teachers exercise good teaching within a specific context (Berliner, 1992), and what is suitable in one specific teaching situation is not necessarily suitable in other contexts (Smith, 2005).

An overemphasis on standards can cause teachers to become technicians rather than educators, and being an educator is often the reason why they chose to become teachers in the first place (Roness & Smith, 2009).

How Can Standards Strike a Balance in Professional Development?

Crooks (2003) has listed a number of conditions for intelligent use of accountability that differs from current practice in many places. When standards are implemented with the objective of promoting development, they are, according to Crooks, likely to develop trust among all parties involved as the work on and with standards is done in cooperation with all stakeholders. Intelligent use of standards initiates deep changes within a person or a system, in contradiction to top-down implemented instructions of change. The latter is likely to invite cosmetic, declarative changes. Proper use of standards leads to informative feedback essential to teachers, and this feedback will result in increased enthusiasm and motivation. In order for Crooks's conditions to be met, the following points need to be taken into consideration:

- *Standards need to be open enough to serve as guidelines and not as lists of skills or pieces of knowledge.* The formulation of standards must be general enough to leave room for personal interpretations and professional freedom for teachers. If not, teaching becomes technical.
- *Standards need to allow for differences.* Teachers differ, and educational contexts differ. We cannot apply the same standards in all settings.

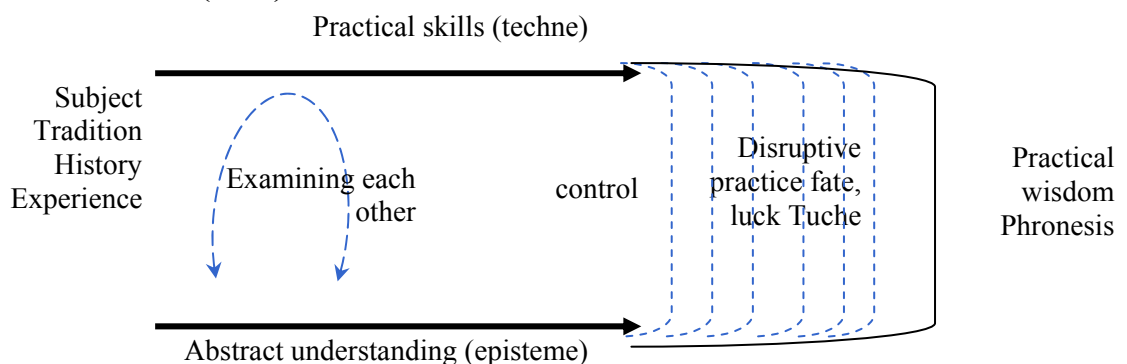
- *Standards need to serve formative as well as summative evaluation purposes.* Assessment carried out in light of standards is to be shared with teachers in a nonthreatening way.
- *Standards need to be constantly revisited and updated.* In an era of rapid development of knowledge and its place in constantly changing societies, it is not possible to see standards as fixed and unchangeable unities. Standards need to be dynamic, to be frequently revisited to examine their relevance to the present and future needs of society.
- *All stakeholders need to be well informed about the standards.* Transparency is the keyword in relation to setting standards and working with standards in an educational system.
- *Support and alternatives need to be offered when standards are not met.* When standards are not met, teachers need to find alternative routes to achieve the standards. Punishing teachers by removing their financial and professional rewards will not lead to improvement in the long run.
- *Summative evaluation (decision making) cannot be based on achievements of standards only.* When assessing the quality of teaching, there is more to it than what can be expressed by standards.

The dilemma we face can be summarised as follows: Are standards a threat to the essential qualities of professionalism constraining professional development, particularly because they are often associated only with narrowly defined and easily measurable attributes? Or can we create standards that define professionalism much more broadly to reflect fundamental professional values and commitments in ways that can facilitate professional development?

Models of Professional Development

The literature offers much research and theory on professional development (e.g., Day, 1999, 2004; Kolb, 1984; Korthagen, 2001); however, this paper will present two models, perhaps less known to the international audience. The first model is a recent model adapted from Brunstad (2007). It defines professional practice in light of the relationship between practical skills (*techne*), abstract understanding (*episteme*), and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and professional growth means expanding all three components.

Figure 2. Brunstad's(2007) Liminal Model



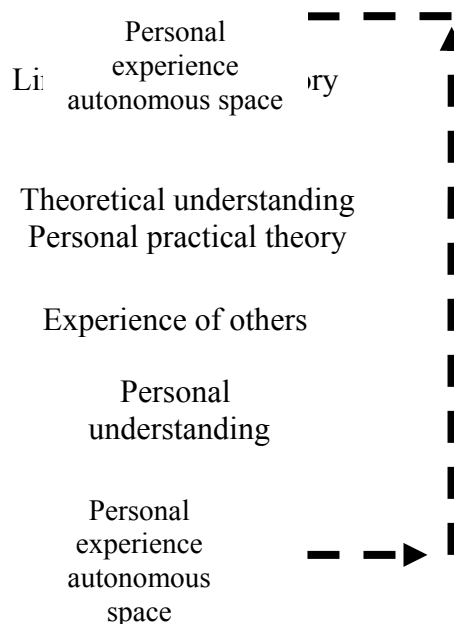
Teaching is rooted in a specific subject tradition built on a long history and record of experiences. Professional learning includes studying the theory of the profession (episteme) as well as practicing the technical skills (techne). The two constantly examine each other; they monitor each other so the two lines are parallel, and the teacher is in full control as long as this occurs. However, the reality of teaching cannot be fully controlled by carefully planning. There is a space of disruptive practice where fate and luck (*tuche*) play a major role, and it is within this space that decisions are made and actions are taken in light of the teacher's practical wisdom (phronesis), which reflects, according to Brunstad (2007), three main features:

1. *Memory*, learning from past experiences
2. *Open-mindedness*, listening to advice and counsel from others
3. *Imagination*, the ability to foresee possible consequences of actions taken.

Within the autonomous space, teachers draw on theoretical and practical information acquired during formal education when deciding on how to act in particular situations. It is, however, not only the context that creates the situation; the analysis of the context determines actions taken. Thus, formal education is an essential basic requirement for teachers, but it is not sufficient when spontaneous decisions have to be taken to handle unique situations in the classroom. It is professional wisdom (phronesis) that determines the quality of teachers' actions within the autonomous space where most development takes place. Explicit standards cannot embrace teacher behaviour in the autonomous space where professional wisdom plays the major role.

The second model is developed by the author and illustrates how reflection on practical experiences leads to professional understanding and growth.

Figure 2. Professional Growth (Smith, 2008)



The teacher's personal experience takes place within the autonomous space, and through reflection a personal understanding of the experience is developed. However, if professional growth is to take place, the teacher needs to collect information from

others involved in the experience, often students. At this stage the teacher has sufficient information to form what previously in this paper is called *practical theory* (Handal & Lauvås, 1987), a kind of metaview on the experience which is distanced from the immediate personal experience. Professional growth takes place when the teacher is able to relate the experience to published views of others, the theory (episteme). Professional development is more than practicing new teaching techniques; it is developing a deeper understanding of experience, which leads to a conscious change of practice.

Teachers have reliable and valid information about their personal teaching qualities, and they have rich tacit knowledge about teaching, what Connely (2002) calls *teacher knowledge*. Teachers can best evaluate their reasons behind actions in problem-oriented situations; it is what Gitlin et al. (2002) call *insider knowledge* about teaching. Teachers are expected to think systematically about their practice and learn from experience (NBC, Core Proposition 4), and to have a deep understanding of themselves and of the nature of their work (Coolahan, 2002, p. 13). Self-knowledge is important in improving performance (Marland, 2001; Smith & Tillema, 2001). Furthermore, teachers who are capable of articulating practical theories and self-awareness, can document these for evaluation purposes. The function of self-assessment is to a large extent, formative; however, documentation of knowledge drawn from experiences presented by teachers can also be used for certification and promotion purposes.

How Can Standards Be Used to Enhance Professional Development?

Development can be seen as looking critically at current practice with the intention of improving it. In other words, we need to map current practice in order to know what and how to change. Standards are helpful in suggesting a direction for change, but they are harmful if current practice is only assessed in light of explicit standards and if goals for professional development are limited to professional competencies presented as standards. Teaching is a complex activity, and multiple tools are required to create a profile of teaching competence (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Following is a far-from-exhaustive list of some common tools for mapping the quality of teaching.

Student Achievements

Student achievements are frequently used when assessing teaching. It is commonly claimed that the higher the student scores, the better the teacher. Basically, I do not disagree with this; however, I want to point out that student achievements are relative to multiple factors external to the teacher, such as student ability, socioeconomic status, and context of teaching, and are thus better defined in other ways than merely as mean scores on standardized tests. A teacher who succeeds in lowering the drop-out rate in her class, or in developing social competencies in her students, or in saving students from developing a destructive self-esteem as a result of not doing well academically, or preventing even one student from developing unhealthy addictions, has scored high on student achievements. These scores cannot be neatly presented in numbers on high stakes tests, but in teachership. However, negative backwash effects on today's education, formed by the accountability and product-focused wave, have to a large extent limited quality teaching to producing high test scores in core school subjects. This type of standard hinders teachers' and learners' development, resulting in large drop-out rates from the teaching profession as well as from schools. Standards

for teaching based only on traditional student achievements should be approached with great care.

Observations

Teaching cannot be decontextualized; the quality of teaching must be evaluated in the context in which it takes place (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000), and therefore teachers should be observed teaching in that specific context. Observation of teaching is an authentic assessment tool widely used in appraisal of teachers. Observations can be used for formative purposes, especially when the observer is a colleague who has been invited by the teacher to focus on specific aspects with which the teacher is unhappy. In this way, feedback from observation is used for professional development purposes.

Student Feedback

Students, who are central stakeholders of education, daily observe teaching and have their own standards for what quality in teaching means. Eliciting students' opinions on teaching can be done informally by asking for oral and written feedback. The advantages are that feedback is spontaneous, immediate, and student oriented; students volunteer feedback on issues they choose using their own language. This direct and unedited form of feedback can, however, be a threat to teachers who are less confident about their work. Many teachers prefer to elicit feedback by using a questionnaire designed for their specific teaching context. The information collected is best used by teachers themselves for professional development purposes and not by management and administration for decision-making purposes (Smith, 2005).

Portfolio

The last tool suggested in this paper is the use of portfolios for professional development purposes. Teacher portfolios have become very common, especially in the United States (e.g., Brown and Irby, 2001; Craig, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Delandshere & Arens, 2003; Shulman, 1988, 1998; Wolf, 1991, Zeichner & Wray, 2001). The main advantages of the portfolio are as follows:

- Portfolios monitor personal development
 - Portfolios highlight self-perceived competence versus the opinion of others
 - Portfolios encourage responsibility for professional development
 - Portfolios provide evidence for professional competence
- (Smith & Tillema, 1998, 2006)

Whereas the main advantages of the portfolio lie in its incentive to professional development, the last point suggests that portfolios provide documentation of professional competence. Evidence to be presented in teacher portfolios are of two kinds: hard and soft (Van der Westhuizen & Smith, 2000). *Hard evidence* consists of official documents and certificates, reports from supervisors, letters of recommendation, and records of student achievements. This type of evidence is external to the teacher, given by other people. *Soft evidence* consists of the teacher's personal voice, views, and reflections related to teaching in a specific setting. Teachers present their practical theories (Handal & Lauvås, 1987) and articulate their tacit knowledge of teaching. Examples of soft evidence are lesson plans, teaching materials, recordings of lessons, and reflections on critical incidents. Standards might serve as guidelines for teachers in choosing evidence of competence; however, if the

standards are too detailed, teachers will choose to include only what is required by the standards and will not document their personal professional identity. The validity of portfolios is embedded in the variety of documentation representing external opinions and teachers' self-chosen evidence of professional competence.

Owing to the very subjective and personal character of soft evidence, it is problematic to state explicit external standards based on which teacher portfolios are to be assessed. Portfolios are best used as a tool for professional development purposes presenting teachers' voices. Professional competence should be documented using a variety of tools in light of standards for teaching but not dictated by detailed lists of competencies that fragment teaching into measurable units. A balanced use of standards as guidelines is likely to support teachers' professional growth.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has not been to argue against the use of standards. My claim is, however, that standards are to be used intelligently, which means that they invite cooperation among various stakeholders of the educational system, and that they allow for differences among teachers in terms of teaching styles and professional expertise. The recent rapid development of standards for teaching will likely decrease teacher autonomy and creativity, and harm teaching quality and education in general if standards are used for uniform evaluation of teachers irrespective of teaching context and purpose of evaluation. This paper advocates applying standards in a manner which appreciates individuality and uniqueness in teaching and motivates and empowers teachers to undertake ongoing critical reflection of practice, to engage in ongoing professional development and growth processes. Standards should support, rather than hinder, professional development. If we succeed in finding the optimal balance between quality assurance and professional autonomy, we will witness a major quantum leap not only in the quality of teaching but in education in general.

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THE BIG PICTURE AND THREE PERSPECTIVES ON TESOL STANDARDS

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Expectations, frameworks, clusters, principles, values, pathways, goals, guidelines, norms, patterns and things our students know and are able to do. This is the myriad of words and phrases that help to define standards. While these concepts are used interchangeably when discussing standards, it is the authentic perspectives of three international TESOL facilitators, Margot Gottlieb, Fernando Fleurquin, and Kari Smith that will be discussed in this summary. Their professionalism and expertise on the subject of standards provided meaningful learning to their audience on Friday, 18 September 2009, at the TESOL Symposium held at ULACIT in Panama City, in the Republic of Panama.

The purpose of this summary is to highlight the presenters' key concepts and perspectives. The following paragraphs will summarize the three plenary introductions made by Margot Gottlieb, "Developing PK-12 Standards for EFL Students"; Fernando Fleurquin, "Using Performance Standards as a Tool for Professional Development"; Kari Smith, "Standards: Help or Hindrance?"; and a "Walk & Talk" conclusion complete with "celebratory firecrackers" facilitated by Debbie Psychoyos.

DEVELOPING PK-12 STANDARDS FOR EFL STUDENTS

Ms. Gottlieb began with the premise behind standards, which includes the idea of bringing equity and excellence to education; creating a yardstick to measure learning; identifying pathways to guide instruction and student growth; and the development of an infrastructure that would support a shared common language that could be easily disseminated among EFL educators. Margo explained that language standards support the field of EFL through the development of a framework for curriculum alignment. This framework fosters a systemic lens between content and language learning, by integrating the basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—throughout the curriculum. Additionally, Margo stated that providing a specific discourse in the content areas and the specific language required for learning in those areas has created transparency, flexibility, and sustainability in meeting the needs of all learners.

Margo concluded her presentation with a glass half-full or half-empty metaphor to illustrate the importance of balance when referring to standards. Whereas a half-empty perception would limit learning and create robotic instructional practices, she suggested that the half-full glass perception would focus on defined, observable, and measurable language proficiency in the content areas. Margo also suggested that the isolation of language teachers would transition into a more cooperative collaboration between English language and content-area teachers, thus supporting collegiality and professionalism for English language educators.

USING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AS A TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fernando Fleurquin, the second plenary speaker, began with a five-question self-assessment tool that included a 0–3 scale (0=Not me!; 1= Sometimes; 2= Often; 3= All the time). The participants were encouraged to score themselves within the following categories: a score between 1 and 5 would indicate some sort of work dissatisfaction caused by lack of recognition; 6–10 indicates a score that often occurs in a dynamic setting like schools where daily challenges require risk-taking and continuous reflection; a score of 11–15 indicates motivation and satisfaction. Participants who scored in this category perceive themselves as recognized and supported in their work. This self-assessment provided the audience with an understanding about the importance of continuous reflection, which is an essential component of professional development and life-long learning.

Incorporating EFL standards into professional development (PD), Fernando presented a variety of ways to keep PD alive. Some ideas for enhancing PD included: creating a personal portfolio; keeping a journal and/or reflective writing log; videotaping a class for review and self-evaluation; inviting a peer teacher to visit a class; engaging in action research; risk-taking and experimentation with new methods of instruction; and attending conferences (such as the annual TESOL symposiums). Additionally, networking, peer collaboration, recognition, empowerment, respect, and defined expectations will improve morale and working conditions that support teaching and learning in all classrooms.

Mr. Fleurquin concluded with a look at standards as a tool for PD, suggesting the following equation:

REFLECTION + STANDARDS = PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When standards are implemented to support teachers as life-long learners, a win–win will result for teachers and students. Teachers will gain confirmed beliefs, confidence, organized reflection, peer support, and administrative encouragement. These gains will enhance professionalism, which in turn will foster learning and language proficiency of English language learners.

STANDARDS: HELP OR HINDRANCE?

The final presenter, Kari Smith, took the audience on an imaginary journey around the world to look at how other countries are using standards. This reflective presentation encouraged the audience to place standards on a balance that would guide teaching and learning without inhibiting authenticity and uniqueness. Ms. Smith began with a photo tour of the Fiords in Norway, “the land of the midnight sun.” While on the mental tour of Bergen, Norway, the audience was introduced to a chronology of studies around the topic of standards. From the 1950s to the 1980s, the focus was on teacher training. From the 1980s to 2000, the focus shifted to the learning process, and from 2000 to the present, the focus has shifted to the policy of enhancing student achievement by providing national standards to measure content knowledge and teacher effectiveness. With this shift to policy, standards, which attempt to define a body of competencies that guide what is important for teachers to know and be able to do, have begun to

threaten teacher autonomy. A continued tour through Europe, Scotland, New Zealand, and Norway, provided the audience with evidence about the importance of balancing the use of standards.

In Norway, there are no standards, *per se*. There are, however, five competencies for new teachers. These competencies include subject matter competence (mastery of content), teaching competence (pedagogy), social competence (effective communication skills with students, colleagues, parents, administrators, and other community members), competence to change and develop (modify and adjust); and competence of professional ethics (modeling for others what it means to be a good person). Kari referred to these competencies as “Teachership,” and warned that standards too rigidly manipulated may be threatening to this idea. Kari concluded that a balance in the utilization of standards will enhance professional development and support teachership.

CONCLUSION: WALK & TALK

The 2009 TESOL Symposium culminated with an introduction to power listening and a dynamic summarizing strategy called “Walk & Talk” facilitated by Debbie Psychoyos. The groups were divided into color teams (red, blue, and green) and instructed to discuss the highlights of their learning from the break-out group session with members of their same color team. When three-minutes of conversation were concluded, the participants were instructed to create mixed-color groups and to engage in a three-minute conversation about the learning from each of the three presenters. The session continued with a question-and-answer period between the audience and the presenters and concluded with a giant firecracker to celebrate the day’s learning!

APPENDIX: TESOL SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

As part of the TESOL 2009 Symposium closing plenary, the “Ticket To Go” summarizing strategy was implemented requiring participants to answer the question, “What was important for you today?” The following responses were received:

- I liked Keri’s notion of *teachership*, especially the idea that a good teacher (a.k.a. the good shepherd) has to be socially competent as well as academically competent; What does standard mean? I think each speaker used the term differently. It would have been interesting to hear what each speaker thought of the ideas of the other two speakers. I was looking for more concreteness. I really enjoyed the three speakers today. I didn’t expect it to be as interesting.
- How to analyze myself when there is a critical point in my classroom through a set of questions.
- As my first TESOL experience, everything was kind of important, especially the things I learned from Dr. Kari Smith’s presentation. I think I have a lot of work to do on questioning and assessing myself on my practices until now.
- I need to hear from my students (their concerns). Also, I need to always be enthusiastic about what I do everyday!
- All of the information that I received during this training was very important, especially when it comes from such well-prepared, dedicated, and kind professionals. Standards are

important for English language teachers. I have attended more than 20-hours of training on this subject and it seems like I can never learn enough. At our institute in Venezuela we are currently writing standards for our English programs as the national standards, which in our opinion are very outdated. Thanks so much for sharing. I will use this information!

- All topics developed today were very important to me. With this knowledge, I will have the opportunity to share with all teachers at school and put them into action. I plan on writing to Debbie to get her help with classroom management for my 1st grade teachers and others.
- There are standards. We may decide what to do with them. What is definite is that we do need to know where we are heading.
- To see that the Panamanian government is doing something to better prepare ESL teachers so that they can instruct students.
- I found an expert who shares some of my “radical” ideas, such as not overstressing the pros of standardization without taking into consideration the cons.
- To learn new methods from others.
- How to manage my time and how to reflect on what I am doing.
- Community of Learning = Action Plan + Reflective Dialogue
- Using the native language to teach English as explained by Dr. Margo Gottlieb.
- The topics were focused on real-life experiences that we deal with everyday in our classrooms.
- It was of great importance for my professional growth. I know that it is not only a personal affair, but a way to improve my knowledge to share with students and others in a better way.
- The entire TESOL symposium was a world of knowledge with new ideas. Each speaker did the best of their ability to share good things with us.
- Being able to define *professional development*. The steps to follow are not written in stone! My pupils are the most important aspect in my teaching. I agree that getting feedback from pupils helps us to become the best teachers we can be.
- Action research!
- Motivation and concerns about standards in Panama. What to do with standards and/or competencies. I also learned about levels of proficiency from Margo: 1-2-3 vs. 1-2-3-4-5.
- Teachers from different institutions, public and private, came together for the purpose of reflecting on standards with the goal of improving the teaching of English in Panama. One important—very important—conclusion was what Margo Gottlieb said in our group, “We can’t tear the educational system apart; we need to put it together.”
- The fact that I can improve my teaching skills by experimenting without worry.
- Action research, the importance of professional development and learning communities, curriculum-wide standards.
- Although standards are necessary, they must be broad enough so that teachers will exercise professional independence.
- To share learning and companionship. How to analyze and motivate myself and my learners.
- The whole explanation about standards and how we can apply them in the classroom. I had realized that some books that I’ve read had the same topics for the same levels.

- The frightening thought that what if I had missed this TESOL symposium. I would have missed out on a lot of knowledge.
- Believe in yourself and analyze yourself so that you can get the most out of classes. Be willing to investigate and use things on a different perspective as needed. Plus always share with colleagues!
- To know that I have always been searching for information to teach my classes better and I've been doing this the right way.
- Meeting professionals from many different countries and meeting some of the leaders and facilitators of the TESOL organization. Learning from the experts, what is important to them—problems and solutions.
- It was important to come to the symposium to hear things we need to implement in our professional life. Assessment is one of them. Reflecting on our teaching and becoming the best teacher we can be.
- Taking time to reflect on what I am doing and why.
- Being “re-motivated.” Being stimulated to be the best I can be. Meeting up with old faces/friends and making new friends.
- To learn about new teaching strategies.
- Learning that we teachers have the power to change teaching for the better. The better prepared to do so we are, the better results we'll get! Implementing standards will make the teaching-learning process more meaningful.
- It is important to share about up-to-date research, even though it is still controversial and difficult to achieve.
- To learn a new trend in teaching.
- I've learned about the importance of reflecting on our own practice. There is always room for improvement—in my case, it could be giving my students more autonomy.
- It was important for me to reflect on my own teaching and assessment. How it impacts students and how I collaborate with my co-workers.
- I know how I can define my professional development, how I know I have developed; in other words to be reflective in my daily activities at school and university.
- One of the important things I've learned today was the need we have for standards, but that it is also important to take care of not losing my leadership as a teacher. What Kari calls “teachership.”
- In general all the topics developed were important, because as English teachers we must improve our knowledge in order to be skilful and do a good job.
- Being alive! Meeting and sharing with colleagues. Learning about teachership—more than just standards, with Kari Smith, and how this affects my pupils and colleagues.
- To learn ways or tools to be a better teacher.
- Being more aware of ELT standards and thinking that we can be the best possible teachers. Considering that our pupils are the center of the teaching process.
- To know how to keep developing in a professional way in the best job of the world, as a teacher.
- Thinking of how to create professional learning communities for development in a high-pressure, little-time work environment. I am asking myself: “What questions do I have for action research?”

- It was important to me the way I need to prepare first to be able to give a class. I need to test all my knowledge to then share it [with] my students. Thanks!
 - The most important thing is how we need to teach to students [who are] are native English speakers and not native speakers. We need to talk in English.
 - Meeting different people and listening to Kari Smith's comments about the teaching methods in Norway.
 - Improve my own development as a professional.
 - Developing my knowledge on Monday in my classroom.
 - It is important to realize how much I do care about my students' learning and to renew my determination to continue studying and growing professionally. I have understood too that it is important for teacher supervisors to assess teachers' performance.
 - Everything was important! But something that caught my attention is the fact that we are teachers, we are the leaders of the class, but we are nothing without our students. Everyday, we have to get inspiration to make them learn, but more than learn, love this language.
 - The dynamic about listening and the new terms like *language standards* and *professional development*, mainly!
 - Dr. Smith's presentation was awesome! Students help teachers align content and keep track of class progress. What's the importance of assessing standards?
 - To listen to ideas, knowledge and experiences that I had deep down inside of me; and to know that I was not so lost.
 - Listening to how people discover new venues to follow.
 - Learning that there are international guidelines to help each teacher be a better professional.
 - We can involve our students in the participation of test preparation (not always sometimes). The answers we get can help the teachers reteach, and assess our performance.
 - Don't stop looking for different ways to provide, teach, and be understood.
 - Today was very important because I got to reunite with old friends and more importantly to listen to subject matter expectations in TESOL. Thanks, Debbie.
 - Kari Smith = Profitable. I like her style and insights. Margo = Exactly what I expected. Excellent! Fernando=Clear and concise advice.
 - I've learned that there is always something to be learned. This has been an excellent experience.
 - To share my knowledge with other English teachers. Self-examination. Help student & adults. Teachership!
 - Being with my colleagues was important. It showed me that the issues are basically the same and that if we continue to work as one, we can have a lot of synergy in Panama.
 - For a teacher, professional development is a necessary tool to continue growing and to become a better teacher.
- To get up-to-date information on the new trends in language teaching. One of the areas that needed more emphasis was language teaching and social advocacy.

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