

The Quest for Professional Standards in Foreign/Second Language Teacher Development: A U.S. Perspective¹

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Society is in constant flux and societal changes necessitate frequent reviews of the goals of teacher education and the preparation of teachers.² Vélez-Rendón (2002) maintains that "The body of knowledge and skills that a second language teacher needed two decades ago is no longer sufficient in today's global and rapidly changing world" (p. 461). Teacher development, teacher qualifications, and teacher certification present continuing challenges for all nations.

This paper describes concurrent efforts by three different independent national organizations to develop professional standards for foreign/second language teachers in the United States. The paper is offered for information only and should not be seen as a model for developing teacher standards in Mexico, since, obviously, the efforts described have grown out of the U.S. educational context. The three standard-setting efforts summarized here are those of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).³

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³ It should be noted that this is not the first concerted effort at developing national standards for foreign language teachers in the United States. Already in 1929 such standards were proposed (Purn, 1929), followed by a second extensive effort by the Modern Language Association of America in 1966 (Guidelines, 1966). Although these efforts did have some impact, none of them resulted in a cohesive, nationally-accepted set of standards necessary for a major upgrading of the profession at large. Unfortunately, many of the excellent recommendations of previous attempts at setting standards could not be implemented on any meaningful scale, partly for economic reasons, but mostly for political/ideological reasons. In the U.S., setting general educational policies is the purview of each individual state rather than the federal government. To this date, individual states, and even individual local communities, and individual institutions of higher learning jealously guard their freedom to establish educational curricula and practices they themselves determine, given the perceived needs and contexts (and, unfortunately, also the financial and other resource limitations) of their local, political and geographic constituency. The result of this lack of conformity is that curricula for teacher preparation, assess-

The NCATE Standards

NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) is a national accreditation agency for teacher education programs, recognized by the U.S. government. The organization is concerned with overall program standards rather than the qualifications of individual teachers. That is, if a state education agency ascribes to the NCATE standards (and 33 states do at present), each individual teacher education unit in that state has to demonstrate to an NCATE Board of Examiners that it provides a curriculum which permits its pre-service teachers to achieve the stated standards. Individual institutions not located in states affiliated with NCATE may elect to apply for NCATE approval for its programs but do not need to do so. NCATE approved the standards for foreign language teachers developed by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) on October 19, 2002. NCATE had previously accepted the standards developed by the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) organization for ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. The six NCATE/ACTFL standards summarized in Figure 1, and the five NCATE/TESOL standards summarized in Figure 2 are provided as guidelines to teacher preparation institutions to prepare performance-based curricula and assessments which focus on what novice teachers should know and be able to do.

FIGURE 1: NCATE/ACTFL STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS⁴

- I. Standard 1: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons
 - Standard 1.a. Demonstrating Language Proficiency
 - Standard 1.b. Understanding Linguistics
 - Standard 1.c. Identifying Language Comparisons
- II. Standard 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts
 - Standard 2.a. Demonstrating Cultural Understanding
 - Standard 2.b. Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions
 - Standard 2.c. Integrating Other Disciplines in Instruction
- III. Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices

ment procedures and criteria, as well as teacher qualifications vary widely. Unless special agreements have been made between specific states to accept the teaching credentials from another state, the teaching credentials are not portable, i.e., individuals certified to teach in one state cannot automatically teach in another state. Given the high mobility rate of the U.S. population, this lack of portability causes a hardship for many teachers and exacerbates the growing teacher shortage in many localities. For an overview of issues relating to foreign language teacher development in the United States, see Schulz (2000).

⁴ For full text of document go to <http://www.actfl.org> (look under special projects).

- Standard 3.a. Understanding Language Acquisition and Creating a Supportive Classroom
- Standard 3.b. Developing Instructional Practices That Reflect Language Outcomes and Learner Diversity
- III. Standard 4: Integration of Standards Into Curriculum and Instruction
 - Standard 4.a. Understanding and Integrating Standards Into Planning
 - Standard 4.b. Integrating Standards in Instruction
 - Standard 4.c. Selecting and Designing Instructional Materials
- IV. Standard 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures
 - Standard 5.a. Knowing Assessment Models and Using Them Appropriately
 - Standard 5.b. Reflecting on Assessment
 - Standard 5.c. Reporting Assessment Results
- VI. Standard 6: Professionalism
 - Standard 6.a. Engaging in Professional Development
 - Standard 6.b. Knowing the Value of Foreign Language Learning

FIGURE 2: NCATE/ TESOL ESL STANDARDS FOR P-12 TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS⁵

- Domain 1: Language
 - Standard 1.a. Describing Language
 - Standard 1.b. Language Acquisition and Development
- Domain 2: Culture
 - Standard 2.a. Nature and Role of Culture
 - Standard 2.b. Cultural Groups and Identity
- Domain 3: Planning, Implementing and Managing Instruction
 - Standard 3.a. Planning for Standards Based FSL and Content Instruction
 - Standard 3.b. Managing & Implementing Standards Based ESL and Content Instruction
 - Standard 3.c. Using Resources Effectively in FSL and Content Instruction
- Domain 4: Assessment
 - Standard 4.a. Issues of Assessment
 - Standard 4.b. Language Proficiency Assessment
 - Standard 4.c. Classroom-based Assessment for ESL
- Domain 5: Professionalism
 - Standard 5.a. ESL Research and History
 - Standard 5.b. Partnerships and Advocacy
 - Standard 5.c. Professional Development and Collaboration

Although the FL and ESL standards are not identical, both sets of standards require that beginning teachers demonstrate language proficiency, be able to describe language in linguistic terms, demonstrate cultural understandings, be able to deliver content-based instruction,

⁵ For full text of document go to www.tesol.org/pdfs/aboutassoc/ncatestes.pdf, Programs

understand the second language acquisition process, and be able to create supportive classrooms and develop instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and learner diversity. Further, teachers understand the standards developed for language learners and can implement them in planning, instruction, and curriculum and materials development; they are familiar with assessment models and use them appropriately in administering, reporting and interpreting results; and finally, teachers engage in professional development. The FL standards developed by ACTFL also require that teachers know the value of foreign language learning (standard 6d). The full texts of the standards are available on the ACTFL (www.ACTFL.org for FL - link to "Special Projects") and TESOL (www.TESOL.org for ESL - link to "Standards and Initiatives") web sites for closer examination and comparison.

The INTASC Standards

In June 2002, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released a draft of its *Model Standards for Licensing Beginning Foreign Language Teachers* for public comment and projected approval in the fall of 2003. The foreign language standards are based on ten core principles believed to be valid for the teaching of any subject area and grade level. These ten standards, applied to foreign language teaching are presented in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: INTASC STANDARDS FOR BEGINNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS⁶

Principle #1: Content Knowledge. Language teachers are proficient in the language they teach. They understand language as a system, how students learn a language, and how language and culture are linked. They are knowledgeable about the cultures of the people who speak the language. Using this knowledge, they create learning experiences that help students develop language proficiency and build cultural understanding.

Principle #2: Learner Development. Language teachers understand how students learn and develop and can relate this to their development of language proficiency and cultural understanding. They provide learning experiences that are appropriate to and support learners' development.

Principle #3: Diversity of Learners. Language teachers understand how learners differ in their knowledge, experiences, abilities, needs and approaches to language learning, and create instructional opportunities and environments that are appropriate for the learner and that reflect learner diversity.

⁶ For full text of document, see Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (2002), *Model standards for licensing beginning foreign language teachers: A resource for state dialogue*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

- Principle #4: Instructional Strategies.** Language teachers understand and use a variety of instructional strategies to help learners develop language proficiency, build cultural understanding, and foster critical thinking skills.
- Principle #5: Learning Environment.** Language teachers create an interactive, engaging, and supportive learning environment that encourages student self-motivation and promotes their language learning and cultural understanding.
- Principle #6: Communication.** Language teachers use effective verbal and non-verbal communication, and multi-media resources, to foster language development and cultural understanding.
- Principle #7: Planning for Instruction.** Language teachers plan instruction based on their knowledge of the target language and cultures, learners, standards-based curriculum, and the learning context.
- Principle #8: Assessment.** Language teachers understand and use a variety of assessment strategies to monitor student learning, to inform language and cultural instruction, and to report student progress.
- Principle #9: Reflective Practice and Professional Development.** Language teachers are reflective practitioners who continually evaluate the effects of their choices and actions on others and who actively seek out opportunities to grow professionally.
- Principle #10: Community.** Language teachers foster relationships with school colleagues, families, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

According to the INTASC promotional literature, the INTASC model standards are intended to be a resource for state policymakers, teacher education programs, professional organizations, teacher supervisors and others, as they work to improve the quality of foreign language education in the United States. In other words, the INTASC standards are not binding guidelines. Rather, the Council of Chief State School Officers invites individual states and institutions to adopt or develop similar standards for entry-level teachers as those proposed and develop their own assessments.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

The third and currently most successful effort (in terms of actual impact²) in proposing national standards and actually offering a creden-

² According to the web site of the NBPTS (www.NBPTS.org), the National Board has certified 32,138 teachers in all 27 certification areas offered by the end of 2003. The web site also states that in 2003 the following numbers of FL and ESL teachers successfully completed National Board Certification:

English as a new language (Early and Middle Childhood)	60
English as a new language (Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood)	46
World languages other than English (Early and Middle Childhood)	21
World languages other than English (Early Adolescence through Young	

tiating procedure for "accomplished," (i.e., experienced) teachers is that of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS). The National Board was created in 1987, in response to a U.S. government report, entitled *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and a subsequent report by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, entitled *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986). With extensive support from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and a number of private foundations, the NBPTS has developed standards, assessment criteria, and a performance-based assessment process for teachers from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 (i.e., ages 3 to 18+) in practically all fields taught at these levels. Interestingly, the NBPTS focused on developing standards for "accomplished teachers," i.e., standards and a *voluntary* credentialing procedure for already certified teachers with a minimum of three years experience who want to document superior qualifications. The focus on national standards for experienced—rather than entry-level—teachers, was doubtlessly selected to get around the 50 state education departments which would need to give their approval for any meaningful national entry-level standards—which, from my current perspective— is practically an impossible feat (see Note 2).

The standards for NBPTS certification are based on five core propositions of what teachers should know and be able to do:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities (*World languages other than English standards*, 2001).

These five core propositions are reflected in 14 standards for certification in the *World languages other than English standards for teachers of students ages 3 – 18+* (2001) presented in Figure 4, and the 12 standards for certification in *English as a new language standards*, presented in Figure 5.

FIGURE 4: OVERVIEW OF NBPTS WORLD LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH STANDARDS--AGES 3-18⁸

The requirements for National Board Certification in the field of World Languages Other than English are organized into the following 14 standards. The standards have been ordered as they are to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities. They are each an important facet of the art and science of teaching; they often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of accomplished practice.

Preparing for Student Learning

I. Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English draw on their understanding of child and adolescent development, value their students as individuals, and actively acquire knowledge of their students to foster their students' competencies and interests as individual language learners.

II. Fairness

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English demonstrate through their practices toward all students their commitment to the principles of equity, strength through diversity, and fairness. Teachers welcome diverse learners who represent our multiracial, multilingual, and multiethnic society, and they set the highest goals for each student.

III. Knowledge of Language

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English have the ability to function with a high degree of proficiency in the languages they teach, know how the languages work, and draw on this knowledge to set attainable and worthwhile learning goals for their students.

IV. Knowledge of Culture

As an integral part of effective instruction in world languages other than English, accomplished teachers know and understand the target cultures and target languages and know how these are intimately linked with one another.

V. Knowledge of Language Acquisition

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English are familiar with how students acquire competence in another language, understand varied methodologies and approaches used in the teaching and learning of languages, and draw on this knowledge to design instructional strategies appropriate to their instructional goals.

VI. Multiple Paths to Learning

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English actively and effectively engage their students in language learning and cultural studies; they use a variety of teaching strategies to help develop students' proficiency, increase their knowledge, strengthen their understanding, and foster their critical and creative thinking.

VII. Articulation of Curriculum and Instruction

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English work to ensure that the experiences students have from one level to the next are sequential, long-range, and continuous, with the goal that over a period of years students will move from simple to sophisticated use of languages.

VIII. Learning Environment

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English create an inclusive, caring, challenging, and stimulating classroom environment in which meaningful communication in the target languages occurs and in which students learn actively.

VIII. Instructional Resources

⁸ For full text of document go to www.nbpts.org or see *World languages other than English standards* (2001).

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English select, adapt, create, and use appropriate resources to help meet the instructional and linguistic needs of all their students and foster critical and creative thinking among them.

IX. Assessment

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English employ a variety of assessment strategies appropriate to the curriculum and to the learner and use assessment results to monitor student learning, to assist students in reflecting on their own progress, to report student progress, and to shape instruction.

X. Reflection as Professional Growth

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English continually analyze and evaluate the quality of their teaching in order to strengthen its effectiveness and enhance student learning.

XI. Schools, Families, and Communities

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English work with colleagues in other disciplines, with families, with members of the school community, and with the community at large to serve the best interests of students.

XII. Professional Community

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English contribute to the improvement of instructional programs, to the advancement of knowledge, and to the practice of colleagues in language instruction.

XIII. Advocacy for Education in World Languages Other than English

Accomplished teachers of world languages other than English advocate both within and beyond the school for the inclusion of all students in long-range, sequential programs that also offer opportunities to study multiple languages.

FIGURE 5: OVERVIEW OF NBPTS ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS AGES 3-18+²

Overview

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has organized the standards for accomplished English as a New Language teachers into the following 13 standards. The standards have been ordered as they have to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities. They each describe an important facet of accomplished teaching; they often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of accomplished practice. These standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in this field.

Preparing for Student Learning

I. Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners draw on their knowledge of human development as mediated by language and culture and their relationships with students to understand their students' knowledge, skills, interests, aspirations, and values.

II. Knowledge of Language and Language Development

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners are models of language proficiency in the languages in which they are expected to teach. In addition, they draw on their knowledge of language and language development to understand the process by which students acquire both their primary and new languages, to develop instructional strategies that promote language development, and to modify the curriculum as necessary to accommodate the needs of new language learners.

² For full text of document go to http://www.nbpts.org/pdf/ecya_enl.pdf, or see *English as a new language standards* (1998).

III. Knowledge of Culture and Diversity

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the dynamics of culture in general, and to their students' cultures in particular, which enables them to understand their students and structure a successful academic experience for them.

IV. Knowledge of Subject Matter

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners draw on a comprehensive command of subject matter, of language(s) of instruction, and their relationship to each other to establish goals, design curricula and instruction, and facilitate student learning. They do so in a manner that builds on students' linguistic and cultural diversity.

Advancing Student Learning

V. Meaningful Learning

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners use a variety of approaches that allow students to confront, explore, and understand important and challenging concepts, topics, and issues in meaningful ways.

VI. Multiple Paths to Knowledge

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners provide multiple paths to help students develop language proficiency, learn the central concepts in each pertinent discipline, and build knowledge and strengthen understanding of the disciplines. They effectively use the language(s) of instruction to enhance subject-matter learning.

VII. Instructional Resources

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners select, adapt, create, and use rich and varied resources.

VIII. Learning Environment

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners establish a caring, inclusive, safe, and linguistically and culturally rich community of learning where students take intellectual risks and work both independently and collaboratively.

IX. Assessment

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners employ a variety of assessment methods to obtain useful information about student learning and development and to assist students in reflecting on their own progress.

Supporting Student Learning

X. Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners regularly and (re-) evaluate, and strengthen the effectiveness and quality of their practice.

XI. Linkages with Families

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners create linkages with families that enhance the educational experience of their students.

XII. Professional Leadership

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners contribute to the growth and development of their colleagues, their school, and the advancement of knowledge in their field.

During 1999-2000 the NBPTS started offering certification for teachers of English as a New Language (ENL). In April 2002 NBPTS certification of teachers of World Languages other than English became available (at present limited to teachers of Spanish, French, German, Latin and Japanese). The first group of foreign language teachers went through the certification procedure in 2002. The NBPTS is the only na-

tional standard setting effort that currently also offers an actual assessment process for certification. The assessment procedure for National Board certification is a rigorous process consisting of two components: a detailed teaching portfolio, developed by the teacher seeking NB certification over a period of from three weeks to three months of instruction. The portfolio must include video-taped and commented samples of actual teaching practice, commented samples of student work, as well as documentation of how candidates work with parents and the larger community. In addition to the teaching portfolio based on actual classroom practice over a specified time period, candidates for National Board certification also must spend a half-day at a designated assessment center where they take formal tests, including six separate assessment exercises of up to 30 minutes each. During these timed exercises candidates must demonstrate their language proficiency, their knowledge of second language acquisition, and their knowledge of linguistics, i.e., how language works. The assessment criteria and procedures used for National Board certification must meet the five so-called APPLE criteria. These criteria require that the assessments must be **A**dministratively feasible, **P**rofessionally acceptable, **P**ublicly credible, **L**egally defensible, and **E**conomically affordable. The performance assessments are scored by trained practicing peers.

Given the investment in time and money, as well as the rewards available for those who meet the National Board Standards, National Board certification can be considered a high stakes assessment. The certification process is expensive (presently \$2,300US), but a number of states, school districts and other organizations offer financial support. A major incentive for going through the demanding, time-consuming certification process is that the certificate is portable (i.e., is accepted as evidence of accomplished teaching by other states), and a number of states and/or school districts give salary supplements to teachers who have successfully completed the certification process.

Candidates for National Board certification are unanimous in their praise for the value of the certification process as teacher development.

Similarities and Differences

What do these three national efforts have in common, and in which way are they unique?

Obviously, the standard setting projects described apply to different stages of teacher development. NCATE is concerned with the quality of teacher preparation programs and its standards are focused on developing high-quality entry-level teachers. INTASC standards can be mandated by individual states for all its teacher development programs--or by individual institutions in states that have not joined the INTASC effort-- and are applied by teacher education programs to validate the

standards for individual teachers, as they seek provisional licensing after one to three years of teaching experience. And the NPBT standards provide a process whereby experienced individual teachers – after a minimum of three years' teaching experience – can seek to validate their **superior** teaching skills.

FIGURE 6: COMPARISON OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARD-SETTING EFFORTS FOR FL/ESL

NCATE/ACTFL (6)	NCATE/TESOL (5)	INTASC (10)	NBPTS-WL (14)	NBPTS-ENL (12)
Language, Linguistics, Comparison	Language	Content Knowledge	Knowledge of Students	Knowledge of Students
Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts	Culture	Learner Development	Fairness	Knowledge of Language & Language Development
Language Acquisition Theories & Instructional Practice	Planning, Implementing & Managing Instruction	Diversity of Learners	Knowledge of Language	Knowledge of Culture and Diversity
Integration of Standards into Curriculum & Instruction	Assessment	Instructional Strategies	Knowledge of Culture	Knowledge of Subject Matter
Assessment of Languages and Cultures	Professionalism	Learning Environment	Knowledge of Language Acquisition	Meaningful Learning
Professionalism		Communication	Multiple Paths to Learning	Multiple Paths to Knowledge
		Planning for Instruction	Articulation of Curriculum & Instruction	Instructional Resources
		Assessment	Learning Environment	Learning Environment
		Reflective Practice & Professional Development	Instructional Resources	Assessment
		Community	Assessment	Reflective Practice
			Scholarship as Professional Growth	Linkages with Families
	School, Families and Communities	Professional Leadership		
	Professional Community			
	Advocacy for Education in World Languages Other than English			

Figure 6 presents a summary overview of the various standards described. While at first sight, the NCATE, INTASC and NBPTS documents appear to be quite different, they share many commonalities. All current standard setting efforts involve teachers in the specialty areas, i.e., they are not exclusively developed by administrators or setters of policy and handed down from the top of the administrative hierarchy. All current standard setting efforts do not just focus on content knowledge (i.e., knowledge about language, culture, and relevant second language acquisition theories), language and teaching skills as did previous efforts, but they include such constructs as dispositions (i.e., teacher attitudes and belief systems that guide their instructional behaviors), attention to individual learners, considerations of diversity, fairness in instruction and assessment, and relationships with the community. All standards also address continuing professional growth and development. All standard setting efforts are anchored in the standards developed for students (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1996 and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 1997). All are performance-based, and require performance-data from institutions and individuals, heavily depending on portfolio assessment. Reflective approaches that permit teachers to develop their own theories of teaching, foster self awareness and critical thinking skills, and lead to change and continuing self-development are emphasized in all three efforts. And for reasons stated previously, all national standard, curriculum or assessment setting efforts are voluntary. Even if states or individual institutions buy into the NCATE or INTASC efforts, the state or institution will set its own levels of performance.

It should also be noted that both the NCATE and INTASC standards have set the level of Advanced Low, as described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (Breiner Sanders, Lowe, Jr., Miles & Swender, 2000) as the base proficiency level for the commonly taught European languages, and Intermediate High for the less-commonly taught, non-European languages and Russian.

A close examination of the various sets of standards shows considerable overlap in knowledge, skills, and dispositions required. The only truly distinct addition not reflected in all three documents is the "Advocacy for Education in World Languages Other than English" required by the NBPTS for certification for teachers of world languages. Given the American context, the dominance of English as a world language, and the resulting perceived lack of importance for studying languages other than English in the American educational context, this standard may be a wise addition to support the survival of foreign language education in the U.S.

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