

# AAUSC 2009 Volume

## Principles and Practices of the *Standards* in College Foreign Language Education

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Virginia M. Scott, Editor

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## Abstracts

**HEATHER WILLIS ALLEN**

### **In Search of Relevance: The Role of the *Standards* in the Undergraduate Foreign Language Curriculum**

Beyond the *Standards*' influence on K-12 language education policy and continued discussions of their relevance and application to foreign language (FL) instruction and assessment, the tangible impacts of the *Standards* in shaping curriculum and classroom instruction have not been wide-ranging in university-level FL departments. This chapter identifies and discusses three factors that have contributed to the reception of the *Standards* in higher education and, more specifically, in terms of the advanced undergraduate FL curriculum. Based on the discussion of these factors, I respond to the question of whether the *Standards* provide a framework adequate for addressing the critical challenge facing university-level FL programs today of the meaningful integration of language and content across the curriculum. Ultimately, I argue that although the *Standards* continue to serve as an important document within a historical continuum of pedagogical change, they fail to provide principled guidance for university-level FL departments struggling to identify pathways or approaches to inform how curricula are articulated.

**KATHERINE ARENS**

### **Teaching Culture: The *Standards* as an Optic on Curriculum Development**

This chapter offers an experiment in defining what it means to teach culture, based on the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006). Traditional postsecondary FL classrooms all too often define “culture” as a set of facts; the *Standards* suggest that culture may be profitably defined as a field of cultural practices, signifiers, and knowledge. In consequence, a curriculum may be developed stressing how learning a culture means not only acquiring its knowledge base but also the strategic competencies needed to function within it. Defining culture as a pragmatic field structured like a language but functioning in more dimensions requires that any curriculum be targeted at a particular site or region within which a group acts and defines itself as culturally literate through communication, pragmatic practices (behaviors, institutional functions), and a characteristic knowledge base.

To make this case, I first offer a rereading of the *Standards* to redefine learning language as learning culture. I then provide examples of how such a rereading of the *Standards* can be implemented to structure curricula fostering various forms of culture literacy. The experiment proposed here argues that the *Standards* apply to a more encompassing model for learning, especially for teaching and learning culture as a set of semiotic systems revealed in the pragmatic choices made by members of a cultural community in a particular field of culture. My experiment, therefore, challenges how the *Standards* have been read and implemented overall.

**ELIZABETH BERNHARDT, GUADALUPE VALDÉS, AND ALICE MIANO**  
**A Chronicle of *Standards*-Based Curricular Reform  
 in a Research University**

In 1995, Stanford University embarked upon curricular renewal in all major foreign languages. This curricular renewal was motivated by the university senate's concern that campuswide internationalization could not come about without a serious commitment to language teaching and learning. That commitment was then institutionalized in the Stanford Language Center. The Center was charged with encouraging excellence in language teaching, establishing and maintaining performance standards, providing professional development opportunities for the teaching staff, and developing a research program about language teaching and learning. At the heart of the renewal process established by the Language Center was a professional development program focused on Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) certification that helped the teaching staff to acquire a common framework and professional language upon which to engage and interact. Also key was a focus on the *Standards* as blueprints for program development. This chapter narrates the process the staff negotiated over several years of development, using the 1st- and 2nd-year Spanish programs as the specific instance of *Standards*-based curriculum development. Appended to the chapter is the curricular document that includes objectives for interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive language based on a quarter system calendar for 2 years of instruction. In addition, the chapter chronicles how the *Standards*-based curriculum had both a washback and a feedback effect on staff-development and knowledge of language assessment. Finally, the chapter maps a future path, noting the shortcomings of current assessment procedures for analyzing presentational language, and proposing an alternative.

**LISA DEWAARD DYKSTRA**

**Reconceptualizing the Goals for Foreign Language  
 Learning: The Role of Pragmatics Instruction**

The the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006) and the 2007 MLA report, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World*, have put forth recommendations for language education in the United States. Both documents lament the dearth of competent speakers of languages other than English and both advocate for a change to the current system. However, in this chapter I argue that neither model is sufficient. After a thorough analysis of the *Standards* and the MLA report, I present a review of the literature on interlanguage pragmatics and argue that the inclusion of pragmatics instruction can aid in the personal transformation necessary for true competence in the second language. Pragmatics study provides a starting point for the deconstruction of the original self by presenting often conflicting patterns of a paradigm that to learners appears to be self-evident as well as uniform across cultures, namely what constitutes politeness—the building block of interaction that serves as a frame for all discourse. When politeness is found to be distinct across cultures, the sense of a foundation of communication gives way and the native culture, and with it the self,

are challenged. The inclusion of pragmatics can result in a different self than before, an amplified self with varying sets of workable frames for interaction. It is in this way that meaningful entrance into and interaction with the target culture can take place. The *Standards* and the MLA report come up short precisely because they do not adequately address this important component of language.

**EILEEN KETCHUM MCEWAN**

### **Incorporating the *Standards* Into a 3R Model of Literary and Cultural Analysis**

Although useful for providing directions and continuity for foreign language programs at the high school and university levels, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006) seem to overlook the specific skills of literary analysis, a traditional focus for many college-level language programs. This chapter attempts to address that oversight by offering a 3R Model of Literary and Cultural Analysis (Recognize-Research-Relate). The 3R Model combines literary, linguistic, and cultural acquisition within a general analytical model that fulfills the *Standards*' Five Cs of foreign language learning. Based on research in schema theory and reader-response theories, the 3R Model helps students identify literary and linguistic elements that seem representative of a target culture, research the target culture through various resources to arrive at a multifaceted view of that culture, and apply the newly developed background knowledge to the text for a more culturally informed reading. Specific examples taken from Francophone literature provide a detailed presentation of the three steps of the model, accompanied by suggestions for using the model with other languages and levels of linguistic competency, thereby demonstrating its wide-ranging application within postsecondary language programs.

**ANA OSKOZ**

### **Using Online Forums to Integrate the *Standards* Into the Foreign Language Curriculum**

This chapter reports on the work conducted in a foreign language (FL) program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County that integrates both in-class and online discussions to reflect on students in and interpret various documents and experiences. In particular, this study focuses on students in one class of Intermediate Spanish I who used asynchronous online interactions to explore, analyze, and reflect on cultural topics. Five groups of students' online discussions were collected and analyzed through the framework of the 5 goals of the *Standards*. Subsequent quantitative analysis of the data showed that the online forums can become springboards for students to share, debate, and interpret information; to gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures; to reflect and make connections to additional bodies of knowledge; to compare and contrast the target culture with their own; and to participate in multilingual and multicultural communities. Pedagogical suggestions to enhance the value of the discussion boards are provided at the end of the chapter.

**JUNE PHILLIPS****Strengthening the Connection Between Content and Communication**

This chapter presents some of the underlying concepts that informed the development of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, especially those that concern achieving communicative and content goals in all levels of language courses. It proposes that a firm understanding of the contexts embedded in the three modes of communication—Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational—establishes an instructional orientation that is more informative for teaching/learning than the four skills alone provided. Using the communicative modes as the starting point for a solid base of cultural or interdisciplinary content (including literary sources) results in learning that has strong intellectual content in the humanities rather than rote learning and manipulative language practice. To facilitate this merging of communication and content, a series of templates are offered that instructors can use so that questions are asked at the planning stage that are appropriate to the content area. This scan of content with potential for student learning is then matched with communicative tasks appropriate to the proficiency level of students. The templates help to establish a mindset for instructors so that new materials can be explored with minimal materials development time and also take advantage of contemporary events, student interests, and opportunities for curricular enrichment.

**JEAN MARIE SCHULTZ****A Standards-Based Framework for the Teaching of Literature Within the Context of Globalization**

The 2007 MLA report, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World*, calls into question many of the current practices in language teaching, their underlying philosophies, and even the structure of departments of foreign languages and literatures in light of the impact of increased globalization, which privileges the development of “translingual” and “transcultural” competence. Particularly at stake is the traditional role of literature in the foreign language curriculum, a role made all the more problematic within the context of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006), which are ambivalent as to how literary texts should figure into the foreign language classroom. Although three of the *Standards’* Five Cs—Cultures, Comparisons, and Communication—have generated new paradigms for the incorporation of literature in the language classroom, very little research has been done in terms of Communities and Connections. This chapter explores why these two standards seem to have been passed over within the pedagogical literature and examines how they can figure prominently into a reconfigured foreign language curriculum that advances the goals of the *Standards* as well as those of the 2007 MLA report. The chapter further explores how literature can be repositioned within interdisciplinary practices that might serve to create new kinds of connections within the global arena, as well as how literature helps provide students access to new foreign language

communities. Finally, the chapter concludes by illustrating the theoretical discussion with the description of an intermediate French language course designed specifically to meet the needs of students interested in Global Studies.

**H. JAY SISKIN**

### **A Great Rattling of Dry Bones: The Emergence of National Standards in the Early 20th century**

The founding of the MLA in 1883 signaled a victory for modern languages in their struggle to gain academic recognition. Greek and Latin were dealt yet another blow to their prestige when “modern language men” persuasively argued that French and German had the same virtues that the classicists had arrogated to themselves, namely a rich literature, efficacy in mental discipline, and an aid to mastering other disciplines. Indeed, the modern languages could go one step further, claiming their practical value in contemporary society. At the same time, waves of immigration were bringing about increased growth in high school enrollments and a more diverse student body, causing concern among many educators. At the 1891 meeting of the National Council of Education in Toronto, the chair of the Committee on Secondary Education, James H. Baker, complained that “the present condition of affairs [as regards high school curricula] is chaotic and that it may be improved in many respects” (Baker, cited in “Report of the committee of 10” *School Journal*, 1895, p. 718).

Such was the historical moment that motivated a series of reports evaluating the place of modern languages in the curriculum, the best ways to teach them, and above all, standards of achievement for entrance into college. In this chapter, I will examine two of these reports—the *Report of the Committee of Ten* and the *Report of the Committee of Twelve*—as well as the formation of the College Board. I will emphasize their importance for standard setting, articulation, and assessment in the context of the educational culture of the times.

**ROBERT M. TERRY**

### **The National Standards at the Postsecondary Level: A Blueprint and Framework for Change**

For years we have looked for the one right way to teach foreign languages. Many different methods, techniques, and approaches have surfaced, but none has yet provided us with *the way*. The most recent phenomenon to appear is the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. While still not affording us the answer, since their 1996 appearance the *Standards* have had a noticeable impact on foreign language teaching: New state frameworks, new curricula, new textbook series, and a new focus on performance in the classroom, as outlined in the Five Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities).

Another challenging yet exciting C is now facing those of us who teach at the college/university level: Change. The challenge is in convincing colleagues why change is necessary and why they should change. We all should read the 2007 Modern Language Association report, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a*

**ABSTRACTS**

*Changed World.* Although this report does not mention the *Standards*, there is a striking overlap of both the spirit and the tenets set forth originally in that 1996 document.

The two-tiered structure that typically exists between the humanists and language specialists, as the MLA report calls them, must be addressed and must evolve for our own common interests. Our goals need to be restructured to produce linguistically and culturally competent users and not rivals to native speakers. It is time for a change. The national standards provide us with the tested and proven blueprint and roadmap that we need.

## Contributors

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