

AAUSC 2009 Volume

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

Virginia M. Scott, Editor

Eva Dessein and Rachel Nisselson,
Editorial Assistants



HEINLE
CENGAGE Learning

Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

**AAUSC 2009 Volume:
Principles and Practices of the
Standards in College Foreign
Language Education**
Virginia M. Scott, Editor

Publisher: Beth Kramer
Editorial Assistant: María Colina
Marketing Manager:
Mary Jo Prinaris
Marketing Coordinator:
Janine Enos
Marketing Communications
Manager: Stacey Purviance
Content Project Manager:
PrePress PMG
Senior Art Director: Linda Jurras
Print Buyer: Amy Rogers
Permissions Editor:
Mardell Gliński Schultz
Photo Manager:
Jennifer Meyer Dare
Cover Designer: PrePress PMG
Compositor: PrePress PMG

© 2011, 2009, 2008 Heinle, Cengage Learning

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

For product information and
technology assistance, contact us at **Cengage Learning
Customer & Sales Support, 1-800-354-9706**

For permission to use material from this text or product,
submit all requests online at **www.cengage.com/permissions**
Further permissions questions can be emailed to
permissionrequest@cengage.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009937267

ISBN-13: 978-1-4282-6288-1

ISBN-10: 1-4282-6288-1

Heinle
20 Channel Center
Boston, MA 02210
USA

Cengage Learning is a leading provider of customized learning solutions with office locations around the globe, including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, and Japan. Locate your local office at **international.cengage.com/region**

Cengage Learning products are represented in Canada by Nelson Education, Ltd.

For your course and learning solutions, visit **www.cengage.com**.

Purchase any of our products at your local college store or at our preferred online store **www.ichapters.com**.

Chapter 3

Strengthening the Connection Between Content and Communication

June K. Phillips, Weber State University (Emerita)

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, now at age 13, are entering their middle-school years. They have survived the elementary grades and are in the throes of early adolescence, not fully formed in terms of acceptance or practice but on the path to maturity. The initial charge to the task force on foreign language standards in 1993 was to develop content standards for K-12 education; content in the enabling legislation (*Goals 2000: Education America Act*) was defined as describing what students should know and are able to do. A major challenge for the foreign language profession was that, unlike English or Mathematics or Social Studies, this discipline was neither a required nor a sequential discipline in schools or in colleges and universities. A beginning foreign language student might start (or restart) that study in elementary school, in middle school, in 9th grade (the most common first endeavor), or in a college/university setting. Though all beginners, regardless of age, face similar linguistic development, older learners, especially those in high school, colleges, and universities, are more intellectually capable. For these students, language study should offer more cognitively rich experiences. The *Standards*, for the first time in foreign language instruction, define goals in terms that incorporate content as a substantial outcome rather than leaving content as incidental to linguistic ones.

Foreign Language Standards: Intents and Events

At the outset, influencing curriculum in higher education was not a major consideration of the standards project. The discussion of the standards over the 3-year course of development did elicit opinions that saw a potential role for them in colleges and universities. The first edition in 1996 of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (SFLL)*, frequently referred to now as the generic volume, addressed only K-12 education. Subsequent to the appearance of that publication, and arising from discussions in many forums, language-specific organizations took two dramatic steps: Firstly, they wanted an expanded volume with applications and examples to specific languages, and secondly, most groups decided they wanted to extend coverage to higher education programs. This determination produced the second and third editions, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century [SFLL]* (1999/2006), with 10 specific languages and inclusion of the undergraduate years for most groups.

This bit of history has relevance for the growing (albeit slowly) interest from college and university faculty in learning about the standards and experimenting with them in curriculum and instruction. Initially, faculty dedicated to teaching language in the lower division (first or second year) courses discerned implications in the standards for their work. The differentiations between first- and second-year language study in higher education and the high schools are not so great. The AAUSC audience was a natural one because many program coordinators had responsibility for language students at those levels and for preparing graduate students, adjuncts, and instructors to teach multiple sections with common goals, purposes, and sometimes assessments. With the passage of time, however, it seems that the *Standards* have instigated further reflection in terms of the content areas (e.g., cultures, interdisciplinary connections) and the attention to a more humanities rich curriculum integrated with communicative goals. A recent report of the Modern Language Association (2007) recognizes that the study of world languages must shift dramatically to engage a wider student body with distinct goals for continuing language study. Though that report does not cite the *Standards*, it does investigate the very principles and goals set forth in the *Standards* several years earlier.

The vision set forth in the *Standards* lends itself to multiple interpretations in terms of practice. The five goal areas (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) describe outcomes but do not prescribe approaches, instructional strategies, or methods with capitalized names. At the same time, one must acknowledge not all practices will be conducive to reaching these goals. The logo for the Five Cs consisting of interlocking circles is intended to emphasize the linkages among them so that communication without culture or content from a variety of disciplines provides a limited experience for students. For many years, foreign language faculty have perceived language and humanities as fairly discrete areas; the lower division taught language as four skills and the upper division emphasized advanced language, culture, literature, film studies, and so on. When culture or literature was taught at the lower division, it was frequently incidental or done in English. Advanced language courses focused on composition, conversation or grammar but were often quite apart from the culture/civilization or literature courses. The standards development task force hoped that an understanding of the standards would result in a richer language program at all levels. To accomplish this goal, programs must pay attention to building language proficiency in all the modalities throughout the students' sequence of study. Upper division content courses must also assure that students continue to improve language skills. If these courses include practices of interaction in English or if students are limited to short sentence responses, their proficiency will plateau and not grow. Likewise, faculty teaching toward the standards must integrate content from the humanities into language practice even at beginning levels.

The logo of the *Standards*, the Five Cs, illustrates how all the goals, whether communicative or content-based, are linked together for learners. This is a shift from a hierarchical vision in which learning the language was the goal for several years and those who survived went on to study culture and other content.

The integration of communicative outcomes and meaningful content is now explored in the professional literature and especially in conference presentations. Some of the focus has been influenced by the standards and the attention given to goals other than communication; however, some of the emphasis is generated by parallel issues, such as research on multiple literacies, enrollments in language courses (or lack thereof), and student preferences and objectives for their own language learning whether it be limited to a few years of study or to achieve more advanced levels in conjunction with other disciplines. Byrnes (1998, p. 282) describes the need for change in higher education as follows:

Among the students who will demand totally different curricula are those who are now graduating from secondary schools with curricula that follow a communicative approach, according to national standards that are communicatively oriented. With its focus on communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, the experiential (as opposed to analytic) learning these students have had cannot be readily fitted into or reduced to the form-focused language teaching that dominates in colleges. Totally different curricula will need to be conceptualized if foreign language departments wish to serve this very important student group.

The AAUSC volume, *SLA and the Literature Classroom: Fostering Dialogues* (Scott & Tucker, 2002), contains articles that address the curricular issues and faculty challenges of breaking down the traditional divisions. On the individual instructor level, integration occurs when the standards and their underlying constructs have been studied and probed for their application to teaching and when a mind-set is established that enables the teacher to incorporate these goals areas even when working with a common syllabus that is not explicitly standards oriented. Not everyone can change or create a curriculum, but every instructor can make certain decisions for a given class. We will explore this model here.

Underlying Concepts of Standards for Instruction

One of the major constructs of the standards was to expand traditional definitions of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) by framing them in a context that addresses both how the skills play out in real communicative acts and how learners acquire them. The Framework of Communicative Modes (SFL, 1996) illustrates how listening in an interaction differs from listening to a recorded broadcast. Phillips (2008, p. 96) summarizes these modes as follows:

Interpersonal communication

This mode refers to the learner as a speaker/listener or reader/writer. It requires two-way interactive communication where negotiation of meaning may be observed. The exchange will provide evidence of awareness of the socio-cultural aspects of communication as language proficiency develops.

Interpretive communication

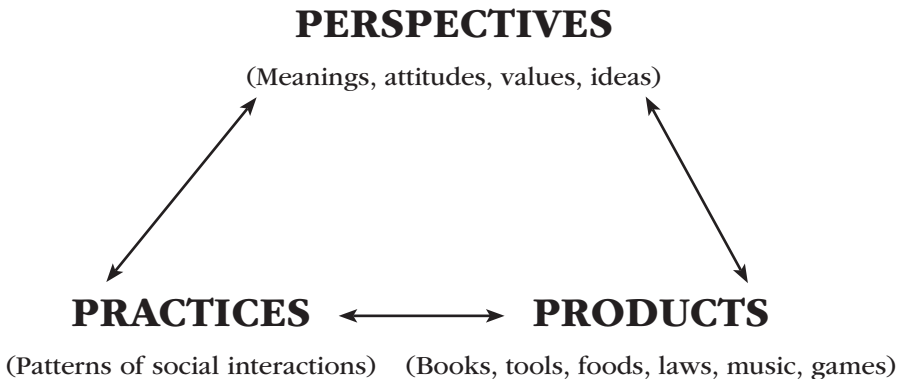
This mode views the learner as a reader or listener/viewer working with “text” whose author or deliverer is not present or accessible. It presumes that the interaction is with authentic written and oral documents where the language input is meaningful and content-laden. The learner brings background knowledge, experience, and appropriate interpretive strategies to the task to promote understanding of language and content in order to develop a personal reaction.

Presentational communication

This mode places the learner as speaker or writer for a “distant” audience, one with whom interaction is either not possible or limited. The communication is set for a specified audience, has purpose and generally abides by the rules of genre or style. It is a planned or formalized speech act or written document, and the learner has the opportunity to draft, get feedback, and revise before publication or broadcast.

As one analyzes, plans, and chooses instructional approaches with these modes in mind, it becomes possible to blend them with authentic materials and create lessons where students acquire new knowledge about target cultures, from a spectrum of disciplines, as they gain competencies in the various modalities. The authors of the *Standards* made an effort to promote communication on a content base, and when instructors keep this merger in the forefront, their students are challenged to acquire new knowledge with new language forms.

A second construct in the *Standards* that provides teachers and students with a means of organizing an infinite mass of information is the Cultural Framework (SFLL, 1996) which presents a model that looks at products, practices, and perspectives as a means of gaining knowledge about culture. Many other cultural models use different terms and are more expansive and complex, yet the framework in the *Standards* has an appeal in its simplicity as a template for lesson planning. For students, it serves as a graphic organizer to encourage them to seek information in each area and to hypothesize about perspectives when these are not explicit.



Given that culture is a dynamic concept that may change dramatically from year to year, students benefit from learning a process for gathering information, analyzing it, hypothesizing, testing hypotheses, and keeping judgments open. Of course, there are traditional and stable aspects of culture as well. Nevertheless, it is not generally useful to codify a given set of cultural facts that may be random and disconnected and that add very little to understanding culture. Attempts to define culture from these stand-alone facts generally fail to help students become life-long learners who are able to engage intellectually in making cultural observations.

Books and articles in the professional literature in the past few years have applied findings from research in second language acquisition (SLA) to classrooms. Many of these researchers have suggested ways of working with texts (written and oral) that have a rich content base. These authors take into consideration genre, matrices based on text structure, and the like so that students can access meaning from authentic texts even though they provide a challenge because they contain material not already studied or familiar (see, for example, Byrnes, 1998; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Most (but not all) curriculum development with a strong content base has been aimed at upper-division courses and advanced learners. However, the larger numbers of students who are in lower-division courses may be taught by graduate students, adjuncts, instructors, or those supervised by coordinators; they may also be part of the teaching load of tenure-track faculty with specialties other than SLA. When courses have a common syllabus created by a coordinator, there may be minimal room for the instructor to deviate from a syllabus; when courses are taught by a faculty member minimally versed in pedagogy, there may not be a syllabus other than the textbook or personal preference. Regardless of the teacher, the syllabus, or the program, opportunities should be provided to assure that all faculty acquire an understanding of the communicative modes and how the inclusion of a stronger content base can enhance curriculum and individual courses. Achieving that agreed-upon direction makes for a better articulated program without impinging upon academic freedom or expertise.

Planning and Teaching by Design

I have found that templates can enable teachers to plan lessons that maximize rich content while simultaneously thinking about approaches that advance interpersonal communication, interpretive communication, and presentational communication. The documents that are the source of content can be selected well in advance of the course, or they can be chosen a day or so ahead when time constraints are a factor. They may fit with a theme being taught, or they may reflect clusters of interest found in a class. For example, several years ago, I found myself in a class with a number of students majoring in science but with farm backgrounds, neither of which was in my realm of teaching or real-world experiences. But as students were helping me select video clips of news from French Web sites, they saw images of cows being burned in great numbers when an outbreak of hoof and mouth disease devastated the farming communities in

France and Britain. Certainly *fièvre aphteuse* was not in my vocabulary nor did I understand its biological causes or the epidemic that ensued. By tracking the trajectory of the outbreak in France, this group of interested students was motivated to watch and read the daily news, report back to the class, propose government interventions, and create posters for the community. None of this content was in my syllabus, but I was able to accomplish the communicative outcomes set forth basing them on an unexpected content theme, one for which they had background knowledge and motivation, with the documents providing key vocabulary. They listened to educated speakers from medical and governmental fields as well as to the dialects of farmers being interviewed. My job, as their teacher, was to adjust the communicative tasks so I could lead them to interpret, have them discuss interpersonally, and finally present a product appropriate to their level of formal writing.

The following templates have been designed, used, and presented by Phillips (2007). The first column represents tasks that the instructor needs to think about in the planning stage. There are specific questions that are appropriate to the content base; in these cases they are drawn from documents—written texts or video—that have cultural content, literary or film value, or that deal with current events. Once the teacher examines the documents, the general proficiency level of the students must be considered. In many instances, similar documents can be used with a range of students, but the response tasks change as do the communicative goals. Though the oral or written documents will be exploited to develop the interpretive mode, some of the concomitant work—brainstorming, identifying, restating at intermediate levels, and narrating, describing, explaining at more advanced levels—will be interpersonal. Presentational communication will be reserved for subjects that warrant the time necessary for drafting and revising.

Template for Cultural Documents

Tasks (For Planning and Teaching)	Intermediate Levels	Advanced Levels
What practices are described in the document?	Identify practices and actions.	Narrate how one performs practices described in the text or observed in visuals.
What products are shown or described?	List products you see or learn about.	Describe products to someone who has not seen them.
What perspectives are expressed in the document? If perspectives are not discussed, what is a reasonable hypothesis as to cultural attitudes, values, importance in the culture?	State a religious, historical, environmental, societal tie, or other connection of the topic to the culture.	Summarize evidence from the document and other sources about the value, attitudes, importance of the topic in the culture. Hypothesize and check for further evidence.

Example:

Students see a photo of a crowd carrying banners and demonstrating. They brainstorm what they think is happening. Then, they are shown the headline and subtitle from the Web site of *Le Monde* (French newspaper) “*La grève*” *RATP prévoit un métro sur dix pour la journée de mercredi.* (Strike. RATP envisions one metro out of ten for Wednesday.)

Drawing upon the interpersonal mode, the teacher and students discuss strikes in our country—who strikes, over what, and so on. Students then work with the Cultural Framework to identify products and practices they understand (e.g., announcing a strike in advance to be legal). Finally, as a group, students and teacher talk about the role of labor unions in modern French culture, the right to strike, and so on.

Template for Content from Literature and Film

Tasks (For Planning and Teaching)	Intermediate Levels	Advanced Levels
Who are the characters and what are their relationships?	Outline characteristics of main characters.	Describe characters’ physical and personality traits; anticipate actions and behaviors.
What actions occur in a scene or clip?	List the actions of various characters in a scene. Compile them into a short summary.	Narrate a sequence of actions that occur; do so from the viewpoints of different characters.
What is/are the setting, time period, and/or historical background?	List information regarding setting of the film or literary piece.	Describe scenes or relate background knowledge of time/place. Provide evidence from the document that expands upon your prior knowledge.
What cultural products, practices, or perspectives can be observed in the film or text or excerpt?	Identify or chart cultural products, practices, or perspectives.	Share, narrate, and/or describe cultural observations from the document.

Example

Students view several clips from the film *Indochine* that shows the colonial presence of France in Vietnam. They describe time, place, dress, occupations. They react to several characters in terms of personality, attitude, relationships across cultures. Based on students’ historical knowledge, discussion of influences of colonialism might ensue.

Template for Contemporary Issues and Events

Tasks (For Planning and Teaching)	Intermediate Levels	Advanced Levels
Why choose this document? Timeliness? Link to theme? Particular student interest?	Report on the who, where, what, when, how, or why of a news article. List essentials of question/answer in interviews. Find categorical information in biographical documents.	Summarize essentials of a news article. Discuss unexpected responses from an interview; create extended questions. Describe the person and his or her contributions for another; identify information you wish you knew but do not yet.
What background knowledge should be elicited?	Brainstorm prior to interpreting document to assure adequate background as well as key language elements.	Create a list or establish the knowledge base from the student group. Create a list of new information to be sought.
What cultural information might the topic or document contain? What expansion may be necessary?	Identify products, practices, perspectives from the documents. Compare cultural information to one's own.	Describe the cultural concepts in the document and hypothesize about related issues. Discuss cultural similarities and differences.
What connections to other disciplines/subject matter are in the document?	Talk about known information in interactions that provide language support. List what we know going into the document/what we learned afterwards.	Describe new information, relate back to what was known. Prepare follow-up questions for further research. Summarize or retell for someone with less knowledge of the discipline.

Example

Students read of the death of Marcel Marceau (9/23/07). They share what they know about him and his work. They brainstorm what kind of information they expect to find in a news obituary. They then read the article and fill in a chart that gives information about his death, his life, his art, and the reactions of the public to his death. Finally, students choose an area in their realm

of knowledge to explore in more detail (e.g., theater students about role of mime in acting development, students of history about WWII and Marceau's role in the Resistance).

Note that almost of all these documents can be classified in different ways. For example, an instructor could choose to address Marceau's death as a current a current event, a cultural topic, or as topic or as an art form through a film clip of a performance. The advantages of the template lie in its relatively quick lesson design feature and the fact that it gradually introduces students to a process of accessing and interpreting authentic texts. The ultimate test occurs when students can take better control of their own learning in further courses or after formal instruction.

In essence, the *Standards* can be part of a mind-set as teachers plan, design, and teach; they can also guide students to think about which communicative modes or combinations are the focus for the lesson. Those modes are not goals in and of themselves but rather a means to learning content; herein lies the challenge intellectually and the challenge of the humanities. Content learned in the foreign language class enriches and expands other knowledge and literacies in the college/university curriculum. Whether students are in a first or a last class, their knowledge of culture, literature, film, and society is enhanced through a new language. Students bring to a language class, even a beginning one, a vast repertoire of general and specialized knowledge; they are not *tabula rasa*. Our challenge as teachers is to build upon and stimulate their intellectual curiosity even as we develop their linguistic proficiency.

References

- Byrnes, H. (1998). *Learning foreign and second languages. Perspectives in research and scholarship*. New York: Modern Language Association.
- MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages. (2007) *Foreign languages and higher education: News structures for a changed world*.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1996). *The standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century (SFL)*. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1999, 2006). *The standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century (SFL)* (2nd & 3rd eds.). Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.
- Phillips, J. K. (2007). *Content for communication*. Presentation at the ACTFL Annual Meeting. San Antonio.
- Phillips, J. K. (2008). Foreign language standards and the contexts of communication. *Language Teaching*, 41 (1), 93–102. Published online by Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, V. M., & Tucker, H. (2002). *SLA and the literature classroom: Fostering dialogues*. AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Swaffar, J., & Arens, K. (2005). *Remapping the foreign language curriculum: An approach through multiple literacies*. New York: Modern Language Association.