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

Patricia A. Duff
University of British Columbia
Canada
OUTLINE

• Review of many documents from Chinese-Taipei research seminar (Dec. 2007) on curriculum/learning standards, assessment tools, teacher accreditation/standards

• Analysis of APEC contexts for S/F language learning
  – Observed policy/standards trends
  – Existing standards for language teachers/programs
  – Assessment issues

• Some opportunities and implications
Contextualizing Policy/Standards Trends

Language policies/standards have evolved in response to globalization and local/regional concerns:

- research and development in other parts of the world (e.g., Europe, US in standards/assessment)
- new political and economic alliances (e.g., EU trilingualism)
- new (perceived) national security threats
- changing immigration patterns or mobility
- diversification of workplace, schools
- perceived competition from neighboring economies
- community/parental/professional advocacy: e.g. FLES
- dissatisfaction with status quo
- accepted new standards, values, research
  - e.g., 21st century competencies for all
Language Education Policies and Standards

• APEC economies clearly recognize socio-economic and political importance of L2 learning/teaching

• especially English as (SL, FL) and other regionally or strategically important languages

  – e.g., Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Japanese Arabic
Observed Policy/Standards Trends across APEC Economies

1. All economies: need strategies for both **establishing** L2 learning policies/standards and successfully **implementing** them (e.g., Yoshida, 2003-Japan; Reeder et al. 1997-Canada)

2. Widespread explicit acceptance of high-level **communicative** and **intercultural** competence as standard for elementary school-tertiary education and for lifelong learning
Consistent with ACTFL (USA) Standards and Others

- Oral, written, different audiences, topics, information, purposes, genres
- Participation in local/global communities
- Metalinguistic, metacultural awareness
- Info acquired across disciplines
- Practices, perspectives of cultures studied
- Comparisons
- Communities
- Cultures
- Communication
- Connections
Observed Policy/Standards Trends

2. Age of first instruction of English

- Decrease in grade level from 2003 to 2007
- Impressive # hrs/wk (per recommendations in Pufahl, 2002: at least 75 min/wk: issue of intensity+duration)
- Compare #hr/wk of instruction of FLs in English-dominant economies: e.g., 0.5-1.5 in USA FLES Gr. K-2

- Implications: need more recruitment, retention, pre- and inservice development of English-proficient teachers for younger learners; articulation/assessment at higher levels

- Obtain comparative data on levels of L2 achievement with earlier start?
Observed Policy/Standards Trends

3. Use of English for content (subject) instruction
   (immersion, mainstream, and content and language integrated learning-CLIL)

   - Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, HK-China
   - English-dominant economies with large influx of ESL students
   - Non-English dominant economies: offering higher-education in English (to attract international students, prepare local students for 21st century competencies/mobility)
   - Reflects trends in EU (CEFR) for CLIL for English and other FLs

   - Implications:
     - predictions from Graddol (2006, English Next) about this phenomenon, esp. at higher grade levels and postsecondary education
     - (future) competition for economies currently providing English-medium higher education ….
Implications of CLIL (cont’d):

• Need for instructional methods that provide integration and focus on:

1. Knowledge structures and text types (rhetorical patterns)
   • classification, description, comparison-contrast, sequence, cause-effect, evaluation (Mohan, 1986);
   • work in Australia drawing on systemic-functional linguistics, genre studies; scaffolding learning

2. Corresponding language/discourse/genres and variation across curriculum, registers (formal/informal, technical/general), and across vocational and professional fields; enculturation

3. Corresponding graphic literacy: representations of knowledge (see next):
Observed Policy/Standards Trends

5. Better alignment needed between assessment practices and standards:

– esp. school-leaving exams vs. (communicative, integrated 4-skill) school curriculum

– tests need better face- and construct validity → to have positive (washback) effect on teaching, “buy-in” by educational community

– too many tests still reflect old curriculum/standards: pencil-paper structure-based tests: no speech, writing

– costs/logistics of direct measures of oral and written proficiency but we must find ways!
Exemplary Standards Frameworks: Language Learning Proficiency Scales→Learner L2 (L3, L4) Profiles

Impressive EDNET review: standards for English and other L2 learning

1. USA (ACTFL) – originally college-level, oral emphasis
2. Europe (Common European Framework) – broadest appeal?
3. Canada (Canadian Language Benchmarks) – adult workplace
4. Australia (Int’l Second Language Proficiency Rating) – adult (?)
• NOTE: all 4 had long incubation, considerable revision, expert consultation and research (testing community, language educators, policy-makers etc.); many years of implementation; also cross-fertilization

• All have much to offer APEC standards/practices  
  – Especially CEFR (Chen et al., 2007; Buck, 2007; *Modern Language Review*, 2007; and my own conclusions)
The Common European Framework
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf
Note: Strengths of CEFR and related initiatives (e.g., European Language Portfolio)

- See excellent recent position papers on CEFR in *Modern Language Journal*, 2007: Little, Alderson, North, etc.
- CEFR is teacher-friendly; intuitive; using non-technical language
- Adopted across Europe and beyond (e.g., NZ)
- For “mutual recognition of language qualifications in Europe” (CofEurope)
- Positive (potential) impact on teaching/curriculum
- Positive impact on stated learning outcomes:
  - e.g. France: B1 in First L2; A2 in 2nd L2; C2 for university leavers
CEFR

• Positive impact on classroom assessment
• Functional, task-oriented
• Applied to language learning for work, study, social/tourism (etc.)
• Gives students agency/responsibility in reflecting on own language abilities: formative/summative self assessment, multilingual ‘biographies’, identities, dossiers
• Positive orientation: “CAN DO” statements (“learner can…”; “I can”), motivating
• Helpful in preservice and inservice training
# Examples of “CAN-DO” Levels

(https://www.alte.org/can_do/general.cfm)

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

#### Describing & Narrating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• where they live</td>
<td>• people, appearance</td>
<td>• plot of book/film</td>
<td>• clear detailed description of complex subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• background, job</td>
<td>• objects, pets, possessions</td>
<td>• experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• places &amp; living conditions</td>
<td>• events &amp; activities</td>
<td>• reactions to both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• likes/dislikes</td>
<td>• dreams, hopes, ambitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• plans/arrangements</td>
<td>• tell a story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• habits/routines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• personal experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Information Exchange:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• themselves &amp; others</td>
<td>• simple, routine, direct</td>
<td>• accumulated factual info on familiar matters within field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• home</td>
<td>• limited, work &amp; free time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• detailed directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• past activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The table above outlines various descriptors for different contexts and levels, including where people live, their appearance, possessions, experiences, and more.
Some Limitations of CEFR

• European context (for languages, mobility, multilingualism, immigration, economics/politics, and collaboration) is not the same as APEC context

• CEFR levels not anchored to any specific language: transferability, comparability of levels across languages?
  
  – In practice, difficult to get test/task raters to agree on specific levels of speech/writing/tasks, especially across countries/languages (e.g., B1 vs. B2 task or performance)

• e.g., Nikolov, pc, in Central Europe
• “making these comparisons turns out to be far from straightforward” (Alderson, 2007)-otherwise very sympathetic
Limitations of CEFR (cont’d)…

• Based on extensive L2 testing research and consultation with L2 teachers, BUT based less on actual second language acquisition developmental-stage research
  – need to verify with test corpus data; Alderson (2007)

• Greater impact on field of (private) testing (e.g., in Europe/ALTE and private tests) so far, than on official high school matriculation testing, curriculum design, materials, pedagogy (Alderson, 2007)

• Needs to be adapted somewhat for younger learners and for content-specific learning or “language of schooling” contexts

• Doesn’t account for cultural or literary knowledge (explicitly) - but certainly deals with L2 pragmatics
Assessment of Language Learners
(Students)

• Tension between desire to establish comparisons in learning outcomes (or standards) across economies/languages by using well-field-tested instruments

vs.

• Need for local autonomy, responsiveness to local contexts, sense of agency and ownership of policy/standards/practices on part of local experts/teachers; deeper appreciation for how/why instrument was developed
• Many approaches to testing in APEC (local/standardized, e.g. Cambridge)

• Most APEC language tests are locally developed

• Important to match tests with curriculum contexts/levels and objectives
Cross-economy Testing Data on English-L2 Proficiency?

- Need comparable or equated instruments (or common scales), testing conditions, rating protocols, etc.; or well understood common tools

- Proficiency tests vs. achievement tests

- **TOEFL** (US; Test of English as a Foreign Lang.),

- **IELTS** (Int’l English Language Testing System, UK/Australia)

  = widely used standardized tests for academic English, for international or English-medium education
TOEFL Internet Based Test Results Sept 05-Dec. 06:
Section score (scaled) means by selected geographic regions and by native country
(Source: ETS, 2007, pp. 10-11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native Country</th>
<th>Number of Examinees</th>
<th>Reading/25</th>
<th>Listening/25</th>
<th>Speaking/25</th>
<th>Writing/25</th>
<th>Total/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>89</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR China</td>
<td>20,450</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>2,763</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>920</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>89</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1437</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IELTS Mean band score by most frequent countries or regions of origin (Academic)

Note: 4/5 of test takers took the Academic rather than General test in 2006. 9 bands

(Selected APEC economies indicated in yellow font)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>7.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>5.77</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>6.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>5.79</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>5.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>5.84</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>6.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>5.75</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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<td>6.18</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>6.48</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>6.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>5.93</td>
<td>6.39</td>
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<td>Taiwan</td>
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<td>5.66</td>
<td>5.62</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.16</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Helpful to try to equate local tests with standardized ones or to map them onto CEFR (e.g., Chen et al., 2007, EDNET report) to assist interpretation of results

• Many European-language tests have done so (e.g., French DELF, German TestDAF)

• “Manual for relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)” by Council of Europe Language Policy Division
e.g. IELTS, Cambridge exams, CEF(R)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IELTS</th>
<th>Main Suite</th>
<th>BEC</th>
<th>CELS</th>
<th>NQF</th>
<th>CEF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>CPE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>BEC H</td>
<td>CELS H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>FCE</td>
<td>BEC V</td>
<td>CELS V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>B2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>PET</td>
<td>BEC P</td>
<td>CELS P</td>
<td>Entry 3</td>
<td>B1</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>KET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entry 2</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entry 1</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.ielts.org/teachersandresearchers/commoneuropeanframework

NQF=National Qualification Framework;
CELS=Certificates in English Language Skills;
BEC=Business English Certificates
• Some very impressive, rigorous test development in APEC economies:

  – e.g., G-TELF (General Tests of English Language Proficiency, Korea): criterion-referenced, task-based, diagnostic, based on communicative competence, EFL contexts, relevant for general, academic and business settings

• Much more work seems to be needed to improve high school matriculation/leaving exams to help improve and assess students’ 21st century competencies
Standards: Language Teachers

- Most APEC economies have their own standards and procedures—for accreditation, assessment, and for professional development
- Various criterion L2 proficiency levels
- Many professional knowledge parameters
- Any cross-economy standards or assessment tools that might help with mobility?
Language Teachers: Knowledge/Skills Needed

(Applied) Linguistic knowledge: L2 proficiency & metalinguistic knowledge

Contextual knowledge: country, program, curriculum, students

Cultural knowledge, experience

Excellent communication/interaction skills, scaffolding

SLA knowledge

Teaching: Knowledge of L2 teaching/learning theory & “best (or “good”) practices” (constructivist, discovery oriented); L2 curriculum, articulation, IT

Other personal attributes: empathy, vision, passion, subject knowledge

Experience: as language learner & teacher; decision-making; beliefs

Reflexivity; Identity as teacher
Standards:
(English) Language Teachers

- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), International
  - based in US, but strong international membership through affiliates and members
  - ESL and EFL/English as international language
Standards:
ESL Teacher Education Programs

TESOL/NCATE Standards for P-12 Teacher Education Programs (2003)

NCATE=Nat’l Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
TESOL International
Leadership on Teacher Standards:
- Recent Implementation in China (EFL)
- Adaptation for Chinese (L2) Teachers
Teaching Knowledge TEST (TKT)

Cambridge ESOL

TKT
Teaching Knowledge Test

'An important stepping stone in your career'

What is TKT?

The Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) is a test from Cambridge ESOL about teaching English to speakers of other languages. It aims to increase teachers' confidence and enhance job prospects by focusing on the core teaching knowledge needed by teachers of primary, secondary or adult learners, anywhere in the world. This flexible and accessible award will help you to understand:
Standards for Teacher Accreditation (D. E. Ingram, 2007)

• Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations:
  • “Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures” (2005)

• Dimensions:
  – Educational theory & practice
  – Language & culture
  – Language pedagogy
  – Ethics and responsibility
  – Professional relationships
  – Active engagement with wider context
  – Advocacy
  – Personal characteristics (Ingram, pp. 13-14)
• International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (Ingram, 2007)- to assess teachers’ functional proficiency

• Australia Council of TESOL Associations: 27 standards for teaching ESL
  - Dispositions toward TESOL
  - Understandings about TESOL
  - Skills in TESOL
Assessment of Language Teachers’ L2

- Important to determine threshold levels required for different grade levels, and ways of assessing fairly and realistically. (Note ELF discussions about assessment standards)

- Proficiency assessment/standards for L2 teachers are also highly relevant for English-dominant economies in which trained immigrant teachers wish to be certified to teach English locally

- Having international standards or instruments assists with mobility and also with cross-national/economy research.
Conclusion

- Much momentum toward establishing useful standards for language learning, language teaching, language programs and language teacher education programs (especially for English as L2)

- Wealth of information being shared across APEC economies vis-à-vis language learning

- Potential for use of CEFR as reference point for APEC standards and for assessment

- Possibilities for more professional development including demonstration of ‘best practices’ with new technologies (cf. yesterday’s presentations)

- Ongoing attention must be paid to L2 teachers’ language proficiency standards and assessment
Conclusion (cont’d)…

• English-dominant-economies (EDE): must motivate learners to study other languages through better instruction

  – Unimpressive levels of bi- or multilingualism among Anglophones in EDEs (even in officially bilingual ones, such as Canada); complacency, inertia, apathy, poor teaching, poor assessment

  – Need more study-abroad/exchanges, co-op programs, service learning, better teaching/teachers, engaging 21st century materials, media, and activities
Thank you!