Styles and strategies in the language classroom

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Abstract

A major thrust within the language teaching profession at the present time is the development and deployment of standards for instructional design. The standards movement has had a significant impact on curriculum development in Europe, North America and Australia. Within the International TESOL Association, standards have recently been developed for the following: Pre-K-12 content and assessment standards; standards for Intensive English Programs; adult education program standards; community college employment standards; standards for workplace language training; P-12 teacher education standards; teacher education standards for community college non-credit and credit programs; and adult education, and university programs. In this chapter, I will trace the evolution of the standards movement and relate it to the other two major performance-based movements: the objectives movement and competency-based education. I will then describe and exemplify three different types of standards:
content, program, and teacher standards, before concluding the chapter by looking at ideological aspects of standards-based instruction.

1 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

In this chapter, I will look at standards-based approaches to instructional design and at how these have been deployed in the evaluation of ESL instruction over the last 20 years. These approaches, which were developed within a behavioral (but not behaviorist) paradigm, include the objectives movement, competency based education, and the standards movement.

Standards-based instruction support many of the most significant developments in education. In Europe, North America, and Australia it underpinned competency-based immigrant and workplace education. In Europe, it is the basis for the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001). In North America, it has had a tremendous impact in all areas of both school and adult education as the ideological underpinning of the standards movement.

A number of professional associations in different parts of the world have drawn heavily on the behavioral paradigm for their work. Of particular note is the Council of Europe and the work that it has done in developing frameworks and defining performance levels for different languages within the European Union. The paradigm also underpins the work being commissioned by the TESOL Association within which standards are currently being written for developing and evaluating instruction in the following areas: Pre-K-12 content and assessment standards; standards for Intensive English Programs; adult education program standards; community college employment standards; standards for workplace language training; P-12 teacher education standards; and teacher standards for adult education. In addition, TESOL has recently established a new standing committee on standards.

In the chapter, after looking at the genesis and evolution of the standards movement, I will illustrate the movement with reference to some of the aforementioned developments. Of particular interest is the way that a behavioral approach is being extended beyond content and assessment. At present, for example, standards are being developed for the development and evaluation of program specifications, setting criteria for professional employment, and describing and evaluating effective teacher behavior. In the final section of the chapter, I will look at some of the ideological and political issues associated with the paradigm.

2 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

The Objectives Movement

It was the objectives movement that ushered in a behavioral approach to education. This movement has been very influential and highly contentious both in general education and also in language education. Most of the controversy has to do with the use of behavioral (or as they soon came to be called), *performance objectives*.

During the early sixties we talked about behavior rather than about performance. This turned out to be an unfortunate choice of terms. A number of people were put off by the word, thinking that objectives necessarily had to do with behaviorism or with behaviorists. Not so. Objectives describe performance, or behavior, because an objective is specific rather than broad or general and because performance, or behavior, is what we can be specific about. (Mager, 1984, p. 23).

Objectives have been characterized in a number of different ways. Valette and Disick (1972) suggest they should stress output rather than input and that such output should be specified in terms of performance. It has been suggested that articulating precise statements of what the learner is to be able to do at the end of a course is an essential step in the curriculum design process, because it greatly facilitates a number of other steps.

In the field of general education, the work of Mager (1962, 1984) and Dick and Carey (1978) in North America, and Rowntree (1981) in the United Kingdom, was particularly influential. Mager, and Dick and Carey sit squarely within the systems approach to education first championed by Tyler (1949), and the cornerstone of their approach was the articulation of goals that were then elaborated as objectives. The key characteristic of a behavioral objective is that it describes what the learner rather than the teacher is to do. It may seem obvious that the instructional process should focus on the learner, but even today, it is possible to find programs with objectives for the teacher of the program such as, “To review the simple past” or “To teach prepositions of place”. It is possible for objectives such as these to be achieved without any learning taking place.

Another characteristic of a behavioral objective is that it must specify observable learner behavior. “To appreciate Shakespeare’s historical plays” is not a performance objective because the behavior is invisible. One cannot see *appreciation* or *understanding*. Mager (1984) lists the following words as being “dangerous” because they do not describe observable behavior and are open to many interpretations: *to know*, *to understand*, *to really understand*, *to appreciate*, *to fully appreciate*, *to grasp the significance of*, *to enjoy*, *to believe*, *to have faith in*, *to internalize* (p. 20).

Formal performance objectives are meant to include three elements: (a) a *performance* or *task* statement, (b) a *conditions* statement, and (c) a *standards* or *criterion* statement. The task element specifies what learners are to do, the conditions statement specifies the circumstances and conditions under which learners are to perform the task, and the standards statement specifies how well the task is to be performed.

The following statements illustrate three-part objectives:

In a classroom role-play (condition), learners will exchange personal information (task). Four pieces of information will be exchanged (standard), and utterances will be comprehensible to someone unused to dealing with a second language speaker (standard).

In an authentic interaction (condition), the student will request prices of shopping items (task). Utterances will be comprehensible to a sympathetic native speaker (standard).

In objectives-driven curricula, conditions and standards have an important bearing on difficulty, and a given task can be made more or less difficult by varying the conditions under which the learners will perform and the standards they are expected to reach. These include both (a) the degree to which the language event is embedded in a context that facilitates comprehension, and (b) the degree to which the language event makes cognitive demands on the learner.

Although they provided a more transparent basis for assessing student performance and evaluating program effectiveness, objectives-driven curricula were heavily criticized in the 1970s. Criticisms included the idea that trivial learning behaviors are the easiest to operationalize, hence the really important outcomes of education will

be under emphasized. In addition, many people feel that pre-specification of precise objectives prevents the teacher from taking advantage of instructional opportunities occurring unexpectedly in the classroom. It has also been noted that outcomes other than behavior change are important in education. In terms of language teaching, an additional criticism relates to the creative nature of language proficiency. Proficient language users know multiple ways of achieving communicative ends through language, and therefore identifying objectives *a priori*, or the standards that indicate how well the objective has been met, may be problematic. Another problem is that, taken to its logical conclusion, the approach spawns hundreds of detailed, micro-level performance statements. Finally, despite the emphasis on objectives in teacher education programs in the 1970s, they failed to take root in teachers' practices.

Most teachers are trained to plan instruction by specifying behavioral objectives… While this prescriptive model of planning may be one of the most consistently taught features of teacher education programs, the model is consistently not used in teachers' planning in schools. Obviously, there is a mismatch between the demands of the classroom and the prescriptive planning model. (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 477)

Despite these criticisms, objectives, used appropriately, did bring tangible benefits to the learning process. In work cited in my 1988 book on curriculum, the use of objectives, when conveyed to learners in ways that made sense to them, played an important part in sensitizing learners to what it is to be a language learner: (a) In particular, learners came to have a more realistic idea of what could be achieved in a given course; (b) learning came to be seen as the gradual accretion of achievable goals; (c) learners developed greater sensitivity to their role as language learners, and their vague notions of what it is to be a learner became much sharper; (d) self-evaluation became more feasible; (e) classroom activities could be seen to relate to real-life needs; and (f) development of skills was seen as a gradual rather than all-or-nothing process.

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The Competency-based Language Teaching Movement

During the 1980s, competency-based instruction developed as an alternative to the use of objectives in program planning. As with the objectives movement, *Competency Based Language Teaching* (CBLT) focuses on what learners should be able to do at the conclusion of a course (as opposed, for example, to the specification of content). Competencies are also generally couched at a higher level of generality than performance objectives. There are therefore fewer of them, and they enable the development of more coherent programs. As with performance objectives, they provide a tangible basis for curriculum evaluation and improvement.

Competency based training is concerned with the attainment and demonstration of specified skills, knowledge, and application to minimum specified standards rather than with an individual's achievement relative to that of others in a group. It is 'criterion-referenced' rather than 'norm-referenced'. (NSW Adult Migrant Education Service, 1993)

According to Leung & Teasdale (1998) , performance-based approaches to competence can be placed into one of three categories (see also Reynolds & Salter, 1995). The first of these;

> …regards competence as a list or combination of discrete parts. Tasks are analysed into components and each component part is stated as desired behaviour. A competent teacher is one who can perform the behaviours involved in the pre-specified tasks. The second model focuses on the ability to transfer previous learning to new situations…The third model looks at competence as the application of a combination of knowledge, understanding, experience and executive ability to task performance in specific contexts. (Leung & Teasdale, 1998, p. 17)

Standards are an important dimension to CBLT, and share the same characteristics of the concept as defined by the objectives movement. Competency-based programs have had a major impact on curriculum development and evaluation in workplace training, particularly in Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand (Brindley, 1994), as well as in the United States:

CBLT first emerged in the US in the 1970s and was widely adopted in vocationally-oriented education and in adult ESL programs. By the end of the 1980s CBLT had come to be accepted as 'the state-of-the-art' approach to adult ESL by national policymakers and leaders in curriculum development (Auerbach, 1984, cited in Richards, 2001)

The following is an example of a competency statement:

The learner can negotiate complex/problematic spoken exchanges for personal business and community purposes. He or she:
achieves purpose of exchange and provides all essential information accurately
uses appropriate staging, e.g. opening and closing strategies
provides and requests information as required
explains circumstances, causes, consequences, and proposes solutions as required
sustains dialogue e.g. using feedback, turn taking
uses grammatical forms and vocabulary appropriate to topic and register and grammatical errors do not interfere with meaning
pronunciation/stress/intonation do not impede intelligibility
interprets gestures and other paralinguistic features.
(NSW Adult Migrant Education Service, 1993 76)

From this example, it is apparent that competencies bear a strong family resemblance to performance objectives and reside squarely within the behavioral tradition. It can also be seen that competencies contain a task and a number of "how well" statements—"achieves purpose of exchange", "provides all essential information accurately", "uses appropriate staging", "errors do not interfere with meaning", "pronunciation is intelligible". However, as already been noted, one difference is the level of generality in which each is couched, objectives being more specific than competencies.

In terms of evaluation, it is also interesting to compare the supposed benefits of CBLT with those listed earlier for performance objectives:

1. Teachers' and learners' attention becomes more focused on language as a tool for communication rather than on language knowledge as an end in itself.

2. Assessment is integrated into the learning process through the use of attainment targets that are directly linked to course content and objectives.

3. Learners are able to obtain useful diagnostic feedback on their progress and achievement since explicit criteria are provided against which they can compare their performances. (Bottomly, Dalton, & Corbel, 1994)

In Europe, the most ambitious attempt at applying a performance approach to the design and development of language programs has come from the Council of Europe. In fact, the very first documents emerging from their work make explicit the ideology underlying their work, stating that this work…

…tries to specify foreign language ability as a *skill* rather than *knowledge*. It analyzes what the learner will have to be able to *do* in the foreign language and determines only in the second place what *language-forms* (words, structures, etc.) the learners will have to be able to handle in order to *do* all that has been specified. In accordance with the nature of verbal communication as a form of behaviour the objectives defined by means of [our] model are therefore *behavioural* objectives. (van Ek, 1977, p. 5)

van Ek hastens to reassure the reader that a behavioral syllabus does not entail a behaviorist methodology. He then suggests that verbal behavior can be atomized into two components: the performance of language functions and the expression of conceptual notions. Thus, we see one of earliest manifestations of a functional-notional syllabus (Wilkins, 1976). We also see that functional-notionalism resides within the performance paradigm. (See Munby's, 1978 exhaustive blueprint for the production of needs-based, communicative syllabuses based on performance criteria.)

Twenty-five years after van Ek's initial set of specifications, the same paradigm is evident in the most recent work of the Council of Europe, although now the focus shifts from behavioral objectives to language competencies. Thus, in the introduction to the *Common European Framework* (CEF) the authors (Council of Europe, 2001) suggest that the framework….

…provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners

have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which the language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. (p. 1)

The CEF defines three broad levels of language use (Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User) each of which is broken down into two further levels giving six levels in all. Table 1 provides global, behavioral descriptors for learners at each of these six levels.

(Insert Table 1 here)

These global descriptors are greatly elaborated, both in terms of the four macro-skills and also in terms of subskills. For example, in terms of spoken interaction, separate scales are provided for the following:

- Overall spoken interaction
- Understanding a native speaker interlocutor
- Conversation
- Informal discussion with friends
- Formal discussion and meetings
- Goal-oriented co-operation (e.g., repairing a car, discussing a document, organizing an event)
- Transactions to obtain goods and services
- Information exchange
- Interviewing and being interviewed.

It is worth noting that the more general level in which competency statements are couched has led to a situation that would be frowned upon by proponents of performance objectives such as Mager and Dick and Carey. The competencies use vague and imprecise language that, in some instances, describes unobservable behavior. (For example, to what extent would it be possible for an independent observer to discriminate between someone who "can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely" (a C2 user) from someone who "can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously" (a C1 user)? This lack of precision has obvious implications when it comes to their use for assessing students and evaluating programs.

Beyond CBI: The Standards Movement

One influential current trend in performance-based curriculum development is the standards movement. While this is receiving most of its momentum in the United States, where it is approximately 10 years old, it is also popular elsewhere. It is the latest iteration of the behavioral approach to instructional design, and thus has close links with both the objectives movement and the competency movement. The confusing thing about this movement, is that it has appropriated the term 'standard' and used it in a broader sense than the objectives movement and CBI.

The strong family resemblance can be seen in the work that has been done in other subject areas such as Math and Language Arts. For example, the National Council for Teachers of English standards document for English language arts states; "By content standards, we mean statements that define what students should know and be able to do" (n.d. pp. 1–2). Again, the principal difference is the level of generality at which the performance statements are couched.

Here are two examples of Language Arts Standards:

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

In terms of the characterization given in the discussion of performance objectives, the first of these examples is a task while the second is a standard. By collapsing the different parts of performance objectives, NCTE (n.d.) has ended up with a confused and confusing list. These statements are from a set of content standards. I would argue that to all intents and purposes, these are indistinguishable from competencies, as will be apparent from the discussion that follows.

10 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

Content Standards

One of the most comprehensive and detailed set of content standards yet developed within the field of language education are the Pre-K–12 standards commissioned by TESOL and developed by a team of specialists working within the United States (TESOL, 1997).

The ESL Pre-K-12 ESL standards are framed around three goals and nine standards. The standards are fleshed out in terms of descriptors, progress indicators, and classroom vignettes. *Standards* are defined as follows: “The nine content standards indicate more specifically (than the goals) what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction” (p. 15). It can be seen from this definition, that standards now encompass what students should be able to do in addition to how well they should perform. *Descriptors* are “broad categories of discrete, representative behaviors” (p. 15). *Progress indicators* “list assessable, observable activities that students may perform to show progress toward meeting the designated standard. These progress indicators represent a variety of instructional techniques that may be used by teachers to determine how well students are doing” (p. 16).

These standards, which are broken down into three broad areas by grade level (Pre-K-3; grades 4–8, and grades 9–12), are organized around three broad goals, each of which has three standards, as follows:

Goal 1: To use English to communicate in social settings
Standards for Goal 1
Students will:
use English to participate in social interaction
interact in, through and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment
use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence

Goal 2: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas
Standards for Goal 2
Students will:
use English to interact in the classroom
use English to obtain, process, construct and provide subject information in spoken and written form

 Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.

use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge

Goal 3: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways
Standards for Goal 3
Students will:
use the appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting
use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting
use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence. (TESOL, 1997, p. 9–10)

Here are the descriptors relating to standard 1 to exemplify how the standards are elaborated.

Descriptors

- Sharing and requesting information
- Expressing needs, feelings, and ideas
- Using nonverbal communication in social interactions
- Getting personal needs met
- Engaging in conversations
- Conducting transactions

Sample Progress Indicators set out observable behaviors that can be used to determine whether students have met designated standards. For example, in relation to standards 1, students in grades 9–12 will:

- Obtain, complete, and process application forms, such as driver's license, social security, college entrance
- Express feelings through drama, poetry, or song
- Make an appointment
- Defend and argue a position
- Use prepared notes in an interview or meeting
- Ask peers for their opinions, preferences, and desires
- Correspond with pen pals, English-speaking acquaintances, friends
- Write personal essays
- Make plans for social engagements
- Shop in a supermarket

- Engage listener's attention verbally or non-verbally
- Volunteer information and respond to questions about self and family
- Elicit information and ask clarification questions
- Clarify and restate information as needed
- Describe feelings and emotions after watching a movie
- Indicate interests, opinions, or preferences related to class projects
- Give and ask for permission
- Offer and respond to greetings, compliments, invitations, introductions, and farewells
- Negotiate solutions to problems, interpersonal misunderstandings, and disputes
- Read and write invitations and thank you letters
- Use the telephone

One of the most useful aspects of these standards is a series of vignettes. These are drawn from a wide range of classroom contexts and describe instructional sequences. From them, the reader gets a clear idea of what the standards might look like in action.

A somewhat different, although related approach has been adopted by a task force charged with developing national standards for foreign language education (National Standards in Foreign Language Education, 1994):

Goal one: communicate in languages other than English
Standard 1.1 Students will:
use the target language to participate in social interactions
and to establish and maintain personal relationships in a variety of settings and contexts.
They will:
discuss topics of interest through the expression of thoughts, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, and experiences
participate in social interactions related to problem solving, decision making, and other social transactions.

Does this mean that the standards movement is a case of old wine in new bottle? To a certain extent, I would say that it is. As I have argued in this section, I see no salient distinction between competencies and content standards. However, the standards movement goes beyond performance statements for learners and

applies behavioral criteria to other aspects of the educational system: most importantly, to the areas of program development and management and to teachers and teacher education. It therefore provides a much more comprehensive set of tools for evaluating educational systems and programs as a whole than was offered by earlier behavioral models. It is to these two areas that I now turn.

Program Standards

Program standards, as the name implies, provide indicators for evaluating the quality of programs as a whole. As might be imagined, such standards cover a wide range of areas and contexts. In places where English is taught as a second language (for example, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia), the range of program types is vast. In addition to the many public and private programs for educating children, there is a range of different program types for adult education. These include general English programs focusing on immediate survival and settlement needs, family literacy programs, vocational and workplace programs, English for specific purpose (ESP), and English for academic purpose (EAP) programs for learners requiring English for professional and/or study purposes, and content-based programs where content and language are integrated. In addition, in some countries, such as the United States, citizenship programs offer language and content classes for students who want to become naturalized.

Given the breadth of program types, it is hardly surprising that the substantive areas addressed by program standards are also wide-ranging and overlap with other types of standards. For example, the Adult Education ESOL Program standards in the United States cover the following areas: program structure, administration, and planning; curriculum; instruction; recruitment, intake, and orientation; retention and transition; assessment and learner gains; staffing/professional development/staff evaluation; support services

Sample quality indicators for each of these areas are set out in Table 2, and illustrate the range and comprehensive nature of such indicators.

(Insert Table 2 here)

In order to be used for purposes of evaluation, the quality indicators need to be operationalized as performance standards. Consider, for example, the quality indicator: *Curriculum and instructional materials are easily accessible, up-to-date, appropriate for adult learners, culturally sensitive, and oriented to the language and literacy needs of the learners.* This is operationalized as follows:

1. The program documents program assessment measures, including classroom-based needs assessments, target population surveys, census data, etc.
2. The program documents the implementation of curriculum change based on learner or target population needs.
3. The program houses or provides easy access to a materials library for teachers.
4. The program references current instructional materials in curricular documents.
5. The program pilot tests new materials on representative student groups.
6. The program staff/textbook committee periodically obtains and pilots the use of review copies of new materials that are consistent with curricular objectives and the needs of the learners, making recommendations for the adoption of texts on a regular basis (e.g., annually).
7. ____% of the faculty indicate that they have access to current and appropriate materials.

Teacher Standards

An exciting, albeit controversial, development currently under way in both Europe and North America is the development of professional standards for teachers. *Teacher standards* describe the skills that teachers should be able to demonstrate within certain defined areas. In Australia, a set of teacher standards (or, as they were then termed, *competencies*) were developed in the early 1990s to guide universities on how to structure their teacher education courses and to provide similar guidance to employers on “the development and implementation of induction and on-going professional development” (Strong & Hogan, 1994, p. 4). This performance-based

 Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.

approach to teaching and teacher education stands in contrast with the traditional *credentialing* approach in which the certificates, diplomas, and degrees that a teacher holds form the criterion for determining an individual's professionalism.

In Europe, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) has established performance standards for teachers at different stages of professional development in a number of key areas. For example, the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults articulates statements in the following areas: (a) language awareness; (b) the learners, the teacher, and the teaching/ learning context; (c) planning for effective teaching of adult learners of English; (d) materials and resources for teaching; (e) professional development (UCLES, 1996)

In North America, a TESOL Task Force has developed a conceptual framework and set of teaching standards for post-secondary ESL teachers. This framework articulates standards in 10 different domains to support and sustain student learning. These areas are as follows: identity and setting, language, learning, professional community, content, professionalism, advocacy, planning, instructing, and assessing. Like other kinds of standards, these are behavioral in nature. In other words, the teacher should be able to demonstrate mastery of the standards through observable behavior in and out of the classroom. These behaviors are fleshed out as performance indicators. Table 3 sets out the standards for eight of these and provides sample indicators.

(Insert Table 3 here)

 Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.

Standards-based evaluation is not without its problems and controversies. Firstly, the criticism of the objectives movement, that it led to fragmentation of the curriculum as well as to an atomistic approach to instruction and learning, may well come to haunt proponents of standards-based curriculum evaluation.

Another related criticism that may well-prove pertinent is that of “death-by-checklist”. The criticism here is that evaluating the overall worth of a program by tallying lists of items on a checklist is problematic because it assumes that the whole is simply the sum of its parts. While checklists of standards have the potential to provide valuable quantitative information, in most cases these will need to be augmented by qualitative data. (See similar criticisms by McKay, this volume to be confirmed, in relation to assessment.)

A third criticism has to do with the extent to which one can infer underlying competence from samples of observable behavior. This is an issue that has bedeviled the field of language assessment for years and is unlikely to be settled here. It is also a fundamental problem in many aspects of language research in which the researcher has to infer the existence of constructs such as *intermediate speaking proficiency* or *master teacher* from observable behavior. (For a detailed discussion of this issue in relation to proficiency rating scales, see Nunan, 1988).

Ideological Aspects of the Standards-based Instruction

In this final section, I will discuss some of the ideological aspects of a standards-based approach to education. Where has it come from? Not surprisingly, the central impetus has been political. The initiatives I have described all fit into a much larger ideological picture. In the United States, for example, Glaser and Lin (1993, cited in Richards, in press) write:

> In recounting our nation’s drive towards educational reform, the last decade of this century will undoubtedly be recognized as the time when a concerted press for national educational standards emerged. The press for standards was evidenced by the efforts of federal and state legislators, presidential and gubernatorial candidates, teacher and subject matter specialists, councils, governmental agencies, and private foundations.

In fact, there is legislation in place that requires performance-based content specifications for subjects in elementary, secondary, and adult curricula. For example, the Adult Education and Literacy Act (1991) requires Adult Basic Education programs in all states to develop indicators of program quality and to attach performance standards to these quality indicators.

Even a cursory examination of the standards and performance indicators presented in this chapter reveal their ideological bases. Consider the following:

- engage learners in self-assessment
- model impartial attitudes towards cross-cultural differences and/or conflicts
- provide learning experiences that promote autonomy and choice
- develop personal professional development plans

These four indicators, selected more or less at random, from the TESOL teacher standards, reveal that individual responsibility and self-direction, as well as tolerance for pluralism are important values for the creators of these standards, and it is against these that TESOL teachers are to be judged.

I would also like to return to the criticisms that were made many years ago of the objectives movement. These were many and varied, from the belief that prespecifying behavior was somehow "undemocratic", to the assertion that the end(s) of education could, by definition, not be specified in advance. Of course, it could be argued that foreign language learning is a skill and, therefore, is a training rather than an educational endeavor. Set against that view are current notions of *communication* as necessarily imprecise and *meaning* as a variable and negotiable commodity. Thus, Widdowson (1983) writes, that

A person educated in a certain language, as opposed to one who is trained only in its use for a restricted set of predictable situations, is someone who is able to relate what he or she knows to circumstances other than those which attended the acquisition of that knowledge. To put it another way, education in a language presupposes the internalization of what Halliday calls 'meaning potential'. (p. 17)

Rowntree, one of the strongest proponents of performance-based curriculum development later changed his mind, although he

never became an outright opponent of objectives. In fact, he was to assert (1981) that:

> I still believe they (objectives) are extremely valuable in course development. Asking oneself what students should be able to do by the end of the course that they could not do (or not do so well) at the beginning can be illuminating. Many teachers (and I am one) would claim that teaching has been far better since they were introduced to objectives. (p. 35)

As I have already indicated, the standards-based education movement and the various standards projects around the world that it has spawned have greatly broadened our concept of performance-based learning and thereby obviated many of the criticisms of the narrow-band behavioral objectives approach criticized by Widdowson and Rowntree. My own view is that standards-based evaluation will play an increasingly important part in both learner assessment and in program- and teacher-evaluation, and whether we like it or not, allocation of public funds to educational institutions and entities will increasingly be determined by the application of content, teacher, and program standards to the evaluation of those institutions and entities.

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Table 1 *General Levels of Language Use*

Proficient user (C2)	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken or written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
Proficient user (C1)	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much *obvious* searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
Independent user (B2)	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with the degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible with strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Independent user (B1)	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons

22 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

	and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic user (A2)	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
Basic user (A1)	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Note. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (p. 24), by Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Copyright Holder. Reprinted [*or* Adapted] with permission.

23 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

Table 2 *Sample Quality Indicators for Program Areas*

Program area	Sample quality indicator
Program structure, administration, and planning	The ESOL program has a mission statement, a clearly articulated philosophy, and goals developed with input from internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders may include administrators, instructional staff, support staff, program volunteers, and learners. External stakeholders may include boards or advisory groups, community and agency leaders, business leaders, employment and training agencies, other educational service providers, state, federal, and local legislators, support services and funders.
Curriculum	The curriculum includes goals, objectives, outcomes, approaches, methods, activities, materials, technological resources, and evaluation measures that are appropriate for meeting learners' needs and goals as identified by needs assessment activities. The curriculum reflects learners' goals while considering their roles as individuals, family members, community participants, workers, and/or lifelong learners.
Instruction	Instructional activities adhere to principles of adult learning and language acquisition. These principles include the following: - Adult learners bring a variety of experiences, skills, and knowledge that need to be acknowledged and included in lessons. - Language acquisition is facilitated through providing a non-threatening environment in which learners feel comfortable and self-confident and are encouraged to take risks to use the target language. - Adult learners progress more rapidly when the content is relevant to the learners' lives. - Language learning is cyclical, not linear, so learning objectives need to be recycled in a variety of contexts.
Recruitment, intake, and orientation	The program takes steps to insure that culturally and linguistically appropriate recruitment and program information materials and activities reach the targeted populations in multiple languages as needed. Recruitment materials suitable for persons with special needs should be available (e.g. larger print, audio tapes).
Retention and transition	The program supports retention through enrollment and attendance procedures that reflect program goals, requirements of program funders and demands on the adult learner (e.g. flexible enrollment options, flexible transfer,

24 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

	and short-term courses).
Assessment and learner gains	The program uses a variety of appropriate assessments, including authentic performance based assessments, standardized tests, learner self-assessment, and assessment on non-linguistic outcomes (e.g. perceived improvement in self-esteem, participation in teamwork activities.)
Staffing/ professional development/ staff evaluation	The program recruits and hires qualified instructional staff with training in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL. Qualifications may vary according to local agency requirements and type of instructional position (e.g. paid instructor, volunteer). Examples of qualifications include a Bachelor's or Master's degree in TESOL, TESOL certificate from an accredited institution, adult education credential with authorization to teach TESOL, a certificate of completion from a provider's pre-service TESOL training program, or a combination of adult level ESOL teaching experience and training determined to be equivalent.
Support services	The program provides access to a variety of services directly or through referrals to cooperating agencies. Examples of services include childcare, transportation, health services, employment counseling, assessment of learning disabilities, native language translators and interpreters, and services related to other barriers to learning.

(TESOL, 1999)

Table 3 *Standards and Performance Indicators for TESOL Teachers*

Domain	Standard	Sample performance indicators
1. Planning	Teachers plan instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify and adjust instruction plans in relation to learner engagement and achievement.	- identify and articulate learning goals for both language and other content - design short-term and long-term plans to promote learning - select appropriate resources

25 *Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.*

2. Instructing	Teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and that promote respectful interactions among learners and between learners and their teachers.	- create physical and virtual environments that engage all learners - organize and manage constructive interactions among learners - engage learners in decision-making about their learning
3. Assessing	Teachers recognize the importance of and are able to gather and interpret information about learning and performance to promote the continuous intellectual and linguistic development of each learner. Teachers use knowledge of student performance to make decisions about planning and instruction "on-the-spot" and for the future.	- gather, interpret, and document information about learner performance before, during, and at the end of instruction - engage learners in self-assessment - use assessments that allow learners to demonstrate their learning - use assessment instruments that are equitable
4. Identity and setting	Teachers understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, heritages, and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize the importance of the sociocultural and sociopolitical settings – home, community, workplace, and school – that contribute to the identity formation and therefore influence learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing.	- create an environment conducive to adult learning - establish classroom routines that encourage learners' appreciation for each other - model impartial attitudes towards cross-cultural differences and/or conflicts - take information from learners' communities to guide planning, instructing and assessing

 Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.

5. Language	Teachers demonstrate proficiency in English	- demonstrate proficiency in oral, written, and nonverbal English - serve as English language models for learners
6. Learning	Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and adult learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings. They use this knowledge to support adult language learning.	- create situations where meaningful messages are exchanged - provide learning experiences that promote autonomy and choice - provide learning experiences that respond to differential rates of learning
7. Content	Teachers use their understanding of the structure and function of language to support language learning. Teachers also use their understanding of the connections among concepts, procedures, and applications from content areas relevant to learners to further learners' language development	- design contextualized activities to provide practice with English discourses and texts - provide input and practice of socially and culturally appropriate language - use content as a vehicle for language instruction
8. Commitment to professionalism	Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and communities at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities.	- take information from the communities at large and the broader teaching community to inform the English language teaching profession - develop personal professional development plans - reflect on teaching practice to continue to grow professionally

(TESOL, 2002)

 Source: Cummins, J. and C. Davidon. (eds).2007. International Handbook of English Language Teaching. New York: Springer.