

reform) as well as from grassroots local or regional concerns related to the validation and maintenance of community languages and the selection of preferred languages for wider communication within and across regions. Language policies and standards are naturally also often informed and shaped by research and developments in other parts of the world (e.g., drawing on the experiences of Europe, where trilingualism or “plurilingualism” is now an accepted educational and communicative objective, with English serving as the default first additional language) and by new political and economic alliances (again, in regions such as the European Union, with the accession of new member countries). Language policy practices have also been heavily influenced in recent years in some economies by new (perceived) international and domestic security threats (e.g., in the U.S. post-September 11, 2001), by changing immigration patterns (e.g., the influx of immigrants into both urban and rural regions in the U.S. and changing immigration demographics in other immigrant-receiving English-dominant economies), as well as by the desire for mobility of skilled and professional workers (Duff, 2004).

The resulting diversification of the ethnic and linguistic composition of workplaces and schools has also been the impetus for reforms in language (education) policies and standards. In APEC economies, perceived competition from neighboring economies has affected many economies with respect to the teaching and learning of English and there has been a concomitant surge in community and parental advocacy for effective English language teaching. Finally, the global impact of new digital information, communication, and learning technologies and intense economic competition and cooperation have also resulted in a serious consideration of best practices and standards in language teaching, assessment, and teacher education and in the use of new media to achieve economies’ educational goals.

III. Observed Policy/Standards Trends across APEC Economies

In this section, I present a number of trends in language education among APEC economies captured by Chen et al. (2008) and the source documents and experts they consulted, and supplemented with my own observations and related research trends.

1. Theory vs. practice in policy/standards implementation

All APEC economies surveyed seem to recognize the need for better strategies both to *establish* and then successfully *implement and sustain* L2 learning policies and standards successfully. For example, Yoshida (2003), a well known scholar in English education in Japan, reported a few years ago in a policy section of the *Modern Language Journal* how in his economy the “espoused” policies related to English language education reform and the practical implementation of those policies and objectives have often been at odds, to the detriment of language learners and reflected to some extent in standardized test national mean scores such as on TOEFL (see Section V below). Such situations of policy-practice disjunctions and shortfalls are reported in other economies as well, such as Canada, which espouses national bilingualism through official language policies but has yet to demonstrate widespread success in implementing this policy (Duff, 2007). Bilingualism and multilingualism in Canada tend to be enjoyed by new-immigrant and long-established Francophone communities in Canadians to a much greater extent than by Canadian-born Anglophones. Thus, a recommendation based on this item is that economies should remain proactive and vigilant about the implementation of desired policies, providing sufficient resources, including training, in order to effect change in language education practices and in resulting language competencies, according to their priorities.

2. *Ideologies related to language pedagogy and objectives: Toward communicative and intercultural competence*

Chen et al.'s review of surveys completed by economies confirms the widespread and deep recognition of the socio-economic and political importance of effective English and other S/FL learning (e.g., in Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Japanese Arabic). It also conveys the current acceptance of high-level *communicative* and *intercultural* competence as standards for elementary school to tertiary education as well as for lifelong learning, competencies also reflected in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards (see Hadley, 2001) and in other current standards documents. The ACTFL Standards stress *communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities* (see Appendix). All of these intersecting elements foreground the importance of increasing learners' global and local interconnectedness with individuals in other ethnolinguistic communities, and the need to improve students' awareness of their own and others' languages and cultures and their metalinguistic and metacultural analytic skills. They also underscore the notion that the communication objectives of teaching shouldn't be restricted to such mundane transactions as asking for directions or ordering food in a restaurant but, rather, that they should encompass oral and written skills targeting different genres, topics, audiences, purposes for communicating, and different sources of information as well. Above all, the survey results confirm that language can no longer be learned primarily for its aesthetic and literary value. It must be learned in a way that increases students' ability to participate actively in 21st century life in a globalized society.

3. *Use of English for content (subject matter) instruction*

A third significant trend internationally, and therefore one not surprisingly also reported by many APEC economies in the survey, relates to the use of English for content (subject) instruction. That is, the language is learned and then becomes the medium for learning about other subjects in immersion programs, mainstream curricula, and content- and language-integrated-learning (CLIL) environments (also known as content-based language instruction in North America, CBLI). Thus, although the second trend reported that there is widespread affirmation that language must be learned for wider communication, it must also increasingly be learned to enable students to succeed in English-medium education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in some cases. In Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and HK-China, because of their British colonial history English is already widely used as a language of instruction. In English-dominant economies with a large influx of ESL students, growing numbers of English language learners are being mainstreamed into English-medium "mainstream" content courses (e.g., mathematics, social studies, and other mandated academic courses), often with relatively little language support once mainstreamed. More attention must be directed in those economies to how mainstream content-area teachers can effectively support these learners with both English language needs and their need to learn the mandated academic content and how ESL specialists can also prepare students for the transition from ESL coursework to content coursework. Non-English dominant economies, as well, are increasing the marketing and delivery of higher education through the medium of English, in part to attract fee-paying international students, but also to better prepare local students for 21st century competencies, skills, and mobility.

This shift toward content-based instruction in English (and/or other S/FLs) also reflects a major trend in the European Union (particularly in CEFR) toward expanding CLIL programs, especially for English but for other FLs as well. Part of the explanation is that, as learners start studying English from earlier grade levels, by secondary school they have sufficient

levels of proficiency to begin applying English to more substantive academic subject matter. In his very interesting book, *English Next*, Graddol (2006) describes this phenomenon, and especially considers the implications of this trend at the higher grade levels and in the postsecondary sector for English-dominant economies that have in the past sought out international students and for which English education has been a very important economic activity. These economies in the future will face increasing competition from non-English economies that can provide the same services closer to home and at a decreased cost to students. Another implication is that, where English (or another S/FL) is being used as a medium of instruction for non-native or not fully proficient learners of that target language, systematic and sustained attention must be paid to *language and literacy* across the curriculum and not just to *content* learning objectives.

Given this trend across APEC and other economies, it is important to recognize that a substantial amount of research has taken place on how best to simultaneously address linguistic and subject-matter learning across the curriculum that economies moving in this direction should be aware of (e.g., Mohan, 1986; Crandall, 1986; Johnson & Swain, 1997; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). Scholars in CLIL/CBLI (e.g., Mohan, 1986; Mohan et al. 2001; Stoller & Grabe, 1997) recommend that attention be paid to three interrelated aspects of language awareness that must be instilled in teachers (and students, in turn)—not only specialists in second language (L2) education but also first language (L1) educators--when delivering content:

- (1) Knowledge structures and text types (rhetorical patterns) associated with different content: e.g., classification, compare-contrast, sequence, cause-effect, evaluation (Mohan, 1986; cf. work in Australia drawing on systemic-functional linguistics and genre studies that provide models and principles for the appropriate scaffolding of content-teaching through an additional language (e.g., Gibbons, 2002, who gives advice about ways of supporting school-aged English language learners in English-medium courses).
- (2) Attention to corresponding language structures (e.g., nominalization in science: *evaporation, photosynthesis*; causal verbs); discourse markers representing the relationship between ideas (*then, next, furthermore, consequently, on the one hand... on the other hand*); genres (e.g., letters vs. reports vs. narrative essays); and variation across curriculum, registers (formal/informal, technical/general), and across vocational and professional fields.
- (3) Graphic literacy: the ability to comprehend and produce visual representations of knowledge through graphic organizers which show logical or conceptual relationships among pieces of information, which reduce the linguistic burden of texts and facilitate new knowledge integration and retention. Some common examples commonly found in information texts are Venn diagrams, flowcharts, tree diagrams, cycles, sequence/chain of events and cause-effect visuals, problem-solution graphics, classification charts, and the like. Importantly, certain types of visual display are normally associated with certain kinds of texts (e.g., compare-contrast texts that have an accompanying compare-contrast table) and particular linguistic structures are also associated with those texts: e.g., *however, in contrast, on the other hand, similarly*, in the case of compare-contrast; *first, second, third, following*, etc., with sequence; *therefore, as a result, consequently*, with cause-effect.

As in the case of early-start language education (next section), the teaching of content through a language that is not the students' mother tongue, or even the teachers' mother tongue in many cases, requires very careful planning, preparation, scaffolding, and monitoring. Teachers must have very high levels of language proficiency and subject-matter competence in their content area and must understand how to support students' language/literacy and content learning objectives. Otherwise, content-based L2-medium education and its variants can be disastrous (Johnson & Swain, 1997).

4. *Age of introduction of English and other S/F languages*

A fourth trend reported by APEC economies since the last survey in 2003, and indeed observed in many other parts of the world as well, has been the gradual lowering of the age of first instruction of English in economies where English is a FL. Importantly, it appears that many economies recognize that both the intensity and duration of language instruction are as important as the age at which the language is introduced in the curriculum, and many economies are ensuring that students obtain at least two hours a week of English instruction (see Duff, 2004). In comparison, although the teaching of other FLs from lower grade levels has increased quite considerably in recent years in the U.S. and Canada, in many instances the number of minutes of teaching in the first few years is much smaller than it is for the teaching of English in non-English-dominant economies, and thus quite negligible in terms of impact (Pufahl et al., 2000). Some implications of this continuing downward pressure for the teaching of S/FLs from an earlier age are that more teachers need to be recruited, retained, and educated through preservice and inservice teacher education and language programs; there must be acceptable standards in place for criterion levels of S/FL proficiency on the part of teachers; suitable curriculum and materials are needed to implement effective language teaching; and the curriculum for younger learners must be articulated well with curriculum and assessment at higher levels (Cameron, 2003). An area of potential research in APEC economies might be the documentation of changes in S/FL proficiency (especially if high-stakes testing or proficiency instruments are the same as before), as well as attitudes toward the target languages, cultures, and peoples, by the end of secondary or high school now in comparison with documented levels of attainment under earlier policies, when English was introduced from later grade levels only.

5. *Better alignment needed between (high-stakes) assessment practices and standards*

In some Canadian provinces, as in many other parts of the world, there is a continuing and often insidious disjunction between curriculum and assessment, particularly in high-stakes school-leaving and university-entrance testing. Whereas the curriculum (e.g., for French as a second language in Canada) may emphasize communication, and especially the development of oral proficiency, school-leaving exams may not directly measure oral skills at all and may focus on psychometrically and logistically more easily measured knowledge sets, such as vocabulary and decontextualized grammar.

To give another example, Richard Watson Todd, a longtime scholar and educator in Thailand, recently bemoaned testing policies and practices in that economy with respect to English university entrance examinations, in particular (Watson Todd, 2007). He reported on the frustration of teachers, parents, and students with the use of multiple-choice exams primarily for assessing students' communicative English; unfortunately, one year when essays were introduced, explicit criteria for the assessment of the essays were not provided, thereby reducing their reliability. Such practices, Todd notes, again signal a mismatch between educational ideals (e.g., as encoded in the National Education Act of 1999 in

Thailand) and assessment practices, a situation certainly shared by many other economies around the world, and one that adversely affects English language education. Assessing knowledge in a more integrative and direct fashion has considerable associated costs, which is why more efficient and psychometrically reliable multiple-choice tests are often selected.

The argument could be made that these more “efficient” and cost-effective tests are good *indirect* measures of oral ability. However, they have very poor face validity in that regard. This trend of misaligned curriculum and assessment is very discouraging for students and teachers who, rather than embrace 21st century curriculum and standards or respond to the particular interests and needs of their own students, must teach to the standardized test. That is, the test leads to negative “washback” in teaching (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004) and is therefore not conducive to best practices in language education. Even if tests seem to indirectly measure a particular skill like speaking and writing, if those skills are not visible to potential test-takers or to teachers, they are unlikely to devote sufficient attention to their development. The tests’ construct validity in the light of standards and curriculum developed with other explicit objectives is then easily challenged. It was largely in response to such concerns that the US-based Educational Testing Service (ETS) recently concluded its extensive redevelopment of the TOEFL exam after many years of research at ETS and consultation with the professional community of scholars and language educators. As a result, the Internet-based TOEFL now includes both speaking and writing components, whereas the Test of Written English was optional before and there was no test of speaking for general test-takers; other changes were also made. An expected consequence of that test reform will be a concomitant increase in attention paid to those skills in schools, in test-preparation centers, in related language teaching/learning materials, and in the consciousness of learners, teachers, and parents about valued competencies and skills—in other words, positive washback effects are expected.

IV. Exemplary Standards “Frameworks”: Language Learning Proficiency Scales for S/FL Learner Profiles (e.g., Common European Framework)

The EDNET report by Chen et al. (2008) provides a commendable analysis of the following four well known and generally well respected standards for English and other L2 learning developed in different regions of the world:

- USA (ACTFL) – originally college-level, oral²
- Europe (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR) – broadest appeal
- Canada (Canadian Language Benchmarks) – adult workplace
- Australia (International Second Language Proficiency Rating) – adult primarily

Another standards documents not included in the report, which has a shorter history of development and implementation in any case and less related testing research, include the international organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages’ (TESOL’s) “ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students.”³ These standards have a great deal in common with the four standards documents reviewed in terms of their underlying principles of language learning and language pedagogy, stressing language for communication, language for academic learning, and pragmatic or functional aspects of language use.

² See Svender & Duncan’s (1998) guidelines for ACTFL use with k-12 learners.

³ Available at: http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565.