INTRODUCTION

Futurists constantly predict the changes that technology will bring to every part of our lives, and generally those changes occur more rapidly than anticipated. World language educators have been relatively eager to embrace technological advancements that have dramatically revolutionized their field by providing linkages to native speakers and authentic materials. The best examples of those linkages have made the world accessible to students and have given them exciting opportunities to use language for real purposes in genuine cultural contexts. At worst, there still exists a significant amount of, frankly, useless programming, useless because it ignores principles of language acquisition and prefers to develop technology on inadequate and inappropriate models of language learning. Technology is seductive; students may even respond positively to programs that produce no verifiable advances in their learning. Too often the missing link is a vision, a purpose for technology in the delivery of a well designed, research-based curriculum that incorporates strong assessments. Instruction must begin with an articulation of learning outcomes: what we expect learners to know and to be able to do and a plan for assessment that demonstrates the performance achieved. Only then can one determine how, where, and when technology can facilitate any part of the process.

STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

One avenue for creating the 'new directions and new perspectives' that serve as the theme of the 1998 CALICO conference lies in the vision and principles provided by the recent publication of Standards for Foreign
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Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (1996). Significant professional discussion in the United States is centered on national foreign language standards and the impact they are having on state and local standards in schools. While higher education has yet to acknowledge the changes that the Standards will bring, projects on the horizon will soon create greater awareness. For CALICO’s membership, attending to the Standards should become increasingly important; the reality is that instruction at all levels is moving in that direction, and technological support must assist schools in meeting the challenge of higher achievement for learners. Virtually every state, regional, and national conference currently sponsors a number of standards-focused sessions. CALICO, too, should address these issues so that the technology under development supports student achievement in the Standards by providing access to materials, facilitating the learning process, and supporting research projects.

The history of Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the national standards development process in world languages has been adequately documented elsewhere (see Phillips, 1994; Phillips & Draper, 1994; Phillips & Lafayette, 1996). The unusual professional consensus that evolved with the publication of the Standards in 1996 has continued as a collaborative effort among 11 organizations which are developing language-specific standards and participating in teacher education standards projects such as the application for membership in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the financial support for sustaining that membership. Since the publication of the Standards, numerous states have begun the parallel process of designing state standards and the concomitant curricular frameworks. Virtually every state’s standards strongly align with the national ones.

As the national standards were being developed, the Standards Task Force was highly attentive to the considerable impact that technology has had on the profession and on the learning of the world’s languages. At one point there had even been discussion about a ‘technology standard.’ But what would that standard have been? The world of technology itself has avoided standards in the name of competition, as evidenced by the continuing battles of PC versus Macintosh platforms, Word versus WordPerfect, Microsoft Explorer versus Netscape, JavaScript versus HTML, and Yahoo versus Excite versus InfoSeek, each a little different and usually incompatible.

It became clear that a separate standard for technology would be outdated by the time the standards were disseminated. Also, word processing skills, Web surfing techniques, or interactive programs that students or their teachers could use were of less importance than was the promotion of the learning of languages and cultures with and through technology. And so the belief that the ‘medium is the message’ was eschewed for one
that envisioned how the media could provide for the messages that students should be involved in exchanging. In essence, the opportunities for language use now available to teachers and students have enabled the expansion of goals and standards into areas that in the past were serendipitous at best. Why was grammar-translation the dominant approach to language learning until the mid-twentieth century? Because opportunities and expectancies for language use were primarily limited to the reading of literary texts. When audiolingualism created its dialogues to be memorized, it simulated barely real life conversations, but the underlying assumption was that only a few of the learners would do their dialogues with a real Spanish, French, or German speaker. Dialogues that begin with: *Qué hay de comer? ‘What is there to eat?’ and have *Hoy es miércoles. Hay albóndigas. ‘Today is Wednesday. There are meatballs.’ as a response are a far cry from functionality, a condition not targeted in a time when foreign travel was for the relatively few. Just because these kinds of interchanges may now be electronically delivered with beeps and animation for feedback does not render them more useful if the pedagogical basis is not sound.

What technology, when used well, has wrought is the following e-mail exchange between a seventh grader in Sleepy Hollow, New York and a peer in Padre las Casas, Chile. (For a case study based upon the Communities goal in the standards, see Haas & Reardon, 1997.) When a U.S. youngster, named Chema, sent a message of introduction to a Chilean keypal, some of the adjectives used in the message ended in *o and some ended in *a in spite of the student’s record of more accurate responses on the worksheets, audio tapes, and computerized drills that came with the classroom text package. Chema received a response that said, *Me alegré mucho de recibir tu mensaje, pero aclárame amigo o amiga. ¿cuál es tu sexo? ‘I’m really glad to receive your message, but make it clear whether you are a [male] friend or [female] friend. Are you a male or a female?’ Maybe, like so many language learners in the past, Chema will never travel to a country where Spanish is spoken, but today’s student will communicate real messages with users of the target language. That single instance caused learning to occur for Chema, her teacher reported that she never again made an agreement error when talking about herself. Technology changes the face of communication for our students and for ourselves.

As the Standards Task Force continued to look at what world language learning should be in the 21st century, it became obvious that technology was a primary player in enabling expansion of goal areas beyond the traditional four skills plus culture. The Standards are organized around five goal areas, commonly referred to as the Five Cs of foreign language education (and a total of 11 standards): Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. All the discipline-based standards
projects were charged by the funding agencies with answering the question, What should students know and be able to do? The standards themselves focus on the be able to do portion of that question; the know portion of the question is illustrated in a graphic that is labeled as the “weave of curricular elements” (Standards, 1996, p. 29). The “weave” concept delineates the various content areas and processes that together provide the rich curriculum that supports all standards areas. Technology is one of the strands in that weave because it has the potential to support all the goal areas and standards in three major ways: Access, Authenticity, and Insights.

STANDARDS GOAL AREAS

It is useful to consider the five goal areas of the Standards in terms of their pedagogical assumptions.

Communication Standards

Over the years, communication has been viewed through many different lenses. In the first half of this century, the dominant grammar-translation approach was unidimensional in seeking to derive meaning from a target-language text by evaluating how accurately it was transformed into the student’s native language. This method had no basis in learning theory but was premised upon what students might do (i.e., read texts in other languages) and a notion of what skills and knowledge scholars possessed. Audiolingualism delineated the four skills and arranged them in the so-called natural order of listening, speaking, reading, writing. As a method, it assumed that a second language was learned, in terms of skill acquisition, in the same order as one’s first. Furthermore, it based its approach to learning on behaviorism, an explanation that is now considered to be an insufficient model for an endeavor as complex as language learning. Audiolingual instruction was more concerned with the skill-getting end of the continuum than the skill-using end. The model of four independent skills has remained inviolate even through the recent decades which have witnessed more of a focus on communicative competence, functional language use, and proficiency. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1986) and assessments associated with them continue to describe performances within separate skill paradigms. Some implicit overlap exists, but when, for instance, a student’s speaking is assessed through the Oral Proficiency Interview, an interactive format is used in which only the speech sample is evaluated, not the success of the total communication.

What then is new about the Communication Standards? Precisely that
the framework of communicative modes focuses on the kinds of events or acts in which learners participate in the real world (Standards, 1996, p. 33). The framework aligns strongly with the field of communication, not just foreign languages. Of the three Standards, the one labeled “Interpersonal,” looks quite familiar on the surface but includes a critical dimension that was minimally considered previously. The aspect of “negotiation of meaning” renders this standard a more substantive interaction than simply talking (or writing) back and forth in controlled dialogue. The interpersonal standard addresses how learners make meaning, that is, how they compensate for evolving accuracy, in two-way/face-to-face/computer-to-computer communication. Teachers, in facilitating this standard, face the difficulty of not being able to structure how the interchange plays out; no predetermined script or dialogue exists. Teachers are limited to arranging the conditions for students to interact. In addition, teachers must become adept at supporting “making meaning,” not thwarting it, and it is for this reason that language drills do not take learners to this level of communication. Communicators create, they do not recite; they are individual negotiators of meaning, not mimics. The Interpersonal Standard has ramifications for teacher education as well. One can straightforwardly teach a teacher how to do a pattern drill, but teaching them to monitor classroom interactions and to judge its effect on students will require more complex interventions. Technology, of a kind yet to be fully designed, could provide feedback to teachers about classroom behaviors and could also greatly assist in enabling communication for students.

The other two Communication Standards, the “Interpretive” and the “Presentational,” more closely reflect recent work with listening/reading and speaking/writing. For these Standards, professional development requires that faculty become more adept at working with the whole range of authentic documents and realistic tasks now available for purposeful communication. Learners must be assisted to make the leap from learning to read and listen, to reading and listening to learn. The nuance that “interpret” implies beyond “comprehend” means that texts should not be considered just as sources of information but should be evaluated for ideas and concepts worthy of interpretation which raise students to the level where they, too, bring ideas, experiences, and emotions to the text. Likewise, it becomes important to create opportunities for students to develop presentational abilities well beyond the journal entry, the classroom oral presentation, the composition, or the essay. Colleagues in language arts provide models and research that will help second language students learn to speak and write for a variety of audiences and to gain awareness of style and purpose. World language teachers may also need to expand their own experiences in these areas.
The primary evolution of this goal area has been toward a more integrated and anthropological view of culture. Rather than trying to categorize culture as big “C” or little “c” (i.e., civilization versus lifestyle), the Standards document sets forth a triangular model of “Perspectives,” “Products,” and “Practices” (Standards, 1996, p. 43). For example, one of the Standards documents concerns a product—business cards—in Japanese culture. Multiple practices are associated with the exchange of cards and these practices are contrastive in U.S. and Japanese culture. Americans often take the cards and, with a scant look, put them in a pocket or may even write something on them (taboo practices in Japan). Japanese tend to handle business cards more reverently and, during a meeting, might arrange them on the table in hierarchical order according to the position of the individual whose name is inscribed on the card. In the absence of a perspective, this product and its associated practices might be viewed by learners as cultural peculiarities; trivia, if you will. However, the practices associated with the product of business cards emanate from perspectives of Japanese culture that are related to Japanese views of authority and hierarchy, views that are evidenced in the form of the honorifics that are so difficult for nonnative speakers to acquire.

Many readers of the Standards document have commented on the extent to which culture permeates all the goal areas. Even as teachers agree with the standards, they have a legitimate concern about their own knowledge and understandings of the cultures they teach. It is quite conceivable that teachers know in detail the culture topics or notes in their textbooks, but even native speakers bemoan the fact that they cannot often keep up with the changes occurring in their home cultures. One can keep current through the more traditional avenue of workshops and travel, but the growing availability of new windows on cultures provided by video, authentic materials, and the Internet can also be exploited. In addition, teachers need to be daring enough to worry less about what they do not yet know and concentrate instead on helping themselves and their students become better observers of cultural phenomena. This task may mean having less assurance in saying that the French eat bread with everything and that the baguette symbolizes French life—after one reads recent statistics on a Web site that confirm large decreases in consumption of bread accompanied by changing tastes in the kinds of bread that French people purchase or changing life styles that preclude daily shopping. What the triangle does is encourage teachers and learners alike to look at products and practices, whether past or present, to see how they might represent cultural perspectives, and, more important, to withhold judgments until it is clear whether those perspectives represent groups or individuals. Thus, a whole new area for teachers as members of a learning community might
be one in which teachers help each other to expand their knowledge base in the recognition that cultures also change.

Connections Standards

A new and exciting area is that of interdisciplinary connections. As learners engage in language study for longer sequences of time, they will want to venture into content areas less central to traditional curricula. The areas of the curriculum which are currently the most prone to this change are in elementary school programs where the age of the learners and the preparation of their teachers has, of necessity, placed content from the general curriculum into the foreign language classroom. (One just cannot talk about verb conjugations to an 8-year-old.) At the other end of the spectrum, more advanced students are doing content-based courses under Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum models or teaming together as language and literature departments think about the umbrella of “language studies.” A major challenge to teachers lies in the wide variety of content that students might chose to investigate. Students will devote countless hours, not to just surfing the Web, but actually learning from it, so much so that some language laboratories are now locking them out of Netscape! (It seems strange that when students really want to learn something on their own, some teachers are afraid to let them.) Perhaps it is teachers who fear the challenge posed in the content students download. It is not necessary for teachers to know that content themselves; they simply have to find an instructional plan that permits learners to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired. If students have acquired effective strategies through their work with authentic materials and the interpretive standard, they are quite capable of forging interdisciplinary connections. Teachers can become learners as students demonstrate their understanding of materials they have chosen to investigate. The greatest instructional task in this area, which may require some assistance from other professionals, involves locating materials that appeal to learners and that are linguistically and culturally accessible. Districts, regions, and organizations might establish institutes or ongoing professional development programs to help foreign language teachers gain awareness of the curriculum of their school and to work with supporting foreign language materials.

Comparisons Standards

Teachers have long known that the knowledge second-language learners gain from their study of the language and the culture contributes to a different view of language as a system. Many adults who never achieved
competency in any mode through their classroom study of a new language will affirm that they did in fact learn about English grammar. This affirmation may or may not be true, but what these individuals undoubtedly gained was a sense of how languages work, how they are structured, and how they express meaning through lexical, syntactical, and phonological means. Students who study outside the bounds of their native language think differently about meaning. A valuable pursuit for new research studies might involve the technological tracking of student processing which could provide more insights into how students think about different languages and cultures. The Comparisons Standards aim to increase cross-cultural competencies in students.

Communities Standards

The national standards project had an advisory board that largely consisted of individuals outside the language teaching profession. For them, participation in multilingual/multicultural communities, was the raison d'être for foreign language study. Teachers at first interpreted this Standard rather narrowly as a field trip. Technology—the information super-highway—allows students and teachers to use their language skills and knowledge of cultures to travel electronically and to forge communities of learners along the way (see Haas & Reardon, 1997).

TECHNOLOGY AND THE STANDARDS

In the standards then, technology is illustrated as an integral part of the curricular weave, an aspect of learning that crosses all standards and goal areas and that must become part of the learning experience itself. Technology, when used to further student learning, provides powerful tools in three major areas: Access, Authenticity, and Insights.

Access

Technology connects learners across nations; the opportunity for communication is but a keyboard away. E-mail has meant that virtually all language learners have at their fingertips a correspondent with whom to negotiate meaning—an essential element of interpersonal communication—on a variety of topics. The additional capabilities of chat rooms, two-way audio, and video exchanges permit regular interactions in all modalities. What is especially important is that these interactions are achieved in cross-cultural contexts that forge friendships and lower barriers to understand-
ing. Never again can students disdainfully proclaim, “Why should I learn another language? I’m never going to ... [fill in the country of your choice].” The global economy has already enlarged our view of workers; cyberspace has now thrown all conceptions of time and space to the winds.

Access must be made available to teachers as well, not just after they are in the classroom but throughout their own learning. All the research shows that the greatest influence on teaching comes from the models teachers had when they were learners. So if teachers are to teach creatively and effectively with technology, they must have opportunities to learn that way. Faculty in higher education must accept responsibility for using technology to enhance the language competencies of their graduates whether they aim to be teachers, use languages in other careers, or pursue advanced studies. To this writer, it is unimaginable, untenable, indeed unethical, for university faculty to shy away from demanding and assuring that graduates reach proficiency at least at the advanced level. When faculty make excuses for not setting high standards, it causes one to think that it is not their students they are protecting, but themselves. We have students for four years or more; we must be able to push their competency to the point at which they control connected discourse at the paragraph level. Technology should provide the access to people and materials, so that practice using the foreign language to interact with native speakers and to understand native texts produces advanced competency with language and cultures.

Authenticity

Technology can provide an abundant, perhaps potentially overwhelming, number of authentic materials for learners to interpret in the pursuit of cultural, interdisciplinary, and personal goals. In the past, authentic materials were less available, more limited in scope, often of adult content, dense in language, and sparse in visual presentation. Old magazines had a short shelf life but nevertheless served as reading texts for years. Today, teachers have access not just to adult literature but also children’s literature and adolescent literature to find content that intrigues and engages students of all ages. Students can learn from the books that are written for target-language learners in subject areas from across the curriculum such as ecology, health, and even space travel. The Web offers ready access to a variety of materials that teach students language, content, and perspective. All the standards require authentic interactions: interpretation means having a meaningful oral or written text from which to derive interpretations; cultural perspectives are developed through observation, interpretation, and interpersonal negotiating about products and practices; connections are forged as learners interact with subject matter.
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content. Technology can be the means of providing innumerable sources for the most compelling materials and exchanges.

Insights

Technology can play a significant role in improving how research is conducted and thereby help the knowledge base in language acquisition to continue to grow. World language teachers must move from paradigms that trained them in prescriptive and teacher-centered methods. The Standards are learner-centered, and second-language acquisition research has emphasized the ways in which learners construct meaning. Consequently, teachers must develop strong repertoires of behaviors that promote negotiated meaning, interpretation, and learner presentation; they need time to observe how learners learn and to reflect upon the effect of instruction. Well designed programs could help us get in the learner's mind, to see how information is processed, how language is stored and retrieved, how language and content problems are resolved. In a recent presentation, Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) called for a two-way pedagogy which includes not only what teachers do but also what they must know about learners' thinking. This approach is quite a challenge and one that would be better met with collaboration between pedagogical and technical specialists.

CONCLUSION

As the Standards take root, technocrats should join pedagogues and language/literature faculty in an effort to provide the best possible learning for students. Tomorrow's scenarios will go beyond the expectations that we can barely imagine today. That is what always happens; a phenomenon confirmed once again by the publication of a Jules Verne manuscript uncovered a few years ago. Paris au XXe siècle, written by Verne in 1863, was refused by his publisher at the time who advised him, Monsieur Verne, fussiez-vous prophète, on ne croira pas aujourd'hui en votre prophétie. 'Mr. Verne, were you a prophet, people would not believe in your prophecies today.' In his book, Verne proposed outrageous things. Thirty years before the dawn of the automobile, he described in detail Parisian streets filled with vehicles in which a foot pedal changed gears. He even predicted traffic jams! Verne also described a subway that could carry 1,000 persons every 10 minutes, pretty close to today's system. He predicted copying machines, faxes, and picture phones. On a more dire note, he saw that people would no longer be decapitated for crimes; they would be electrocuted. (Verne did not imagine lethal injection.) Should a Jules Verne exist among us today, I wonder what his vision for our field might be. I do
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not possess that vision but I am confident of a few things. If technology is to support learning to high levels of achievement, then technology for language learning has to accept the challenge of serving effective pedagogies. We must not let the media limit our approaches; technology without pedagogy is nothing. The language teaching profession has embraced technology for decades, but the ideal marriages of technology and pedagogy are still rare. The good news is that they do exist, and they are expanding: the hope is that a vision by programmers and teachers that calls upon the Standards framework for guidance could create the interactions that are most beneficial to learners.

NOTES

1 The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Collaborative Project brings together for standards-related projects the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, the American Association of Teachers of Italian, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, the American Classical League, the American Council of Teachers of Russian, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools & Chinese Language Teachers Association, the National Council of Secondary Teachers of Japanese & Association of Teachers of Japanese. The Project's activities are coordinated through the AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034.

2 Members of the National Standards Task Force were: June K. Phillips, Project Director; Christine Brown, Chair; Marty Abbott, Keith Cothrun, Beverly Harris-Schenz, Denise Mesa, Genelle Morain, Marjorie Tussing, A. Ronald Walton, John Webb, Thomas Welch, and Guadalupe Valdés.

3 These lines are from an AL-M Spanish Level One dialogue published as part of a textbook series in the 1960s and 1970s (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

4 The Jules Verne manuscript has been published with a historical preface as Paris au XXe siècle (1994) Paris: Hachette Livre. The publisher's quote was found in a marginal note from his editor, P. J. Hetzel.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR’S BIODATA

June K. Phillips (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Dean of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University. She was the project director for the national standards, editor of the language-specific standards, and chairs the Foreign Language Advisory Committee of The College Board.

AUTHOR’S ADDRESS

Dr. June K. Phillips, Dean
College of Arts & Humanities
Weber State University
1904 University Circle
Ogden, UT 84408-1904
Phone: 801/626-6424
Fax: 801/626-7422
E-mail: jphillips@weber.edu