

Title:

Language futures: tensions and synergies in the use of standards in language assessment in a multi/plurilingual world.

Coordinator 1: Jamie Dunlea, Manager Assessment Research Group, British Council, United Kingdom

Coordinator 2: Margaret Malone, Director Assessment and Research, ACTFL, United States

Coordinator 3: Vincent Folny, Manager Innovation and Development, France Education International, France

Symposium format (one choice - delete the others):

- **Symposium Multimodal**

Symposium mode (one choice - delete the others):

- **Hybrid**

Sub-themes (multiple choices - delete the others):

- ☐ LANGUAGES IN INSTRUCTION: languages as Medium of Instruction, in Higher Education, in CLIL and languages for Internationalization
- ☐ (MINORITY) LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD: Lingua Franca, Global language, Academic Language, dialects
- ☐ LANGUAGE & TECHNOLOGY: media, tools, digitals humanities, Natural Language Processing (NLP)
- ☐ LANGUAGE IN THE MIND/BRAIN: psycholinguistics, bilingualism, multilingualism, processing, cognitive advantage, individual factors or differences, cross-linguistic factors, disorders
- ☐ LANGUAGE SKILLS: writing, fluency, chunks / formulaic language, speaking, feedback, testing
- ☐ LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: teacher education, curricula and education, classrooms, instruction, task-based learning, EAP, study abroad, (virtual) exchanges, materials and methods
- ☐ LINGUISTIC SOCIAL ISSUES: linguistic (in)justice, power, advocacy, attitude & bias, diversity-
emancipation, discriminations, ethnicity and gender, ideology, language & social justice

Short Abstract

Standards are the backbone of reliable and valid assessment. At the same time, countries and languages often use different standards (Common European Framework of Reference, ACTFL Guidelines, China's Standards of English). Such standards often aim to inform multiple facets of educational and professional contexts, including teaching, learning, assessment, and certification. Different standards also have different scope vis a vis language, geographies, and cultures. For example, the CEFR and ACTFL Guidelines are both designed to offer a standardised framework to describe proficiency across multiple languages. Descended from the U.S. government Interagency Language Roundtable Scale, the ACTFL Guidelines were designed for use in academic and workplace contexts and across languages. The CEFR was designed for use across a diverse spectrum of countries across Europe, but has also since been adapted for use in countries in East Asia (e.g. CEFR-J) and other international contexts. Whereas the CSE aimed to develop a localized set of standards for use in one context, China. This symposium will address existing standards and assessments available across the world, including existing and potential crosswalks among systems, current and emerging best practices for employing such systems and confirmed and prospective ways to accurately assess the proficiency of learners not just in a given language but taking into account multi/plurilingual competence.

Argument

Standards are the backbone of reliable and valid assessment (Cox, Winke & Malone, 2018). At the same time, countries and languages often use different standards (Common European Framework of Reference, ACTFL Guidelines, China's Standards of English). Such standards often aim to inform multiple facets of educational and professional contexts, including teaching, learning, assessment, and certification. While covering all of those bases is inherently challenging, different standards also have different scope *vis a vis* language, geographies, and cultures. For example, the CEFR and ACTFL Guidelines are both designed to offer a standardised framework to describe proficiency across multiple languages. Descended from the U.S. government Interagency Language Roundtable Scale, the ACTFL Guidelines were designed for use in academic and workplace contexts and across languages. The CEFR was designed for use across a diverse spectrum of countries across Europe, but has also since been adapted for use in countries in East Asia (e.g. CEFR-J) and other international contexts. Whereas the CSE, while drawing on, adapting, and adding to methodologies established by the CEFR, ACTFL, etc, aimed to develop a localized set of standards for use in one context, China.

Although work has been done to seek alignment between some of these standards, compartmentalism, coupled with the need to provide consistent and comparable results across languages and borders remains a challenge for communicating language test results to stakeholders. While facilitating the mobility of qualifications across languages and across borders was one aim of the CEFR, arguably most work has been done on the comparability of examinations and qualifications WITHIN languages, and much less examining the comparability of the application of these standards across languages.

Also relevant to the 2023 AILA Congress is the paucity of standards and tests that account for the skills of multilinguals across their languages. While the *CEFR Companion Volume* (CoE, 2020) has focused on concepts of plurilingual and pluricultural competence), neither multilingualism nor plurilingualism have yet to truly inform our approaches to evaluating language proficiency or utilizing measurable understanding of multilingual/plurilingual proficiency in designing teaching and learning curricula and materials.

We recognize the importance of valuing linguistic diversity and bringing it to the core our standards as well as the challenges involved in creating clear descriptions of proficiency to underpin and drive curriculum, materials, and assessment development and validation. At the same, we understand the conflicts that arise in harmonizing the standards for one language across proficiency levels, for standards across language qualifications meant to be at the same proficiency level, and what has not yet been adequately achieved: reflecting multi/plurilingual competence within our standards.

This symposium will address existing standards and assessments available across the world, including existing and potential crosswalks among systems, current and emerging best practices for employing such systems and confirmed and prospective ways to accurately assess the proficiency of learners with multi/plurilingual competence in a way which not only fairly reflects their ability to function in a given language but will capture the actual benefit multi/plurilingual individuals can bring to learning and professional contexts.

Cox, T., Malone, M. E., & Winke, P. M. (2018). Future directions in assessment: Influences of standards and implications for language learning. *Foreign Language Annals* 51(1), 104-115.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12326>

Council of Europe (2020), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr.

