

FUNDAMENTALS OF
LANGUAGE
TEACHING

**WHAT EVERY SPANISH TEACHER
NEEDS TO KNOW**

**A METHODS BOOK
FOR TEACHERS OF SPANISH**

BY

JAMES S. TAYLOR AND BLAIR BATEMAN

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

© 1986, 1996 BY JAMES S. TAYLOR AND PAUL F. LUCKAU

REVISED EDITION, 2011

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

© 2011 James S. Taylor and Blair Bateman. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-1-257-99425-0

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT MAKES A LANGUAGE TEACHER?

YOUR OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CHAPTER ARE TO:

- 1. IDENTIFY THE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD BE PRESENT IN SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS.**
- 2. SUMMARIZE GUIDELINES SET UP BY PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS.**
- 3. DESCRIBE IN DETAIL “IDEAL” FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AT THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS.**
- 4. SUMMARIZE WAYS OF GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE TEACHING PRACTICUM.**
- 5. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR GETTING A JOB AS A LANGUAGE TEACHER.**
- 6. ASSESS YOUR OWN MOTIVATIONS AND PREPARATION FOR BECOMING A LANGUAGE TEACHER.**

Look Who's Teaching Spanish!

Mr. Downs stepped into the principal's office with a quizzical look on his face. "You wanted to talk to me, Mr. Dudley?" he asked.

"I'll come right to the point," the principal answered. "I know you lived in Mexico for a couple of years and that you speak some Spanish. Since Miss Gomez will be leaving us this spring, I would like you to teach some Spanish classes next fall."

Mr. Downs was flabbergasted. He was the football coach! Along with his P.E. classes he had taught some health classes, but that was his minor in college. He had absolutely no idea about how to teach a foreign language. It was true that he had spoken Spanish quite well at one time, but that was ten years ago, and he hadn't used it since he had returned to college. "I'm not sure I can do it, Mr. Dudley. I've never taught a language before, and my Spanish is pretty rusty."

"I don't think there will be any problem," replied Dudley. "If you can speak it, you can teach it. Mr. Larson, the other Spanish teacher, can help you with ideas. This way I won't have to hire another teacher, and we'll get someone to help in the drama department."



Miss Kyutee could hardly wait for school to start. Her first year of teaching had been a lot of work but she felt like it had been a success. One thing for sure was that fourth grade was right for her. This year, however, she had some things she wanted to change. She just needed to come up with more motivational type activities. That is why she was so excited about her plan to teach Spanish. She was positive that the students would love it and be as motivated as she had been during the two semesters she had studied Spanish at the University.

Miss K. had always intended to take more Spanish, and even visit a Spanish speaking country, but she had decided to finish college, teach a few years, and then take a trip south of the border. It was true that she still made a lot of errors when she tried to use the language and her vocabulary was quite limited, but she reminded herself that that wasn't too important at the elementary level. Besides, the students would never notice.

Emiliano Zapata was proud of his heritage. Although his parents had fled Cuba when he was a young boy, and he had been raised in Miami, he still considered himself a Cuban. He was especially proud of his use of the language. He had always spoken it with his family and friends and made sure that he read Spanish newspapers and magazines almost daily. When he enrolled at the local university, he had taken several Spanish literature courses and had always been the top student. He found that he could easily impress the professors since he could express himself much better than the poor “gringos” who still made millions of mistakes and had a very limited vocabulary.

Emiliano had been appalled when he visited the class of an American friend who had been hired as a teaching assistant. His friend’s pronunciation was not good, and he made many mistakes as he taught. The students seemed to like him, and he was good at explaining grammar, but he still had a long way to go with the language.

As Emiliano made an appointment with the chairman of the Spanish Department, he mentally rehearsed what he was going to say. “What do I have to do to teach beginning classes here in the Spanish department? I can handle the language so much better than any of your T.A.’s, and my pronunciation is native. You need teachers who can speak the language.”

~~~~~

Virginia and Madeleine were ecstatic. Dr. Theo Rettich, the protégé of the greatest Spanish linguist in the country, had been hired by the university and would be teaching their linguistics class.

As the semester progressed, however, they became more and more disillusioned. Dr. Rettich would come to class, sit down at a desk and read his lecture notes. Seldom would he interact with the class, and it never occurred to him to illustrate anything on the chalkboard. Once during a lecture, as he was reading his notes, Dr. Rettich stopped, and muttered to himself, then went back over his notes trying to solve a problem which had suddenly become obvious to him. After several minutes of painful silence he mumbled: “This is not correct” and stood up and left the class.

It to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It's a good divine that follows its own instruction. I would rather teach twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teachings.

*The Merchant of Venice* —William Shakespeare

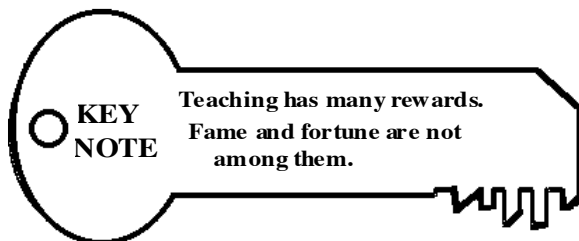
## CHAPTER ONE

# WHAT MAKES A LANGUAGE TEACHER

So you want to be a *foreign language teacher*? Why? Is it because that career sounds stimulating and “exotic” and conjures up visions of traveling to exciting new places, talking to important, fascinating people, and eating delicious new food? Is it because at some point in your life you learned a second language and liked it so much that you wanted others to have the same experience? Before you jump headlong into this profession, you had better give it a long hard look to see if it’s really what you want to spend doing the rest of your life.

### IS THIS CAREER FOR YOU?

First of all, you must decide if you really want to be a *teacher*. Teaching is often referred to as the “noblest” of professions, but it can also be frustrating in a number of ways. You must be resigned to the fact that most of your rewards will come from the satisfaction you get from the effect you will have in the lives of your students and not from monetary gains.



You should know that teaching is not an eight to five kind of job that you can forget about in the evening when you return home. More often than not, teachers take assignments home at night to correct, and spend weekends and much of their own money on materials and visual aids.

Teachers cannot be mass produced as if they were machines coming off an assembly line. Each one is a unique individual who brings different qualities, talents, experiences, and attitudes to the task. It is vital that you never lose sight of the fact that the process of becoming a teacher is a partnership endeavor between *you* and the developing institution. They don’t make you a teacher—you become a teacher. This means a concentrated, long-range effort on your part to develop the talents and skills that will make you successful. Since human behavior is not an exact science, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint what makes good teachers, but after years of study, research, and experience, we have a number of ideas about what features are present. However, the teacher–developing institution cannot simply imbed those qualities in you. It is necessary for you to be personally very active in the process. The ideas, helps, procedures, methods, approaches, techniques and strategies presented in your training need to be seized enthusiastically and adapted to develop your teaching style. That teaching style may have aspects of uniqueness and sameness that will be augmented by discussion with other prospective teachers.

A generalized accusation sometimes leveled at professional educators is that “those who *can make* it in the world of business, *do so*, those who *can’t make it, teach*.” The underlying implication is that only those of mediocre ability go into teaching. While it is true that some teachers should not be in the classroom, the accusation is very unjust to the hundreds of thousands of intelligent, well-prepared teachers who are very successful in a career they have chosen—not for material rewards, for they are few—but for the satisfaction of using their special skills to serve others.

Are there teachers in our colleges and schools who shouldn’t be teaching foreign languages? Unfortunately there are—for a number of reasons. A myth that continues to persist is that anyone who can speak a language can teach it. This mistaken conception is one of the leading causes of poor language teaching at all levels. In schools across the country, native speakers who have never studied the structure of their mother tongue are frustrating students by the thousands.



At the other extreme, we find language teachers who can barely use the language. Teachers with limited mastery of the language often have limited success in teaching that language. This is most evident in elementary schools where teachers who can scarcely say *Buenos días* or *Guten Tag* are indelibly perpetuating their own errors in their students. At the university level, some PhD’s with brilliant academic credentials, who have been assigned to teach beginning and intermediate classes are beating into the ground any hopes that their students had for proficiency, as they lecture in English on the historical development or the grammatical complexities of the language.

Sometimes a situation develops in a school that causes the principal to go to the coach, or the drama teacher, or the band teacher and ask one of them to teach foreign languages. More often than not these teachers are “drafted” because they had

a couple of semesters of language study in college or because they lived for a period of time in a foreign country. Once in the classroom, many of these “draftees” just get the job done by focusing on grammar explanations because they mistakenly believe that those are their objectives. After all, that’s the way they were taught!

Are there language teachers in our colleges and schools who are good at their job? Fortunately there are, and the cases mentioned above should not diminish their successes. The examples of poor teaching we have described should not discourage us, because poor teaching can be changed. All language teachers, future or present, have the moral responsibility to examine themselves carefully to determine if they really are suited to teaching and if they have the proper skills and adequate training to teach the particular courses they are assigned to teach. If they are not, they should feel a strong obligation to take the steps to improve, or look for another career. In this chapter we will identify what goes into the making of a successful language teacher and will outline the steps which need to be taken to become one.

### What Are the Essential Qualifications?

What kind of a person is a candidate to teach a foreign language? Certainly more than just someone who can speak or who knows something about the language. Obviously there are additional qualifications. National guidelines call for the following characteristics to be present in someone desiring to become a language teacher.

**1. Intellectual capacity.** Generally speaking, *any teacher* must be a bright, capable individual who is interested in people, things, and events—someone with an intellectual curiosity who enjoys helping others learn.

**2. Desire to teach.** Perhaps the most important factor that sustains a teacher through all the ups and downs of teaching is the *desire* to teach. This desire can be seen best in the teacher’s enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is contagious, it converts and convinces, it combats burnout, and it keeps the teacher coming back in spite of disappointment and frustration.

**3. Language mastery.** Ideal language teachers must be at ease with the language. Their vocabulary should be broad enough that they rarely have to grope for words. Their pronunciation should be such that even though natives may recognize it as foreign, they have no difficulty understanding what they are saying. It should be free from a harsh and distracting American accent and should serve as a good model for their students to imitate. They should be able to understand the spoken language in most contexts, to read most texts with good comprehension, and to write with clarity and correctness.

**4. Strong conviction of the value of language study.** Since today's language teachers must constantly justify their existence, someone planning to teach a language must be personally committed to the position that *everyone* can gain from foreign language study, and that it should be an integral part of the "general education" we require in our schools and colleges. Candidates must be strongly committed to the teaching of languages.

**5. Appreciation for the culture.** Ideally, the teachers will have had residence in countries or areas where the foreign language is spoken and will have observed many of the cultural aspects first hand. They will have studied the civilization and way of life of the speakers of the language and will understand the differences between the target culture and their own. They will be able to explain culture to their students with a positive and accepting attitude.

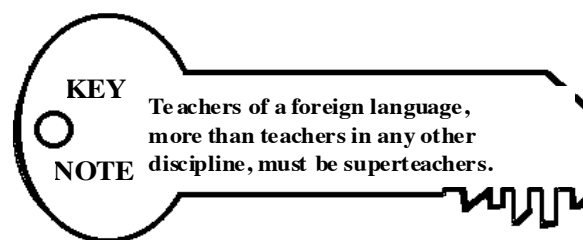
**6. Understanding of language and structure.** In addition to their personal mastery of the language, the teachers must be able to present the structure and vocabulary of the language to the students in a logical and clear fashion. They need to evaluate their students' progress, diagnose their problems, and prescribe activities that will lead them to proficiency. Natives do not automatically qualify with these abilities.

**7. Interest in and satisfaction with teaching.** Ideal teachers understand the nature of teaching, know the objectives of education in their areas,

and have a good grasp of the psychology of learning. They should be interested in working with people of all ages and enjoy teaching them—especially young people.

**8. "Teaching Personality."** We are referring to the special something that makes a teacher that seems innate. It involves those qualities that enable a person to establish rapport naturally, to sense intuitively what the students need, to perceive ways to present ideas, to set up situations, to involve group participation, and to inspire the students to learn willingly, yes, enthusiastically. However, we change the hackneyed expression from "*teachers are born, not made!*" to "*teachers are born, and then made!*" Teacher development work is universally applicable, but the teachers must bring much with them.

Teachers of foreign languages must be well-rounded individuals. Not only must they be "practitioners" of the language; they must also be "experts" in other areas such as English, music, art, anthropology, current events, history, literature, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, education, geography and language in general. Teachers must also be role models, counselors, facilitators, motivators, often friends, sometimes special advisors, actors, party hosts, guards, even police, nurses, and the like, but these added jobs are part time, thank heavens!



## PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS

With all that is expected of public school teachers, you may wonder who decides what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to fulfill their multiple responsibilities. There are at least three levels of organizations that make these decisions: (1) teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities; (2) professional associations and organizations in the field of



education; and (3) state departments of education.

**Teacher preparation programs** at colleges and universities determine what courses education students are required to take. For foreign language teaching majors, these courses generally include classes in language, literature, and culture; one or more courses in language teaching methods; and education courses. (More will be said on teacher preparation programs later in this chapter.) In order to make their graduates more marketable as teachers, many institutions require foreign language teaching majors to have a teaching minor in another subject.

Teacher preparation institutions do not have complete freedom to set their own requirements for teaching majors; they are largely constrained by the standards developed by **professional associations and organizations**. One of the most important of these organizations is the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC). Created in 1987, InTASC

is a partnership of state education agencies and national educational organizations dedicated to the preparation, licensing, and ongoing professional development of teachers. InTASC has developed a set of ten standards for teachers, which were revised in 2011, that serve as a model for many teacher preparation programs. You should become familiar with these standards, as you will probably hear them mentioned periodically in your education courses.

In the field of foreign language education, the professional organization for teachers is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL); this is an acronym that you should learn by heart. ACTFL has published a set of Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers that supplement the more general InTASC standards in the accreditation of foreign language teacher preparation programs. These standards are listed on the following pages.



### **InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards**

**Standard #1: Learner Development.** The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

**Standard #2: Learning Differences.** The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

**Standard #3: Learning Environments.** The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.

**Standard #4: Content Knowledge.** The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

**Standard #5: Application of Content.** The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

**Standard #6: Assessment.** The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

**Standard #7: Planning for Instruction.** The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

**Standard #8: Instructional Strategies.** The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

**Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.** The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

**Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration.** The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

**ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers****STANDARD 1: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons**

**Standard 1.a. Demonstrating Language Proficiency.** Candidates demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the target language, and they seek opportunities to strengthen their proficiency.

**Standard 1.b. Understanding Linguistics.** Candidates know the linguistic elements of the target language system, recognize the changing nature of language, and accommodate for gaps in their own knowledge of the target language system by learning on their own.

**Standard 1.c. Identifying Language Comparisons.** Candidates know the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages, identify the key differences in varieties of the target language, and seek opportunities to learn about varieties of the target language on their own.

**STANDARD 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts**

**Standard 2.a. Demonstrating Cultural Understandings.** Candidates demonstrate that they understand the connections among the perspectives of a culture and its practices and products, and they integrate the cultural framework for foreign language standards into their instructional practices.

**Standard 2.b. Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions.** Candidates recognize the value and role of literary and cultural texts and use them to interpret and reflect upon the perspectives of the target cultures over time.

**Standard 2.c. Integrating Other Disciplines in Instruction.** Candidates integrate knowledge of other disciplines into foreign language instruction and identify distinctive viewpoints accessible only through the target language.

**STANDARD 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices**

**Standard 3.a. Understanding Language Acquisition and Creating a Supportive Classroom.** Candidates demonstrate an understanding of language acquisition at various developmental levels and use this knowledge to create a supportive classroom learning environment that includes target language input and opportunities for negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction.

**Standard 3.b. Developing Instructional Practices That Reflect Language Outcomes and Learner Diversity.** Candidates develop a variety of instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and articulated program models and address the needs of diverse language learners.

**STANDARD 4: Integration of Standards Into Curriculum and Instruction**

**Standard 4.a. Understanding and Integrating Standards in Planning.** Candidates demonstrate an understanding of the goal areas and standards of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards, and they integrate these frameworks into curricular planning.

**Standard 4.b. Integrating Standards in Instruction.** Candidates integrate the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards into language instruction.

**Standard 4.c. Selecting and Designing Instructional Materials.** Candidates use standards and

curricular goals to evaluate, select, design, and adapt instructional resources.

### **STANDARD 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures**

**Standard 5.a. Knowing assessment models and using them appropriately.** Candidates believe that assessment is ongoing, and they demonstrate knowledge of multiple ways of assessment that are age- and level-appropriate by implementing purposeful measures.

**Standard 5.b. Reflecting on assessment.** Candidates reflect on the results of student assessments, adjust instruction accordingly, analyze the results of assessments, and use success and failure to determine the direction of instruction.

**Standard 5.c. Reporting assessment results.** Candidates interpret and report the results of student performances to all stakeholders and provide opportunity for discussion.

### **STANDARD 6: Professionalism**

**Standard 6.a. Engaging in Professional Development.** Candidates engage in professional development opportunities that strengthen their own linguistic and cultural competence and promote reflection on practice.

**Standard 6.b. Knowing the Value of Foreign Language Learning.** Candidates know the value of foreign language learning to the overall success of all students and understand that they will need to become advocates with students, colleagues, and members of the community to promote the field.

The ultimate authority that grants teaching licenses is the **state department or office of education**. In most states, the department of education grants licenses more or less automatically to students who have graduated from and been recommended by an accredited teacher preparation institution. However, states usually have additional testing requirements that teacher candidates must meet in order to satisfy the federal government, which, since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, has demanded that teachers be “highly qualified” in the subjects they teach. For foreign languages, this usually means that teacher candidates must pass an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview at a specified level, usually either Advanced Low or Intermediate High (see Chapter 7 for more information on these levels). In addition, many states require teacher candidates to pass a “Praxis II” content test for the language they will be teaching. The Praxis tests are designed by the company Educational Testing Services (ETS);

more information on the tests is available at the ETS website. Each state sets its own cutoff score for the Praxis that is considered a “passing” level. Some states require other tests. For information on the requirements in specific states, check the website of the state’s department or office of education.

### **Obtaining a Teaching License**

It is important to understand that the licenses granted by state departments of education are not simply as a “Spanish (or French or German) teacher”; rather, they are general licenses to teach at a specific level, either the elementary or the secondary level. In Utah, an elementary license allows teachers to teach grades K-8; a secondary license, grades 6-12. (This means that middle-school classes may be taught by someone with either an elementary or a secondary license.) Along with a license, teachers must have an **endorsement** to teach one or more specific subjects. For example, a candidate who graduates

from a secondary education program with a Spanish teaching major and a geography teaching minor would likely get a secondary license with an endorsement in Spanish and an endorsement in geography. You may have heard of licensed teachers going back to school to earn an endorsement in another subject; this simply means that they plan to continue teaching at the same level (high school, middle school, etc.), but they want to be qualified to teach another subject in addition to the one(s) they already teach.

In most states, teachers who have been teaching for several years can qualify a promotion or higher-level license by fulfilling additional requirements. In some states there are several levels of licenses, each of which is associated with a successive pay increase. An increasing number of states are requiring National Board certification (see Chapter 18) for their highest level of license.

An additional requirement for obtaining a teaching license in most states is to pass a criminal background check. To complete the background check, applicants must submit fingerprints for review by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and/or the state bureau of criminal identification.

### **Alternative Routes to Licensure**

In response to teacher shortages, most states have now made provisions for candidates to obtain a teaching license through routes other than traditional teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities. These routes are known as **alternative routes to licensure** (ARL). There are different alternative routes. Most often, teacher candidates in ARL programs are college graduates or professionals in other fields who decide to enter the teaching profession but do not want to return to college to complete a four-year education degree. Other ARLs are sponsored by nationwide programs such as Troops to Teachers and Teach for America.

It is difficult to make generalizations about ARL programs because they vary enormously in their requirements. Some states, including Utah, have fairly rigorous ARL programs. In order to qualify for a license under Utah's ARL program, candidates must have a bachelor's degree or higher with a major in the subject they plan to

teach. Participants in Utah's ARL program complete coursework determined by a transcript review, take required content knowledge tests, teach for a minimum of one year and a maximum of three years in a licensed position, successfully pass evaluations of classroom performance skills by the principal and, upon program completion, are recommended for licensure by the principal and ARL advisor. In order to obtain a world language endorsement in Utah, ARL candidates must pass the Praxis II content test and an Oral Proficiency Interview in their language and complete a course in language teaching methods.

Although ARL programs can streamline the path to licensure for non-traditional teacher candidates, these programs have certain drawbacks. Depending on their requirements, they may or may not prepare teacher candidates with the same broad base in adolescent development, multicultural and exceptional education, and classroom management that they would receive in a traditional teacher education program. Even in rigorous ARL programs, candidates generally receive much less mentoring than they would in a traditional teacher preparation program. Whereas candidates in traditional programs student teach in the classroom of an experienced mentor teacher, under the guidance of a university supervisor, ARL candidates are largely on their own. Even if an ARL candidate is assigned a mentor teacher, the mentor generally does not work in the same classroom, and is therefore unable to provide the same quantity or quality of feedback as a mentor teacher in a traditional student teaching experience. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that college and university students complete a traditional teacher education program rather than opt for an alternate route to licensure after they graduate.

### **Teaching in a Different State**

What happens if you obtain a teaching license in the state where you graduated from college but plan to teach in a different state? Most states have reciprocity agreements with other states whereby they allow teachers to begin teaching with another state's license, provided that they meet certain licensure requirements specific to their own state within a reasonable

period of time. These agreements are facilitated under the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement, which is actually a collection of over 50 individual agreements by states and Canadian provinces. Each individual “agreement” is a statement by that state outlining which other states’ licenses will be accepted, and on what terms. For more information on reciprocity agreements between specific states, check with the state department or office of education in the state where you plan to teach.

### IDEAL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Every year over 3,500 language teachers graduate from over 800 different teacher training institutions and find employment in the nation’s schools. With few exceptions, all states require, by law, an approved teaching certificate before allowing anyone to teach in the public schools. As previously mentioned, this certificate is usually granted automatically by the state upon the recommendation of any approved teacher training institution located in the state.

Ultimately, the nitty-gritty of education for certified teachers is in the hands of the *training institutions*, that is, the colleges and universities that actually set up the curriculum, teach the courses, supervise the teaching practicum, and make the final evaluation of the candidates. What we will do here is postulate an “ideal training program” for the levels where languages are taught.

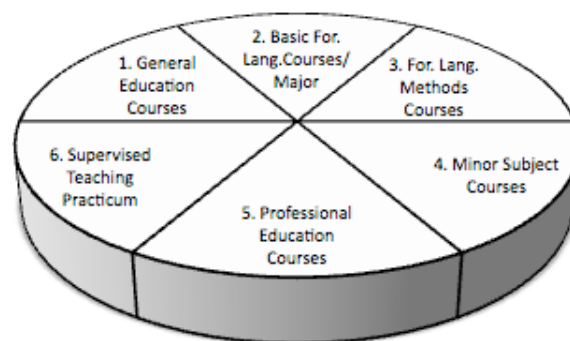
#### Secondary School Teachers

The large bulk of language teachers in the nation (currently more than 80,000) are at the secondary schools. What should go into the training of a successful secondary school teacher?

**Candidates.** In our discussion of the characteristics expected of secondary school teachers of languages, we mentioned that they needed to understand and enjoy working with young people, be capable classroom managers, and be convinced of the importance of language study in the public schools. Notice that these characteristics closely relate to the *personality* of the individual. The adage that some people are

“born teachers” contains a great deal of truth. There are others, however, who no matter how hard they try can’t develop a “feel” for teaching. Whether these qualities are innate or are developed as the person forms his or her personality is not certain, but it is clear that a *teaching personality* is necessary.

**The curriculum.** Typically, the training program for a secondary school language teacher consists of work in six areas, as illustrated in the following chart:



Let’s look with greater attention to detail at what the content and organization of these courses should be.

**1. General education courses.** Most of the educational institutions that train teachers have a “general education” or “liberal arts” component that must be completed by *all* graduates. Rightly so—a college graduate should be a well-rounded individual with a broad academic background, not someone whose studies have been limited to a narrow area of specialization.

This broad liberal arts emphasis is especially desirable in a training program for language teachers. It should include the humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, and the arts.

Some specific general education courses are especially relevant to language teachers. Among these are: general philosophy, social/cultural anthropology, cultural geography, comparative world cultures, and history of civilization.

If this liberal arts component is not a universal requirement of the *institution*, it should

at least be an integral part of the *teacher training curriculum*.

**2. Basic courses in the foreign language (major).** The ideal foreign language education program would consist of at least 30 semester hours of courses in the foreign language. They would include advanced grammar, conversation, reading and writing, culture, literature, and phonetics. These courses should be proficiency oriented, not just a theoretical or academic review of the grammar of the language. They should be taught in the foreign language, with ample opportunities for individual practice. The students should finish these courses with an ability to use the language for communication. Actual proficiency tests should be given often to determine if the student is reaching minimal levels of functional use and remedial work should be prescribed if necessary.

When native speakers of the language take advanced grammar classes, they should study the language structure sufficiently to prepare them to explain matters clearly to their students, who need something more than just an offhand “that’s the way you say it.” Too often natives can pass these classes because they speak fluently and correctly, but they really don’t understand the underlying grammatical concepts.

In a phonetics course, teacher candidates should not only study the sound system of the language in a formal way, but also work at improving their personal pronunciation until it is acceptable and can serve as a model to their students. They should also learn how to teach pronunciation.

The literature courses should be taught in a way that will permit continued personal development in all four skills. They should not be totally lecture oriented, and should require other assignments such as discussions, brainstorming, oral reports, and written papers.

The civilization and culture classes should go beyond the usual history/fine-arts emphasis (“Big C” Culture) and should include geography, study of contemporary patterns of life, values, and behavior. But prospective teachers must be prepared to teach more than folksongs, food, and festivals. They will also be teaching about the politics, economy, and social problems of the countries where the target language is spoken.

Some introduction to sociolinguistics should also be included.

It is essential that the language competence of the teacher candidates be evaluated in terms of actual performance in the language, not just the successful completion of a specified number of courses. This presupposes that some type of evaluation instrument, such as the ACTFL Language Testing International tests, be administered and that the students reach a minimal level of proficiency before being certified. The responsibility of providing activities both in and out of the classroom that will bring the students to this level lies with the training institution. It is also that institution’s responsibility to administer the tests and to certify the student’s proficiency. These tests should not be left until the final semester before graduation or certification—there must be time for additional work if needed. Most professional education groups currently recommend that teacher candidates reach a rating of Advanced or higher on the ACTFL/ETS speaking proficiency or an equivalent test.

**3. The language methods courses.** The program should include at least one, preferably two, methods courses—perhaps one to be taken before student teaching and the other during or after. The pre-service courses would prepare the students with basic techniques for teaching the major skills (speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing), managing the classroom, teaching culture, preparing audio-visual aids, evaluating and adapting texts, and adapting and using technology. The in-service or post-service course could explore more in depth the various theories of language acquisition and implications for teaching strategies.

These courses should not be taught by a “generalist” who has little training, interest, or experience in teaching the foreign language. Ideally, they would be taught in the language department by a specialist who is proficient in the foreign language and has had extensive personal experience in the foreign language classroom. Whenever possible they should be taught in the foreign language. The courses must not be limited to discussions of methodologies, but must include numerous opportunities for practice that allow the student to develop basic skills. These

practice sessions would obviously be in the foreign language. They should not be limited to one particular approach or theory, but should acquaint the future teachers with a wide range of methods and approaches.

Nine of the most important skills to be learned in these courses are:

1. Conducting classroom activities exclusively in the language.
2. Using authentic activities and exercises that develop student mastery of the structure of the target language.
3. Directing activities that guide students toward free, personalized communication in the language.
4. Providing numerous opportunities that develop listening and reading comprehension, as well as writing skills.
5. Using a variety of learning situations that bring the reality of the culture closer to the student in natural ways so it can be appreciated and assimilated.
6. Developing, encouraging and promoting student participation in events in the contemporary ways of life in the culture.
7. Using modern technology, such as computers and videos, to reinforce students' acquisition of the language.
8. Practicing the use of visual aids and electronic equipment to enhance classroom presentations.
9. Developing the ability to determine students' learning styles and adapting instruction to meet those learning styles.

Ideally these courses would include numerous presentations made by the students that are videotaped and critiqued by the specialist. Latitude should be present which allows teachers to adopt the teaching style that best suits his or her personality and preparation.

**4. Basic courses in the minor subject.** Most secondary school teachers prepare themselves to teach in a second area. It is very likely that their teaching assignment will require them to teach something besides their major. The core of minimum preparation for a teaching minor is also set up by the college or university. Foreign language majors should not neglect their

preparation in their minor area just because of the heavy demands of their major. They should prepare themselves well in the minor subject, take the methods course if there is one, and student teach at least one class in that subject.

But what about prospective teachers who are *minoring* in the foreign language and whose major is English, math, social sciences, music, or some other subject area? Only rarely do state and professional organizations provide guidelines for these minors. It is natural that these teachers be primarily concerned about their major area, but it is quite common (between 30 and 50%) for them to be assigned to teach the same classes that a language major would teach. In an ideal program, the language preparation of a minor would be the same as that of the major. The only difference might be the taking of fewer literature and civilization courses and focusing more on language competence.

Essential among the requirements for the minors must be the foreign language methods classes. A methods class in English or math will not give them the skills to teach Spanish or Japanese. While it may be true that these teachers might never teach advanced language classes, their mastery of the language should not be much different from that of a major. Similarly, the student teaching experience should include teaching at least one class in the foreign language.

**5. Supervised teaching practicum.** Prospective teachers should have a lengthy period of practice teaching—at the very least from eight to ten weeks—supervised by expert, experienced teachers and working with actual language learners. For students preparing to teach in the public schools, this will be the “student teaching” experience. The importance of this activity cannot be overemphasized. Student teaching influences perhaps more than anything else the way the teacher candidate will eventually teach. To the consternation of methods course professors, many student teachers seem to suffer a total lapse of memory as they student teach, forgetting all of the principles and techniques they practiced in the methods class. It is far easier for them to follow the example of their mentor teacher.



The mentor teacher is thus vital to the training program. This person should be selected with great care, preferably by trained FL specialists who can recognize good language teachers when they see them. These “master teachers” should be the type who can best help the student teacher learn. Some teachers are good models, but not good mentor teachers because they cannot yield their classes into the hands of someone learning to teach.

The university must go to great lengths to prepare this mentor teacher to be effective. There should be a training program and some specific guidelines that the mentor teacher is to follow. Some universities even give these teachers the status of *adjunct professor* and give recognition to the importance they play in the teacher education program. In addition to the recognition, other benefits can be included such as free classes at the university, special library and activities privileges, etc. These types of remuneration can be more important than a token honorarium.

The student teaching experience must be more than just observation. Eventually the teacher candidate should completely take over the classes and be responsible for the preparation of lesson plans, presentation of lessons, giving and scoring of tests, preparation of materials and visual aids, use of electronic aids, and all the other tasks expected of the regular teacher.

During the student teaching, frequent observation by, and consultation with, the mentor teacher and the specialist college supervisor should take place. Both are expert language teachers themselves. In a positive, supportive way these supervisors should critique the practicing teacher and offer specific suggestions for improvement. These supervisors will write comprehensive evaluations that will be the principal basis for hiring the individual.

**6. Professional education courses.** It is highly desirable for teacher development programs to start with some kind of “exploration of education” course. This course should come at the very beginning of the students’ program, in most cases, during the Freshman or Sophomore year, the earlier the better. This course sends the students out into the schools to observe a variety of programs and levels, and permits the students to decide if they really do want careers in

education. In a real sense these courses allow students to “deselect” themselves if they decide that teaching is not for them. It is very unfair to the students to wait until they have finished most of the coursework before sending them out into the schools. If at that time they decide against teaching, they have misspent several semesters of work in the teacher development program.

Having confirmed their desire to be a teacher, the students would then take some “foundations of education” courses that introduce them to some general principles of teaching. Among other topics, these courses would treat different philosophies of education, explore effective approaches to teaching, present principles of classroom management, practice development and use of visual aids, address ways of meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse learning needs, and explore uses of technology in education.

### **Elementary School Language Teachers**

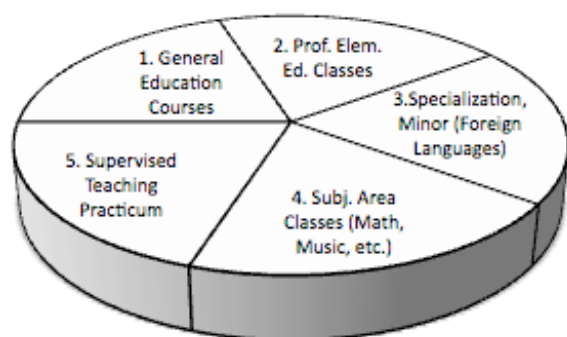
The acronym **FLES**, Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools, is commonly used to refer to language teaching to children. Typically, university students who have decided to teach at the elementary school level must complete a major in elementary education. Sometimes, but not always, a minor or area of specialization is also required. Elementary teachers are required to be able to teach a much broader curriculum than specialized secondary school teachers, and generally speaking work harder at relationships with their students. Chapter 15 discusses in detail the types of language programs found in elementary schools.

**Candidates.** In addition to the characteristics discussed at the beginning of this chapter, elementary school teachers need to:

1. Understand and enjoy working with children.
2. Be capable, patient classroom managers.
3. Know the elementary curriculum.
4. Be convinced that foreign languages have a necessary place in the total perspective of elementary education.

Generally speaking, elementary school teachers who work with a typical “sequential

FLES” program do not need to be extremely fluent in the foreign language, but they must have a level of mastery which will allow them to be confident in teaching the class in the language and to be a good model to the children. We do not recommend programs that allow non Spanish-speaking teachers to try to teach the language. Although these programs build on children’s natural enthusiasm for learning a language and give them a positive attitude about language learning, the children usually develop poor



Let’s look at each of these areas in greater detail.

**1. General education courses.** It is just as desirable for elementary school teachers as it is for secondary school teachers to get the general liberal arts education that is required of all university graduates. In the elementary school the teachers’ expertise extends across several disciplines and the teachers must be well rounded in their outlook on life.

**2. Professional education courses.** As with the secondary program, the elementary program should begin with an exploratory course that will take prospective teachers out into the schools and allow them to decide at an early point if they have chosen the correct career. A high level of teaching skill is expected of the elementary school teacher. These skills are developed in the professional education courses that all candidates must take. They would examine philosophies of education, organization and financing of school systems, ethics, elementary school curriculum, and so on.

pronunciation, learn many incorrect patterns, and soon become bored with the constant repetition of what they hear on a tape or see and hear in a video. Teachers desiring to teach in immersion programs should have near-native fluency and native speakers can find alternative routes to licensure. (See Chapter 15.)

**The Curriculum.** Training of elementary school teachers usually consists of courses and practice in five areas as follows:

**3. Specialty areas or minor.** Most programs allow students to specialize in areas of interest such as: early childhood education, special education, and music. It is in one or more of these areas that future elementary teachers would make their preparation with a foreign language. Although non-immersion FLES teachers are at a much lower level of language use than junior and senior high school teachers, these students should take an advanced grammar course, conversation, a pronunciation and phonetics course, a civilization and culture course, and at least an introduction to literature course. In addition to these basic language courses, they should take at least one methods class in language teaching. If possible, a course in children’s literature of the language they will be teaching would be very valuable. The content and structure of the methods courses would be basically the same as outlined for the secondary program.

**4. Subject area methods courses.** Since the elementary school teachers are normally expected to teach all the curriculum subjects of a grade, they must prepare by taking methods classes in several areas such as: teaching math, teaching science, teaching language arts, teaching reading, and teaching social studies. In addition they usually take courses in art, music, children’s literature, and physical education.

**5. Supervised teaching practicum.** The student teaching experience has been mentioned as being highly critical in the teacher training process. The candidate must be able to put into practice all the concepts and skills he or she has been practicing in all the other courses. He or she also needs the constructive criticism and help of both an experienced cooperation teacher and a college supervisor. In the case of teachers who will have

a minor or specialty in foreign languages, the student teaching should provide opportunities to teach the foreign language, and have the help and guidance of supervisors who are also experienced language teachers. It is essential that mentor teachers be selected with great care and they should be given training and guidelines on how to work effectively with student teachers.

**Teachers in Immersion Programs.** What was said above about lower language competency expectations does not apply to teachers in immersion programs. (See Chapter 15 for a description of immersion programs.) The need for language fluency in teachers in this type of program is even greater than that of secondary school teachers. The state of Utah, for example, requires immersion teachers to have Advanced Mid level proficiency (as opposed to Advanced Low for non-immersion teachers). Ideally, these teachers are native or near-native speakers of the target language who handle the language with ease and are able to comfortably present the regular curriculum of the grade they are teaching.

Prospective immersion teachers need to complete the same preparation as regular elementary school teachers; they may be assigned to a normal program and must be prepared for that. In addition, they should have at least three additional courses: 1) a methods class in teaching foreign languages; 2), a foundations course in immersion education, which would focus on research and practice related to immersion programs; and 3) a course on content-based instruction, which would focus on teaching and assessing the curriculum of subject areas, such as social sciences, math, physical sciences, and art in the foreign language.

Although immersion programs have been around for decades, specific training programs for immersion teachers are still few and far between. The University of Minnesota's Dual Language/Immersion Certificate program was the first in the nation to offer a coherent set of courses designed specifically for immersion teachers. More recently, Utah has become the first state to require a specific endorsement for teachers in immersion programs. This endorsement entails course work in foundations of immersion education; second language literacy development, content-based second language

curriculum, instruction, and assessment; language acquisition; and student teaching or a practicum. (More on qualifications for immersion teachers in Chapter 15.)

If the candidates are not native speakers of the language, they should have some special training in the specialized vocabulary of the classroom. Students who attended elementary school in the target language will have learned this vocabulary. Candidates to teach in immersion programs should complete a practicum or at least part of their student teaching in an immersion program.

### **GETTING THE MOST FROM THE TEACHING PRACTICUM**

Every responsible training program has a "practicum," an experience where the candidates "practice" their newly-learned skills. For those preparing to teach in the public schools, this will be *student teaching*. For students preparing to teach on a university level, this will be the *teaching assistantship*. Whatever your area may be, the practicum usually involves working with an experienced teacher, and you will be observed and evaluated by a supervisor. The following suggestions can be of great help:

**1. Preparing to student teach.** The teaching practicum will be a very demanding experience. It is different from regular teaching in that student teachers will probably be teaching someone else's students, and they cannot draw on past expertise because this will probably be their first teaching experience. It is wise to prepare as much as possible beforehand; much can be done before the experience begins. You can spend a considerable amount of time preparing visual aids (flash cards, pictures, clock, conversation transparencies); remember, you will not have the files which all experienced teachers build over the years as they teach. You will need to "over prepare" as you develop your lesson plans. It will be extremely helpful for you to have a copy of the text being used in the classes you will teach, which will allow you to focus your visual aids and planning preparation on lessons which will be assigned to you.

**2. Relating to your mentor teacher.** Obviously, it is important to relate well to the mentor teacher(s). Remember, you cannot totally fill their shoes. You are not expected to be as effective; you don't have their experience. They know the system, the students, the textbook, the program, the school, the community, the administration, and the parents. Your goal is not to imitate them, but to use any ideas or suggestions they give to be as effective as possible with your own qualities and limitations and with your own teaching style.

Some mentor teachers are better models, some are better facilitators. You will need to adjust to the personality of your assigned partner (or assigned mentor teachers), and you will need to accept the role which they want you to follow. Ask for advice and suggestions about your teaching and volunteer to help and cooperate however you can. Be careful never to criticize any colleague, especially in front of the students.

**3. Relating to your university supervisor.** Somehow you have to consider your supervisor as your partner and ally. Don't forget that he or she is on your team and is there to help you become a good teacher. Ask for suggestions and always react to them in a positive way. While it is true that she/he or he will evaluate your teaching, you must accept the evaluations in a spirit of humility. If you become defensive and try to excuse your mistakes you will make little growth. Remember, this is a learning situation; try to remain teachable.

**4. Teaching someone else's classes.** It is difficult even in the best of situations to step into someone's classes and take over. The students will not treat you with the same respect given to the regular teacher. Sometimes they will test you

to see what they can get away with. If you radically change things, they will resist. You may have to disguise your intents with a "challenge" approach, saying "I have been so impressed with your ability to use the language, I'll bet you can go half the class period without using any English." Most mentor or partner teachers give full support to the student teacher by making it clear to the students that you are an "associate" teacher and that you have equal authority and will both be responsible for the grades.

If it appears hard for you to implement some of the ideas and techniques you have learned in the methods class, don't make the excuse, "they don't do that in this school." Try anyway! You might be able to make some very valuable contributions to the program. Many mentor teachers indicate that they learn a great deal from their student teachers, and get many new ideas that they include in their own teaching.

Sometimes, you may just have to be content with doing what the mentor teacher does, and say to yourself, "My turn will come. When I get my own classes I'll teach them differently."

**5. Becoming a "doer and a collector."** After you have learned the routine, procedures might become boring and there is a tendency to just sit back and let the mentor teachers do most of the work. Don't just sit in class observing. Find out as much as you can. Have other texts been tried and discontinued? Why? Is there a language lab? Learn how to operate it with ease. Have you inventoried the mentor teacher's files and materials collection? Visit other language teachers in the school. Volunteer to work with other areas in the school, such as working in the attendance office, taking tickets at sports events, and helping with the school newspaper or play.

## CONCLUSION

Language teachers must be a "special breed." They must begin with an intellectual curiosity. They must be competent in the language and several other areas. They must enjoy teaching. We see that the initial development of a foreign language teacher can be a rigorous process that really never stops. Those teachers who have been "drafted" into a new position of foreign language teacher may find that they have to go back and do some remedial work; the above ideas and procedures should be very valuable to "draftees." Those whose language skills are not completely adequate can always find ways to bring them up to par. Those whose teaching is not interesting or motivating will have to find ways to change that situation. But all of us can improve, and we should all be constantly working, experimenting, getting involved in workshops and conferences, and searching for ways to reach our goals more effectively. The

above suggestions can help immensely to solve the developmental problems of beginning teachers at all levels. Although our development as a teacher begins with a rush in our college years as we take the courses, complete the student teaching, and perfect our language skills, it goes on after we get a job and get our own classrooms with our own students. In actuality, it should continue on through the rest of our careers as teachers. Current in the professional literature is the expression ***lifelong process***, applied to teaching careers or to commitment or to teacher development. The idea that teaching is a *forever* dedication is a good note to use in the finale of this chapter.

**REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

- American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. (1990). AATSP Program Guidelines for the Education and Training of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. *Hispania*, 73, 785-794.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1999). *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking* (1999 revision). Alexandria, VA: Author. Available at [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org).  
*These guidelines were developed by ACTFL as an academic analog to the government language proficiency level descriptions, originally developed by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and currently revised and used by the various language schools participating in the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR).*
- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. (1986). *A nation prepared: Teachers for the twenty-first century* (report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession). New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED268120)
- Guntermann, G. (Ed.). (1993). *Developing language teachers for a changing world* (ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.
- Holmes Group. (1995). *Tomorrow's teachers: A report of the Holmes Group*. East Lansing, MI: Author. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED399220)
- Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. (2011). *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards*. Available at:  
[http://www.ccsso.org/resources/programs/interstate\\_teacher\\_assessment\\_consortium\\_%28intasc%29.html](http://www.ccsso.org/resources/programs/interstate_teacher_assessment_consortium_%28intasc%29.html)
- Language Testing International. <http://www.languagetesting.com/>  
*The website of a licensee of ACTFL that describes the speaking proficiency tests developed by ACTFL, and gives instructions about how to take them.*

**Image Credits**

- p. 7: Teaching. (n.d.). *Public Domain Clip Art*. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from  
<http://www.pdclipart.org/albums/Education/teaching.png>. Public domain.

**ACTIVITIES FOR METHODS CLASSES**

1. Summarize the characteristics listed in this chapter for “candidates” for your own particular level and make a checklist. Do you qualify? What are the areas you need to work on? What courses could you take to improve your preparation? Set up a specific plan for personal improvement and work on it during the upcoming semesters. Coordinate this plan with your methods instructor and make periodic reports.
2. Evaluate the teacher training program you are currently in. Compare the requirements and features of that program with the guidelines suggested in this chapter. What areas of preparation are not required? Are they important? Could and should they be included in your program? Discuss this in class with your instructor and peers and make some specific recommendations.
3. Interview some experienced language teachers. Ask them what training they received and find out how they feel about that training. What additional courses or experiences would have been helpful to them? Were there some parts of the training that they feel were of no value? Discuss your findings in class. Submit a report of the interview to your methods instructor.
4. The methods instructor can assign students to different groups and have each group research some aspect of foreign language teacher training, such as elementary school teachers, college courses, education department courses, and others. Form panels and present your findings in discussions in class.
5. Spend some time thinking about where you would like to get a job teaching. Write a résumé and begin setting up a job placement file. Decide which professors or administrators know you best and could write the most accurate letters of recommendation. Consult with the university placement service.
6. Make it a point to become acquainted with the foreign language specialist in your state and in a nearby school district. Discuss their foreign language programs and specifically talk about how they feel about teacher development.
7. Get acquainted with the professional organizations that help us set standards for language teacher training. Go to the library and find issues of their journals. Look through the journals to find articles about teacher qualifications and preparation. Report your reading to your instructor.
8. Obtain a list of the required courses for education majors at your university. For each course, determine which of the InTASC Standards and ACTFL Program Standards it addresses. Are all of the standards addressed in the required courses? Discuss this in class with your instructor and peers.