



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH

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| Abstract

English is widely recognized as a global language that can bring many benefits to its learners, such as access to education, employment, social mobility, and intercultural communication. Language standards and systems play a vital role in the learning and teaching of English. They provide a common framework for communication and ensure that learners are developing the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in academic and professional settings. This article examines the role of language standards and systems in English language learning and teaching from a variety of perspectives. It explores the different types of language standards and systems, their benefits for learners and teachers, and the challenges of implementing them in the classroom. The article also discusses the importance of cultural awareness in language teaching and learning and the need to create inclusive learning environments that respect the diversity of learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

| Keywords

Language Standards, Language Systems, English Language Learning, Challenges in Implementation. and Future of Language Standards

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1. Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language in the world, and it is used in a variety of global contexts, including international business, science and technology, education, and government.

In international business, English is the language of contracts, negotiations, and meetings. It is also the language of global trade and investment. In science and technology, English is the language of research and publication, as well as technology development and innovation. In education, English is the language of higher education in many countries around the world, as well as many international online courses and educational programs. And English is the official language of many international organizations, such as the

United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the European Union. It is also the language of diplomacy and international relations.

In the 21st century globalized world, English language proficiency can open up many opportunities for people in both their personal and professional lives. For example, people who are proficient in English can travel more easily, work for international companies, and access information and resources from all over the world.

And English language proficiency is an important skill for success in many academic and professional fields. For example, most scientific research is published in English, and many international conferences and workshops are conducted in English.

Language standards and systems play an important role in language learning and teaching. They provide a common framework for describing language proficiency, which can help learners set goals and track their progress. They also provide a basis for developing language teaching materials and assessments.

2. What are language standards and systems?

Language standards and systems are a set of criteria that are used to describe language proficiency. They typically include a description of the skills and knowledge that learners need to have at a particular level of proficiency. Language systems are the different ways that language can be used to communicate. They include things like oral communication, written communication, and sign language. There are a number of different language standards and systems in use around the world. Some of the most common include:

- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): The CEFR is a framework for describing and comparing language proficiency levels across all European languages. It is divided into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, with A1 being the lowest level and C2 being the highest level. The CEFR is used by language teachers and learners all over the world to assess and track language progress (<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/>).
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS): IELTS is a standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English speakers. It is one of the most popular English language tests in the world and is accepted by most English-speaking countries for immigration and educational purposes. IELTS assesses four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (<https://www.ielts.org/>).
- The Pearson Test of English (PTE): The PTE is another standardized test of English language proficiency that is used for immigration, study, and work purposes (<https://www.pearsonpte.com/>).
- The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): The TOEFL is a standardized test of English language proficiency that is used for university admissions and other purposes (<https://www.toefl.org/>).
- Other language standards and systems: There are many other language standards and systems that are used around the world, depending on the specific language and country. For example, in China, the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) is used to assess Mandarin Chinese proficiency. In Japan, the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) is used to assess Japanese proficiency.

In Vietnam, the government has also issued several other legal documents related to the teaching and learning of English, such as the Law on Education, the Law on Higher Education, and the Examination and Assessment Regulations.

Decree No. 1400/2008/N-CP of the Government on the approval of the project "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system in the period 2008-2020".

Decree No. 40/2014/N-CP of the Government on the regulation of the 6-level foreign language proficiency framework for Vietnam.

Circular No. 23/2018/TT-BGDT of the Ministry of Education and Training on the regulation of the foreign language proficiency assessment test.

The issuance of decrees and legal documents on language standards and systems in the teaching and learning of English is an important step in improving the quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam. These documents have created a legal framework for the teaching and learning of English, helping educational institutions develop teaching programs and assessments that meet the needs of learners.

In developing and assessing language proficiency, language standards and systems are so important. Such as: They provide a common framework for describing and measuring language skills. This makes it possible to compare the language proficiency of learners from different backgrounds and track their progress over time. They help learners set goals and track their progress. By understanding the different levels of language proficiency, learners can set realistic goals for themselves and track their progress towards those goals. They provide a basis for developing language teaching materials and assessments. Language teaching materials and assessments can be developed to target specific language skills and align with specific language standards. They promote language equity and inclusion. By providing a common framework for describing and measuring language skills, language standards and systems can help to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of their background or native language.

3. How do language standards and systems help learners?

Language standards and systems can help learners in several ways. They can help learners set specific and measurable goals for their language learning, track their progress, develop their skills, and access appropriate resources. For example, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes six levels of language proficiency, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (mastery). A learner who is at the A2 level might set a goal of reaching the B1 level within a certain period, as (Europe, 2001). In addition, they can help learners track their progress towards their goals by providing clear benchmarks to measure against. For example, a learner can track their progress by taking standardized tests, such as the IELTS or TOEFL, or by asking their teacher for feedback on their language skills.

Language standards can help learners develop their skills by providing a clear understanding of what they need to be able to do at each level. For example, a learner at the B1 level of the CEFR should be able to understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Language standards can help learners access appropriate resources by providing a common framework for describing language skills. For example, learners can use the CEFR to find language teaching materials and assessments that are tailored to their specific needs.

This means learners can see how they are doing and identify areas where they need to improve. For example, the CEFR provides descriptors for each level of proficiency, which can be used to assess learners' skills and knowledge. Moreover, language standards and systems can be used to develop language teaching materials that are aligned with the needs of learners at different levels of proficiency. This can help learners learn more effectively. For example, textbooks and online courses can be designed to target specific CEFR levels. And language standards and systems can be used to assess language proficiency. This can be done through standardized tests, teacher-made tests, or other methods. This information can be used to make decisions about placement, instruction, and assessment. For example, the CEFR is used by many language schools and organizations to assess the language proficiency of learners.

Beside, language standards and systems can be used to support learners' motivation and engagement :

Firstly, language standards provide a sense of accomplishment. They help learners set realistic and achievable goals for themselves. As learners achieve these goals, they experience a sense of accomplishment, which can boost their motivation and engagement.

Secondly, language standards provide social interaction. They can be used to create opportunities for learners to interact with each other in a meaningful way. For example, learners at the same level of proficiency can be grouped together for language practice activities, even if they have different native languages. This type of social interaction can help learners feel supported and motivated in their language learning journey.

Thirdly, they provide access to authentic materials. They can be used to select authentic materials that are appropriate for learners' levels of proficiency. For example, learners at the B1 level of the CEFR might read a news article or watch a video that has been adapted to their level. This type of exposure to authentic materials can help learners feel connected to the language and culture they are learning, which can boost their motivation and engagement.

These frameworks give learners a sense of direction and purpose, and they can help them feel confident that they are making progress towards their language learning goals.

In addition to these specific examples, language standards and systems can also support learners' motivation and engagement in a more general way by providing a clear and structured framework for language learning.

In the classroom, teachers can use language standards to set clear and achievable goals for their learners. For example, a teacher might set a goal for their learners to be able to understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. by the end of the year. Or teachers can create opportunities for learners to interact with each other in a meaningful way. For example, teachers can have learners work together on projects, or they can have learners participate in role-playing activities. In these ways, teachers can create a classroom environment that is supportive and motivating for all learners.

I would like to list other examples of how language standards and systems can help learners, such as : they can help learners to communicate more effectively with native speakers ; to understand different cultures and perspectives ; to improve their job prospects ; to access higher education; and to participate in civic life.

Language standards and systems can be a valuable tool for language learners and access appropriate resources (Nation, 2001).

4. What are some of the challenges of implementing language standards and systems?

There are several challenges associated with implementing language standards and systems. They include developing and implementing language standards and systems, which can be expensive. This can be a challenge for organizations with *limited resources*. There may *not be enough political will* to implement language standards and systems. This can be a challenge in countries where there is a lot of linguistic diversity. There may *not be a consensus* on the best way to implement language standards and systems. This can make it difficult to get everyone on board. There may be *resistance from stakeholders*, such as teachers, learners, and parents. This can make it difficult to implement language standards and systems effectively. It can be *difficult to assess language* proficiency in a way that is fair and accurate. This can be a challenge for organizations that are using language standards and systems to assess learners.

These are some examples of how these challenges have played out in real life:

- In the United States, there has been a long-standing debate about the role of English as the national language. This debate has made it difficult to implement language standards and systems that are

fair to all learners. One piece of evidence is a 2017 Pew Research Center survey that found that 62% of Americans believe that English should be the official language of the United States. Another piece of evidence is the case of *Arizona v. United States*, in which the Supreme Court ruled that Arizona could not require all government employees to speak English.

- In India, there are over 100 languages spoken. This linguistic diversity has made it difficult to develop and implement language standards and systems that are universally accepted. One piece of evidence is a 2011 census that found that 121 languages are spoken in India. Another piece of evidence is a study by the Central Institute of Indian Languages that found that there are over 1,650 dialects of Hindi spoken in India.
- In China, there has been resistance from some parents and teachers to the implementation of English language standards and systems. This resistance has made it difficult to ensure that all learners have access to high-quality English language education. One piece of evidence is a 2018 article in the *South China Morning Post* that reports on the resistance from parents and teachers to the implementation of English language standards and systems in China. Another piece of evidence is a 2019 blog post by a Chinese education expert that discusses the resistance from parents and teachers to the implementation of English language standards and systems in China.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of organizations that are working to implement language standards and systems. These organizations believe that language standards and systems can play an important role in improving language learning and teaching.

5. What are the benefits of using language standards and systems?

Obviously, we cannot deny the benefits of using language standards and systems. Because language standards and systems can help improve communication between people who speak different languages, This can be important in a globalized world where people are increasingly interacting with each other from different cultures and backgrounds. They can help increase the efficiency of language learning. This is because they provide a clear and concise framework for learning, which can help learners focus their efforts and make better progress. They can help enhance the assessment of language proficiency. They provide a common framework for assessing learners, which can help ensure that assessments are fair and accurate. They can help promote language diversity by ensuring that all languages are given equal status. This is important in a world where many languages are under threat of extinction. And they can help improve language policy by providing a foundation for making decisions about language use. This can be important in countries where there is a lot of linguistic diversity. As follow:

- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a language standard that is used in over 40 countries to describe language proficiency. The CEFR has been used to improve communication between people who speak different languages by providing a common framework for understanding language levels (<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/>).
- The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a standardized test of English language proficiency that is used by over 10,000 organizations in over 140 countries. IELTS has been used to improve the efficiency of language learning by providing a common framework for assessing learners.
- The World Bank uses language standards and systems to assess the language proficiency of its employees. This helps to ensure that all employees have the language skills they need to communicate effectively with each other and with clients.

- The government of India has developed a language policy that promotes the use of all languages in the country. This policy is based on the principle of equality for all languages and has been used to promote language diversity in India.

6. The future of language standards and systems

The future of language standards and systems is uncertain (Crystal, 2003), but it is likely to be shaped by a number of factors, including *the increasing globalization of education*. As education becomes more globalized, there will be a growing need for language standards and systems that can help ensure that learners from different cultures and backgrounds can communicate effectively with each other. This is because language is a key to communication and understanding, and it is essential for learners to be able to communicate effectively in order to succeed in a globalized world. *The development of new technologies*: New technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, are being developed that have the potential to revolutionize language learning and teaching. These technologies could be used to develop new language standards and systems that are more effective and efficient than traditional methods. For example, artificial intelligence could be used to create personalized learning experiences for learners or to develop virtual language learning environments. *The changing needs of learners* The needs of learners are constantly changing. As learners become more mobile and have access to more information, they will need language standards and systems that are flexible and adaptable. For example, learners may need to learn multiple languages in order to succeed in their careers, or they may need to be able to learn languages quickly in order to meet the demands of their work.

These are some examples of how language standards and systems could be used in the future (Graddol, 2006):

- They could be used to develop personalized learning experiences for learners. This could be done by using data from learners' interactions with language learning materials to create a customized learning plan.
- They could be used to develop virtual language learning environments. These environments could be used to provide learners with opportunities to practice their language skills in a safe and supportive environment.
- They could be used to develop new assessment tools. These tools could be used to assess learners' language skills in a more comprehensive and nuanced way than traditional methods.

7. Conclusion

Language standards and systems play an important role in language learning and teaching. They provide a common framework for describing language proficiency, which can help learners set goals and track their progress. They also provide a basis for developing language teaching materials and assessments. There are a number of challenges associated with implementing language standards and systems. However, the benefits of using them outweigh the challenges. As the world becomes more globalized and technology advances, the role of language standards and systems is likely to become even more important. Overall, the future of language standards and systems is bright. They have the potential to play a major role in improving language learning and teaching in the years to come.

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