Competencies of a Successful Adult ESOL Instructor:
Exploring the TESOL Standards

By

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Abstract
The proposed study explores the existing Standards for TESOL instructors, particularly their potential and current use as a framework for self-assessment and goal-setting as part of ongoing professional learning. The researcher has made meaning of each standard for herself and has made her learning process public to enhance professionalism in the field of ESL teaching and to contribute to a community of practice that supports ongoing learning. She gathered greater understanding of each standard by drawing on the literature, her own experience as a student in a TESOL course, and the insights of experienced ESL instructors as revealed in interviews. Author and experienced participants see value in the Standards as a framework for self-assessment and professional learning if they are introduced in certification programs and reviewed periodically and collaboratively by collegial teams of instructors. Suggestions for making the standards more accessible and useful are offered.
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Glossary

A glossary is provided to ensure that author and readers have similar understandings of technical terms essential to this study, including general education terms and terms more specific to language learning. Definitions are presented here as well as in the text. Wherever possible, definitions are supported with references. In a few cases, the definition articulates my own understanding of the terms as they are used in this study.

**assessment for learning** is an investigative tool to find out as much as possible about what students know and can do and what confusion, preconceptions, or gaps they may have so that teachers can decide what can be done to help students progress (WNCP, 2006).

**English Language Learner (ELL)** is the term in current use that refers to students in the process of acquiring English as an additional language (Reyes & Vallone, 2008, p. 178). In some jurisdictions, this term is preferred for K-12 students, replacing ESL, because many of the students are learning English as their third or even fourth language. **English as Second Language (ESL)** refers to students in the process of acquiring English as a Second Language (Reyes & Vallone, 2008, p. 178). This term remains in common use to refer to adult learners, although it is often true that adults as well as students are learning English as their third or even fourth language, as reflected in the TESOL reference to speakers of *other* languages. I believe the term may be in transition for adult learners as well and so I may refer to adult learners as...
critical inquiry in education is the curious and reflective examination of a teaching and learning situation to gain insight about practices that may be hindering student achievement. The goal of critical inquiry is to improve student learning by improving teaching practice and so potential solutions are considered. In their work with schools, Kaser and Halbert (2009) have found that the strongest school leaders are characterized by constant curiosity and a mindset of persistent inquiry, thus avoiding "the complacency or cynicism that sometimes comes with experience" (p. 62).

community of practice is the term coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) to refer to a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do: they learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

ESOL Program is a curriculum planned and delivered to teach English to adult speakers of other languages. In this study, ESOL and TESOL are terms used interchangeably to refer to instructors who teach English to adults.

moral purpose "Moral purpose in educational change is about improving society through improving educational systems and thus the learning of all citizens. In education, moral purpose involves committing to raise the bar and close the gap in student achievement" (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005, p. 54). "The central moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, wherever they exist, are narrowed" (Barber & Fullan, as cited in Bezzina, 2007, p. 61).
**instructional leadership** includes specific behaviours such as collaboration, peer coaching, inquiry, collegial study groups, and reflective discussion, to promote professional dialogue among educators (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, pp. 132-135). Instructional leaders support collaboration among educators, develop coaching relationships, encourage and support the redesign of programs, and apply the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development. Instructional leaders may encourage action research or conduct it themselves to inform instructional decision and promote professional growth.

**personal leadership** is the desire of an individual to take charge of his or her life. It is an outlook on life and one’s role in the world. Personal leadership requires a commitment to balance, a sense of purpose, and values and it involves having an individualized mission that involves seeking continual improvement (Thomas, 2002, n.d.). In this project, I understand personal leadership as the desire and ability to manifest one’s thinking by establishing a strategic growth plan and remaining committed to it until it is achieved.

**phonology** is “the science of speech sounds including especially the history and theory of sound changes in a language or in two or more related languages.” (Britannica online dictionary)

**professionalism** is a set of internalized character strengths and values directed towards high-quality service to others through one’s work (Stenson, 2006). In the TESOL/NCATE Standards for P-12 ESL Teacher Education Programs (2003), **professionalism** is the domain represented as at the core of the four
other intersecting teaching Standards domains. In this document, professionalism includes having instructors understand ESL research and history; participate in partnerships, collaborate with colleagues, advocate for students, and seek out ongoing and relevant professional development.

**Professional development** is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement (NSDC, n.d.). Day (1999) explained the term in more detail:

> It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning, and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. (p.4)

Finally, Evans (2008) linked professional development to professionalism by defining it as “the process whereby people’s professionality and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced (p. 30). However, the term professional development, like staff development, has sometimes been used to describe inservice or training chosen and paid for by an employer such as a school district. In this study, professional learning is a term used interchangeably with professional development to emphasize ownership of the learning by educators themselves (Brown & Cherkowski, 2011). Professional learning may involve workshops or training sessions but also includes reflective practice, such as self-assessment and goal-setting.
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Inc. (TESOL) is a professional association or community with a mission to "advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages worldwide" (TESOL, n.d. website home page). It is governed by a Board of Directors and active participation of members in governance is encouraged. The organization marked its 40th anniversary in 2005-2006 (TESOL, n.d. History). The association brings together teachers or instructors and administrators at all educational levels, providing a wealth of research, resources, and learning opportunities.

**TESOL instructor** is the term used in this study for an instructor who teaches English to adult students who currently speak other languages. Because not all instructors who teach English to speakers of other languages are members of the TESOL organization, I have used this term interchangeably with ESOL instructor.

**TESOL educator** is the term used in this study for a person who teaches those who are preparing for TESOL certification as adult ESOL instructors.
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CHAPTER ONE:

THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN TESOL LEARNING

Thousands of individuals like me come from all over the world to English speaking countries, most of us with an ambition for a better life. In order to be successful in our newly adopted homes, proficient knowledge of the English language is essential. Many of the courses offered to aspiring Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) instructors are of short duration, lasting approximately six weeks. With such a brief period of study, important aspects of instruction may be omitted or underemphasized. Because a plethora of institutions have sprung up to certify TESOL instructors, it is unclear whether all of them provide the quality instruction that will allow their graduates to be effective transmitters of knowledge.

Even in cases where high quality initial preparation occurs, ongoing effectiveness and professionalism for TESOL instructors, as for other educators, depends upon continued professional learning and development. A set of professional Standards, such as those developed by the TESOL professional association (2008) for teachers of adults, were designed to provide a framework for ongoing learning within communities of novice and experienced instructors who build a common language with which to reflect on their practice and share their knowledge with each other. However, there is little information available about the extent to which novice and experienced instructors are familiar with the TESOL (2008) Standards, see them as relevant to their work, and use them as a guide to self-assess and improve practice.

In this study, I have made meaning of the Standards for myself, as an English language learner and as a TESOL course graduate with additional background in preparation for K-12 teaching. I also interviewed five experienced TESOL instructors to access their perspectives on the relevance of the Standards to their teaching and as a basis for their self-directed professional
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Learning. My purpose was to model use of the Standards for my own professional learning and to initiate ongoing conversations about the quality and development of professional practice within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) among ESOL or TESOL instructors.

I envision that this study will contribute to use of a Standards framework to deepen TESOL instructor’s learning, equipping them to be increasingly skillful in their instruction and serve their students effectively. I expect that this study will enable me to begin my career as an ESOL instructor and move toward a role as an ESOL educator (of instructors) or program administrator by developing a deep understanding of professionalism. In this study, I am sharing both the process and outcomes of my development as a contribution to the community of ESOL instructors and educators.

Introducing Myself and My Background

I was born in India and received most of my education there before starting my second master’s degree at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) in 2010. Having had all of my formal education in English, I have been in an informed position to compare the structure of the English language with those of my native Punjabi and Hindi, the latter two being similar in grammatical structure.

When I was growing up, my classmates and I were required to communicate in English at school, except during Punjabi and Hindi classes. I used to speak in Punjabi at home and in either Punjabi or Hindi with friends, depending on which language they understood better. My peers and I struggled to grasp a few aspects of the English language. For example, pronunciation of various sounds led to some interesting moments when many students in the same classroom had different versions of the same sound. Sometimes the teachers themselves were the greatest enemies of pronunciation. It was not uncommon for me to hear the same word vocalized in a
These experiences have helped me understand how difficult a task it can be for a grown person, who speaks a language that has significant structural disparities with the English language, to learn it from the beginning. And how challenging it must be for an instructor to teach every small aspect of the language to such students successfully! Many skills and competencies on the part of the instructor are required for successful ESL instruction. Through the proposed study I want to encourage ESL instructors to access a framework of skills and competencies that will support them in their ongoing professional learning. I will begin by modeling my own learning as a TESOL instructor using a Standards framework and continue by interviewing experienced TESOL instructors about the value of the Standards for their professional development.

My professional goals are to become a TESOL instructor and, after gaining some experience teaching English to new Canadians, become a TESOL instructor-educator to prepare and support TESOL instructors. With master's degrees in English and in leadership, I may someday be interested in pursuing TESOL program administration.

My experience learning three languages simultaneously has contributed to my current interest in language learning. In my context, learning these languages was not a colossal challenge because I lived the languages. By this, I mean that I experienced constant exposure to all three languages at home, at school, and in the community. However, because I grew up in those three languages, my situation may be different from the experiences of some of the ESL educators I plan to interview for this study. A goal of this research is to expand and confirm or revise my own experiences as a language learner and novice instructor with the perspectives of experienced instructors.
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Overview of the Study

In this study, I examined the current and potential use of the TESOL Standards framework (2008) for self-assessment and growth-planning throughout an ESOL instructor’s career. I reviewed literature related to ESOL teaching to gain insights into what Standards are available, how they are intended to be used, and how experienced instructors are actually using them. To generate data collection for this study and become familiar with the TESOL (2008) Standards, I reflected on the qualities that I appreciated in my instructors as a language learner. Next, I took a six week introductory TESOL course and I kept a reflective journal to document the process and my own responses. A final important source of data was interviews that I conducted with a small number of experienced ESOL instructors. My data analysis involved comparing my own insights and those of experienced instructors with the literature, in order to understand how the TESOL Standards can be applied effectively by instructors to support ongoing professional learning.

The Complexity of English Language Learning

Many people who come to an English speaking community from a non-English speaking one are not at the same advantageous position as those who come from a multi-lingual background such as mine. I hope to learn more about what instructional strategies and sequences of instruction make second language acquisition easier and permanent for these people. What I learnt from my studies in India was focussed on teaching English to individuals who have had at least a small amount of exposure to the language. Because teachers and students of English in India share a common mother tongue and a common culture, the complexity of English teaching is reduced. However, there is a magnitude of complexity that comes with teaching English to those who are completely alien to the rules of the language and whose first languages are
diverse. I also wonder how the English language could be learnt without reference to or
dependence on a mother tongue and culture shared by the student and the teacher.

How can the Standards help in answering my questions related to TESOL? I am
interested in learning what I will need to do to keep up with the latest research in the field to
maximize my own professional growth, my future students’ learning, and to give full justice to
my profession. This study will be an important beginning for my own career as a TESOL
instructor and educator and I hope it will contribute to a professional, learning-oriented attitude
for others in these fields.

**Focus Questions**

To focus my investigation and guide my analysis, I developed one central question with
three related questions. The central question for this study is: *How can TESOL instructors,
including myself, understand and adapt the TESOL Standards for assessing development and
planning ongoing professional learning?* Related questions include:

1) *How well do the TESOL Standards describe the competencies that are important to me,
from my own experience as a language learner and TESOL student, and from the
literature?*

2) *How well do the TESOL Standards describe the competencies that are important to the
experienced instructors that I interview?*

3) *How can the TESOL Standards be adapted or explained to make them more accessible
and useful for beginning and experienced ESL instructors?*

With this study, I intend to embrace professionalism by planning the ongoing self-
management of my own learning. I hope that my modeling of this approach to ESL teaching will
inspire other instructors to participate actively in a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger,
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1991) that allows each of us to share our learning and enhance our professionalism.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have framed a learning opportunity that came about as a result of my moral purpose as an educator. I am concerned that the quality of ESOL instruction may not always be sufficient to enable newcomers, ESOL learners, to share the benefits of Canadian society. The problem presents opportunities for teacher or instructor leadership in this area to contribute to ongoing professional learning within a community of practice amongst ESOL instructors, which is the purpose of this study. I have proposed to make meaning of the TESOL Standards for myself and as a starting point for professional conversations among ESOL instructors.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review for this study is to inform my understanding of the Standards movement, specific Standards for ESOL instructors, and to deepen my knowledge of the content and process of ESOL instruction. The education leadership literature helps me to frame this study as an act of teacher or instructor leadership within a professional community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When I analyzed the data for this study, I drew on the literature to inform my understanding of the Standards. I first considered insights from my own experience as a language learner and then drew on the reflective journal that I kept during the time I took a TESOL course. Finally, I analyzed interviews with five experienced TESOL instructors, to supplement my own experiences and to build a broader understanding of the usefulness of the TESOL (2008) Standards for self-assessment and goal-setting for ESOL instructors.

To prepare for the analysis, I have organized this literature review to begin with articles related generally to the Standards movement in education. Next, I explored readings on some of the prevalent TESOL Standards, followed by those that detail current knowledge about ELL and ESOL curriculum and approaches to instruction. My literature review concludes with readings that support my moral purpose in education and inspire me to see myself as moving toward teacher leadership or instructional leadership in the field of teaching English to adult learners.

The Standards Movement

Frameworks for professional practice are not exclusive to the education fields but exist in other professions as well, including nursing and social work. Beck, Hart, and Kosnick (2002) have described two approaches to K-12 educational improvement: (a) implementing curriculum Standards, and (b) implementing Standards for teaching practice. The first assumes that student learning will be improved through a prescribed curriculum. Lachat (1998) confirmed that
curriculum Standards define what all students should know and learn at high levels. Advocates of these Standards propose that students benefit by raising expectations for learning as well as promoting the use of multiple assessment strategies and continuous or periodic comparison of one's developing competencies with these expectations. Lachat also wrote that Standards-based instructional strategies develop teachers' capacities to look closely at student work, to reflect upon students' strengths and needs, and to provide more varied learning strategies for students.

In contrast, advocates of the teaching Standards movement "note that teachers, like their students, must be engaged with the subject matter and understand it deeply, have expertise in making it meaningful to students, and have latitude to exercise their expertise in classroom decisions" (Beck, Hart, & Kosnick, 2002, p.176). Although the approach to improving education in the two kinds of Standards differs, both contribute to an environment where it is common for professional educators to check their students' performance and their own against an established set of criteria.

**Related Standards Frameworks**

In this section I review several Standards frameworks in the field of education and identify their purpose and content. I describe comprehensive Standards for K-12 teaching, for school administrators, and for K-12 ESL instructors. Reviewing these related Standards further illustrates the power of the Standards movement and provides context for understanding Standards frameworks for ESL instructors who work with adults. In hindsight, this preparation for my study might have benefitted from a review of standards frameworks for adult education, given that adults have some specific characteristics and needs as learners that are distinct from those of children. However, I began with an area with which I was familiar – K-12 teaching – and expanded my search into the TESOL field specifically.
Standards for K-12 teachers. Danielson (1996) developed a framework of components for professional K-12 teaching practice that can be used to meet the self-directed learning needs of novices or enhance the skills of veterans. In this framework, broad domains include planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibility. Danielson proposed that the most powerful use of the framework is for reflection and self-assessment, which makes teaching more purposeful, thoughtful, and rewarding. Other uses for a Standards framework include mentoring and induction, peer coaching, and supervision. Finally, Danielson proposed that a Standards framework is the public’s guarantee that the members of a profession hold themselves and their colleagues to the highest expectations.

Another Standards framework of interest is the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) Standards for the Education, Competence, and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia (2012). The British Columbia College for Teachers, a regulating body for K-12 schools in the province, developed the Standards as a powerful force for professionalism by highlighting the complex and varied nature of teachers' work to support academic and social success for students. These Standards were developed to establish common, public expectations for the practice and conduct of the province’s K-12 teachers and to establish a regulatory framework to guide the College in decisions related to teacher education programs, certification, fitness to practice, and discipline. The eight Standards include: (1) educators value and care for all students and act in their interests; (2) educators are role models who act ethically and honestly; (3) educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development; (4) educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and communities in schools; (5) educators implement effective practices in area of classroom management, planning, instruction, assessment, evaluation, and reporting; (6) educators have a broad
knowledge base and understand the subject areas they teach; (7) educators engage in career-long learning; and 8) educators contribute to the profession.

A third relevant Standards framework is the Teacher Leader Model Standards (2011), which are intended to codify, promote, and support teacher leadership as a vehicle for transforming schools to meet the needs of 21st century learners. Teacher Leader Model Standards quote York-Barr & Duke (2004) to define teacher leadership: “The process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement”.

The purpose of this set of Standards is to stimulate dialogue about the knowledge, skills, and competencies teachers need in order to become leaders in their schools, district, and the profession. These Standards offer support for teacher leadership practice and for implementing teacher leadership roles within schools and districts. They include guidelines regarding transforming teacher authority and influence, expanding teachers’ roles, creating structures to support teacher leadership, preparing teachers for leadership, promoting and recognizing teacher leadership, and sustaining teacher leadership over time.

The Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011) are laid out as a series of broadly stated domains that identify critical dimensions of teacher leadership. Each of the seven domains includes functions that further define the scope of actions or expectations related to that domain. The seven domains are: (a) fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning,(b) accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning, (c) promoting professional learning for continuous improvement, (d) facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning, (e)
promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement, (f) improving outreach and collaboration with families and community, and (g) advocating for student learning and the profession.

**Standards for school administrators.** In 2007, the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association (BCPVP A) established Standards to foster continuous professional learning for effective school leadership. The purposes described in the document are professional preparation and development of aspiring principals and vice-principals, induction of new principals and vice-principals through mentoring and coaching and/or cohort support programs, personal professional self-reflection and growth planning of principals and vice-principals, and coherence among existing and new leadership programs. The Standards also engender public trust in the profession. They offer the public assurance that members of the profession are discharging their duties as defined in a way that builds confidence in them individually and as a whole.

Similar sets of Standards for school leaders exist in jurisdictions across North America, including other Canadian provinces. For example, Alberta Education (2009) recognized the complexity of responsibilities and competencies required of principals in the management of teaching and learning within K-12 schools. The result was the Standards document entitled *Principal Quality Practice Guideline: Promoting Successful School Leadership in Alberta.* This framework describes successful principals as accomplished teachers who also practice quality leadership to provide opportunities for maximum learning and development for all students in their schools. These Standards come include clearly stated knowledge, skills, and attributes to form the basis of recruiting principals, preparing school principals, and assessing each principal's performance. The seven leadership dimensions include: *fostering effective relationships,*
embodying visionary leadership, leading a learning community, providing instructional leadership, developing and facilitating leadership, managing school operations and resources, and understanding and responding to the larger societal context.

Other suggested uses of the Alberta Standards include principal's self-reflection on the quality of their own daily practice, principal's ongoing professional growth, and principal supervision and evaluation. "These guidelines provide a reference for faculties of education in developing and delivering principal preparation programs, for teachers and vice-principals who are preparing for school leadership roles, for beginning principals in their efforts to meet stakeholder expectations and for superintendents in their supervision and evaluation of principals." However, it should be noted that the use of the Alberta principals' Standards for evaluation differs from common use of the BCPVPA Standards, which are provided as a resource for self-assessment and growth-planning but not for external evaluation.

**Standards for K-12 ESL Instructors.** *English as a Second Language Standards* (TESOL, 2001) describe the characteristics that school-aged second language learners typically exhibit at various stages of the English acquisition process. These Standards have been created as a resource to help educators who work with K-12 ESL students. These Standards are presented as a tool that teachers can use to help them to: make placement decisions, plan instruction, set goals, monitor and report on student performance, and plan professional development. This set of Standards also presents at least five principles of effective second language learning that is easily confirmed in the literature.

For example, Ellis (2004) identified the importance of focusing on individual differences amongst the learners as well as focusing on meaning and form in second language learning. The principle, as expressed in the Standards, recommends that ESL students’ learning should build
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on their previous educational and personal experience. Students should also be encouraged to apply their learning in their oral and written language. A second principle of effective second language learning is that students' cultural identities should be honoured by instructional practices. A third principle is that all K-12 teachers, not just ESL specialists, need to address the learning needs of ESL students and be prepared to adjust instructional approaches to accommodate the different levels of English proficiency and different learning rates and styles. ESL students' cognitive and academic growth should continue simultaneously with their language learning.

Learning a language means, among other things, using the language to socialize, learn, query, imagine, and wonder. ESL students show considerable variation in their rates of development of oral proficiency and writing. Integrating language teaching with the teaching of curricular content in thematic units simultaneously develops students' language, subject-area knowledge, and thinking skills. Exercises in grammatical structures that fragment language at the word or sentence level and neglect the discourse level are not effective. To summarize, the five principles of quality ESL instruction that I found evident in the TESOL Standards for K-12 teachers include: (a) building on current knowledge, (b) honouring cultural identities, (c) differentiating instruction, (d) providing simultaneous language and content learning, and (e) balancing word or sentence work with meaningful use of the language.

The TESOL/NCATE Standards for Preschool to Grade 12 ESL Teacher Education Programs (2003) were developed to support pre-service programs that would prepare teacher candidates with a range of basic competencies. These Standards are divided into the five domains of Language, Culture, Instruction, Assessment, and Professionalism. Each domain is divided into specific Standards. The Language domain includes describing language and
language acquisition and development. The *Culture* domain includes the nature and role of culture and cultural groups and identities. The *Instruction* domain includes planning for Standards-based ESL and content instruction, managing and implementing Standards-based ESL and content instruction, and using resources effectively. The *Assessment* domain includes understanding issues, such as cultural bias, and building a repertoire of tools to determine the level of students’ language proficiency development. In a graphic representation of the Standards, at the core of intersecting teaching Standards domains is the domain described as *Professionalism*. Professionalism includes having teacher candidates understand ESL research and history, participate in partnerships, collaborate with colleagues, advocate for students, and seek out ongoing and relevant professional development.

**My Primary Focus: The TESOL Standards for Adult Education**

Two Standards frameworks for adult English language learning contribute to my understanding of the qualities of a successful ESOL instructor: a set developed for *education programs for TESOL instructors* and another focusing on *instructor performance*. The program Standards are relevant because they contain descriptions of the competencies that graduates of that program achieve as qualified TESOL instructors. Teaching or instructor Standards are directly applicable as a self-assessment, growth-planning, and goal-setting tool for pre-service and practicing instructors, especially when the broad dimensions are accompanied by more detailed descriptors of what each standard looks like in practice at various levels of proficiency.

**TESOL Program Standards**

TESOL’s *Program Standards for Adult Education English to Speakers of Other Languages Programs* (2000) were written by a task force of experts to define at a national (United States) level the components of a quality adult education ESOL program. This set of
Standards describes program quality indicators in eight distinct areas: Program Structure, Administration and Planning; Curriculum; Instruction; Recruitment, Intake and Orientation; Retention and Transition; Assessment and Learner Gains; Staffing, Professional Development, and Staff Evaluation; and Support Services. These standards provide sample measures and performance Standards that programs of any size can use to measure continuous improvement toward preparing students to become ESOL instructors with essential competencies. Cognizant of the great diversity among adult ESOL programs across the country, the task force specifically wrote these standards so that they would be useful to program directors or administrators, coordinators, and instructor-educators for all types of programs. These standards lay out quality indicators that can be used in reviewing an existing program or guide the planning for a new ESOL program. Although the standards are complete, the Adult Program Standards Task Force expressed the intention to continue to develop supplementary materials, such as examples for the quality indicators, as well as a self-review instrument for program development.

**TESOL Instructor Standards**

This set of Standards was published by TESOL in 2008 (see Appendix A) and they were my primary focus in this study. This document represents the core of what ESL instructors who teach adult learners should know and be able to do. TESOL’s Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults (2008), which I refer to simply as the Standards (note capitalization), is divided into eight domains with one standard in each. The eight domains are Planning, Instruction, Assessment, Identity and Context, Language Proficiency, Learning, Content, and Commitment and Professionalism. Each standard includes a brief description, performance indicators that detail the expert skills for each standard, vignettes to illustrate performance indicators as practiced by various ESL instructors, and a discussion section for reflection on performance
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indicators. Proposed uses of this Standards framework are to provide ESOL instructors with insight into what constitutes effective teaching in the ESOL field and to foster their self-reflection and self-managed professional development or professional learning. The authors also suggest that the Standards could be used in instructor training programs and as a guide for hiring and assessing ESOL instructors.

The Standards domains appear similar to the principles of quality instruction that are evident in the standards for school-age English Language Learners (ELL) and also have commonalities with Danielson’s (1996) teaching framework. Teaching today – for children or adults, native speakers or language learners – consists of knowing the learners’ abilities, needs, and cultural backgrounds; planning a program to meet those needs and move their learning forward; and assessing their progress accurately to help them set appropriate, personalized goals.

Management of the classroom environment is important, to create social conditions that support learning and encourage students to learn from each other as well as from the instructor. Good teaching does not end with the cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment but extends to professional responsibilities to collaborate with other instructors to improve teaching and student learning. Professionalism includes the responsibility of instructors to monitor and expand their own learning and to keep up with new developments and trends in their field.

For English language learners of all ages, there is an important focus on honouring the mother tongue and native cultural identity as well as differentiating instruction to build on the current knowledge of each student. The Standards recommend meaningful use of the English language for real communication, supplemented with vocabulary and grammar instruction. In the TESOL (2008) Standards for instructors of adults, there is emphasis on understanding adult
learning and in involving students in decision-making, such as choosing what should be assessed.

**TESOL Course Modules as a Standards Framework**

Topics of study in a TESOL instructor’s course can be seen as a standards framework, particularly if student continues to refer to them for ongoing reflection and growth-planning once he or she is teaching. The *International Teaching of English as Foreign Language Corporation* (2007) that I took as part of the data collection for this study included twelve modules in the Diploma Course for TESOL. The first was a *study skills* module to optimize the prospective instructor’s performance in researching and presenting material and learning how to encourage students to develop good study skills. The second module was a brief *history of English language teaching* and its potential future. The third module was *second language acquisition* and the fourth module explored different approaches to *syllabus design*. The fifth module investigated *discourse analysis* and how it could be applied to teaching English as a second language. *Material design* was the main topic of the sixth module and *phonology* of the seventh module. The eighth module looked at various assessment methods and their relative effectiveness. The ninth module focused on *classroom management* relevant to different student groups. *Embedding learning technologies*, the tenth module, reviewed current materials on the development of English as a global language. Module eleven was on *continuing professional development* and the final twelfth unit required aspiring ESL instructors to write a 5000 word research paper on some aspect of language instruction.

I present these twelve topics as a framework for initial instructor development that may be adapted for ongoing professional learning. To make this framework more manageable for this use, I have grouped the topics together into broader areas. In this curriculum, it is evident that
instructors of adult language learners need to develop *interpersonal skills; subject and content knowledge; course design and program planning* that includes assessment; classroom management skills; and *research skills for ongoing learning*.

**Summary of the Standards Review**

In the preceding section I explored the literature related to the characteristics of quality adult ESL instruction by first exploring various examples from the standards movement in education. Common understanding of learning outcomes, as defined in curriculum standards, appears to be important for teachers and students in K-12 education. Standards or criteria for teaching performance are also defined for K-12 teachers of English Language Learners to use to assess their own performance and set goals for improvement. The importance of a set of standards to guide professional self-reflection and self-assessment as well as to provide a public guarantee of high achievement is reiterated in Danielson's (1996) writing and in the introduction to the BCPVPA Standards (2007). I view both the content and intended use of the standards for general teaching and for teaching of ELL children as a complement to the ESL Standards for adults and to the topic modules in courses designed for instructors. Each set of standards applies current research and accepted practice to the field of language learning and teaching.

**ESL Teaching: Curriculum**

In this section of the literature review I outline my current knowledge of important aspects of the ESL curriculum that instructors are to deliver to their English language students. I explore nuances of second language acquisition and the place of grammar and vocabulary in second language learning. However, I begin by exploring the meaning of learning a second language and why this process might require special consideration.
Language

Ellis (1997) defined a second language as any language learnt subsequent to the mother tongue. He further explained that second language acquisition, as a field of study, is influenced by and influences other fields such as linguistics, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education. Language teachers need to acquaint themselves with second language acquisition research to make sure that the teaching content is contributing directly to language learning. This direct contribution can be assured by matching the teacher’s instructional approach to the learner’s preferred style of learning. Ellis (1997) proposed that the study of second language acquisition may help teachers in two ways. First, it will enable them to make their assumptions about learning explicit so that they can examine them critically. In this way, knowledge of how individuals learn language will help teachers or instructors to develop clearer understanding of how the learners they are teaching acquire the second language. Second, the study of language acquisition will provide information to support educational decisions.

Ortiz-Marrero and Sumaryono (2010) have agreed with the importance of the instructor’s language acquisition knowledge and also with encouraging students to use their first language to help learn a second language. They explained that the students have the resources to transfer their mastery of their home dialect or first language to the task of learning a second language. They also emphasized the importance of teachers honouring both the oral and the written languages of the learners to validate the learners’ strengths for learning a new language.

Grammar

In my own experience, grammar is often taught as a collection of formulas to be deposited into the heads of language learners. What usually results from such second language learning efforts is a mechanised, temporary form of learning. Just as communicative uses of
language cannot be learned by memorizing random sentences, grammar cannot be understood by memorizing rules that are simply handed out to students. One grammar structure leads to another in a chronological order but in an apparent contradiction, learning a language and its grammar occur as a whole, simultaneously and not independently.

Sjolie (2006) wrote that grammar instruction needs to correspond to the way language develops and not just to the surface appearance of grammar. Language and grammar acquisition occur developmentally and hierarchically. The difference between the student’s and the teacher’s understanding of grammar can result in misinterpretations. Sjolie (2006) further wrote about the challenge faced in teaching English as a second language by the widely varying components of global versions of the language, which raises the question of which “Standard English” ought to be taught. He further mentioned the contention that grammar is about much more than forms and its teaching is ill-served if students are simply given rules. The more current and promising approach to grammar instruction is to present grammar as a tool for language learning: a developing understanding of grammar helps speakers or writers to construct sentences that may be used for authentic communication.

Gottlieb’s (2006) focus is on the needs of school-age language learners, particularly the need to acquire language and content knowledge simultaneously. However, I believe an example presented by Gottlieb pertains to adult ESL learners. Unfamiliar sentence or clause structures such as reflexive pronouns can lead to common misinterpretations. Gottlieb (2006) provided an example of how relative clause structures differ from language to language using the following sentence: Someone pushed the mother of the girl [who] was on the balcony. Native speakers of English prefer the interpretation where the girl was on the balcony. This is a preference for attaching the relative pronoun [who] to the noun phrase that appears lower in the structure.
However, native speakers of Spanish, German, Dutch, French, and Russian have been shown to prefer attaching the relative pronoun [who] to the noun phrase that appears higher in the structure, in this case *the mother*. Such structural ambiguity results in different meaning for the sentence depending on the noun to which the pronoun refers. This is also an example of the knowledge of language acquisition that well-equipped second language instructors may apply in their teaching.

**Vocabulary**

English language learners face significant challenges related to vocabulary. “Research indicates that knowledge of English vocabulary is one of the strongest correlates of the discrepancy between the reading performance of native English speakers and that of ELLs” and that ESL students “need a strong introduction to vocabulary of all kinds to help them progress with their everyday and academic language skills (Freeman & Freeman, as cited in VanDeWeghe, 2007, p. 101-104).

Sims (2010) shared his communicative and visual approaches to vocabulary teaching: “I have found that when students understand the words and their meanings, their critical-thinking skills improve because they feel confident in using the words to describe the *how, why and because* of events and issues. By linking vocabulary to images and then linking those images to students’ everyday lives, I have found teaching vocabulary to be much less of a chore and more enjoyable for everyone in the room” (p. 128). Other promising and current strategies include the use of cognates (words similar to student’s native languages). Multimodal approaches that combine visual, aural, and written representations of words can be especially helpful, as is exposing learners to key words used in different contexts. In sum, “comprehensiveness of instruction coupled with use of the native language, in support text and cognates, are powerful
tools for increasing the vocabulary of ELL students” (Blachowicz et al, as cited in VanDeWeghe, 2007).

**ESOL Teaching: Instructional Approaches**

writers agree that there is no single best method to teach English language. The choice of the best method is supposed to be a conscious decision based on an instructor’s own experience, training, and beliefs (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). They also mention that teaching is complex and involves the orchestration of many spheres in support of students’ learning, including physical, emotional, practical, behavioural, political, experiential, historical, cultural, spiritual, and personal. The complexity increases when language teaching is the focus because methods are further influenced by instructors’ “view of the nature of the language, of language teaching and learning in general, and by their knowledge of the particular sociocultural setting in which the teaching and learning takes place” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. ix). Even more complexity relates to the instructors’ experience in learning and teaching as well as the immediate needs of specific students. Advocating for one approach to teaching over all others would not be feasible in such an intricate teaching scenario. Aspiring and practicing instructors need to be aware of the history of ESL teaching as well as the most prominent past and current methods so they can learn to orchestrate learning for students by drawing on the appropriate method for the situation.

The grammar translation method, as described by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), is one of the oldest approaches to teaching a second language. This traditional method involves translating a reading passage from the target language into a native language and then practicing the vocabulary and grammar structures. Students are required to answer comprehensive questions from the passage in the target language. Techniques used in the grammar translation
method include finding antonyms or synonyms for certain words from the text. Students are taught to recognize cognates by learning the corresponding spelling or sound patterns of the languages. Grammar rules are to be memorized using the deductive method, which involves moving from general rules to specific conclusions. Practice exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks and building sentences with assigned words are used to develop vocabulary. Students are given a topic and asked to create a summary of a reading in the target language.

The main goal of the grammar translation method is to enable students to acquire the grammar and vocabulary to read literature in the target language. The grammar translation method is not concerned with preparing students to communicate orally: literary language is considered superior to spoken language. The instructor has an authoritative role in the class and most of the class interaction is from the teacher to the student. Students’ native language plays an important part because translations form the core of this method (Larsen-Feeman & Anderson, 2011).

The direct method became popular when grammar translation failed to prepare students to communicate orally in the target language. No translation is allowed in this method. “Meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 25). The main goal of this approach to instruction is that students learn to communicate orally in the target language. Students are also encouraged to think in the target language and to self-correct their errors but they are not to use their native language in the classroom. Instructors and students are partners in the teaching and learning process.

Instructional strategies or techniques associated with the direct method can include reading aloud the passages or dialogues or answering questions in the target language as well as
conversation practice, dictations by the instructor, map drawing, paragraph writing, and so on. The sole purpose of this method is learning to communicate in the target language without any use or consideration of the students' native language. However, I believe that without knowing the native language of the students, instructors are less likely to understand the difficulties that a student might face in learning the new language. It also seems to me that learning opportunities will be lost when there is no use made of the native language in any form.

The audio-lingual method is also an oral-based approach (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) with communication in the target language the main goal. This method drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. It also has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology. Conditioning is used to help the learners acquire sentence patterns in the target language, so that the learners can override their native language habits to target language habits to speak like a native in target language. The instructor leads the class and students imitate the teacher and respond appropriately. Dialogues form the basis for teaching new vocabulary and structural patterns. Grammar is thus induced from the examples. Student to student interaction is mainly through the use of instructor directed drills, with oral/aural skills receiving most of the attention. Except for the intention of this method to override the native language, I believe this method could be quite useful in teaching a second language for oral communication.

The total physical response method values the importance of students' enjoyment in their learning experience (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This method largely tries to imitate the manner in which a person acquires their native language. It begins with modeling, where the instructor gives the commands and then carries it out with the students. The students then demonstrate their understanding of the tasks. Students practice reading and writing the commands after that. To reduce the stress of learning a second language, total physical response
was developed to allow students to speak when they are ready to speak. Meaning is made through body movements and there is no need to include the students’ native language. I am somewhat skeptical about shy students ever being ready to participate but the enjoyable element of the approach might motivate them to speak up eventually. For me, this approach has ample potential for teaching beginners.

The task based method of teaching a target language requires the students to communicate with each other for the completion of a task at hand (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The tasks, selected for their usefulness to students, are presented by the teacher and each has a clear intended outcome. The instructor only provides the initial input and for the rest the students communicate with each other to complete the task. All four skills of the language are covered with special focus on the meaning dimension of the language. Techniques that can be utilized for a task-based language teaching approach include information-gap task, opinion-gap task, reasoning-gap task, and so on. This approach is helpful in encouraging the students “to use the target language actively and meaningfully” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 160). In my opinion, this method is appealing because of the active nature of learning-by-doing and because it provides students with real reasons for understanding each other, which is the purpose of language.

“The participatory approach is based on a growing awareness of the role that education, in general, and language education, specifically, have in creating and perpetuating power dynamics in society” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 170). The goal of this approach is to teach meaningful language and “to raise the political awareness of the students” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 175). Dialoguing and problem posing are the two most often used techniques of this approach. “Students learn how to use language in real-world situations in order
to address their problems. Knowledge is jointly constructed with the teacher asking questions and the students responding” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 176). All of the language skills are covered but the highest importance is given to literacy in the target language. Correctness in form is valued, in order to help learners to communicate effectively with the authorities. This method also appeals to me because of its intention to help create confident and self-realizing students as they expand their knowledge of a situation and their ability to express that knowledge. I believe this method is of immense importance in helping immigrant learners adjust more easily to a new place with a new language.

Not a method but a significant methodological innovation, technology can be used in a second language classroom to provide teaching resources and to enhance learning experiences or support autonomous learning. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) have cited Kern’s explanation that “rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language pedagogy and language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and new ways to create and participate in communities” (p. 200). The goals of technology use are to have students access authentic language and use language in interaction and knowledge creation. Students’ autonomy in their learning is also a goal of this method.

I concur with the importance of recognizing the opportunities that are opened to immigrants through technology. Because most information today is readily available through the world wide web, a range of everyday business such as completing government forms or tax returns, making medical appointments, paying bills, and so on occur by accessing the internet, making knowledge of technology essential for success in society. For example, my parents who are well versed in English but still settling as new immigrants, have recently discovered the ease of using an ipad for convenient knowledge and tasks. Technology also offers immigrants of
retirement age a means of passing time productively while their children are at work and grandchildren at school. Technology can provide autonomy in learning and help to develop confidence because, with technological skills, adult learner will not feel as dependent on others for new information.

Teachers strive to support the autonomy of students and the teacher’s role is to monitor active involvement in using the language to connect to people and gather information. “Language is seen as a tool for social interaction, relationship building, and for knowledge creation” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011, p. 209). Some use of the native language is allowed to supplement learning the target language. Techniques to provide technological language learning experiences include blogs, computer-assisted language learning software, digital portfolios, distance education, electronic presentations, electric text Corpora (collection of language texts in written or spoken form that are digitized for computer searches), podcasts, and many more. Use of technology is not to be seen as a classroom replacement but as an accessory to it.

The sheltered method emphasizes the concept of comprehensible input, which simply means making concepts understood by the learner. Grasp of meaning is accomplished through the use of real objects and materials (realia), manipulatives (rods, attribute blocks, and geo boards in mathematics), visuals (study prints or textbook illustrations), graphic organizers (matrices, Venn diagrams, semantic maps and webs), and planned opportunities for interaction between all individuals in the classroom. The sheltered method encourages the students to “use their emerging English speaking skills to understand new ideas and the teachers modify their own speech, emphasizing vocabulary through critical pauses before key phrases, frequent restatements and paraphrases, and occasionally exaggerated intonation” (Sarrer & Winningham,
In my opinion, this method is valuable for its potential of putting entirely new concepts in perspective for the learner.

**From Ideology to Inquiry**

Due to the complexities in teaching there is no fool proof method to adopt for success with English language teaching for all students. To learn how to best meet the unique needs of students with the resources at hand, professional instructors need to experiment with different combinations of approaches using critical inquiry. Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011) summarized the process of critical inquiry:

In order to move from ideology to inquiry, teachers need to inquire into their practice. They need to reflect on what they do and why they do it, and they need to be open to learning about the practices and research of others. They need to interact with others, and need to try new practices in order to search continually for or devise the best method they can for who they are, who their students are, and the conditions and context of their teaching. (p. 233) Kaser & Halbert (2009) identified inquiry as one of six prominent mindsets of leaders whose schools focus on learning for all students rather than on socioeconomic sorting. An inquiry habit of mind implies better understanding and decision-making through questioning and reflection. The authors emphasized the value of trust among colleagues to support inquiry: “Building commitment to change and improvement requires positive relationships and for this, the mindset of trust is essential.” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009, p. 77)

**ESL Teaching: Relationships**

Ladson-Billings (1994) wrote about five areas of high priority in the education of multicultural students. Those five areas are: teacher's belief about the students, curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education.
“How teachers think about education and students makes a pronounced difference in student performance and achievement” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 2).

Within an ESL learning environment, complexities are bound to increase with more diversity in the language and culture of teachers and students. It is of immense importance that an encouraging and amicable atmosphere is nurtured in the class for high student learning achievement.

Learning a language can be a long and arduous journey....Classrooms should be physical places of healthy conditions in which teachers, who have high expectations for all students, engage students in ongoing dialogue and reflection through a variety of modes reading, writing, debating, and listening. In such classrooms there is time and space for voices to be heard, understood, challenged, and validated in a welcoming and safe environment (Ortiz-Marrero & Sumaryono, 2010, pp. 93-95).

A similar set of Standards and instructor expectations is important in an adult ESL classroom. Building an accepting and collaborative classroom community may be as important for adults as it is considered to be for K-12 ELL students.

Knowing the Student

For an effective teaching and learning environment, ESL teachers in elementary and secondary schools, like K-12 teachers of mainstream students, are expected to know each student well. The Coalition for Equal Access to Education (2005) recommended that Alberta Education work with the Alberta Teachers’ Association to develop province-wide policy that requires all designated ESL teachers to meet the requirements of specialized ESL training, cultural competency, and anti-racism education. The BC English as a Second Language Standards (2001) recommended that ESL instructors construct student profiles that include information
about each student in three main categories: educational background, development and family. Educational background includes previous education and literacy level in the student’s first language. The family category involves cultural background, previous country or place of residence, familial education and employment, and expectations. The development category consists of health, gender, learning style and talents, and interests.

Such student profiles are constructed while teaching adult English learners, especially for teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or Business English. The purpose is to determine the student’s specific needs or purposes for learning the English language and assess his or her level of English proficiency (International TEFL Teacher Training, n.d.). But there is a lack of literature on creating student profiles for adult English language learners. The profiling expectations for K-12 ESL instructors may be a promising area of inquiry for instructors of adults, especially if the goal is to support English language learners toward independent learning and strong study skills.

Recognizing Culture

Rodriguez (1998) quoted Collier and Hoover on the implications of students’ culture in instructors’ efforts to maximize student development. “The relationship between culture and learning styles – although not fully understood – is an important one: Culture shapes the way we think (cognition), the way we interact (behaviour), and the way we transmit knowledge to the next generation (education)” (Rodriquez, 1998, p. 2). These authors went on to say that, given the pervasiveness of culture in determining patterns of social behaviour in general, the existence of variations among cultural groups may cause problems for students when classroom interactional patterns are not consistent or compatible with those experienced at home or in ethnic communities. I propose that instructor awareness and acknowledgement of home cultures
may be as important for adult ESOL learners. The emphasis on identity and context in the TESOL (2008) framework indicates that adults may also learn the English language more effectively when they develop awareness of their cultural background and its implications for their learning style. Variations of learning styles amongst learners also necessitates the importance of adopting more than one teaching method or of blending several approaches together when it comes to English language learning.

Rodriguez (1998) drew attention to research that described effective teacher-student relationships and confirmed the value of teachers knowing young students' backgrounds and cultures:

Drawing on observations of teachers and students involved in classroom activities in culturally and linguistically diverse environments, Ladson-Billings (1994) identified a set of teacher behaviours that consistently promote student learning and success: the teacher-student relationship is fluid, humanely equitable, and extends to interactions beyond the classroom and into the community. The teacher demonstrates a connectedness with all students. The teacher encourages a 'community of learners', in which students are encouraged to learn collaboratively by teaching one other and being responsible for each other. (p. 3-4)

Similar community-building competency for teachers of school-age language learners was recommended by Banks and Banks (1993):“The challenge is making effective instructional use of the personal and cultural knowledge of students, while at the same time helping them reach beyond their cultural boundaries” (p. 7). I believe that the Standards for instructors of adults imply a similar aim to build on the students' existing cultural and linguistic backgrounds but not to let stereotypes limit the instructor’s view of learning potential.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) wrote that

"adults often feel threatened by a new learning situation. They are threatened by the change inherent in learning and by the fear that they will appear foolish...By understanding students' fears and being sensitive to them, the teacher can help students overcome their negative feelings and turn them into positive energy to further their learning" (p. 85).
Community language learning is one method that fulfils these goals with two basic descriptions of the kind of learning that can take place:

‘Learning is persons’, which means that whole-person learning of another language takes place best in a relationship of trust, support, and cooperation between the teacher and students and among students, and ‘Learning is dynamic and creative’, which means that learning is an ongoing developmental process.” (p. 100)

Together, these authors strongly emphasize the need for teachers of adults to be sensitive to the fear of making the mistakes that are a part of new learning, and also stress that an atmosphere of interpersonal trust is a significant requirement for learning.

Culturally Responsive Andragogy

Because culture is inextricably related to the language and development of certain skills such as communication and comprehension, understanding culture forms a major part in a second language learning scenario. An understanding of culture can help instructors better understand the students’ different learning styles and can also be used as a medium to get the students to interact with one another by using English to talk about their own culture. Stairs (2007) wrote that “the underlying assumption of culturally responsive pedagogy is that diversity is an asset that enriches the learning of all students, not a deficit to overcome” (p. 38).

For Irvine and Armento (as cited in Stairs, 2007) the term culturally responsive pedagogy implies that teachers should be responsive to their students by incorporating elements of the students’ culture in their teaching. “Culturally responsive teaching makes explicit the issues of race, ethnicity, and culture as central to teaching, learning, and schooling.” (Stairs, 2007, p.38).

In this literature, the use of the term pedagogy indicates that the recommendations apply specifically to teachers of children and youth.
Clark (2008) argued that the essential difference between pedagogy and andragogy is that transformational learning is emphasized more for adult learners. In Clark’s words, “transformational learning occurs when learners have gained the ability to develop new perspectives and redefine their world by critically reflecting on past knowledge and experiences.” (p. 15) Instructors can help adult learners overcome their fear of appearing foolish by using the students’ prior knowledge and experience to inform current and future learning. An example that occurs to me is if learners with a skill, such as the ability to prepare a local dish, are asked to teach that skill to the other students using the target language, their confidence with the language will be supported by their confidence with the skill.

Guy (as cited in Clark, 2008) defined culturally responsive teaching as:

Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 18)

The emphasis on learner experiences as an instructional strategy is a foundational assumption of andragogy, which implies that adults’ cultural experiences should be valued as part of instructional practice. An ESL classroom is frequently a multicultural classroom. Because culture affects learning styles, consideration of culture in the learning environment is unavoidable. Instructor acknowledgement of students’ previous learning and life experiences provides adult learners with opportunities for expression and confidence building.

Assessment for Learning

The term *assessment for learning* (WNCP, 2006) is in current use to distinguish formative assessment from summative assessment or evaluation. In formative assessment, teachers share with students the criteria that will be used to evaluate or assess progress. They also share their expectations for student work, examples of student generated products that fall
into all levels of the grading range, and scoring rubrics and checklists. Teachers may ask questions to encourage students to reflect on their own learning processes through reflective writing or discussion. Peer feedback can also be included in formative assessment. When managed well (clear ground rules, specific guidelines), peer feedback can motivate learners and provide extended opportunities for ELLs to engage in discussion using the academic language essential to success in the English classroom, therefore building critical cognitive academic language in an authentic setting.

Stiggins (2002) discussed how such clear statements of expectations on the part of teachers and how sharing all criteria and examples of past student work increase the likelihood of student success. Although the formative assessment movement originated in K-12 education, I propose that its principles, such as respect for the learner and including learners in decision-making, are similar to those of andragogy -- instruction for adults. Therefore, it may be useful to understand formative assessment when planning and delivering an ESL curriculum to adults.

Professionalism and Leadership

The ever-increasing diversity in demographics and corresponding change in responsive education systems has created a need for professionalism and leadership to bring about the highest possible student achievement. Evans (2008) explained professionalism as a practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual descriptions of a specific profession. Professionalism both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's purpose, service provided, and prevalent expertise, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice. The complexities of adult ESL education, such as large "multilevel classes, limited resources, substantial facilities, intermittent funding, and limited contracts with few benefits" (Crandall, 1993, p. 497), have amplified the need and scope of professionalism in adult ESL education.
Crandall (1993) also described the kind of self-directed learning or professional development that is most effective:

Professional development for adult ESL literacy, like teacher education in general, is most beneficial when it builds on teacher/learner strengths, views teacher education as shared learning rather than training, and considers teacher development a lifelong process of questioning, reflection, discussion, and collaboration.

Covey's (2004) view of self-leadership suggests that he views professionalism as a move beyond effectiveness to the ideal of making a unique and significant contribution. Covey (1996, 2004) developed a framework for personal effectiveness in which he suggested that seven habits can lead individuals to mature from dependence on others to independence and finally to interdependence. These seven habits, as described by Covey, include being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, putting first things first, thinking win/win, understanding and then being understood, synergizing and sharpening the saw, by which he meant self-care and ongoing learning. Covey insisted that being effective is no longer sufficient performance in a professional field. Covey asserted that new definitions of success require one to survive, thrive, investigate, excel, and lead beyond effectiveness. “The call and the need of a new era is for greatness. It’s for fulfilment, passionate execution, and significant contribution… what we would call voice requires a new mind-set, a new skill-set, a new tool-set… a new habit” (p. 4).

A reference to Danielson’s (1996) teaching framework is worth repeating to underscore the relationship between a comprehensive framework of competencies and each professional’s personal reflections. Danielson wrote that the most powerful use of her framework is for reflection and self-assessment. She advised that a framework to guide reflection enhances the value of the activity and makes teaching more purposeful, thoughtful, and rewarding. Other uses for the framework include mentoring and induction, peer coaching, and supervision.
Professional development for adult ELL instructors encompasses all that is included in general teaching, with the additional peculiarities of dealing with adult learners. For example, the fear of risking an already developed and successful identity when learning, which may be compounded by the homesickness or alienation that can occur when adults have left family members to venture to the new country.

“Professional development for teachers [and instructors] must be an integral and ongoing part of a school’s plan to implement high learning Standards with culturally and linguistically diverse students.” (Lachat, 1998, p. 1). Lachat listed several possible areas of professional development that are connected to performance-based instruction and assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse students (see Figure 1).

- building instruction and assessment around a Standards-based curriculum for students with varying levels of English proficiency
- developing authentic performance tasks that connect to students’ cultural background, interests, and prior knowledge
- understanding how language and culture influence student learning
- understanding differences in the communication and cognitive styles of various cultures and what these mean for student participation in learning tasks
- providing a variety of opportunities for students with varying levels of English proficiency to explore concepts and problem solving over the time
- accommodating different learning styles in performance assessments
- using multiple forms of assessment to gather evidence of student proficiencies
- creating and applying rubrics that are not culturally biased
- using portfolio assessment with culturally diverse students
- developing ways of evaluating the language demands and cultural content of learning tasks
- strategies for including all students in classroom discourse
- developing ways of working with different cultural communities.

Figure 1. Lachat’s (1998) areas of professional development connected to performance-based instruction and assessment.
An example of Standards developed to provide direction for professional development can be found in the Saskatchewan Standards for ESL instructors: “The statement of Standards provides a tool for self-evaluation and quality control with the professions” (Harrold, 1995, p. 57). Similarly, the rationale for certification of ESL instructors in British Columbia proposed that “by gaining experience within the framework of a professional institution and through ongoing commitment to professional development, ESL instructors strive to enhance knowledge and abilities, and to add to the field of ESL” (Harrold, 1995, p. 38).

The Government of Alberta (2011) requires the acquisition of certain personal characteristics by ESL teachers for adults: excellent communication skills; an interest in language; imagination, energy, creativity, patience, enthusiasm, commitment and adaptability; a sense of humour; the ability to work well in a multicultural environment and demonstrate respect for other values and cultures; the ability to create an environment in which students feel comfortable and will participate; and the ability to make classes relevant to the needs and interests of diverse groups. Overall, ESL teachers for adults should also enjoy coordinating information and preparing teaching materials, supervising and evaluating student progress, and helping others.

Leadership

In K-12 education, the concept of teacher leadership has emerged in conjunction with schools characterized by less administrative hierarchy and more shared responsibility. Danielson (2007) argued that in the “most successful schools, teachers are supported by administrators to take initiative to improve school wide policies and programs, as well as teaching, learning and communication” (p.19). Lambert (2002) agreed, pointing out that “instructional leadership is everyone’s work and we need to develop the whole school community” (2002, p. 40. This
project is my initial foray into the area of instructor leadership and enhanced professionalism, analogous to teacher leadership in K-12 education.

A similar approach to instructional leadership can be applied to ELL teachers and relates to definitions of professionalism evident in ESL instructor Standards. Ortiz-Marrero and Sumaryono (2010) have advised that:

Adopting a variety of collaborative and engaging practices to advocate for students, parents, and the teaching field in general will enhance a teacher’s vantage point in assuming leadership roles. It is important, however, to understand one’s reality to choose the level of involvement one is capable of taking on.” (p. 95)

Teachers should discover students’ home languages and cultural backgrounds “to unleash the power of those languages and dialects in freewrites and writing-to-learn activities, to listen to their words and enter their worlds, and to advocate and take on leadership roles” (Ortiz-Marrero & Sumaryono, 2010, p. 95).

One of the most critical factors in students’ success is their ability to see that what they are doing is worthwhile, which will help them build personal capital that they can then spend in other situations. Motivation, either intrinsic or extrinsic, is essential. As teachers or instructors who have ELLs in our classrooms, schools, and communities it is part of our professional role to educate students about available options, introduce a curriculum that makes those connections for them, and teach them how to take action to improve their situations. Advocacy for students may be a part of this role (DelliCarpini, 2010, p. 102-104).

Kaser and Halbert (2010) argued that there are six distinct mindsets that characterize the way successful, learning-oriented leaders make sense of their professional world. Intense moral purpose motivates these leaders to work toward success and opportunities for all students. They are knowledgeable about current models of learning and consistently inquiry-oriented. They are able to build trusting relationships, make decisions informed by evidence, and move to wise
action through learning-oriented design of programs, schedules, and collegial activities. I believe that similar principles apply to ESL teachers for adults. Particularly, ESL instructors exhibit moral purpose in their profession when they are determined to improve the life chances of their learners by working with their colleagues and their community to provide the highest quality learning experience possible.

Leaders Amongst Peers

Harrison and Killon (2007) described ten roles for teachers as leaders based on their belief that teachers can serve as leaders amongst peers. Teachers can serve as leaders providing instructional resources to their colleagues. As an instructional specialist a teacher can help peers implement effective teaching strategies and plan collaboratively to implement new techniques. An instructional specialist can also engage self and others in research. Curriculum specialist teachers can lead others to a common understanding of curriculum Standards and develop pacing charts and assessments collaboratively. Teacher leaders as classroom supporters can help other teachers implement strategies that most directly improve student learning by demonstrating a lesson, co-teaching, or observing and giving feedback. Leading conversations that engage peers in analyzing classroom information can also strengthen instruction. Other leadership roles include serving as a mentor for novice teachers and participating in committee work, consistently modeling the vision of the school, aligning professional goals with those of the school and district, and sharing responsibility for the success of the school as a whole.

Teacher leaders as catalysts for change are never content with their current learning and strive for continual improvement. The most important role of a teacher leader is that of a learner. In my view, ESL instructors can focus their professional development on any of these roles,
especially the role of professional as learner, which builds a solid foundation for modeling and mentoring among peers.

Clemons (2007) suggested critical awareness-raising as the current need in TESOL programs and courses to improve preparation of diverse teachers in the field. She mentioned that TESOL and the Chinese Government have worked to implement performance Standards focused on local needs and contexts. She also described the importance of exploration of multiple professional identities and experiences intersecting in the TESOL field. Clemons advocated for interconnectedness between language, language teaching, and language teacher identity within the larger sociopolitical arena of globalized teacher training received by the TESOL instructors.

In recent years, study groups have been hailed as an effective, job-embedded method for K-12 staff development that also promotes the professionalization of teachers (ASCD, 1998).

A powerful result of effective study groups is the support participants receive as they explore how best to teach children to foster meaningful learning. The general characteristics of study groups are that participants construct knowledge through research, interaction with selected materials, and collegial discourse. Participants acknowledge that each person brings expertise to the group and has a contribution to make. Study groups provide an avenue for renewal, an atmosphere of companionship, and an opportunity for growth. Participants make a commitment to create new knowledge and use this knowledge to positively affect perspectives, policies, and practice. (p. 1)

All participants in a study group share responsibility for the success of the group. They look to themselves and to each other to identify significant problems to explore and to set direction for teacher learning that will benefit students, which implies teacher leadership and ownership of their learning (Brown & Cherkowski, 2011). The study team approach is consistent with the practice of critical reflection by instructors, individually or in groups. It is one approach to formalizing an inquiry mindset (Kaser & Halbert, 2009) within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have explored the strands of literature that contribute to an understanding of the meaning of professional Standards for ESOL instructors and their use as a framework for ongoing professional learning as well as initial preparation. I began by looking at the Standards movement, some examples of professional Standards in various areas of education, and the prevalent Standards for teaching English as an additional language for K-12 and adult learners. Then I looked into the content and processes of English language instruction relevant to professional reflection within a Standards framework. In the next section I examined the importance of inquiring or critically reflective collegial relationships to promote instructor learning and bring about more effective instruction for students, particularly noting the role of teacher or instructor leaders in that process. These strands of literature contributed to the construction of my own professional identity as an instructional leader in the TESOL field and also prepared me to analyze interviews with experienced ESOL instructors.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD

I conducted this study to make meaning of the prevalent Standards for ESOL instructors for myself and to share the process as an illustration of reflective professional learning for other instructors. This study can be seen as an act of collegial influence, or as teacher or instructor leadership within a community of practice, in that I am contributing my learning to a professional community. I envision that this study will demonstrate, for ESOL instructors, educators, and decision makers, the value of the TESOL Standards (2008) as a basis for ongoing learning and the development of professionalism for ESOL instructors.

The data for the study was based on three sources: (a) recollections of the qualities I appreciated in my own language instructors, in light of the Standards, (b) reflective journal entries I wrote while taking a TESOL course, and (c) interviews with five practicing ESOL instructors. I completed the TESOL course in December, 2011, and as I worked through the course material I made periodic journal entries that included observations about the curriculum and areas of emphasis. Later, I interviewed practicing ESOL instructors to extend the awareness of the TESOL (2008) Standards that I had developed and to examine the perceived usefulness of the Standards for ongoing professional learning.

Combining Personal Exploration and Interviews

This study required a personal, exploratory method because the Standards, to be effective for self-assessment and growth planning, need to be understood and applied by each instructor in a personally meaningful way. Meaning-making that contributes to teacher learning is an essential aspect of successful change in education (Fullan, 2007). Because professionals learn best in collaboration, interviews added insights to my personal reflection. The perceptions of
experienced ESL instructors were intended to supplement my literature-informed knowledge with a range of practice and experience-based understandings.

Fullan (2007) asserted that successful change in education will involve, for individuals and for groups, both meaning and moral purpose. The two are connected in that moral purpose puts learning to serve each student well at the heart of what educators are trying to do together. Thus, shared inquiry and innovation also acquire significance, or meaning, because they help to achieve the professional learning that, when shared, can lift a school out of mediocrity and offer its students richer learning and life opportunities. The real value of constructing meaning as a basis for change occurs “when shared meaning is achieved across a group of people working in concert” (Fullan, 2007, p. 37).

Fullan explained that the pursuit of meaning involves constantly refining knowledge, which ignites motivation. With this study, I constructed meaning around what constitutes quality ESOL instruction and ongoing professional learning for ESOL instructors. My perspectives, somewhat limited by my current lack of teaching experience, were supplemented with the perspectives of five experienced instructors. Participation in a professional community occurred when participants agreed to be interviewed and will continue as participants and others read and respond to the final report. I hope that my work will prompt other ESOL instructors, educators, and decision makers to draw their own meaning from the literature, data, and analysis that I have provided. My moral purpose in sharing this work is to contribute to improved practice for ESL instructors and improved educational experiences and life opportunities for their students.

**Qualitative Method**

A qualitative research method was appropriate for my research because the research questions I had asked required personal exploration and construction of meaningful
understandings. The combination of methods that I chose integrated my own exploration of the Standards with that of more experienced educators. The main purpose of the selected method was to access and develop a detailed, personal, and trustworthy understanding of the Standards that could stimulate conversation and professional learning in the broader ESOL instructor community. A potential benefit of this research design is that the knowledge constructed with reference to personal experience may be more likely to have a lasting impact on practice.

However, it is important to note the limitations to the claims that can be made, from a study with a qualitative method and a small number of participants. Although the study may be richly detailed, it cannot be generalizable or prescriptive – it is up to readers in this and other settings to see and apply similarities to their own situations. I must acknowledge that the insights of a small number of ESOL instructors, including myself, do not represent the entire community but are only an example of some of the thinking that occurs in the field. Further, the study is not an evaluation of the TESOL (2008) Standards or of their effectiveness, except as perceived by myself and my participants in application to our own practice.

Blasé and Blasé (2004) reviewed studies that showed that development of teachers as learners who collaborate with one another to study teaching and its effect is vital to sustained improvement in teaching. They also described reflection as a desired professional disposition that can become a prominent characteristic of a group of teachers or, in this case, instructors. In my choice of research method, I considered that a small number of interviews would not provide an accurate picture of the ESOL field. However, they could provide a manageable amount of information to integrate into my personal knowledge framework, as a starting point for my own ongoing professional learning and leadership. The interviews and my analysis of them, in light of
the literature and my own experiences, provide a basis for professional conversations that I expect will continue throughout my career as an ESOL instructor and educator.

**Research Process**

The data for the study began with my recollections of my own experience as a language learner as a child and young person in India. I compared the qualities that I appreciated in my teachers to those described in the TESOL (2008) Standards, in order to make meaning of the Standards for myself and to begin to understand their relevance to my career as an ESOL instructor. The next step in data collection and analysis was to review the journal entries that I had made in response to an online TESOL course. Data collection continued as I interviewed five practicing ESOL instructors.

I believed the study required a minimum of three interview participants and so I looked for a larger number of participants, in case any chose to withdraw from the study or become unavailable before the study was finished. I was fortunate to have six participants willing to provide their insights and when one withdrew from the study, I was still able to analyze data from five participants.

**Personal Reflective Journal**

To gather data for my study, I kept a journal of my reflections on the TESOL course that I took in December of 2011. I wrote about the topics that were emphasized in the content and the process of teaching ESL students. I considered the emphasis given to the relationships between student and instructor and amongst the students and to professionalism and leadership among instructors. Gathering knowledge of the ESOL literature and the meaning of the TESOL (2008) Standards, albeit without teaching experience, prepared me to conduct effective interviews and analyze participant responses with sensitivity to trends and issues in ESL instruction.
Interviews

From the interviews I collected the perceptions of five experienced professionals related to the TESOL Standards (2008) and the relevance of the Standards to the teaching competencies they believed were important. I asked questions that invited the interviewees to talk about their understanding of the characteristics of quality ESL instruction, their awareness of the TESOL Standards, and their use of the TESOL Standards or any other framework for self-assessment or reflection and goal setting (see Appendix B).

How Participants were Chosen

To find experienced ESL instructors for this study, which I defined as having at least three years of teaching experience, I contacted administrators of local organizations in the mid-sized western Canadian city where I was living. I contacted organizations and post-secondary institutions that I assumed would hire only qualified instructors. Later, as part of the interview process, I asked participants about their qualifications and their post-preparation professional development, which validated their education and experience in the field. My proposal summary was either forwarded to instructors or I was asked to email the instructors directly. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone because the participants were in other locations within the province. I found these two participants through personal contacts.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant signed an informed consent to show that he or she understood the purpose of the study and were willing to have an audiotaped interview with me. The interviews were confidential: I was the only one with access to the data with names attached and I did my own transcribing of the interviews. The interviews were also anonymous because I used pseudonyms in my written report and the identities of participants will not be revealed in any
presentations, reports, or journal articles that result from the study. The pseudonyms that I chose were somewhat representative of their heritage (Asian, Western European) but the names did not correspond to the ethnicity of specific participants, in order to protect their identities.

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were aware that if they withdrew at any time, their information would be removed from the study. Participants were provided with a transcribed copy of their own interview for review and each participant will receive an executive summary of the study when it has been completed, with the option to read the entire thesis if they so wish. The study involved no deception or any risk of harm to interviewees. Participation in the study offered interviewees the opportunity to contribute to the shared learning of an ESL community of practice and to the literature on instructor’s experiences and perceptions.

**Data Analysis**

When I was planning this study, I developed focus questions to guide data collection and analysis. I generated or collected and analyzed the data in two sections by examining the TESOL Standards (2008) for: a) their personal relevance to me, and b) their relevance to participants. To determine personal relevance, I reflected on my experiences as an English language learner, considering what instructor competencies I remembered being important to me as a student. I remembered the qualities in my instructors that stood out for me and considered the competencies, as described by the Standards, that my instructors might have cultivated to contribute more effectively to my learning. These memories and the reflective journal that I kept while I completed an online TESOL course in December, 2011, served as a main source of data for the personal relevance section. I drew on these data to compare the priorities expressed in the course with those evident in the TESOL Standards (2008).
In the second section of my data analysis I looked for the relevance of the Standards to my interview participants, who were all experienced ESL instructors. From interview responses, I sought to determine the knowledge and skills that participants valued as important for a successful ESL instructor and how they viewed the Standards. As I analyzed the data for each domain, I prepared a table depicting participant responses for the performance indicators within each domain (see Table 1); with checkmarks indicating that the performance indicator was mentioned in the participant’s interview. Later, I used these tables to construct a graph to depict the overall responses from all participants.

Table 1. Example of tables constructed for data analysis. (Participant Responses Relevant to Performance Indicators for the Planning Domain, Standard 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Planning</th>
<th>Learner Consideration</th>
<th>Lesson Planning</th>
<th>Activities and Strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rossella</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donatella</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noriko</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next step after I constructed these tables was to look more closely at the quality of each participant’s response in relation to the Performance Indicator. I coded the interviews with E, A, X, N, where E meant that the response corresponded exactly or closely to the written description of the performance indicator; A indicated that the participant added to or elaborated on the written description of the performance indicator; X showed that the participant referred to skills other than those mentioned in the Standards; and N, this performance indicator was not
mentioned in the participant’s response. I translated this coding to a tabular depiction of responses to performance indicators for each domain and standard (see example, Table 2).

Table 2. Example of tables constructed for data analysis. (Participant Responses for the Instructing Domain, Standard 2, Instructor Role Performance Indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>E</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rossella</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donatella</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Noriko</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided a rationale for the research method for this study, a combination of personal reflection and qualitative interviews. I explained how participants were chosen as well as the ethical considerations that were required. I described the sources of data, which included the contents of my researcher’s journal and interview responses from the five participants who were experienced ESL instructors. Finally, I provided a description of how I analyzed the data with each of the Standards as pre-existing categories.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, I sought to learn how TESOL instructors, including myself, might understand and adapt the TESOL (2008) Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults for self-assessment and ongoing professional learning. This chapter is organized to answer three focus questions that I used as predetermined categories for organizing and analyzing the data. First, I looked at how the Standards address the competencies that have become important to me as a language learner, a TESOL student, and someone who has reviewed the literature on teaching English as a second or additional language to adults. Second, I discuss the relevance of the Standards to the participants, based on my interviews with them. Finally, in response to my third focus question, I explore ways that the Standards might be adapted or explained to increase their accessibility and usefulness for ongoing instructor learning.

Personal Relevance of the TESOL Standards

To reflect on the personal relevance of the Standards, the obvious beginning was for me to summon my own experiences with the English language. I began to accumulate my thoughts starting from the time when I was learning English language myself, advancing to the time when I was learning how to teach English, and ending at the more recently etched memory of the literature I reviewed for this study.

As a Language Learner

When I considered my experience as a language learner, I found that my experiences confirmed the value of each of the Standards. There were not any that I have not come to value as competencies I appreciated in my own instructors, although Standard 6, about adult learning, was not relevant to my early recollections because I learnt English in school. As a result of this analysis, I also became aware of some aspects of instruction that I believe are missing or
EXPLORING THE TESOL STANDARDS

underemphasized in the Standards. To come to these conclusions, I noted my experiences in the order that I remembered them, which revealed my subconscious preferences for competencies that were most important among all that mattered to me as a language learner. Then I reviewed the TESOL Standards (2008) and matched all but Standard 6 with the personal experiences that made them important to me.

**Standard 5: Language Proficiency.** As a language learner the competencies that I valued in my instructors began with their firm grasp of the target language, which included a thorough understanding of first language interference in learning the new language and the ability to guide students to overcome this interference. I specifically remember one instance where an English teacher at university spent a major part of the lesson on pronunciations of v and w sounds because, in my first language, the v sound doesn't exist. I also appreciated the ability of instructors to help me use my first language as a tool to learn the second language through associations.

When I thought about my past language teachers I easily remembered those who were great teachers or those who were, in my estimation, on the opposite end of the scale. Invariably the great teachers were proficient in the target language. Those teachers served as models to follow and helped me better grasp the target language unconsciously, even outside of the formal lessons. I learned best when the instructor planned lessons so the whole course made sense and we were not learning random aspects of the language. These experiences are most relevant to Standard 5, in the Domain of Language Proficiency, which requires that the instructor achieve the proficiency of a native speaker with some higher education. Logical sequencing of instruction also depends on knowledge of how adults learn, which corresponds to the Planning Domain, as expressed in Standard 1.
Standards 1 and 2: Planning and Instructing. I held in great esteem the teachers who allowed me to interpret the texts of stories and poems in my own way. I learned to express myself more easily in the target language when I had opportunities to play with the words and the ideas they represented. This freedom instilled in me such a love for the language that I later earned a master's degree in English literature. Creative assignments were my favourite but simply reproducing someone's work, such as in the grammar translation method, was tedious. This experience corresponds to the Instructing Domain, Standard 2, which calls for the use of a variety of activities to address individual student needs and to foster students' critical-thinking skills. Although the Standards do not directly mention cultivating creativity for instructors or learners, they do stress the importance of providing varied learning experiences to help students become independent, lifelong learners.

Standard 3: Assessing. Another experience that reverberated for me across the years points to the importance of sharing learning intentions with students. When I was in school we had to read aloud passages from poems. I used to think that the teacher was lazy as forty or fifty of us read and she just sat there, seldom correcting many of our obvious mispronunciations. The activity may have had more value for students if we had been told how we could use poetry to practice our speaking with appropriate stress and intonation.

When I knew what the goals of the lesson were, I learned effectively and also gained a sense of achievement and confidence from knowing that I had achieved or exceeded goals. Sharing lesson purposes with students is clearly mentioned in the Instructing Domain, Standard 2, as part of the instructor's role in the classroom. However, it also corresponds with the current formative assessment trend in K-12 education, in which students are made aware of learning outcomes, receive feedback according to criteria, and guided to set personal goals for further
learning (WNCP, 2006). A similar line of thought seems to be evident in the TESOL Standards, Assessing Domain, Standard 3, in the description of "teachers [involving] learners in determining what will be assessed". However, a more extensive understanding of formative assessment may help instructors visualize what that could look like in the classroom.

As a student I was never a fan of formal evaluation. I realize now that what I wanted was not the judgement that came with evaluation but the feedback of formative assessment – letting me know my mistakes and how to correct my learning. I lived for the compliments on the work that I was proud of. Assessment is addressed dealt in the subsections of Standard 3, Assessing, but the language used seems to emphasize summative assessment or evaluation more than formative assessment. Instructors without recent K-12 teacher education may benefit from additional workshops on formative assessment.

**Standard 7: Content.** I do not remember how I was taught the details of stress or accent, pronunciation, and intonation but I have a general sense that it was fun and interesting. The real value of pronunciation became evident to me when I came to Canada and had problems with making my p,t and b sounds distinctive enough for people to understand me. My favourite example occurred when I asked an assistant at a store about the pet aisle and she sent me to look at a bed. Regarding intonation, I also found that my "How are you?" was so flat that nobody wanted to reply. I remember that only a few students got the chance to practice conversations orally in class due to class size and time restraint. I wish my instructors had had greater knowledge and skill of English pronunciation and intonation, so that I was better prepared to communicate effectively.

However, I also see now that a greater repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies may have been helpful. For example, instructors may have had students practice
conversations in pairs or small groups and then conducted quick performance assessments to see how well students were mastering each skill and whether further instruction was needed. This issue can be seen as overlapping several of the TESOL Standards, including those in the Language Proficiency and Instructing Domains. However, Standard 7 in the Content Domain describes teaching language for “genuine communicative purposes”. If this Standard had been the primary goal for the instruction I received, with appropriate modeling and more interactive teaching methods, I may have experienced fewer communication problems when I began to use the language in Canada.

Another area that I remember as a language learner was practicing all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – in different situations. Learning was more engaging if a variety of activities were used to practice the language. Interactive exercises helped us make use of the language for communication, as recommended in Standard 7 of the Content Domain. I also learnt the best when my senses were involved. I remembered more of the language when we had audio and video instruction with concrete and colourful examples. I was also motivated by interesting practice material, wisely chosen by an instructor who knew my needs and interests. These experiences correlate with what the Standards in the Instructing and Content Domains.

English was one of the three languages that were taught simultaneously throughout the school period. The school I went to was an English medium school, which meant that all other subjects except languages were taught to us in English. So not only did we get to learn the language but we also developed the ability to think in English without having to translate our thoughts from first language to second. Later, my language teacher education (B.Ed.) program reiterated that the best way to learn a new language is to simulate the environment in which
children learn their mother tongue – that is, use it for genuine communication. I think of these opportunities as *living* the language and for me, it was the best way to learn.

**Standard 8: Commitment and Professionalism.** Not all of my English language teachers lacked the skills that I have come to value but there seemed to be considerable inconsistency in their abilities, which may have led to discrepancies in the quality of language learning for students in the school. I see now that practices associated with *professionalism*, such as teacher leadership, collaboration, and ongoing self-directed learning, may help peers learn from each other and build a more consistent culture of excellence throughout a school. Looking back, I wonder if my instructors had opportunities to familiarize themselves with the latest research and to collaborate to enhance their skills and build a community of excellence. In the Commitment and Professionalism Domain, Standard 8 urges instructors to contribute to and benefit from communities of professionals learning together.

**Standard 4: Identity and Context.** From my personal experience as an English language learner, I would not know how much identity and context plays a part in learning a new language because I learnt English language in India from Indian teachers. Just knowing from where I came from did not make them all great teachers. But what I remember is that I enjoyed times when a teacher related words in the target language to similar words in the native language. I can say that it is important for the instructor to have knowledge about student identity and context in respect to the target language acquisition. If I had known as a language learner that my first language can either help or detain me from learning target language efficiently, I would have preferred my instructors to work on this skill. First language use is also mentioned in the Learning Domain, Standard 6.
When knowledge of the target language and teaching expertise were in place, a teacher’s friendly demeanour also helped me learn well. When I liked the teacher and I believed that he or she liked me, I was more attentive to what was taught. Sadly, I have always compromised my learning in situations where I did not like my teacher and I do not think I am the only student to do so. When students perceive instructors as mean or overly strict, there is a negative atmosphere in the classroom and learning becomes inefficient and burdensome. I believe the ability to connect personally with students is partially addressed in the Identity and Context Domain, where Standard 4 advises instructors to understand how identity and heritage affect language learning. However, the warm regard that I have experienced in my best learning situations is not fully captured in the description “of equal, responsible, and respectful interactions with students”. As a student, I wanted to feel that my teachers cared about me as a person as well as a learner.

**Conclusion.** The moral purpose (Fullan, 2007; Kaser & Halbert, 2009) that motivates me in the ESOL profession is the conviction that every learner deserves to learn in the best possible way from the best instructors. Human potential is not to be wasted. To serve students well and expand their life opportunities, I want to be the best instructor that I can be. A similar passion for teaching, supported by a strong skill set and competency in the language, would have been all I would have looked for in my teachers. I believe the best language instructors helped students become autonomous life-long learners rather than textbook or teacher-mimicking monkeys aiming just to get a passing grade. These instructors loved to teach and loved to learn, which may not be easily captured in a standard, although the Professional Domain does emphasize the value of ongoing learning. The passion that can be described as moral purpose seems not to be addressed explicitly in the Standards.
After reviewing the TESOL Standards (2008) with my own language learning experiences in mind, I would not have wanted any of the eight Standards to be compromised by my instructors. Each of the Standards corresponds to qualities that I valued in my instructors, particularly the focus on developing language proficiency and knowing how to teach the language effectively with careful planning, current and varied instruction, and feedback to help me improve my skills. This teaching expertise is expressed in the Standards related to Planning, Instructing, Assessing, Identity and Context, and Learning, which specifically addresses adrology, or teaching and learning for adults. Although I had little knowledge of my instructors’ professionalism as a student, shared learning and commitment to ongoing improvement seem important now when I remember inconsistencies among instructors. Thus, this analysis of my experiences as a language learner affirms the value of the Standards but also points out aspects that may be missing or underemphasized – formative assessment, creativity, warm regard for students, and the moral purpose to serve them well.

As a TESOL Student

In this section, I draw on my journal entries to describe briefly the TESOL course content relevant to each of the eight Standards. The purpose is to build understanding of the Standards and consider their coherence with what was taught in the online program. The course that I took was provided by International TEFL and TESOL Training (ITTT) and it was referred to as the TESOL Diploma.

Standard 1: Planning. The TESOL course emphasised the importance of planning for a lesson. It was stressed that a lesson plan needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the needs and circumstances of a classroom and to serve as a working document related to the goal to be achieved and the activities as aids to reach that goal. Also emphasized was the importance of
conducting a *needs analysis*, a test to determine the skill level of each language learner, followed by a questionnaire or interview to determine the students' expectations of the course. Planning is also influenced by priorities for learning established by each group of students, ideally overlapping individual needs.

The course emphasised that planning varies, even when teaching a similar kind of group each term, because individuals vary from each setting to the next. There are also different types of ESL instruction, for instance, teaching beginners, individual adult students or children, or monolingual or multilingual students. The purpose of an ESL course can be oral communication, business English, or preparation for university. The TESOL course offered tips for teaching different types of learners with a focus on teaching strategies, possible problems, and motivation.

The TESOL course provided guidance for selecting resources to bring purpose to and confidence to learners; resources should be chosen according to students' needs, interest, and English learning level. Various resources were suggested as emergency references during lessons. Course or text books were recommended because they provide continuity and a progression of skills for time effective planning. Good texts provide a blend of all four language skills as well as grammar and vocabulary and support new instructors with a range of methods. For efficient use of the course books it was suggested that instructors approach them critically and make informed adaptations to suit the needs of a specific class. To make the lesson effective an instructor can use various teaching aids/equipment in addition to the course books and its ancillary material. What stood out for me in this unit was the importance of being resourceful and being able to find, use, and adapt materials rather than limiting both instructor and student learning with just one comfortable or traditionally-used course book.
I found that the TESOL course corresponded closely to the intent of the planning standard when it emphasized learner considerations for planning short and long termed goals. From the extent and frequency of the material dedicated to knowing the students, it was clear that personal knowledge was considered indispensable to planning for teaching. The course presented activities and strategies for lessons to cover content, address individual differences, accomplish learning objectives, build on learners’ problem-solving and critical thinking skills, employ a variety of English styles, and encourage use of English beyond the classroom. My instructor for the TESOL course stressed good lesson planning as clarity about goals and how you plan to achieve them. At the end of each unit I was required to plan lessons for different language level classes. I could say confidently that the course and the TESOL Standards (2008) Planning domain corresponded well.

**Standard 2: Instructing**

The TESOL course recommended that instructors cultivate the interpersonal and communication skills to help them establish rapport with the students. Good rapport between instructor and students and amongst students would make the teaching-learning environment engaging, motivating, and effective. One way to achieve an effective learning environment is through classroom management, that is, the skill of organizing and managing the class, having a friendly, relaxed manner, and maintaining appropriate interactions. Classroom management strategies included using eye-contact, gesture, and voice; grouping the students so they could support one another; arranging the classroom furniture; varying the instructor’s position; using students’ names, providing individual attention; and giving clear instructions. The importance of providing descriptive feedback was emphasized, so that students would be prepared to self-correct and provide feedback to peers. To motivate students, instructors should not indulge in
over-correction or refer to only the textbook. Instructors should be responsive to students and sensitive to their problems. Praise and encouragement should follow clear explanations so that a relaxed and comfortable learning atmosphere is created.

A major part of the course was dedicated to competencies that were directly related to instructional skills. Both the TESOL course and the Instructing domain of the Standards emphasized effective classroom management, the various roles of the instructor during instruction, the importance of consideration for adults as learners, and the use of a range of activities, strategies, and resources to accomplish learning goals. The Standards called for instructors to create supportive classroom environments that engage all students in purposeful learning and create respectful interactions among them. I found the Standards and my TESOL course to be consistent in their treatment of instruction.

Standard 3: Assessing

The TESOL course had chapters dedicated to testing and evaluation and mistakes and feedback. There was a focus on awareness of the needs of certain age groups and language levels, of what motivates learning, and of how students learn. Weekly tutorials were recommended to discuss with students whether learning goals were met, what problems they faced, and so on. Students could also complete course evaluations questionnaires, followed by class discussion of the results to reach consensus on content and activities for the following week.

Several kinds of tests were presented. Placement tests are used before a course begins and diagnostic tests are used at the beginning of a course so that instructors can plan lessons that address student needs. Other tests are given periodically to determine whether language skills have been retained or need reinforcement. Records of these tests as well as achievement tests at
the end of a course can help instructors to evaluate each student's improvement over time and their final level of performance. Other tests include external exams or proficiency tests, such as TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language, IELTS – International English Language Testing System, and so on. Instructors who are aware of these external exams can guide students to make choices that will help them achieve their long term life and career goals.

The course also emphasized the need for positive feedback to encourage student self-awareness and self-improvement. The type and extent of feedback offered to students depends largely on factors such as student personality, the role expected of the instructor, the stage of the lesson at which the correction is being made, and type of activity. It is particularly important to provide feedback to inform corrections when a mistake is directly related to the learning goal, has been repeated regularly, or seriously impedes communication.

The TESOL Standards (2008) correspond to the trend to formative assessment in K-12 education (WNCP, 2006) by acknowledging the importance of gathering and interpreting information about performance to promote continuous learning for each student. The Standards also describe the importance of using knowledge of student performance to make informed decisions about planning and instruction. Assessment for the Standards included decisions on what aspect of a student’s learning is assessed and how to give constructive feedback to the students to facilitate their learning. As I reviewed the course material from the perspective of the Assessing Domain, Standard 3, I saw coherence between the course and the Standards.

**Standard 4: Identity and context.** The Needs Analysis emphasized in the TESOL course is an example of formative assessment – information gathered to support learning – but also a way for instructors to become familiar with their students’ identity and context, as it is described in Standard 4. Instructors were advised to use questionnaires or interviews to gather
detailed information about each learner’s English language level, past learning experiences, and specific objectives for the course. The importance of courtesy and kindness was emphasized, in order to establish good rapport with students.

Related to context, instructors were expected to learn to handle first language interference while dealing with diverse language backgrounds, age groups, and ability levels in a single class. To do so, instructors need to be aware that not all students from all parts of the world will be able to vocalize each English sound correctly, which is acceptable as long as meaning is intelligible. Therefore, the instructor’s role includes helping students set realistic goals. The course also dealt with instruction for broader groups, such as groups of students who have a common first language or students at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English learning.

The TESOL course gave prominence to encouraging student interactions to create, for each person, a sense of belonging to the group. Group work was recommended to support student interaction and bypass the personal differences that sometimes occur when students work in pairs. Cooperative assignments were promoted as encouraging students to work together in the target language and also negotiate their roles and level of participation.

Compatible with Standard 4, in the Identity and Context domain, the TESOL course emphasized the importance of understanding who the learners are and how their communities, backgrounds, and goals for the course affect their learning in order to shape instruction accordingly. Instructors need to recognize how context contributes to identity formation and influences learning styles, needs, goals, and so on. It is important to apply knowledge of learner identity and context while planning, instructing, and assessing. The identity and context standard illustrated, in essence, what the TESOL course had to say about creating classroom environments where each student’s background is respected, a sense of community develops, and students are
encouraged to connect their learning to their lives. What I found missing in the Standards was a performance indicator for gathering information regarding student identity and context. There was mention of identifying students’ prior learning and background and integrating this information with planning but the performance indicators, usually quite comprehensive, did not describe information-gathering competencies. Otherwise, Standard 4 corresponded with the concept of learner consideration that was emphasized in the TESOL course.

**Standard 5: Language proficiency.** Prominent in the TESOL course was the goal of developing each instructor’s English language proficiency and skills for transferring this knowledge to students efficiently. Verb tense systems were reviewed, with the caution that in most Asian languages there is only one tense and in most Slavic languages there are three, an awareness that will help instructors reduce confusion. The course emphasized other aspects of grammar as well as pronunciation and phonology, which, it was noted, are often neglected in teaching due to lack of instructor knowledge. TESOL course students were made aware of varieties of English and of the International Phonetic Alphabet, which contains universally accepted symbols for English sounds. Stress and intonation were reviewed for their contribution to meaning in speaking and listening. In the TESOL course, it was clear that the main purpose of language learning was communication. Therefore, if another person does not understand what a speaker is trying to say, the speaker’s language learning is not yet successful.

The language proficiency domain, Standard 5, outlines the need for instructors to demonstrate proficiency in social, professional, and academic English. An instructor’s proficiency in listening, reading, speaking, and writing should at least be equivalent to the skills of a native speaker with higher education. I found that this standard clearly demonstrated what proficiency levels were required from an instructor serving as a language model for learners.
Both the course and the Standard were explicit in their demands for instructors to model effective strategies for language skills: to speak fluently on formal and informal topics and in social interactions, use appropriate discourse strategies, demonstrate control of suprasegmental features (stress, intonation, and so on), use appropriate registers, and provide exposure to various genres. This standard emphasized the importance of non-native ESL instructors preparing to model cultural aspects of English language such as gestures, personal space, and body language.

**Standard 6: Learning.** Authors of the TESOL course considered it a duty of the instructor to create a non-threatening environment for student participation. Speaking is usually intimidating for a new language learner and so various techniques were recommended, including creating rapport amongst and with the students, encouraging pair and group work, adding some purpose and an element of interest to the speaking activity, and most importantly not pressuring the students to speak, especially without advance notice or opportunity for preparation. Interesting activities and scenarios along with a good lesson plan can go a long way toward encouraging students to participate. Instructors introduce new language at the appropriate stage of the lesson and adjust the talk time and level appropriately to the needs of the class. For example when teaching vocabulary, instructors need to consider the students; the difficulty level of the words chosen will depend on similarity to first language, similarity to known English words, spelling and pronunciation, and suitability to age, interests, and so on. Criteria for choosing vocabulary also included frequency and **coverage**, that is, how often the students would be likely to come across the words or to use them in different situations.

The Learning Domain, Standard 6, asserted that instructors need to understand how people learn and how they acquire language, in light of theories of adult learning and second language acquisition. However, learning theories are simply mentioned as important but nowhere
in the Standards document are they described or illustrated with examples. Standard 6 holds the expectation that instructors understand that there are differences in how people learn and that instructors will be able to gather this information about their students from them. In the TESOL course, instructors were expected to reflect on student learning and be flexible about trying new approaches when needed. I found that Standard 6 was congruent with the course in the emphasis on knowing how and when learning happens, reflecting on and enhancing teaching style, and keeping student learning central to teaching.

**Standard 7: Content.** The TESOL course was congruent with the Content domain, Standard 7, when stressing the importance of providing practice using the functions and features of language in various situations. When introducing grammatical structures, instructors need to build student awareness of meanings, forms, and patterns and how and when they are used. It is also important to note any differences between spoken and written forms and to identify use in different situations, which were described in the course material as technical, formal, informal, tentative, medical, and language used for requests, invitations, complaints, or giving advice, and so on. The course, like the Standards, emphasized that content is an important consideration for lesson planning.

In the course, students' prior knowledge of the world was an important consideration when teaching receptive skills of listening and reading. Specialist skills involved in listening or reading with efficiency include the ability to predict, to scan or skim to find specific information, to recognize the main idea, and to use context as a clue to meaning. Keys to a successful receptive skills lesson are to build students' interest before starting with the lesson, pre-teach complex vocabulary or structures, present motivating material that is realistic and aids understanding, and include practice with different language skills.
The course revealed that amongst the two productive skills of speaking and writing, writing is often neglected because the new language learner attends more to the immediate need of speaking skills. Teaching speaking and writing differ in terms of vocabulary, spelling, legible handwriting, layout, punctuation and even grammar, as in the use of contractions. Accuracy and fluency of speaking and writing are equally important: accuracy is concerned with producing correct language and fluency is concerned with students experimenting creatively with the language to produce greater volume. Three broad categories of activities for speaking practice include controlled activities, guided activities, and creative communication.

For writing, many learners have used a different alphabet and so forming English letters can pose some challenges and require special training. Teaching spelling can be a challenge because, in the English language, there are words that sound the same but are spelled differently, for example, waste and waist. Other words are spelled the same way and pronounced differently, for example, read and read. There are also differences between the spellings and pronunciation of British English and the American English. Creative writing enables students to practice personal expression as well as writing skill. Games are often used for teaching speaking and writing and they can be competitive or co-operative with either a communicative or a linguistic base.

The TESOL course expanded upon the main ideas expressed in the Content Domain, Standard 7, with a variety of ways to practice communicative tasks and develop students' grammatical, discourse-based, strategic, and sociocultural competencies. Both the course and the standard emphasized the use of a variety of instructional strategies and classroom activities. The TESOL course stressed the use of content knowledge for lesson planning, along with drawing on students' prior knowledge and teaching students to use independent learning strategies.
However, the Standard but not the course suggested collaborating with content specialists to develop lessons. Alternately, something that was missing in the Standards but present in the course was explicit mention of creating student interest in learning the language. Both the course and this standard emphasized that course content should be the language that students need for communication.

**Standard 8: Commitment and professionalism.** The TESOL course placed teaching expertise at the centre of instructor competencies and encouraged the cultivation of effective teaching strategies with cycles of experimentation and reflection. The use of self-evaluation forms was encouraged to monitor one’s growth as an instructor. Criteria for self-evaluation after a lesson included the extent to which learner objectives and personal aims were met; the accuracy of anticipated problems and solutions; the reasons for and effectiveness of modifications made to lessons; the effectiveness of various phases of the lesson, including engaging, studying, and activating; and lesson strengths and areas for improvement. In the course, instructors were encouraged to observe lessons conducted by other instructors and to learn from and give feedback to each other.

It is interesting to note, however, that nowhere in the course that I took were the TESOL (2008) Standards mentioned as an overall tool for self-evaluation of instructor competencies. The course focused on self-evaluation of each lesson and provided some general guidelines for self-evaluation, such as noting whether students achieved intended outcomes and identifying the strengths or weaknesses of a lesson. This approach to self-evaluation provided a foundation for instructors to manage their own learning during their initial preparation. However, an opportunity was lost in that a more comprehensive tool such as the Standards was not offered as a basis for ongoing learning after the course was finished.
Standard 8, in the Commitment and Professionalism domain, described a more extensive range of competencies than was taught in the course. The course encouraged ongoing learning and skill development but the Standard went beyond that in calling for instructors to develop their understanding of the relationships between second language learning and teaching continuously, within the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and the community at large. The knowledge thus gained and shared contributes to productive changes for the instructors, the ESL field, and the community. With this exception, I would say there was agreement between the TESOL course and the final standard.

Beyond the Standards

Although the Standards corresponded well with the contents of the course that I took, the course went into greater detail for certain instructor competencies. For example, the course included details about teaching strategies, which they described as TESOL methodologies. Of all the methods, the most useful are the ones that imitate natural language acquisition. To decide which method is best suited for any particular lesson, instructors were urged to consider their own capabilities, students’ background and needs, course content, and the time and resources available. Some important things to remember while planning instruction are that students need as much language exposure as possible, communicative tasks are important but need to be supported with additional instruction, and vocabulary is as important as grammar. Students should also be encouraged to discover language for themselves in a learning environment free of anxiety and stress. Above all, instructors should remember that the methodology that they themselves prefer may not be the most suitable for students from different backgrounds.
The Standards did not appear to consider the instructor’s personality for establishing rapport with students, motivating them to learn, or for possible interference with teaching. The TESOL course offered skill development to overcome deficits that could be attributed to personality or values as much as to skill. However, the course material included the assurance that to be a good teacher one does not have to conform to a specific kind of personality; each instructor has to develop his or her own style of teaching through practice. To make up for the practical aspect missing in online delivery, authors of the TESOL course suggested that aspiring instructors work as a teacher’s assistant, observe local ESL teachers, or even practice teaching language to their friends whose first language is not English.

Comparing the Course and the Standards

A common theme runs through my analysis of the TESOL course as compared to the Standards: The course described the theoretical knowledge and skills of a successful ESOL instructor and the Standards support growth-oriented review of the initial knowledge and skill set as applied in ongoing practice – either through self-assessment or assessment by peers or supervisors. Within the broad domains described by each Standard, performance indicators divide the general goal into several more specific goals. For each of these, descriptors are provided to categorize an instructor’s ESOL instruction as approaching, meeting, or exceeding the criteria. Vignettes or snapshots of ESOL instruction are included to illustrate the performance criteria in actual practice. With the few exceptions that I have identified, the TESOL course and the Standards (2008) appeared to present a similar range of competencies.

Personal Relevance Conclusion

After examining the Standards in light of my experiences as an English language learner and as a TESOL student, the competencies that are most important to me are related to the
language proficiency, teaching expertise, and the ability to know and plan for specific students. The Standards addressed these main ideas by emphasizing language proficiency and content, identifying the skills of assessing and planning as part of instruction, and providing reminders across several domains to consider learners’ backgrounds and needs. The final Commitment and Professionalism domain reminds instructors that all of these skills, first introduced in their initial preparation, can be further developed and enhanced over time through critical reflection.

As a learner of English language, I wanted the best teachers to help me be the best learner I could be. At the time that I was a student, I may not have understood how my teachers might have improved. However, after reflecting on my own experience and training in light of the Standards, I have a much clearer idea about the kind of instructor that I want to be. Further, I am now convinced that the profession of ESOL instructor will be much more satisfying if I embrace ongoing learning in order to understand and better serve the needs of my students. I am prepared to become a lifelong learner in the profession, guided by the Standards and the activities they support – professional conversations about what the Standards mean and what else they could include, and by my own reflection and goal-setting.

Relevance of the Standards for Participants

To understand how the Standards might be perceived by experienced ESOL instructors, I interviewed five participants, including four females and one male, whom I have referred to with pseudonyms. They were employed in a variety of programs, including university preparation courses as well as community venues. Together, each participant and I referred to a copy of the TESOL (2008) Standards that had the performance indicators listed. I asked each participant about the competencies they believed were important for success in the profession and their views on the usefulness of the Standards. In this section, I present my analysis of participant
responses as they relate to Performance Indicators within each of the eight Standards. I then discuss participant responses in more general ways, noting their overall familiarity with the Standards as well as their perceptions of the usefulness of the framework for their own professional learning through self-assessment and goal-setting.

**Standard 1: Planning**

Performance indicators related to planning include: *overall planning, learner consideration, lesson planning, activities and strategies, and resources*. All participants were concerned with overall planning and all of them mentioned topics related to at least one other performance indicator, with emphasis on lesson planning and activities and strategies. Two participants mentioned learner consideration and only one response included direct mention of resources.

**Overall Planning.** Responses closely matched or added to the topic of overall planning. For example, Rosella stated, “I guess when I say planning I also mean having an understanding of...curriculum development – so starting off with your goals and learning outcomes and then producing or creating lessons to suit those goals and meet those goals”. Donatella referred to the additional utility of planning for review and reflection: “You have to have a plan that will allow you to refer back to previously done work and review and reflect upon it.” Noriko agreed that planning is critical for effective teaching.

Others described the missions of their programs as a foundation for planning; one person mentioned that curriculum documents were outdated but that the *Canadian Language Benchmark System* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012) checklist of learner competencies provided a helpful guide for planning. Antonio noted that his planning for university preparation courses was more focused on lectures and reading assignments than on the
classroom activities that might be found in a course for oral communication. Akiko raised a concern: “Sometimes planning gets neglected due to multi-level classroom with multi-skill level of the students.” There was general agreement that instructors need to have clear goals for each lesson in mind as they teach.

Akiko and Antonio both considered the missions of their program in their planning. For example, Akiko explained: “The program that I am in is not strictly language based; the mission of the government is to help new immigrants settle into the new society.” Akiko also recognised the importance of having a clear plan for each lesson, although not necessarily a formal lesson plan on paper but having the plan and goals clearly in mind while teaching the lesson. She mentioned the importance of considering the available amount of time available in a specific course when planning the learner outcomes to be addressed. Akiko felt that her program’s curriculum, to be used as a guideline with ideas, resources, and outcomes, was better than the outdated concept of a more prescribed curriculum.

**Learner considerations.** Only two participants spoke directly about learner considerations for planning. Donatella’s concern, like that of Antonio, related to the type of program: “Be aware of what their needs are. For example, I am in a family English program, so it’s not quite the same as if they were in a workplace English program.” Donatella further noted a consideration that was not prominent in this section of the Standards: “they are adults so they should be able to have input as to what they need to learn.” Noriko simply agreed that testing for prior learning and background knowledge should inform planning, noting that “a pretest or a diagnostic test is important.”

**Lesson planning.** Participants emphasized the importance of lesson planning for the quality of instruction and of creative lessons to maintain student engagement. Donatella added a
comment on instructor reflection: “It’s important to keep track of what was really successful in your class, like the strategies that worked and those that didn’t”.

**Activities and strategies.** Rossella emphasized the fun and creativity to better engage the students that can be provided with a range of teaching strategies and learning activities. Two instructors mentioned the importance as well as the difficulty of addressing individual differences with strategies and activities. Akiko noted that differentiation was “infeasible in large classes”, although she added that “we aim to teach a combination of skills to students in groups”. Antonio acknowledged the reality of a variety of types of students and expressed doubt that instructors can “teach to every student”. However, he shared his strategy for tackling the problem: “I think when you dealing with a classroom you have to teach to a median. I might try to talk to them individually.”

**Resources.** Only two participants addressed resources in their responses about what is important in ESOL teaching and they did so by contributing insights beyond what was stated in the performance indicator. Noriko put responsibility for supplementing existing resources on the instructor as she emphasized the importance of “being resourceful”:

> I think resourcefulness comes with initiative, [asking] what other resources are out there other than your textbook, other than what’s available, if you want to support your lesson, and then you must be able to create them, and also be spontaneous to be able to make quick changes during the class if prepared material isn’t working as planned.

Antonio expressed dissatisfaction with the current resources available to him when he said,

> [the] books aren’t very good and we should be changing them to something that is more appropriate. We are using materials that are supposed to be for this level, that I…would have difficulties giving it to somebody two levels above where we are at”. 
Standard 2: Instructing

Performance Indicators related to instructing include: classroom management, instructor role, activities and strategies, and learner considerations. All participants were concerned with activities and strategies and all of them mentioned topics related to at least one other Performance Indicator with relatively equal emphasis.

Classroom management. Three participants described competencies that corresponded closely to this Performance Indicator. Donatella, Akiko, and Antonio all described classroom management as effective use of class time for learning, summed up by Donatella in the mantra, “be responsible, be on time, be organized”. Akiko also mentioned the importance of organizing and managing constructive interactions, creating an environment that engaged all learners, and managing activities in which groups of students exchange roles.

Noriko’s comment further emphasized the overlap of classroom management and engagement:

You have to have a nonthreatening classroom environment, if [students] are not belittled, when they make comments or they give an answer they are not put down, because that’s going to prevent them from opening up and to be engaged.

Antonio asserted that “classroom environment is very, very important” and “extremely underrated”. He noted that a sign of classroom management was that students commonly understood what kind of behaviour was expected during a range of activities, from serious to light hearted. Antonio valued the light hearted occasions as “the time when students can really come out of their shells”.

Instructor role. Most of the participants described aspects of instruction that corresponded closely to this performance indicator. Donatella described the instructor’s role in promoting learner participation and mentioned a need for making goals explicit to the learners: “I
give them reasons for learning and what and why they are learning it”. Donatella agreed with the importance of instructor role and added leadership as an important quality for modeling and promoting respectful interactions among learners. Other instructor roles mentioned included that of an expert, conductor, facilitator, and even an entertainer. Donatella added pacing to an instructor’s role, noting that it is important to realize when to give the class short breaks for relaxation: “Especially with beginner classes as they tire from stress; we might still visit during that break, but it [is] more casual. And [there’s] a little bit more laughter.”

Noriko, Akiko, and Antonio all elaborated on the concept of instructor role, as described in the performance indicator instructor role as shifting from instructor to counselor to friend to instructor and so on, as the situation demands. Akiko elaborated as well but emphasized instructor characteristics such as patience, approachability, flexibility, and creativity or resourcefulness. She also noted the need for instructors to be inclusive, collaborative, honest, accountable, respectful, prepared and organized, reliable or dependable, and able to admit fault. Antonio also contributed a skill outside of the Standards as a requirement for a successful ESOL instructor: consistency in performance.

**Activities and strategies.** Four of the five participants’ responses closely matched the performance indicator for activities and strategies and the remaining instructor, as well as some of the others, added to it. Their comments pointed to the importance of students enjoying classroom activities, such as games and contests, and also the need to use a variety of activities and strategies to meet goals and address learner differences. Rossella’s comment was typical of the instructors’ emphasis on providing engaging activities: “It’s amazing to get a group of students together and give them a task that is highly interesting and to see them work together to fulfill the task”.
Akiko noted the value of activities that offer the opportunity to practice many skills and

Donatella shared some specific activities she uses for daily review and speaking practice:

For example, Joanna asks William if he goes to the bank once a week, so they have to form the question. Or any topic that we have been covering, for example, we might have been covering idioms, then we might say, Ninny ask Marta if she ever has been on cloud nine so she has to ask Marta, and Marta might share a story. And I try to write them on board so they can correct it. And another thing we do for conversation, I have an envelope full of slips on questions or topics, for example, *What do you know about aliens?* If they don't know, they have to know how to say they don't know what an alien is or they might ask what do aliens mean or ask somebody else.

Also extending the performance indicator, Noriko’s response emphasized the importance of activities that not only moved students toward immediate learning goals but also prepared them to be independent lifelong learners. Finally, Antonio believed that a teaching repertoire that included a variety of strategies and activities gave him the flexibility to respond to student needs: “I change individual things in my classroom if I see something is not going well for whatever reason and I might move it in a different direction”.

**Learner considerations.** This performance indicator prompted four of the five participants to share a richer view of instructing than what was described in the Standards. Donatella agreed that recognizing the students as individuals is an important part of instructing but she added an extra skill: the ability to motivate the adult learner. Noriko also elaborated: “rapport with the students - you have to be caring enough, failing which they will not learn. If you are distant you don't have a relationship with your student, that’s also not going to work.” Antonio also emphasized the ability to develop rapport as an additional instructional skill related to learner considerations: “Someone who has a very good rapport with their students ... no matter how good a teacher you are, if they don’t like you they really are not going to learn very much.” Two other additions offered by participants for this performance indicator were the ability to “help the students make connections [between] what they learned in class [with] outside of the
class" (Akiko), and the ability to give students the tools to answer their questions themselves to help them become independent learners (Antonio).

**Standard 3: Assessing**

Performance Indicators related to assessing include: *need for assessing, types of assessment, evaluation of results, learner considerations, and development and changes.* Participant responses emphasized formative assessment, or information and feedback to support ongoing learning, in their responses. There was much less emphasis on summative assessment or the evaluation process that provides a grade, and little indication that the participants saw a connection between the two. Three participants emphasized learner considerations related to assessing and only one commented on development and changes.

**Need for assessment.** Donatella affirmed the need for regular assessment that is consistent with the formative approach emphasized in the Standard: “I know it is really important for the students to know where they stand as learners”. Rossella agreed with the importance of the ability to monitor and observe learning, although it was not clear that she distinguished between formative assessment and summative assessment or evaluation. Noriko showed her understanding of the formative aspect of assessment as integral to instruction,

> I think assessment is an ongoing process and it’s not towards the end. The tasks that you give will tell you whether or not your objectives have been met, you would know very clearly from every lesson whether the objectives have been met.

Akiko also emphasized formative assessment: “I would know by the students’ feedback... and I would constantly monitor the class”. Akiko further added that the assessment results obtained could be used in, “making sure that the students understand the lesson before moving on to the next.”
Antonio agreed with being able to monitoring learning as it happens in the classroom but he expressed concern with the expectations of formative assessment for the instructor: “I feel that there is insufficient time to gather and interpret information about learner background, preferences, expectations, and goals. I’ve got students for three months, what do you expect me to do?”.

Rossella traced the source of shortcomings in her assessment skills:

I feel that my TESOL training course focused more on lesson planning and different instructional skills. It neglected the assessment aspect of teaching, giving a setback to my skills in setting goals for learners and then how to assess those goals, what models to use.

Noriko agreed that assessing is just as important as planning and instructing. However, when she described assessment as a measure of goal achievement, she revealed some confusion between formative assessment and summative evaluation: “If they can’t perform a task very well then the objectives have not been met”. Akiko showed understanding of formative assessment when she spoke of the integration of planning, instructing, and assessing: “When you first meet a class you might want to think about assessing to assess where to begin with the class. You can’t plan a curriculum or even a lesson based on something you don’t know”. However, Akiko also mentioned the common neglect of assessing in practice: “I think we all can do better jobs of formal and informal assessing. We all do informal assessing, but to what extent, maybe we don’t do enough of that”. These responses seem to indicate that this Standard which emphasizes formative assessment but distinguishes it from evaluation or summative assessment was not well understood or articulated by participants. However, the Standard is coherent with current trends in K-12 education (WNCP, 2006) and with the adult learning literature that assumes students will take an active role in their learning.
**Types of assessment.** Rossella commented in a way that revealed how she had moved away from an emphasis on summative assessment or evaluation in her practice:

I don’t necessarily measure success solely on the mark at the end of the day but also on other aspects as well: comprehension, understanding whether they really comprehended it, did they really get something out of it. I know that success has happened from my observations of students in the classroom.

Noriko, too, expanded on the topic to show understanding that the field of assessment has become broader than that indicated by the term *evaluation*: “If you use figures, they don’t tell you much, compared to rubrics and or a portfolio for assessment of students’ learning”.

**Evaluation of results.** Few responses were relevant to evaluation, possibly indicating that most of the participants placed more emphasis on formative assessment – monitoring learning to support instructional decisions and ongoing learning but not with an emphasis on a final score, level, or grade. An alternate interpretation could be that instructors did not have adequate tools to support summative judgments on the level of achievement that students had reached by the end of a course. For example, they may not have been aware of external tests that can be used for evaluation or they may not have found them appropriate. Evidence to support this alternate interpretation lies in one participant’s mention of the value of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012), particularly as a checklist of skills mastered.

Antonio described his response to a problem with evaluation: “I made my own tests after the standardized tests didn’t work – the test generator and adapting the test generator didn’t work to suit my students.” Antonio emphasized the importance of using assessment tools that allow students to demonstrate what they have actually learned:

Students are at a disadvantage to do readings on the things they have no background knowledge on. And if we are not careful in how we test the language and the
development of skills in that then we end up testing their knowledge of content and that’s not fair to them at all, but that’s what’s happening.

**Learner considerations.** Participant comments that I found relevant to learner considerations for assessment further underscored the instructors’ preference for formative rather than summative assessment. Rossella connected formative assessment with relationship building, noting that to gather information about the learner, an instructor needs to interact with the learner on a personal level. Akiko affirmed the value of engaging students in their assessment by pointing out that she used a checklist with the students for that purpose. Antonio expressed a strong preference for teaching rather than judging and sorting (Kaser & Halbert, 2009), noting how personal considerations could bring about inaccurate judgments:

> For reading you don’t need to test it, just develop it. You know it in a classroom whether the students are getting better or not. You know that. Even the students can tell. Why do I have to put it on a piece of paper? Well you have now attained this level of reading which may or not be an indicator of their reading ability. Maybe they don’t like to talk. Or the topics are uninteresting.

**Development and changes.** Although the development of formative assessment in practice was implied, this shift was not described specifically in instructor’s responses. Antonio’s development of what he viewed as more appropriate tests could be described as development of the evaluation tools that were used. Comments by Antonio indicated that professional learning opportunities focused on assessment strategies would be welcome. The need for summative assessment or evaluation in TESOL programs and the forms and uses of such evaluation is an interesting topic for further research.

**Standard 4: Identity and Context**

Performance indicators for this Standard include: classroom environment, learner identities, instructor interactions, and learner communities. All participants described at least
one of the performance indicators in their responses, with emphasis on learner identities and instructor interactions.

Classroom environment. Donatella’s agreement with acknowledging learners as adults and encouraging appreciation amongst the learners, "...as they are telling their stories, I will write that on board. And then we will do a group correction of whatever was said, and the student who said that gets another chance to see what she said and see her own mistake sometimes."

Learner identities. Rossella elaborated on the competency of cultural respect, "I mean open minded to culture: different cultures, cultural needs, and cultural sensitivity. To add to the normally considering particular learning needs but also cultural issues as well, so to be open-minded, aware, and sensitive." Donatella agreed, "I can have many Spanish speaking and four who speak Persian, or Arabic or other language. They all still need the same attention to make sure they understand." Noriko agreed, "Gives language practice in the English language using context from the students’ culture."

Akiko agreed with respecting learner identity and using it as a classroom resource, "Every student comes in with their own set of skills, like educational background which influences their learning ability in this class". Akiko reiterated her agreement, "We have to take into consideration where they are from and what their livelihood was from their home country because there are some students who have a lot of trauma and we are to recognize that as well." She explained the legitimacy of learner identity, "After years of teaching different groups you learn that certain groups require improvement on certain type of skills."

Antonio’s response assumed that ESOL teaching requires that students leave their own cultural identities and language outside the classroom door, a practice that is not supported in
current language learning literature. However, rather than question his assumption, Antonio challenged the Standard as “hypocritical” and “meaningless” words on paper:

What level of identity we are talking about here? People have multiple identities: ethnic identity, national identity, individual identity, group identity, and so on. Your identity changes with the people you are with. You can’t see it from here because it’s on the other side of the door [that says] ‘Please Speak English only in this Classroom’. What’s one of the most important parts of your identity as a person? Your language. So we are stripping them of that and we are stripping them of their identity in the classroom and forcing them to use a different one... so is this what we mean by ‘respect the legitimacy and diversity of identities’ by saying you can’t use your own language in class? That’s the major part of their identity.

**Instructor interaction.** Donatella agreed with modeling interactions and attitudes towards cross-cultural differences and conflicts,

There is a lot of difference with cultures and what they relate to. Whatever I have to present I make sure that each student gets it. Well I might ask them, if they understand what we are talking about or how they might relate to in their own culture or how they might express it....We should have some cultural awareness and sensitivity to pass to other students as everybody is different. Open-minded and patient in interactions. Instructor is non-judgmental. Adult learners have a lot of positive or negative learning to refer to that may help or hinder their learning.

Akiko recognized the importance of being respectful in interactions with the students, and added, “Some students I’ve heard are torture survivors, so we have to be quite careful in picking our theme for teaching them. We also have to be sensitive to how they react to certain things and the behaviours of certain things.” Antonio agreed with interacting equitably and responsibly with the adult learners and learning about the learners’ cultural background, which he called a bonding process.

**Learner communities.** Noriko agreed with the legitimacy of the role of the learner communities in instruction but her comments revealed why this aspect of instruction might be neglected in practice:

Learners’ community, right now I think what the problem here is that the lot of materials used are totally alien to [students], [the concepts] are very western. It’s one of the
hindrances to effective teaching. To me I rather have a localized content and all they have to do is language mastery.

Noriko then focused on the problem of appropriate resources and the difficulty instructors would have to truly understand their students:

I think it's one of the sad things here, many of our resources are also very mainstream culture, and to actually do something for them is really time consuming. You must have knowledge first, of their society and community. I don’t think many ESL instructors would have that knowledge unless they have gone into that community or done enough reading to find out where their students come from.

Akiko agreed with this competency:

We need to help students connect what they learned in the classroom to the outside of the classroom, help them connect to the community. Use their experience as examples for you to gain knowledge and incorporate that into the English language [ learning].

However, Akiko also described some of the challenges of developing this competency, “It takes a lot to know what each individual student’s background is. It takes a lot of energy. And one will still try to get to know them as well as possible within limited time for the course”.

**Standard 5: Language Proficiency**

Performance Indicators for language proficiency include: *general proficiency, other contexts, classroom performance, and non-native advocate*. Only two instructor comments related to general proficiency and one mentioned the importance of being an advocate.

**General proficiency.** Rossella and Antonio both responded to and elaborated on this competency. Rossella noted, “You have to be a strong communicator, verbally, and in written skills”. Antonio stated that proficiency in English language was important for purposeful interactions with the students. He described a competent ESOL instructor as “someone who knows language well enough to convey its meaning, form and use in appropriate context, and [is] able to answer students’ questions”.
Non-native advocate. Only one comment was prompted by this performance indicator and it was more about the issue of inclusion among ESOL instructors than about advocating for students. Noriko highlighted an issue of inclusion and collegiality that may be missing from the commitment and professionalism domain of the Standards:

The cry of the indigenous communities is we need indigenous teachers who can understand our context and develop the curriculum. I see that phenomenon happening in ESL but I don’t see if the issue has been raised. I think there is a discrimination... a mindset that is deeply embedded in the mainstream culture that ESL teachers must always come from mainstream culture in the West or else perceived otherwise....there is a prejudice, although it’s not said but felt by non-mainstream ESL instructors.

From the response to this Standard, advocating for students did not seem to be a priority for instructors who see their role as focusing on language instruction. However, when we looked at the performance indicator advocacy for Standard 8, Commitment and Professionalism, Akiko described how she acted as a professional resource to learners:

We have a counselling service for students in our organization. We also refer them to outside counselling services. That’s a part of our program’s mission to help the students connect to the services in their neighbourhood so that they could settle well into their community.

Perhaps advocacy is one area where the type of ESL program, such as family English, workplace English, or university preparation, has a strong influence on how instructors see their role.

Standard 6: Learning

Performance Indicators for learning include: classroom environment, learner activity, and learner variables. Three responses related to learner variables received, one to classroom environment, and two to learner activity.

Classroom environment. Rossella addressed the importance of classroom environment as an important factor in facilitating learning. However, other participants may have overlooked
this performance indicator because of its overlap with comments they had already made in response to previous categories, such as learner considerations.

Learner activity. Donatella responded:

If I ask them to write about some cultural celebration in their country, it’s a good writing exercise. Once they have written, I correct it and go over it with them. If they want to they can share it with the class. If they do share then there is an open question period, the other students get to practice their English skills to ask questions or clarifications.

Donatella believed in encouraging the use of students’ first language in learning English language through relation and comparison; for example, she encouraged the students to share similar words from other languages while doing vocabulary or relate English idioms to similar expressions from their first language.

Antonio responded to this set of performance indicators by defining learner autonomy as “teaching learners how to learn by themselves” and “teaching them different strategies, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to become better learners on their own”. Antonio expressed the opinion that this competency may be overlooked in the TESOL field: “We don’t promote enough of learner autonomy in the classroom. Students are spoon fed to go to next level”. Antonio shared an example of one independent learning strategy that he encourages – self-selected reading of young adult literature at the library. He explained that students who take the time to do this “learn their grammar by osmosis” and grasp new concepts more quickly when they are introduced in class. Antonio further described his competency for encouraging independent learning: “I very rarely answer students’ questions directly. I usually answer them in a way that helps them create an answer”.

Learner variables. Rossella, Antoni, and Noriko all agreed with the importance of providing a wide variety of learning experiences to target most learner variables. Noriko’s statement was representative of their thinking:

You need to be very sensitive to your learners needs because of inherent different styles of learning and intelligences. If you want to cater to the needs of different learners in the classroom, that’s why sensitivity to their needs is important. You also need to be very adaptable to meet the needs of the learners. To make adjustments and make supplements to the text and the curriculum.

Standard 7: Content

Performance Indicators for content include: input and practice, tasks in content area, and content knowledge in lesson planning. Four of the participants responded to at least one performance indicator for this Standard, with input and practice receiving the most emphasis.

Input and practice. Donatella, who had previously described some of her daily language practice activities, agreed that instructors should model oral and written language in the content area being taught. Noriko agreed, “You have to be knowledgeable of the content that you are teaching; otherwise you are not able to deliver the content of the course effectively”. Akiko agreed, “If it’s a grammar activity first it’s a paper and pencil and they will work on that. Following that there would always be a speaking activity just so that they can get practice on all their English skills”.

Tasks in content area. Only Donatella’s response noted the importance of tasks in content areas. She agreed with the skill of using illustrations and examples related to the topic, for example: “If I am teaching connecting words, I do not teach them individually but with an exercise, for example, with learning bank vocabulary and sentences [with blanks to fill in]”
Content knowledge in lesson planning. Donatella and Antonio responded in ways that related to this competency. Donatella used learners’ prior knowledge or expertise in a content area to develop lessons and Antonio taught students strategies to acquire content knowledge on their own.

Standard 8: Commitment and Professionalism

Performance Indicators for commitment and professionalism include: gaining and using knowledge, skill development, and advocating. Gaining and using knowledge was referred to by all of the participants. I also categorized four comments as relating to skill development.

Gaining and using knowledge. Rossella described professionalism as collegial problem solving and self-reflection:

Another form of assessment for myself is asking other instructors, not to assess me but if I have a situation or problem in my class or something or a new idea I kind of seek out other instructors’ advice... My own personal reflective practice... just interpreting my performance.

Donatella’s response focused on the value of working with experienced instructors and of sharing professional development or training activities:

I went to a lot of professional development courses, which really helped me, and I worked with two other very experienced teachers. When I had taken TESOL training, I gave a presentation to all the other ESL instructors about basically what was covered and what I felt was really important to me and why.

Noriko, too, believed in the utility of reflection and pursuing other opportunities to grow professionally:

In fact after every lesson you should reflect on what went on. Undertaking action research in class would be something that would continually improve not only teaching and learning with in classroom and will but also definitely serves as feedback to the community of ESL teachers out there.
Noriko agreed with the importance of observation and peer feedback and added her insights into the role of administrators as instructional leader:

As the head of the department, I used a set of Standards for assessing teachers and gave feedback. Other criteria used were annual work reviews where the instructors talked about their performances on the targets set achieved or otherwise.

Akiko also described her experience with learning from a colleague and also from other instructors that she was supervising:

I did have my own insecurities, I didn’t feel confident at all, but it took a colleague of mine to kind of put things into perspective – [by saying] you are here to teach them English... use their experience as examples for you but incorporate that into the English language. As a supervisor to other instructors, I observed their classes, encouraged them to have a plan, a goal for their every class. Even with student teachers on their practicum, I encouraged them to have set criteria for each class and be clear on that. To reflect and assess whether the criteria have been met or not.

As a TESOL trainer, Antonio had used criteria to review the teaching performance of other instructors, although he did not describe what those criteria had been. He remembered, from his Diploma course, that there had been a long list of criteria to look for in lesson observations.

**Skill development.** Rossella emphasized the importance of teacher self-development:

“students will only grow as the teachers grows.” Rossella also gave an example of an instructional skill that she had acquired with experience: “I have gained the ability to enunciate, speak loudly, speak clearly, grab attention when I need to get everybody to focus on me or the board or whatever activity we are doing.”

Donatella revealed that her primary strategy for improving her teaching was to review her professional development session notes and seeking out new professional reading:

I spend a lot of time looking at different instructional material, techniques, and websites for new ideas/explanations...and referring back to notes from professional development courses and seminars on a set of guidelines or they will have let’s say, pages with what your students expect from you, what’s okay for you to expect from your students, for example.
Donatella also talked about the value of being open to learning from colleagues and being organized. However, her greatest emphasis was on the value of remembering what is important in ESL teaching by repeated review of good materials.

Noriko noted the importance of ongoing learning, “you need to keep abreast of what’s going on in research and to be very current in present terms of your methodology, in terms of your assessment”. Akiko outlined her understanding of the variety of ways to obtain professional learning: “the instructor gets educated on areas needed by talking to the department head, consulting outcome guides as per issued by the organization, going through the materials, talking to seasoned instructors, and by enrolling in advanced education”.

**Advocating.** Noriko noted that it was important to interact in teaching and learning communities and build a rapport with other instructors but she also referred to structural barriers to collegiality: “With the decentralized departments in learning institutes, I am not sure about what the instructors share with the other departments…and the outside community”. It was unclear whether any of the participants saw advocating for professional learning opportunities and collaboration as a part of their role as instructors.

**Importance of Each Standard to Participants**

To determine the degree of importance of each standard by the participants I calculated the percentage of their responses that referred to each of the Standards domains (see Table 3). From my analysis it is evident that the *Instructing* domain and *Commitment and Professionalism* domains rank higher than the rest of the six Standards domains. A moderate number of participant comments referenced the *Planning, Assessing, Identity and Context,* and *Learning* domains, ranging between 40% and 60%. The Standards that received the lowest of percent responses were *Content,* and *Language Proficiency,* receiving only 33.33 and 15 % responses,
respectively. This latter percentage is surprisingly low, considering the emphasis on language proficiency that is evident in the literature – perhaps my participants took their own language proficiency for granted.

Table 3. *Ranking the importance of Standard domains by number of participant responses.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Domains</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
<th>Importance Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructing</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity and Context</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Proficiency</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment and Professionalism</td>
<td>73.33%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *Bar graph showing importance ranking of domains.*
Additional Competencies

Participants' comments did not all focus on particular Standards domains but some general comments about the overall value of the Standards were offered. These comments brought a new understanding of moral purpose for ESL instructors, questioned the quality of preparation provided by certification courses, and identified the need to consider how special needs students in ESL classrooms may be neglected. Antonio made comments that revealed some tension between the ideal qualities stated in the Standards and the reality of systems that impose instruction and assessment practices beyond an individual’s power to remedy.

Moral Purpose

Donatella critiqued the Standards document: “It just talks about tools for equity and learner identity – it lacks any moral purpose behind teaching”. Unfortunately, I did not probe her understanding of moral purpose, which in K-12 education means that educators value their work for its contribution to a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic society based on recognition and appreciation of unique identities.

However, Noriko’s comment revealed a tension in ESL teaching for adults, a for-profit industry, which presents an alternate view of moral purpose than is evident when discussing publicly funded K-12 schools.

Sometimes you wonder, as ESL is a very profitable... enterprise, [if] that is at the cost of professionalism. The organization – do they promote that, which comes first? How passionate are you about the subject and professional development? The moral purpose is not there.

Tension between two conflicting purposes – generating profit and providing immigrants with the best learning and life opportunities – was evident in Antonio’s concern that published language proficiency tests could be “money-making schemes” that yielded misleading results and did not do justice to learners. Antonio also spoke passionately about pressure to move international
students too quickly through ESL programs in order to acquire their tuition fees for Canadian universities:

You can teach people tricks how to pass these exams but then you are throwing them into university, something they are really not ready for. Now they are paying big money, because they are paying as international students to go to a university in your country. And they've got a piece of paper saying, 'yes I have passed this exam' and they are nowhere near ready.

Quality of Preparation

Rossella believed that her initial TESOL training course focused on lesson planning and instructional skills but neglected the assessment aspect of teaching. As a result, she believed that she lacked skills in setting goals for learners and assessing their achievement of those goals. She also stated that her employing organization did not encourage professional learning opportunities for instructors. Antonio also believed that requirements to qualify as an ESL instructor have become insufficient:

I have been to conferences; people want to hear that this has been successful. People just want something to follow and believe in, like you are starved in terms of development. I think a lot of that starts from the actual starting point is too low for the four week courses. Quality has gone out of the window. It's unfortunate.

Special Needs Learners

Rossella raised the concern that special needs students in ESL classrooms may be neglected because there are few, if any guidelines for addressing special needs:

if [students] have special learning needs they are encouraged to go to another center …where they can get help. But in terms of my instructional methods I don’t address it; I don’t give alternate lessons to somebody with ADHD. There is a need to have mechanisms to identify students with special needs.

Donatella mentioned that her program taught life skills to special needs students along with teaching English language, in order to help students become as independent as possible in life. It was not clear how the special needs students that Donatella referred to had been identified.
Systemic Issues

Antonio criticized several of the Standards for not being relevant to the real world of ESOL teaching. These comments led me to question the practicality of using the Standards for individual development when instructors work in complex systems that have great impact on their teaching. For example, Antonio did not believe that the materials he was using for teaching were at the appropriate level for his students and he had questions about the validity of the assessments as well. When instructor decision-making power to change materials or assessments is limited, the improvements that can be made by reflection on teaching will also be limited. Perhaps the most powerful use of the Standards will be when they are reviewed collaboratively, by both instructors and program administrators, as a measure of collective competency. With this kind of collaboration occurs, questions may be asked about the impact of administrative decisions on the quality of instruction. However, when ESL education is a profitable enterprise rather than a public service, the cost of raising the quality of teaching by providing more appropriate materials and assessments will always be weighed against profit margins.

Utility and Clarity of the Standards

Overall, Rossella was delighted to have a framework to follow to enhance her skills and she ordered a copy of the TESOL (2008) Standards document for herself. Donatella saw the Standards as convenient reminders of the skills she needed for better performance as an ESL instructor: “I was going through these Standards and I thought, oh I should remember this, I haven’t done too much on something.” However, Noriko predicted that the extensive range of the Standards would be overwhelming for beginning instructors. She suggested that the Standards be presented in levels that identified the critical competencies for a beginning instructor, followed by skills and strengths to build over time.
Akiko believed that the Standards would have clarity, even for beginning instructors, and that they provided a comprehensive inventory of skills that both beginners and experienced instructors should be reference regularly.

These came out in 2008 and I think many of the teachers who work with me are not aware of these Standards but we probably practice it. But when I look through all of these performance indicators, I can look at them and check, check, check, and check all that I do. So without being aware of this on paper, we actually do practice it already as we have been teaching a while now. It’s incredibly difficult to master all of them but I think [it will be helpful] if you are aware of these Standards and are willing to continually strive to master these Standards.

Antonio found the Standards equivalent to a checklist and he questioned whether a subjective assessment of whether a competency should be checked would have value. Antonio’s overall impression of the value of the Standards would not be complete without recalling his strong response to the Identity and Context Standard. This response points to the importance of making meaning around the Standards through dialogue among instructors. If the Standards were accepted as a guide for conversations, perhaps instructors would begin to question and possibly investigate and challenge the rationale for policies such as “English only” in the classroom.

How Can the Standards Be More Accessible or Useful?

The Standards were, surprisingly, unfamiliar to all of the five participants that I interviewed. Several of the participants suggested that the Standards be more widely distributed to practicing and preparing instructors of ESL. Participants noted the value in having a comprehensive list of skills available to support beginning instructors and to remind experienced instructors to address areas that may have been overlooked in their training or practice. Some participants expressed the belief that most of the Standards described skills that experienced instructors already have. I interpreted these responses as confirming my own belief that the Standards are a comprehensive inventory of the competencies that are important to continue to
develop beyond initial certification. Some of the comments that instructors shared made me wonder if they might benefit from a closer examination of what certain Standards mean and identifying the evidence that supports their perception of competency in that area.

I believe that the Standards would become more widely accessible and useful for instructors’ ongoing learning if: (a) ESL certification programs referred to the Standards; (b) practicing instructors aware of the Standards shared them with colleagues and modeled their use; (c) program administrators provided copies of the Standards for each instructor; and (d) instructors were able to read articles in ESL journals and newsletters about how the Standards have been used as a basis for professional learning in various kinds of programs.

The Standards for Self-Assessment

Participant suggestions for making the Standards more useful for instructors began with adding specific categories for self-assessment within Standards and performance indicators, that is—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012) was offered as a model. Adapting the Standards for one’s own use as a self-assessment tool was not emphasized by participants but it is an approach that is familiar to me from working with the BCPVPA Standards (2007) framework for self-assessment in a master’s course.

Students in the UNBC master’s course used the BCPVPA Standards as a starting point for developing a portfolio that evolved to describe all of the competencies pertinent to their professional situation. Standards or performance indicators could be added, made more specific, or addressed with varying degrees of emphasis, depending on the student’s strengths and goals. Professionalism was enhanced as students considered their personal emphasis carefully and sought feedback from trusted colleagues and supervisors who were familiar with their work.
history. The data from this study has confirmed my belief that the TESOL Standards (2008) can be a valuable basis for ongoing professional learning for instructors when used in this flexible, reflective, and collegial manner.

**Clarification of Terms**

Another participant mentioned that the language used for the Standards is often vague and arbitrary. For example, Standard 6, Learning mentions *scaffolding*. It may be unclear to instructors what this term meant to the people who wrote the Standards – does it mean leveling language and content or using graded materials? *Identity* is another term that was seen to be ambiguous. Again, I propose professional conversations around ambiguous terms as a way to make the Standards more useful to individual and specific groups of instructors, until such time as the Standards may be revised and a glossary added. It can be useful for instructors to share the strategies they use to scaffold or support students as they reach for higher levels of accomplishment. The vignettes, which are presented in the TESOL Standards (2008) book but were not reviewed before my interviews with participants, may also provide illustrations of the concepts to add to their clarity.

**Consistent Writing Style**

One participant found that the language of the Standards shifted, in a distracting way, between colloquial and formal language. Revision was recommended to give the document a more cohesive and unified style. Until the Standards are in a format that appears accessible, clear, and useful to all instructors, or a more suitable Standards framework is developed, I recommend that teams of instructors revise the TESOL Standards (2008) as needed for themselves.
Addressing Bias in Self-Assessment

Another issue raised by one participant as a barrier to usefulness was the subjectivity of the Standards, particularly the difficulty of trying to quantify measurable things such as the quality of an instructor’s relationship with students. The participant pointed out that it is difficult to know how and what students feel about their relationship with their instructor in reality. My response to this argument is that subjective understanding or meaning-making is a source of the power of the Standards for self-directed learning and goal-setting. When instructors have decided that a Standard matters, or describes an important competency, they may be more willing to seek data to inform their self-evaluation, in the form of anonymous student interviews or course evaluations.

Although there can be no truly objective and standardized measure of relationships, instructors willing to consider data carefully to inform their goal-setting may become aware of trends they want to address. Further feedback can be used to note whether changes made appear to be bringing about worthwhile improvements in student achievement or the quality of students’ learning experience. This critically-reflective approach to managing one’s own professional learning is supported in current educational literature (Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Brown & Cherkowski, 2011). To summarize, possible bias in self-assessment may be remedied when colleagues share perspectives, check their understandings with current literature, and invite feedback from students to confirm or question the ratings that they have assigned themselves. However, the objectivity of self-assessments is not as important as the capacity to improve teaching skills that may develop as a result of the reflective process.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINAL REFLECTIONS

I carried out my study to set the stage for my own ongoing professional learning as an ESOL instructor and to contribute to a critically reflective and collaborative community of practice among ESOL instructors. I was motivated by the need to provide new immigrants to Canada and other English speaking countries with the essential tool — the English language — for making the most of their opportunities for a better life. I was concerned about disparities that may exist in the degree of preparation that ESOL instructors receive and in their orientation to ongoing professional learning. I wanted to become a TESOL instructor and possibly an instructor educator or program administrator who contributes a critically reflective and collaborative approach to the professionalism of the TESOL community.

As I designed this study, I saw an opportunity to investigate Standards frameworks that could support ongoing professional learning for ESOL instructors, to achieve the goal of having more instructors offer the best possible instruction to adult language learners. I envisioned that my study would encourage practicing ESOL instructors to access a framework of skills and competencies to support their ongoing learning and share their knowledge with others. By analyzing my own experience as a language learner and TESOL student as well as interviewing experienced TESOL instructors, I discovered that the TESOL Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults (2008), upon which I focused my study, address a range of important competencies. Further, the dialogue through which I and my five participants decided which Standards were important to us and which competencies could be missing was a productive professional learning activity that led to clearer goals and stronger commitments to our students. At the very least, these professional conversations introduced current directions in the ESOL field that instructors had previously not considered.
The Value of the Standards

Through this study, I came to the conviction that the Standards can provide a comprehensive, current, and useful framework for self-directed learning by instructors of English for adults. The framework appears to have potential for usefulness for both beginning and experienced instructors reflecting on their competencies and development alone or, ideally, with colleagues. I believe that the answer to my central research question – how to make use of this framework for this purpose – first involves ensuring that ESOL instructors become familiar with the Standards early in their careers, preferably by having them introduced in their preparation or certification programs. The next step is to develop a culture of critical inquiry that supports instructors’ investigation of their own practice, ideally supported by program administrators as well as colleagues. If initial understanding of the Standards is developed by encouraging instructors to gather evidence of their own competencies and set and achieve growth goals, I believe more ESOL instructors will be well-prepared for lifelong learning, satisfaction, and success in this profession.

Barriers to Using the Standards for Instructor Learning

During the study, I became aware of a variety of barriers to the use of the Standards that I envision. First, instructors in some programs may not be provided with paid time to invest in professional reflection or data collection – program administrators may not see this activity as beneficial or as contributing to the profits that are important to the organization. Second, it may be difficult for instructors to face pressure from the Standards to address such commonly under-emphasized areas as learner considerations or advocacy when they have large classes with diverse needs and outdated resources. However, when time and resources are provided, the current culture of the instructor community may impose yet another barrier to professional
learning, change will be difficult if a number of instructors hold fast to beliefs that they should not concern themselves with student identities or that they must maintain an “English only” policy in classrooms.

Further, instructors willing to shift their roles toward more promising and current practices may not be familiar with critically reflective, self-directed learning processes, which may include individual or group self-assessment, evidence gathering, goal-setting, and documenting success (Brown & Cherkowski, 2011). In some organizations, there may not be sufficient trust among instructors or between managers and instructors to support this kind of inquiry and the democratic decision-making that it produces (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). In situations where companies compete for the same students, the relationship with the TESOL organization may prevent the use of the Standards that I have described.

**My Leadership and Learning Experience**

In this study, I embraced professionalism for myself by designing and managing my own learning, integrating current literature with my experience, and seeking the perspectives of experienced colleagues before sharing evidence and new convictions with colleagues. By interviewing the participants and introducing them to the Standards, I believe that I contributed to a community of practice that will expand as other ESOL instructors read about the study or attend workshops based on it.

I believe that I was able to expand awareness of the Standards amongst the instructors that I interviewed as well as amongst others whom I invited to participate in the study. Although colleagues of participants chose not to be interviewed, the concise description of the study and the Standards framework that I provided may have sparked some curiosity among them. I gained confidence that at least one participant was encouraged by the interview process to use the
Standards for self-improvement when I was asked for my copy of the Standards document to photocopy.

As a learning experience, this study helped me to realize and articulate my moral purpose to help provide the best possible futures for immigrants through quality language instruction—not just in my own classroom but throughout ESOL instructor communities. Further, I was able to take action that prepared me for a leadership role in my chosen profession. I experienced the satisfaction of beginning to achieve my leadership goal when I observed how the interviews activated the thought processes of participants regarding self-assessment and helped them identify and focus on important aspects of quality ESOL teaching.

In this study I gained understanding of the areas that participants and I believed were neglected in the Standards, such as moral purpose and warm relationships with students, and also became aware of some difficult issues, such as questions about whether profits or learning take precedence in testing, whether non-native instructors are marginalized, and whether the TESOL industry is designed to provide universities with tuition paid by international students as a source of funding. These are all areas that warrant further investigation. However, the importance of this study was that these issues were raised.

Thinking about the Standards initiated my quest for gaining deeper and first-hand knowledge about the quality and extent of competencies required to perform as a successful ESOL instructor. I gained insight into the self-assessment process for growth, not just to address deficits that may have been a result of shortcomings in my initial TESOL course. I became aware of areas of ESOL teaching that I need to explore further, such as connecting with the learner community, learning more about assessment, and working with or forming a community of practice where I can be both mentor and mentee. I now have a stronger orientation to ongoing
professional learning because I have realized, while reviewing the literature, that there is a continuous influx of new research into the field of language teaching to adults.

The purpose of my study was to determine the potential of the TESOL (2008) Standards as a professional learning tool for ESL instructors, given that there can be considerable variation in the length and quality of their certification programs. I have confidence, as a result of this study, in the comprehensive scope the TESOL Standards and their value for highlighting areas that can be overlooked in practice. Identifying valued competences that might be missing in the Standards was also a useful exercise that required participants to identify what really matters to them in terms of their profession.

**Inspiration**

In the process of this study, I was inspired by participants’ interest in developing their own teaching skills to improve student learning. The participants’ eagerness to learn and to share their perspectives with me inspired confidence in the powerful potential of well-knit communities of practice in TESOL field. I felt privileged to be so included in my participants’ deepest thinking about the importance of their work. I had forgotten that teaching is not an isolated process and now I look forward to working among colleagues who keep learning to help each other make better lives a possibility for their students.

Participant responses also strengthened my conviction that effective teaching is based on a strong moral purpose (Kaser & Halbert, 2009) that is meaningful to the instructor (Fullan, 2007). For example, Antonio exhibited inspiring moral purpose when he asserted that we can help students most by being honest with them about the actual level of achievement that they have attained and their chances of success at university. To provide students with useful and accurate information, instructors must have accurate, appropriate tests and clear benchmarks,
which are descriptions of levels of achievement. These are resources that may be shared in a thriving community of practice.

Another example of inspiration that I found in this study was the quality of compassion that an ESOL instructor exhibited to help students learn not just the English language but also life skills. As for me the purpose of English language teaching is to prepare the non-English speaking students to make the most of the new life situations, to help the students connect to their new environment, and to maximize their potential. To achieve these goals, I now understand that instructors use various activities and strategies that connect to the students’ lives and experiences. However, according to the Standards, advocacy for students beyond the classroom can also be considered an aspect of an instructor’s role.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although I have found this study beneficial for my own learning and leadership development, there are limitations to be noted before my findings can be accepted as a trustworthy contribution to the fields of adult language teaching and instructor development. First, my sample size was very small and so trends that I interpreted from participant responses may not hold true in a larger sample size or with instructors in another location or employed in other programs.

One thing that I would have changed about this study would be to distribute full copies of the TESOL document to at least the participating instructors, well before the interviews. The quality of participant responses in this study may have been limited by participants’ unfamiliarity with the Standards and a lack of time to review the entire document, including the illustrative vignettes. At some points in the interviews I thought that participants misunderstood the meaning and intent of certain Standards or performance indicators, which may not have occurred
if they had been provided with time to review thoroughly. However, I was also concerned that
participants would have been discouraged from participating in the study had I made a request
for them to read a weighty document in preparation for the interview. I might also have left,
with participants after the interview, a worksheet or rating chart for self-assessment based on the
Standards.

Suggestions for Further Study

I believe my research questions were answered thoroughly from my own perspective and
that of my five participants. However, my mind is still full of questions that were not the focus of
this study, such as how English language learning is affected when student and instructor share a
common language. I would like to investigate that technical question further. I would also like to
learn more about the mindsets and approaches of ESOL instructors who teach university
preparation ESOL courses, to understand the unique challenges they face. I would also like to
explore tensions between native and non-native ESOL instructors.

In addition to topics already mentioned, I am interested in the skills and competencies
that ESOL instructor educators or program administrators might see as valuable and how they
would view the Standards as part of initial certification and ongoing development. Another
group of interest would be ESOL students, whose perspectives could provide valuable
information for instructors about what enhances or hinders learning. By gathering perspectives
from larger samples at all levels of ESOL teaching and learning, the ESOL community would be
strongly positioned to make recommendations for program improvement consistent with the
inclusive, democratic ideals of Canadian society.
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APPENDIX A

Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults Framework (2008)

The Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adult Framework were presented in 2008 by TESOL. Presented below is an overview of the eight domains it had covered. I retrieved this document from the TESOL website.

Domain: Planning

Standard 1: Teachers plan instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify plans to assure learner engagement and achievement.

Domain: Instructing

Standard 2: Teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and promote respectful classroom interactions.

Domain: Assessing

Standard 3: Teachers recognize the importance of and are able to gather and interpret information about learning and performance to promote the continuous intellectual and linguistic development of each learner. Teachers use knowledge of student performance to make decisions about planning and instruction “on the spot” and for the future. Teachers involve learners in determining what will be assessed and provide constructive feedback to learners, based on assessments of their learning.

Domain: Identity and Context

Standard 4: Teachers understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, heritages and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize the importance how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influences learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing.
Domain: Language Proficiency

Standard 5: Teachers demonstrate proficiency in social, business/workplace and academic English. Proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing means that a teacher is functionally equivalent to a native speaker with some higher education.

Domain: Learning

Standard 6: Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and adult language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings. They use this knowledge to support adult language learning.

Domain: Content

Standard 7: Teachers understand that language learning is most likely to occur when learners are trying to use the language for genuine communicative purposes. Teachers understand that the content of the language course is the language that learners need in order to listen, to talk about, to read and write about a subject matter or content area. Teachers design their lessons to help learners acquire the language they need to successfully communicate in the subject or content areas they want/need to learn about.

Domain: Commitment and Professionalism

Standard 8: Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching and learning to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and communities at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities.
Appendix B

TESOL's Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults (2008) and Performance Indicators

Standard 1: Planning

1.1 Overall Planning
- identifies and articulates short- and long-term plans to promote learning
- identifies and articulates learning goals for both language and other content

1.2 Learner Considerations
- identifies learners' interests and integrates in planning
- identifies learners' needs and integrates in planning
- identifies learners' prior learning and background knowledge and integrates in planning

1.3 Lesson Planning
- develops lesson plans that allow time for learning, review, and assessment
- develops lesson plans that include assessment to evaluate learning and achievement of objectives
- develops lesson plans that connect individual lessons to curriculum and to program objectives

1.4 Activities and Strategies
- designs or sequences strategies and activities to deliver content
- designs or sequences strategies and activities to address individual differences
- designs or sequences strategies and activities to accomplish learning objectives
- designs or sequences strategies and activities that build on learners' problem-solving and critical-thinking skills
- designs or sequences strategies and activities that employ more than one variety of English

1.5 Resources
- selects appropriate resources

Standard 2: Instructing

2.1 Classroom Management
- organizes and manages constructive interactions
- creates an environment that engages all learners
- makes effective use of classroom time
- manages activities
- adjusts instruction when necessary
- uses unexpected events to extend learning

2.2 Instructor Role
- makes goals explicit
- gives clear instructions
- promotes learner participation
- listens and responds to learner talk
- models natural language use
- models and promotes respectful interactions among learners
- asks questions to check for comprehension
- facilitates discussion
- clarifies student thinking
- gives correct feedback

2.3 Activities and Strategies
- uses a variety of strategies and activities to introduce, explain, and restate concepts and processes
- uses a variety of strategies and activities to address individual differences
- uses a variety of strategies and activities to group learners in a variety of ways to meet goals
- uses a variety of strategies and activities to make content accessible
- uses a variety of strategies and activities to further critical-thinking skills

2.4 Learner Considerations
- treats learners as adults
- conveys and maintains expectations for learner behaviour
- engages in decision-making about their learning
- helps learners become independent, lifelong learners

Standard 3: Assessing

3.1 Need for Assessment
- demonstrates a recognition of the importance of obtaining information about learner performance
- ties assessment to learning objectives

3.2 Types of Assessment
- uses a variety of formal and informal assessment tools appropriate for the context and desired results
- uses assessment that is multimodal, systematic, and purposeful
- uses assessment tools that allow learners to demonstrate their learning
- uses assessment tools that are culturally sensitive, appropriate, and equitable
- uses assessment tools that are instructor generated and standardized

3.3 Evaluation of Results
- gathers and interprets information about learner background, preferences, expectations, and goals
- monitors learning as it happens in the classroom
- gathers, interprets, and documents information about performance before, during, and after instruction

3.4 Learner Considerations
- engages learners in self-assessment and monitoring of their progress
- uses learner feedback on instructional methods and approaches in the design of appropriate assessments
- provides constructive feedback to learners based on assessment of their learning
3.5 Development and Changes
- evaluates the reliability and validity of instructor-generated and standardized assessment instruments
- uses assessment results and learner feedback to adjust or modify the future learning objectives

**Standard 4: Identity and Context**

4.1 Classroom Environment
- creates an environment conducive to adult learning
- acknowledges learners as adults
- establishes routines and encourages learners’ appreciation for each other

4.2 Learner Identities
- respects the legitimacy and diversity of identities and roles’ impact on planning, instruction, and assessing
- uses the diversity of adult learners’ and roles as a classroom resource
- varies instructional practices to address learner identities and roles

4.3 Instructor Interaction
- interacts equitably and responsibly with adult learners
- models respectful attitudes towards cross-cultural differences and conflicts

4.4 Learner Communities
- helps learners connect and apply their learning to home, community, and workplace
- integrates information from learners’ communities in planning, instruction, and assessing
- seeks out and uses knowledge about learner communities to guide instructional practice

**Standard 5: Language Proficiency**

5.1 General Proficiency
- demonstrates proficiency in oral, written, and professional English
- demonstrates proficiency in social, academic, and professional English

5.2 Other Contexts
- demonstrates familiarity with more than one variety of English
- varies register according to context

5.3 Classroom Performance
- serves as an English language model for learners

5.4 Nonnative Advocate
- explains and advocates for NNES (Non-native English Speaking) teachers

**Standard 6: Learning**

6.1 Classroom Environment
- creates classroom contexts in which language acquisition can take place
- scaffolds language and content
- integrates instruction in oral language and literacy
- adjusts teacher talk to the English level of the learner
• provides language input, feedback, and opportunities for learners to use and extend English

6.2 Learner Activity
• provides learning experiences that promote autonomy and choice
• provides learning experiences that promote cooperation and collaboration
• creates classroom contexts in which learners can negotiate meaning through interactions with the teacher and with one another
• creates situations where meaningful messages are exchanged
• encourages learners to use their first language skills as a resource for learning English
• helps learners to develop metacognitive awareness and to use strategies for knowing about, reflecting on, and monitoring their own language

6.3 Learner Variables
• demonstrates understanding of the personal and contextual factors that affect language learning
• provides learning experiences that respond to differential rates and styles of learning

Standard 7: Content

7.1 Input and Practice
• provides a model of oral and written language in the content area
• provides input and practice in the different linguistic features of the language used in the content area
• provides input and practice in the discourse structures used in the content area
• provides input and practice in applying sociocultural rules that relate to the content area
• provides input and practice in coping strategies that can be used when grammatical, sociocultural, and discourse competency is not fully developed

7.2 Tasks in Content Area
• incorporates real-world tasks that give learners instruction and practice in doing activities specific to the content area in the four skills area
• incorporates pedagogical tasks that give learners instruction and practice in using the language they need to successfully complete a real-world task

7.3 Content Knowledge in Lesson Planning
• uses prior knowledge or expertise in content area to develop lessons
• collaborates with content specialists to develop lessons
• teaches students investigative or strategies to acquire content knowledge on their own

Standard 8: Commitment and Professionalism

8.1 Gaining and Using Knowledge
• seeks out, interacts, and reflects on learning in teaching and learning communities and shares information with the teaching profession
• seeks out, interacts, and reflects on student learning and shares with teaching and learning communities
• seeks out, interacts, and reflects on knowledge about learners’ communities and shares with teaching and learning communities
- pursues other opportunities to grow professionally

8.2 Skill Development
- is developing his or her professional voice
- is developing personal professional development plans
- continually develops his or her knowledge and skills to improve instructional practices
- balances professional responsibilities with personal needs

8.3 Advocating
- advocates for English language teachers and English adult learners in his or her teaching context
- builds relationships with the teaching and learning communities to support students’ learning and well-being
- encourages social and political strength in learners and their communities
- serves as a professional resource in all learning and teaching communities
Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Are you aware of the TESOL (2008) Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults Framework? If so, how did you learn about this set of Standards and can you describe its main ideas and uses?

2. a) Can you describe, in your own words, the qualities and skills of a successful ESL instructor?
   b) Can you explain where your ideas about quality ESL instructors came from?

3. Have you ever used a set of Standards to reflect on your development as an instructor and to set goals for improvement?
   a) If so, what Standards, when, and how?
   b) If not, how do you usually decide what to work on next, to improve your knowledge and skills as an ESL instructor? How do you know when you have been successful?

4. When you look over a basic outline of the TESOL (2008) Standards,
   a) Which Standards are most important for ESL instructors to master?
   b) Which are most neglected?
   c) Are there any that do not seem important at all?
   d) Are there any important areas that are missing?

5. Have you ever encouraged other ESL instructors to use Standards or criteria to guide their professional development?

6. What changes would you suggest to make the Standards more useful to practicing ESL instructors?