

Market Ideology, Critical Educational Studies, and the Image of Foreign Language Education



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Introduction

A number of factors may explain the poor contemporary image of foreign language education. The language teacher drilling students in the declension of Latin nouns at the front of classroom, as depicted in the film *Dead Poets Society*, serves to illustrate the perception of the foreign language teacher as taskmaster, afflicting his or her charges with the minutiae of static particles of language information. In the minds of some, perhaps, the anti-German hysteria from the early twentieth century continues to plague the profession, although it is hard to imagine anyone ascribing to current information gap activities the characteristics of “subversive propagandizing” or “espionage,” as was the accusation leveled almost one hundred years ago at language education in the United States (see Wiley, 1998). A third explanation for the low esteem in which the profession is held may be misguided pedagogy, such as an interpretation of behaviorism that subjected students to sterile recorded dialogue and examples of proper language use. Even if these have played some role in our current status, I wish in this article to explore the way we ourselves have conceptualized and rationalized our own endeavor. One underlying assumption about the value of foreign language education arises from principles of market ideology, commonplace in educational programming but manifestly inappropriate to justify the study of languages in the contemporary United States. In this article, I will suggest that a critical perspective helps demonstrate the drawbacks to such an approach.

I begin with a discussion of three pertinent historical trends in the profession. Next, I introduce the reader to critical educational studies in foreign language, and the issues they illuminate in regard to the image of foreign language education in the United States. Finally, I explore how a critical pedagogy of foreign language education can strengthen our endeavor and advocate specific avenues of reform.

Overview of Historical Trends

Between 1893 and 1895, the National Education Association's (NEA) Committee of Ten identified classic and modern languages as central to the high school curriculum. In 1918, the NEA Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education published the influential *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, further fine-tuning the curricu-

lum to five essential subjects, including modern language. During the past century, then, and even much earlier at the post-secondary level, foreign language education has had an important role to play in educational institutions in the United States.

Educational conservatives¹ often rationalize the study of languages as important in the preparation of an educated and well-rounded person. The traditional and currently conservative position holds that foreign language training should be included in the curriculum, since a person cannot be considered educated without it. As the British philosopher of education Peters (1975) explains in his seminal work on the concept:

Thus our concept of an educated person is of someone who is capable of delighting in a variety of pursuits and projects for their own sake and whose pursuit of them and general conduct of his life are transformed by some degree of all-round understanding and sensitivity. Pursuing the practical is not necessarily a disqualification for being educated; for the practical need not be pursued under a purely instrumental aspect. This does not mean, of course, that an educated man is oblivious to the instrumental value of pursuits—e.g. of science. It means only that he does not view them purely under this aspect. Neither does it mean that he has no specialized knowledge; it means only that he is not just a narrow-minded specialist. (p. 9-10)

Foreign language educators have historically argued that foreign languages contributed measurably to education and that abilities in languages constituted one mark of an educated person (see Lado 1964). Although such arguments are not often articulated today, these ideas still hold a level of attraction for language educators, since we recognize the contributions our own language learning has made to our worldview(s).

A second trend, and perhaps the more contemporarily proffered justification of foreign language study in the curriculum, relates to the practical value of such training.

These arguments point out that language education benefits both the workplace and the multicultural world students will inhabit. As the framers of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* have articulated:

To study another language and culture is to gain an especially rich preparation

for the future. It is difficult to imagine a job, a profession, a career, or a leisure activity in the twenty-first century which will not be enhanced by the ability to communicate efficiently and sensitively with others. . . . Possession of the linguistic and cultural insights which come with foreign language study will be a requisite for life as a citizen in the worldwide neighborhood. (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 12)

Additional arguments offered along these lines tend to focus on issues of national security. Kurt Müller (1986), for example, argued during the latter days of the cold war that “the study of the use of foreign languages by the U. S. armed forces has revealed that language competence is an important component of national defense” (p. 138). The tragic events of September 11 have reminded a grieving country of our need for language knowledge as well.

Methodological changes preferred by these educationally progressive camps, similarly, have shifted to communicative, “real” world emphases that infuse the curriculum with everyday relevance for students. Certainly, research that may have advanced our understanding of second language acquisition has fueled these pedagogical shifts. Often, progressive educators have attempted to tie language proficiency to gains in marketable skills or tourism. Indeed, foreign language education has seen a century of remarkable change in terms of methodological theory in the United States. From grammar-translation to audiolingualism, from the Natural Approach to Total Physical Response, and from communicative approaches to proficiency orientation, we seem to have settled for the time on an eclectic blend with an emphasis on language in context. Certainly, lack of curricular innovation has not been an issue on the theoretical level. Some would argue, however, that what happens in the classroom has not changed appreciably (see, for example, Connor, 1995).

Legacy of Non-success

A third trend seen historically in foreign language education in the United States can be called a legacy of non-success.² In 1930, for example, Abraham Flexner declared, “I am bound to confess that foreign languages, and especially Latin, are for many Americans a worse stumbling-block than even the lack of that broad basis of general historical knowledge that the honour school of almost any British

university affords" (p. 81). In 1968, Hansen and Graham asserted that the expenditures necessary by both individuals and institutions to maintain foreign language requirements did not meet a test of cost-benefit analysis.

Supporters of foreign language education who have mourned the loss of our nation's language competence (Simon, 1980) include some, as in the case of the much-celebrated President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies of 1979, who have judged the situation nothing short of scandalous. Recently, the President of Drake University in Iowa, a former professor of Russian, disbanded the entire foreign language department in favor of study abroad programs designed to increase language competence, citing departmental failures as his rationale (Schneider, 2001). In other words, in terms of the resources committed to language study in the United States, there was and is substantial doubt as to its benefit in the marketplace of graduates.

It is true that, in the past decade, Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) has increased almost 10%, with suburban private schools leading the trend (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999, p. 12). Gains in FLES may be in part due to the benefits attributed to FLES and routinely given as the rationale for the study of foreign languages at that level: gains in basic skills, communication, creativity, self-concept, career development, curricular integration, and cultural enrichment (Curtain & Pesola, 1994, 7-9). It is also likely that gains in foreign language instructional offerings, where they exist, have benefited from an increased attention to articulation efforts (see Lally, 2001). During the same period, however, secondary school foreign language offerings have remained relatively steady. Spanish has shown significant gains at all pre-university levels, at times replacing other languages in the offerings (see Rhodes & Branaman, 1999).

Our legacy of non-success has thus been reflected in the waxing and waning of enrollments.³ Scholars have questioned the necessity of foreign language education in numerous forums, perhaps most often in terms of specific fields of study (for English, see Patty, 1989; for speech and communication, see Hall, 1976; for biological sciences, see Janies, 1969). In 1987, one study found that doctoral degree requirements nationwide included only 45% that required two or more foreign languages, with 14% having no foreign language requirement (Moore & Sacchetti, 1988). With respect to graduate programs in education, the 2000 *GRE Directory of Graduate Programs in Social*

Science and Education indicates a combined total of only 23 institutions requiring foreign language study without options for substitution in the fields of administration, curriculum and instruction, early childhood education, elementary education, secondary education and "other" education, including bilingual education, social foundations and TESOL. In terms of anecdotal reports, it is not uncommon to hear of university faculty senates debating the removal of foreign languages from general education requirements, nor of secondary school principals who are less than supportive of their school's foreign language requirement. If language study has remained in the "core," it is only by dint of substantial effort on the part of advocates and not thanks to the positive—or at least indispensable—image enjoyed by other disciplines.

Critical Educational Studies and Foreign Language Education

At this point, I wish to explore the historical trends reported above from the perspective of critical educational studies.⁴ I will contend that the arguments for and against language education have too often been judged from within an historically-constructed ideology. This ideology misapplies the logic of the marketplace as a guiding principle for educational programming, rather than referring simply to a greater public and democratic good. I want to illustrate that the convergence of (a) methodological factors focused on the student as "consumer" and (b) policy issues positing the school as "producer" of a commodity points to an underlying appropriation of a corporate mentality in foreign language education. Trends in the field evaluated against such criteria are demonstrably weak, and will likely lead to the further erosion of confidence in the need for language education, both within and beyond educational institutions. However, if we as a profession explicitly reject market ideology and begin to reshape and reconceptualize our undertakings outside of its constraints, the image and value of language education will indubitably improve.

Critical educational studies depart from traditional quantitative analyses in which truth is seen as neutrally and naturally defined, fragmentable, and measurable. Similar to those who employ naturalistic approaches to research, critical theorists see truth as both holistic and defined by participants in the social world. Critical theorists go a step further by seeking to understand the relations of *power* inherent in the sense individuals make of their world. Though by no means a homogeneous set of educational thinkers, critical

theorists tend to have in common a set of related ideas and a concern for social justice.⁵

Critical educational research, therefore, includes qualitative, structural and philosophical examination of phenomena. In foreign language education, for example, the work may look at linguistic diversity in terms of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of groups in society and at the relative sociopolitical power of each. This *cultural capital* is, in effect, a commodity, a good that has a social value. Some groups in society are *marginalized* when their cultural capital is devalued by the dominant culture. This devaluation can and does occur through schooling (cf. Heath, 1983).

Schools play a powerful role in creating and recreating social orders. Certain behaviors are encouraged, certain knowledge is honored, and other knowledge is trivialized. Within the United States, we often rely on a *banking model* of schooling (Freire, 1997), which assumes that teachers transmit knowledge to their students, who then are measured via a plethora of tests.

Although the critical study of foreign language education in the United States has experienced significant growth in recent years, our colleagues in TESOL remain ahead of us (see the Autumn, 1999 issue [v.33, n.3] of *TESOL Quarterly*, for a dedicated issue on critical approaches to TESOL). Nonetheless, Lourdes Ortega (1999) has explored ideological and structural constraints in foreign language education, and Ana Roca (1999) reports on the case of Florida in its attempts to articulate a foreign language policy in higher education, concluding:

The failure of foreign language education in the United States is often blamed on poor pedagogy and unqualified teachers, when in reality part of the problem is systemic, the result of politics, poor planning, and poor policies. (p. 304)

Deborah M. Herman's (2002) excellent historiographic treatment of the profession notes that:

[The foreign language teaching profession was] in the ticklish position of doing cross-cultural analysis while extolling the culture of the United States as, in the end, supreme. In addition, study of material considered hazardous to impressionable children and youth would have to be avoided; all study must work toward the creation of an American culture and loyal American citizens. Finally, all practically oriented language instruction should

be in the service of American economic and political goals abroad. (p. 15)

Osborn's work in helping teachers discern elements of *foreignness* within the foreign language curriculum includes an observation that:

In effect, by assuming that all non-English languages are somehow related to that which is foreign, language educational endeavors serve to reinforce a language identity by default. Though challenges to English as an official language are often mounted, within the realm of common-sense, the national and official languages of the United States are both, and only, English. Non-dominant language speakers are thereby marginalized as the media of their expression take on a devalued position. A student who chooses to adopt the view of the dominant culture, therefore, is put in a position of assimilating linguistically. Further, those students who speak American English as a native language are firm in their beliefs that English is *the* language of the United States. (Osborn, 2000, p. 87)

Xaé Reye's (2002) reflections on her own experiences as both speaker and teacher of Spanish have added to the literature, as has her call for a reform of language curricula to include the authentic experiences of migrants. Tollefson's (2002) edited volume on language policy in education includes Wiley's (2002) analysis of language rights in the United States context. Finally, Reagan and Osborn (2002) have endeavored to bring the issues gleaned from critical educational study to the attention of language educators in *The Foreign Language Educator in Society: Toward a Critical Pedagogy*, arguing that:

We take as a given that foreign language education in American public schools is largely unsuccessful at producing individuals competent in second languages. We also take as a given that this lack of success is not due to any particular methodological or pedagogical failure on the part of foreign language teachers. . . . These factors alone do not, and cannot . . . explain the overwhelming nature of our failure to achieve our articulated goals. Rather, in order to explain why foreign language education is relatively unsuccessful in contemporary American society, we need to look more critically at the social, political, cultural, historical, and economic context in which foreign language education takes place. (p. 2)

Market Ideology

Marketplace ideology in American education is not a particularly recent phenomenon. Kerr, in a subsequent edition, reiterated a statement first made in 1963:

The production, distribution, and consumption of "knowledge" in all its forms is said to account for 29% of gross national product . . . and "knowledge production" is growing at about twice the rate of the rest of the economy. Knowledge has certainly never in history been so central to the conduct of an entire society. . . . And the university is at the center of the knowledge process. (1982, p. 88)

As a result of market ideology, language educators continue to find themselves justifying the existence of language requirements at all levels, especially at schools and colleges where the curricular *modus operandi* increasingly follows logic similar to Chaffee's:

The only reason to create and maintain a formal organization like a business or university is to perform functions that someone—a customer—needs which cannot be done alone or in small groups. A primary definition of what is needed is what customers are willing to pay for, which is determined by their resources and priorities. Competing demands for both public and personal funds are rising rapidly; the costs of operating a university are rising rapidly; and the economy is reasonably steady. This is a recipe for disaster in any industry unless customer satisfaction is rising rapidly. (1998, p. 18)

The conservative position, which holds that foreign language education is beneficial in the formation of the "well-educated" person, becomes complicated by calls to give students more choice in their school programs, or in their "consumption" of the educational process. The students can argue that they do not want to take languages, and marketplace rationales would thereby support the elimination of such requirements from the curriculum. Political conservatives (who may or may not be educationally conservative) in general are unlikely to advocate grand scale multilingualism in the United States, arguing that such movements could result in the fragmentation of the nation (see Schlesinger, 1992, as one example of such arguments). The paradox is that educational conservatives may issue calls for language study, but the courses take shape primarily as a form of cultural capital entrenched in the tradition of schooling. In other words, students are expected to take a foreign language because it is "good for them" and part of an "education"

for some, but no level of language proficiency is actually required of all.

These practices reflect the banking model of education and set up what Reagan (2002) refers to as a political economy of languages in education: some languages "count" as appropriate for serious study, others do not, often based on sociopolitical distinctions of prestige to the "educated person." In practice today, though, the tension between the ideal of the "educated person" and the corporatizing of curricular programmatic thought leads to a situation in which schools, as "producers" of a knowledge commodity, will require language courses as an obstacle, filter or hurdle to completing a course of study, or, increasingly, not at all. How many students have taken foreign languages at the college or high school level simply because it was a "requirement" prerequisite to the awarding of a degree or diploma?

The progressive position, relying on "real world" applications for justification and the shaping of curricula, fares just as poorly within evaluative frameworks drawn from market ideology. Given the explosive growth of English (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) and the geopolitical power invested in the language (Pennycook, 1995), "real world" applications of the skills and knowledge gained in contemporary foreign language education in the United States are minimal at best. Not surprisingly, claims to the contrary suggesting that foreign language education provides "marketable" skills consistently fail to resonate as convincing. Nor should they be convincing, since language professionals themselves reject many such claims. The authors of Idaho's curriculum guide assert that, "As for studying a foreign language for vocational purposes, within this country there is almost always a plethora of native speakers of any language needed in commerce" (Idaho State Department of Education, 1994, p. 21).

In addition, curricular reforms that have included such activities as asking directions in a foreign country, discussion of school schedules with students abroad, and similar approaches do not pass a test of market usefulness. It is likely that the vast majority of Americans will never enter into such exchanges and that what little proficiency they may develop in our classrooms involves situations just as "foreign" to them as were the literary readings in grammar-translation classrooms of the past. It is certainly ironic that movements in the field to provide more "useful" language education have suffered the same fate as their literary-focused predecessors—i.e., being seen

as out of touch with contemporary educational trends. Language classes of today could be largely seen as extraneous to the market-driven schooling experience.

Thus, as both liberal and conservative language educators have accepted the supremacy of marketplace rationales for contemporary language educational practice, the market demand for contemporary foreign language education as practiced has seemingly grown significantly smaller. And ironically, even as scholars have rightfully critiqued the elitist perspective of some who call for the “educated person,” they have unwittingly refuted perhaps the most compelling reason for language education—i.e., that well-educated people should have some experience learning a second language. Utilizing a critical analytical perspective, then, one can see that the depreciated image of language education in the United States, despite attempts from both conservative and progressive factions to justify and laud its existence, could be linked to the market ideology prevalent in educational programmatic discourse. In the case of FLES, it would be enlightening to explore how language education at that level appropriates or avoids market ideology. The logic of the marketplace, with its emphasis on production and consumption metaphors, fails to provide compelling arguments for contemporary language study. It fails, furthermore, to provide effective guidance on structuring foreign language curricula.

Yet, consumerism and market ideologies should not be the primary sources guiding the determination of educational requirements or programs in language education. Although a customer may well know which toaster best suits his or her needs, s/he cannot always evaluate which educational choices, and thus what knowledge, should constitute the basis for awarding a diploma or degree. Education ideally does involve student construction of knowledge, and the student’s needs and desires should not be summarily dismissed. On the other hand, education also involves interactions analogous to the mentor and protégé relationship. Of necessity, many decisions regarding educational programming and requirements must be made by professionals with an eye toward the students’ best interests and the greater aims of education in the United States.

Advocating a Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogues, though espousing the need for critical awareness and social justice, have largely failed to recognize the role language education can play in their endeavors. Yet the power of foreign

language learning, those of us in the field recognize, can be a significant component of education. Our endeavor can indeed provide to students benefits not found in other disciplines. Nonetheless, foreign language educators do need to examine the frames of reference within which we have constructed our profession: our endeavors are not apolitical (whether we wish or assume them to be or not), and our decision-making should not stem from the marketplace. In his text on the influence of corporate culture in U. S. society, including education, Henry Giroux (2000) has asserted:

The last few decades have been a time of general crisis in university life. Issues regarding the meaning and purpose of higher education, the changing nature of what counts as knowledge in a multicultural society, . . . and intensifying struggles over the place of politics in teaching have exacerbated the traditional tensions both within the university community and between the university and the broader society. . . I have argued elsewhere that the question of what educators teach is inseparable from what it means to invest in public life, to locate oneself and one’s students in a public dialogue. Implicit in this argument is the assumption that the educators’ responsibilities cannot be separated from the consequences of the knowledge they produce, the social relations they legitimate, and the ideologies they disseminate. (p. 25)

In foreign language education, therefore, the discussion should not be centered on *whether* students need to study second languages, but on *what kind* of second language education students should have at all levels and on the justification for that particular form and focus independent of marketplace logic. To see an improvement in the image of foreign language education, foreign language educators should redirect the discussion toward the issues of a greater public, democratic good.

In the pursuit of education, teachers and students have an ethical responsibility related to the production and expansion of human knowledge that can be addressed through a thoughtful approach to language education. We can take as a starting point Rosovsky’s (1990) assertion that “An educated American, in the last quarter of this century, cannot be provincial in the sense of being ignorant of other cultures and other times. It is no longer possible to conduct our lives without reference to the wider world. . .” (p. 106). This wider world, however, is no longer (nor was it ever) just overseas. Linguistic diversity continues to increase

dramatically within the United States, and our society could benefit from language education for all students.

Yet, for the shortcomings in our image to be rectified, it would seem that foreign language educators will need to undertake at least two avenues of reform. First, language educators will need to conceptualize their endeavors outside of the market ideology prevalent in education, explicitly rejecting its validity as primary, or even secondary, in educational decision-making. Second, foreign language educators will need to reform and expand language curricula and instruction along the lines of a critical approach to language education, pedagogically oriented toward an exploration of issues related to the role of language in discourses, in discrimination and in ideology.

One powerful justification for foreign language education lies in the power of the process of language learning, perhaps even more so than in the product of language proficiency. As one example, the fact that words embody concepts and culture in ways that preclude the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence with words in other languages is a lesson learned only in the study of a second language. If the world views of residents of our global village are embodied, at least in part, in their languages, then the study of foreign languages is central to an educational program in our democracy. As the study of natural sciences is vital to those who would live in and seek to understand our natural world, so the study of languages is indispensable for those who live in our social world. And certainly the fact that my high-school leaf collection did not result in a *marketable* skill should not exclude such learning from the curriculum!

We also need a reinvigoration of curriculum development geared at aggressively pursuing the ideals embodied in the latest national standards.⁶ Communities of “foreign” language speakers are at home in most, if not all, areas of the United States, and a critical language awareness will benefit the education of students who live here by introducing them to the interplay among language, culture, diversity, and power. Such a curriculum would include at least some of the facets of a metalinguistic knowledge base, including:

- The social context of language use
- The nature and implications of code-switching and code mixing
- Bilingualism and multilingualism as individual and social norms
- Ideology and language

- Issues of language standardization and linguistic purism
- The concept of linguistic legitimacy
- The historical development of language
- The nature of literacy, and the concept of multiple literacies
- Critical language awareness. (See Reagan and Osborn, 2002, p. 139)

Curricular reform related to such additions will aid us in realizing the potential of our field in contributing meaningfully to life in a pluralistic democracy. Age-old formulas for curricular reform are unlikely to meet the challenges, since approaches to both developing and understanding curricula typically utilize a hierarchical view of the curriculum development process. While these approaches do emphasize the importance of the connections and recursiveness inherent in the curricular process, they also present a serious challenge to understanding the development, implementation and evaluation of democratic, and especially critical, approaches to curriculum. Martel illustrates this point effectively when noting that:

there is a sense today that ideas, institutions, and political structures resting on the vertical [hierarchical] axis represent a deficit model of human organization. Largely products and constructs of the Western world and of its political culture, like the Nation-State, products exported with Western Europe's historical world-wide displacement of its internal competitions and wars, they are not adapted to meet the budding axial shift [to collaborative/horizontal frames]. They are not structures based on peace and sharing. On the contrary, they are based on competition and even warfare. (2000, p. 154)

The point can be applied to the issue of curricula and curriculum development in the broader sense, since the process or construct of curriculum development, as now practiced in United States foreign language education, is a construct and product of the Western world and its intellectual tradition. As a result, a critical pedagogy of foreign language education will involve the decentralization of the curriculum and instructional reform process. Kumaravadivelu (2002) refers to a similar idea in the call for a postmethod pedagogy, as do discussions of *macrocontextualization* in the literature (see Osborn 2000; Reagan & Osborn 2002; Reyes 2002). It is certainly beyond the purview of this article to detail the implementation of such changes in curriculum development. However, given the highly context-dependent varieties of linguistic diversity

in the United States, a case can be made that the days of "one size fits all" approaches to language education already have passed or soon will pass. Therefore, language educators at all levels should have a significant voice in a critical reformation of the field.

Conclusion

The image of language education in the United States involves an entangled set of issues, including historical, social and political issues, in addition to educational ones. The persistence of the status quo in our field can be blamed on a tendency to conceptualize and rationalize our endeavors within the confines of an ill-advised market ideology as we seek to explain our curriculum and instruction or justify our reason for being. Although we have, metaphorically, made our bed, we need not lie in it. Indeed, we can begin to move into the core of educational experiences for all students as we boldly embrace a vision of our own choosing—with a rationale grounded in the best that education can be.

Critical educational studies point to a critical pedagogy as a potent avenue of reform. There is certainly much more work to be done in this area. Concerns regarding the implementation of a critical pedagogy in language education should be noted (see Johnston, 1999). A revolutionary pedagogy cannot be comprised solely of rhetoric. It must translate into beneficial action. This century promises to be a challenging one for our profession, and by incorporating insights afforded by critical educational studies, we are well poised to move the agenda and the image of foreign language education forward.

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NOTES

1. Terminology here is a difficult matter. I am endeavoring to explore generally recognized historical trends, but do not suggest a historiographic treatment, and this exercise will necessarily run the risk of overgeneralization. The reader should view the categories "educational conservative" and "educational progressive" as heuristic, not absolute. Such categorization is consistent with many introductory approaches to the foundations of education (see Johnson et al., 1999, or Schultz, 2001, as examples). My primary goal is to discuss the interplay

of market ideology and historical trends in shaping our image.

2. I am choosing to avoid the term "failure" here due to an important distinction. Non-success implies that we have not reached certain product goals (e.g., proficiency). Yet, foreign language education has played a significant sociological role in the United States—one that we are only beginning to understand. It can be argued that, in that vein, the field of foreign language education has been quite successful in providing the country with a symbolic nod to diverse linguistic heritage that does not actually threaten the status quo.

3. For public high school enrollment figures over the past century, consult <http://www.actfl.org/public/articles/details.cfm?id=139>. Another route is <http://www.actfl.org> and select "Special Projects," then "Foreign Language Enrollments."

4. Michael Apple (1996, p. x) utilized this term in describing this form of scholarship. Some scholars have preferred to use "critical pedagogy," "critical theory" or simply "critical" as the marker. Carspecken (1996), as one example, has authored a text on the research approach called "critical ethnography," a subset of critical educational studies.

5. The language of critical pedagogy can seem challenging when one first encounters it. Wink (2000) has authored a very accessible and useful introductory text.

6. With this suggestion, I depart from the position of many critical theorists who see standards as an embodiment of various forms of cultural domination. I acknowledge that standards can be a tool for continuing unequal relations of power in society:

[W]hile the proponents of a national curriculum may see it as a means to create social cohesion and to give all of us the capacity to improve our schools by measuring them against "objective" criteria, the effects will be the opposite. The criteria may seem objective; but the results will not be, given existing differences in resources and in class and race segregation. Rather than leading to cultural and social cohesion, differences between "we" and the "others" will be socially produced even more strongly, and the attendant social antagonisms and cultural and economic destruction will worsen. (Apple, 1996, p. 32-33)

Before we venture too far down the standards/standardized test path prevalent in education in the United States today, it would do us well to consider Apple's analysis and Elana Shohamy's (2001) critical research on language tests. However, I am proposing a markedly different approach to curriculum development that should offset some of those effects listed by Apple. The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* provide an exceptional starting point for these reforms.