

Alla Karimi
Practicum GER 509
Dr. W. Fischer

420-1

Changing Perspectives in Foreign Language Education: Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?

The article of Renate A. Schulz "Changing Perspectives in Foreign Language Education: Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?" discusses the "good old days" in foreign language education and assesses changes that have taken place in language teaching since the 1960s.

Schulz reminisces about the content-based instruction, the phonetic and grammatical structures. She also touches on cultural patterns, as they were reflected in the accepted literary canon of the time. She mentions conjugation and declination, transformation of singular forms to plurals and present tenses to the past, dictation and transformation exercise.

And then Schulz discusses the changes in foreign language teaching in the 1970's: multiple intelligences, learning styles, learning strategies, diversity, heritage speakers and teachers with limited language proficiency, "standards", performance assessments, and portfolio. Schulz raises questions what the profession will have to deal with in the future in order to succeed.

420-2

There are several aspects that caught my attention in Schulz's article: "standards", professionally relevant language proficiency, and no consensus on what knowledge or abilities define an elementary or intermediate-level course.

According to Schulz the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* are a mixed blessing. They have "reinvigorated many teachers and challenged school systems to take a critical look at their curriculums." But at the same time they define foreign language learning "predominantly in terms of basic communication skills, ignoring - or at least undervaluing - the benefits of foreign language study for general education.

Schulz also presents and answers five "easy" questions posed by Richard Brecht of the National Foreign Language Center in the 2001 *Northeast Conference Report*. Question that caught my attention is: Will the demands of new learners, together with new technology and new scientific knowledge, radically change the way we teach and learn language? Without doubt, my answer is yes.