
Second Language Acquisition Research: A Resource for Changing Teachers' Professional Cultures?

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This article situates the role that second language acquisition research can potentially play in promoting change in teachers' methodological beliefs and practices. Drawing on an area of sociological enquiry known as diffusion of innovations research, the article first reviews a theoretical framework for understanding change in language education, which is constructed by asking the question "Who adopts what, where, when, why, and how?" The article then discusses the practical applications of this framework with reference to what needs to be done if the innovation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) is to become part of the mainstream in language education.

WHAT ROLE DOES SECOND LANGUAGE acquisition (SLA) theory and research play in how language teaching professionals think about and perform language teaching?¹ From a rationalist perspective, which has a long history in applied linguistics (see Markee, 1990), SLA studies not only play a key role in the construction of pedagogically relevant knowledge, but the diffusion and use of insights derived from SLA are also seen as relatively unproblematic: The results of SLA research trickle down to practitioners, who then, ideally, adopt them.² This is the view to which Krashen (1983) implicitly subscribes when he says: "Given a brief workshop or inservice, the most practical, most valuable information we can provide [teachers] is a coherent view of how language is acquired, a theory of second language acquisition" (p. 261).

However, this view is by no means universally accepted. Strevens (interview cited by Phillipson, 1992) claims that there is in fact little evidence to support the idea that basic research

(whether in SLA or any other subdiscipline of applied linguistics) plays a major role in influencing the decisions of national language education policy-makers. On the other end of the spectrum, it is worth noting Eykin's (1987) claim that from the perspective of practicing foreign language teachers, SLA research is rarely worth reading because the ideas researchers discuss are too distant from teachers' everyday classroom concerns. Furthermore, even when researchers discuss ideas that are potentially relevant to teachers, they often express themselves in such opaquely technical language that teachers are "turned off" from the whole idea of research. Under such conditions, it seems that teachers tend to rely far more on their collective and individual teaching experience as a resource for pedagogical change than on the theoretical knowledge to which they are exposed at university or teacher training college (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). *THEORIES* of SLA, such as Krashen proposed (that is, basic research in language learning processes) differ qualitatively from teachers' experientially based *theories* of language learning. The distinction between *THEORIES* and *theories* of language learning, which I will discuss later in this article,

derives from Edelsky (1991): THEORIES are abstract constructs that seek to expand the frontiers of knowledge, whereas theories are practically driven, experientially based attempts to solve everyday problems. By extension, we may also differentiate between "pure" RESEARCH and research. More specifically, research is equivalent to action research, which Cohen and Manion (1985) define as "small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention" (p. 174). In conclusion, SLA THEORY and RESEARCH do little to promote change in language education because they do not address the real-life concerns of teachers and policy-makers.³

This is clearly an unhealthy situation. Why does the language teaching profession find itself in this uncomfortable bind? If we are to resolve such problems, applied linguists, teachers, and other stakeholders in language education need to understand how social change happens. This involves developing some familiarity with a type of sociological enquiry known as the diffusion of innovations (see Rogers, 1983, 1995). To this end, I will first briefly review how Krashen's (1981, 1982, 1985) ideas on the importance of comprehensible input in SLA have been developed by a number of RESEARCHERS in the last 15 years to form the THEORETICAL basis for the innovation of task-based language teaching (TBLT).⁴ I will then outline a framework for understanding how innovation in language education works, using the potential diffusion of TBLT to discuss the issues and problems that must be resolved in order to make social change occur.

THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT AND TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION

Long argues that SLA THEORIES should be of the "causal-process" type (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Long, 1985a). Such THEORIES consist of THEORETICALLY motivated constructs that are hypothesized to play a particular causal role in SLA. These hypotheses are then tested through experimental RESEARCH, whose results are said to be generalizable to all second language learners. Thus, for example, one of the most well-known causal-process THEORIES in SLA states that the construct of "comprehensible input" (language that is slightly beyond a learner's current level of competence in the target language, hence also known as "*i+1*") is a sufficient causal variable in

SLA (Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1985). According to this THEORY, learners initially understand *i+1* from contextual clues in the environment. This input destabilizes their interlanguage in such a way that language learning occurs.

According to an alternative interpretation of the role of *i+1* in SLA, comprehensible input is a necessary but insufficient condition for language learning to occur. Instead of positing relatively passive learners who are exposed to *i+1* and who somehow learn the language through osmosis, learners are thought to receive comprehensible input by actively negotiating information with their conversational partners (Long, 1981, 1989). To the extent that interlocutors are able to converge during the course of this negotiation, they may not only receive the comprehensible input that they require to understand the new language to which they are being exposed, but they may also receive the opportunity to learn new language and eventually produce comprehensible output, that is, language that incorporates new linguistic knowledge into their evolving interlanguage systems (Swain, 1985, 1995). These perspectives on the role of comprehensible input in SLA have been used to provide the THEORETICAL underpinnings to two distinct pedagogical proposals: the Natural Approach, outlined by Krashen and Terrell (1983), and TBLT, formulated by, among others, Doughty and Pica (1986), Long (1985b, 1989), Long and Crookes (1992, 1993), and Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993). It is on this latter development that I will now concentrate.

A number of definitions of tasks and TBLT have been offered in the literature (e.g., Breen, 1987; Candlin, 1987; Crookes, 1986; Long, 1985b; Nunan, 1993; Prabhu, 1987; Richards, Platt, & Webber, 1985). By and large, these definitions may be differentiated according to the relative importance placed on "real world" or "pedagogical" tasks and to the justification of the construction of such tasks in sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic terms. For present purposes, I define TBLT as an "analytic approach to syllabus design and methodology in which chains of information-gathering, problem-solving and evaluative tasks are used to organize language teaching and learning; these interdependent pedagogical tasks, which combine insights from sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic research, are designed to methodologically simulate the communicative events which learners encounter in specific second language-using environments" (Markee, 1994a, 1997).

This formulation of TBLT seeks to include within its definitional compass the following THEORETICAL and theoretical issues in the curriculum design literature: (a) TBLT uses an analytic rather than a synthetic approach to course design; that is, it is based on a behavioral rather than a linguistic organization of content (for a fuller discussion of these terms, see Wilkins, 1976); (b) TBLT does not distinguish between the processes and products of learning; rather, process and product are two sides of the language learning coin, which experience shows cannot be separated from each other; (c) the selection, grading, and sequencing of content in TBLT is accomplished by using chains of macrotasks (information-gathering, problem-solving, and evaluative tasks). These macrotasks, which subsume more microtask types (e.g., one-and two-way information-gap tasks, reasoning-gap tasks, and information-transfer tasks), are derived from sociolinguistic analyses of learners' objective needs and psycholinguistic research on students' subjective wants, complemented by psycholinguistic RESEARCH on the properties of different types of tasks. In this way, instruction is not only based on experientially and empirically derived criteria for course design, it is also socially situated in specific language learning environments (for examples and discussion of what materials based on this type of definition look like, see Markee, 1997).

This definition makes it clear that SLA RESEARCH plays a key role in the continuing THEORETICAL development of TBLT. However, this definition does not give any clues concerning how teachers (and, indeed, other key players in educational change, who will be discussed in the next section) might interpret these ideas and associated behaviors and beliefs or why they might wish to adopt or reject these innovations. As already argued in the introduction, we cannot assume that teachers will necessarily react favorably to TBLT. We therefore need to develop some understanding of the variables that typically come into play when teachers decide whether to adopt or reject innovations that are derived, at least in part, from SLA THEORY and RESEARCH. It is to these questions that I will turn in the section that follows.

Although I use the innovation of TBLT to illustrate how socially situated change works, we should not make the mistake, as already mentioned in Note 4, of believing that the issues of acceptance or rejection of social change dis-

cussed in this article are peculiar to TBLT. The diffusionist perspective presented here has been used to analyze the diffusion of other teaching approaches and practices (e.g., Henrichsen's 1989 analysis of Charles Fries's attempts to diffuse audiolingualism in postwar Japan). By extension, this perspective may also be used to analyze any type of social change, such as innovations in fashion, technology, or social mores (Rogers, 1995).

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

There is a long tradition of work on the diffusion of innovations in education (for present purposes, the most important references include Fullan [1982a, 1982b, 1993], Fullan & Hargreaves [1992], Fullan & Pomfret [1977], Miles [1964], Nicholls [1983], Rudduck [1991], and Stenhouse [1975]; for a more complete list that draws on a wide range of disciplines, see the annotated bibliography given on the Language in Development Forum, a World Wide Web site located at <http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/ldf/>, that focuses on issues pertaining to the management of curricular innovation). In spite of the existence of this literature in education, an interest in understanding how educational change occurs is a relatively recent phenomenon in applied linguistics (for relevant references, see the annotated bibliography on the Language in Development Forum). For present purposes, the review of the literature on how to manage educational innovation⁵ is based on a THEORETICAL framework proposed by Markee (1993, 1994a, 1996, 1997). This framework is constructed by asking the question "Who adopts what, where, when, why, and how?" (for the original formulation of this framework in the context of language planning, see Cooper, 1982, 1989).

Who

In any process of change, different stakeholders play a variety of social roles. Using the distinctions proposed by Lambright and Flynn (1980), stakeholders may act as change agents, clients, adopters (or resisters), implementers, or suppliers of innovations.⁶ Of course, these roles are not mutually exclusive: Individuals may play several of these roles, either at the same time or consecutively over a period of time. Nonetheless, we can differentiate between these distinct

social roles. Change agents are the catalysts or initiators of change. Thus, SLA RESEARCHERS, curriculum specialists, teachers and administrators, or parents can all attempt to persuade others to adopt TBLT and thus to change their current behaviors and values concerning what constitutes good teaching. This role may be subdivided further into internal and external change agents. Internal change agents are members of the same educational system as potential adopters. If these individuals are highly placed in the organizational hierarchy of this system, they can exercise legitimate authority and power over subordinates. In contrast, external change agents are outsiders who cannot legitimately impose change on system members. In the present context, depending on the circumstances, SLA RESEARCHERS may act as internal or external change agents.

Teachers are the potential clients of this RESEARCH, but they may choose either to adopt or resist its pedagogical implications. That is, for reasons later discussed in the "Why" section of this article, teachers may decide to accept or reject TBLT as a viable or useful approach to organizing and implementing language teaching. Of course, teachers are not the only stakeholders who may become adopters or resisters. Administrators frequently play key roles in the adoption process by acting as gatekeepers of change (Fullan, 1982a), who minimally acquiesce in, or actually mandate or forbid, change. Assuming that teachers choose—or are allowed—to adopt TBLT, they become implementers of change. Teachers' decisions to adopt or reject TBLT are often further mediated by individuals who are suppliers of information about this innovation. Typical suppliers of information about TBLT include teacher educators and trainers (who may also be RESEARCHERS in their own right), publishers, and scholarly and professional journals. Again, these roles are quite fluid. Teachers who carry out research (or RESEARCH) on TBLT in their own classrooms are not only change agents in their own right, they also take on the responsibility of supplying themselves with the information that is relevant to solve the problems they wish to investigate. In summary, if educational innovations are to diffuse successfully, language teaching professionals must not only understand the variety and complexity of social roles played by various stakeholders, but they must also ensure that the different interests of these stakeholders are taken into account and accommodated.

Adopts

The process of adoption involves potential adopters evaluating the worth of an innovation. This process may be divided into four phases, during which adopters: (a) gain knowledge about an innovation, (b) become persuaded of its value, (c) make preliminary decisions whether to reject or to adopt and implement the innovation, and (d) confirm or disconfirm their previous decisions (Rogers, 1983). Of these four stages, the fourth is the most crucial. Adopters often reverse initial decisions to adopt a new idea or practice in light of later experience. Indeed, it is salutary to remember that as many as 75% of all innovations fail in the long term because adopters either reject them outright during phase 3 or modify opinions about their utility or validity during phase 4 (Adams & Chen, 1981; Rogers, 1983). Because TBLT is still a comparative newcomer on the language teaching scene (Long & Crookes, 1992), it remains to be seen whether this innovation will become an established part of the language education mainstream. This question will be further examined in the "When" section of this article.

What

Innovations—that is, any changes in beliefs or behaviors that potential adopters perceive to be new (Markee, 1993, 1994a, 1996, 1997; Pennington, 1995; Rogers, 1983, 1995)—may be divided into primary and secondary innovations (Markee, 1996, 1997). For present purposes, TBLT materials, methodologies, and an underlying ideology of experiential learning are examples of primary innovations. However, in order to make the primary innovations of TBLT viable, it is frequently necessary to develop secondary innovations. Such innovations develop the infrastructural capacity of an organization (or a profession) to sustain and nurture primary innovations. Infrastructural development includes a broad range of activities: (a) developing or strengthening formal and informal communication networks (e.g., professional journals, associations, email lists, orientations, staff meetings, etc.) to facilitate the diffusion of primary TBLT innovations; (b) developing or strengthening the knowledge base that underpins TBLT by developing courses in key areas such as curriculum development, methodology, SLA, evaluation, and testing; and (c) developing or strengthening monitoring and evalua-

tion protocols to keep track of how (un)successfully primary innovations diffuse over time (for an account of the interaction between primary and secondary innovations, see Markee, 1994a, 1996, 1997).

Although applied linguistics has historically been quite successful in developing the THEORETICAL knowledge base that underpins TBLT, it has been much less efficient at communicating the implications of this RESEARCH to all stakeholders in language education. Speaking to this issue, empirical evidence gathered over a 6-year period in an ongoing ethnographic project in curricular and teacher innovation suggests that if SLA and other RESEARCH is to be useful to teachers, it is more important for RESEARCHER-change agents to communicate well with their teacher-clients about this RESEARCH than to develop the THEORETICAL knowledge base of SLA studies (see Markee, 1997). I recognize, of course, that this conclusion may strike many RESEARCHERS as simplistic: Why should there be a trade-off between RESEARCH and communication? However controversial this conclusion may seem to some, it makes perfect sense from a diffusion of innovations perspective on the adoption of TBLT because the process of diffusion is a specialized form of communication (Rogers, 1983, 1995).

Where

The issue of where an innovation is developed and potentially adopted is not so much a geographical question as a socioculturally constrained problem (Cooper 1982, 1989). No matter how objectively "good" a given innovation may be in its own terms, it is always the product of a particular cultural, political, administrative, educational, and institutional milieu (Kennedy, 1988). The likelihood of an innovation being adopted is therefore always contingent on its ecological appropriateness in a specific context of implementation. These sociocultural systems are not static and may change over time. Thus, change agents must understand how these and other sociocultural variables (see Markee, 1986) may potentially constrain their proposals for change. For example, task-based, small-group work may well be a useful resource for promoting instructed SLA in U.S. universities (Long, 1989). However, in educational systems where cultural perceptions of good language teaching are equated with authoritarian approaches to pedagogy, the THE-

ORETICALLY supported recommendation that teachers should use such techniques is unlikely to be acceptable, particularly if teachers also lack confidence in their own communicative ability in the foreign language (D. F. Clarke, 1991).

When

RESEARCH suggests that in secondary education, at least, it may take anywhere from 8 to 50 years for successful innovations to be adopted on a systemic basis (Fullan, 1993; Mort, 1964). Although these figures may be too high for other levels of education, and although one may take a relatively optimistic or pessimistic view on the length of time required to diffuse innovations, these statistics nonetheless show that the diffusion of new ideas or practices always takes a long time. Indeed, diffusion is often a much slower process than change agents either desire or anticipate. Furthermore, it seems that the diffusion of innovations does not occur in a smooth, linear fashion. More typically, the adoption of an innovation is characterized by a slow, cautious start as a small minority of potential adopters explore the possible advantages of the innovation. Many innovations never pass beyond this initial stage. In the case of successful innovations, this preliminary phase is usually followed by a sudden burst of activity, during which the majority of potential adopters jump on the adoption bandwagon. Finally, the diffusion process tends to level off as fewer and fewer potential adopters are left to adopt the innovation (Rogers, 1983, 1995). This interaction between the numbers of potential adopters in a given social system who take up an innovation and the amount of time it takes for the diffusion process to be completed may be graphed as an S-shaped diffusion curve (Cooper, 1982; Rogers, 1983, 1995).

In this respect, it is important to remember that SLA and TBLT are both recent arrivals on the applied linguistics and language teaching scene: Both emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, as already noted, little consensus exists as to whether the results of SLA RESEARCH are robust enough to be applied (see Note 2), and there is even less agreement concerning what specific insights might be translated into viable pedagogical recommendations. On a number of counts, therefore, TBLT has a long way to go before it becomes part of the pedagogical mainstream, if it ever does.

Why

The reasons why change occurs or does not occur are immensely complicated. As I discussed earlier in the "Adopts" section of this article, the processes of adoption or rejection are rarely black-and-white processes. Potential adopters may reverse their initial decisions to incorporate TBLT. Furthermore, the meanings and understandings that potential adopters bring to this innovation are always highly individualized. Thus, even if adopters A and B adopt the "same" innovation, not only are they likely to interpret TBLT quite differently, but they will also probably adopt it for different reasons. Nonetheless, some empirically based generalizations can be made about the kinds of psychosocial variables that tend to determine the decision-making behaviors of potential adopters. As we saw in the "Who" section of this article, individuals adopt certain social roles when confronted with change: They become potential adopters or resisters. We may refine this rather broad distinction by using the typically S-shaped diffusion curve to distinguish between finer categories of adopters. These are innovators, early adopters, (early and late) majority, and laggards. Innovators occupy the toe of the diffusion curve; early adopters occupy the portion of the curve just before the slope of the graph steepens; the majority of adopters occupy the steep part of the curve; the laggards occupy the top portion of the curve where it flattens out (Rogers, 1983, 1995).

Certain psychological profiles of these various adopter types may be outlined as follows. Innovators are typically widely traveled, well educated, and upwardly mobile; they tend to be high-risk takers who tolerate high levels of uncertainty, and they tend to have a high degree of exposure to mass media and close professional or personal contacts with change agents. At the other end of the spectrum, laggards tend to display diametrically opposite characteristics (Rogers, 1983, 1995). Furthermore, different adopters are typically characterized by different levels of social status within their reference group. Perhaps surprisingly, both innovators and laggards have low status. These adopters are outliers on the diffusion curve, but for different reasons. Although somebody must begin the process of adopting TBLT, for example, innovators are such high-risk takers that other potential adopters perceive their adoption behaviors as too uncritical and, above all, too dangerous to serve as a viable model for them to follow with

confidence. Laggards are perceived as just too conservative to influence others in a meaningful way.

It turns out that early adopters are the most influential type of adopter to advance the diffusion process. The psychological profiles of these adopters are almost identical to those of innovators but differ crucially in the willingness to take risk and in the level of social status. While still open to change, early adopters are moderate-risk takers who have high social status within their reference group. If such adopters decide to accept an innovation like TBLT, their example typically triggers the bandwagon effect indicated by the steep section of the diffusion curve (Rogers, 1983, 1995). The implications of this insight for language teaching professionals who wish to diffuse Long's ideas on comprehensible input so that TBLT may become part of the pedagogical mainstream are clear: It is vital to identify the correct individuals and organizations who can take on the crucial role of opinion leadership in the profession.

In addition to such characteristics of adopters, innovations themselves possess attributes that tend to either promote or inhibit their acceptance. These attributes include: (a) the relative advantages of adopting an innovation, (b) the innovation's compatibility with previous practice, (c) its complexity, (d) its trialability, and (e) its observability (Rogers, 1983). Other attributes also posited to be important in (language) education include: (a) the form an innovation takes (Richards, 1984), (b) an innovation's explicitness (Dow, Whitehead, & Wright, 1984), (c) its originality (Mintzberg, Raisiniani, & Théoret, 1976; Pelz, 1985), (d) its adaptability (Dow, Whitehead, & Wright, 1984), and (e) its feasibility (Kelly, 1980).

What do these attributes mean and what implications do these properties of innovations have for the diffusion and implementation of TBLT? With respect to the first five attributes, the adoption of TBLT should be perceived by teachers to be potentially advantageous for their students or for themselves. Perceived benefits might include a better class atmosphere, better learning by students, or a sense of heightened professional competence by teachers. Furthermore, the adoption of this innovation should not be too onerous to implement in terms of the time, money, or effort that teachers must spend in order to learn how to use it. Moreover, in order to promote the acceptability of TBLT, its perceived newness should be moderate. That is, TBLT should be neither too differ-

ent nor too similar to potential adopters' present cultural belief systems and practices (Stoller, 1994). Closely related to this attribute is the question of how easy or difficult TBLT is to use or understand. Innovations that are easy to use or understand are generally much more likely to be adopted than those that are difficult to use or understand. In addition, if teachers can easily break down TBLT as a whole into smaller constituent parts, which they can try out individually over time, they are much more likely to adopt this innovation than if they are required to accept it all at once. Finally, teachers who are able to observe peers using TBLT in their classes are much more likely to adopt it than teachers who do not have the opportunity to see trusted colleagues using this innovation successfully with their students.

Although these attributes seem to be desirable for all kinds of innovations, five additional attributes are also important for educational innovations like TBLT. Concrete innovations (e.g., TBLT materials) are much more likely to be adopted than abstract ones (e.g., TBLT methodologies or the development of new teaching values that are consistent with the THEORETICAL underpinnings of TBLT). Innovations that have clear and explicit rationales (whether derived from SLA or other sources, such as education) are much more likely to be adopted than those that do not. As in the case of culturally compatible change, innovations that require either too high or too low a level of originality of interpretation are less likely to be adopted than innovations that require a moderate level of originality. For example, if teachers are expected to develop TBLT materials with little or no guidance from curriculum specialists, it is most unlikely that they will attempt to produce TBLT materials. Furthermore, innovations should not be so highly engineered that they cannot be adapted by end users; in other words, it should be possible for teachers to adapt TBLT materials or methodologies so that these innovations are consistent with teachers' pedagogical purposes and appropriate to the social context in which teachers operate. Finally, end users should perceive the implementation of TBLT to be logistically doable within the existing constraints of the social system within which they operate. Alternatively, the existing social system must be seen as sufficiently flexible to accommodate the possibility of change by developing secondary innovations to support the implementation of primary innovations, as discussed earlier in the "What" section

of this article. In summary, if TBLT is to have a chance of diffusion among language teaching professionals, change agents must give quite careful thought to how they package their ideas and recommended practices for consumption by their intended audience. However, this is easier said than done because the interactions between the variables previously discussed in the "Where" and "Why" sections of this article, such as ecological appropriateness, psychological and social profiles of adopters, and attributes of innovations, vary tremendously from one social context to another. Thus, the relative impact of these variables must be established separately for each individual context (for examples of such analyses, see Henrichsen, 1989; Markee, 1997).

How

As noted at the beginning of this article, the idea that RESEARCH drives social change is widespread in the academic community. This perspective on how social change occurs is called a research, development, and diffusion (RD&D) model of change, which is complemented by empirical-rational change strategies. It is important to acknowledge that there are language teaching innovations (e.g., the notional-functional syllabus) that have in fact been developed and diffused along RD&D lines (White, 1988). However, the use of an RD&D model is by no means the only way of stimulating social change (Chin & Benne, 1976; Havlock, 1971). As these authors note, it is also possible to impose change, as frequently happens in international language aid projects (Phillipson, 1992). This center-periphery (CP) model of change employs power-coercive change strategies, which are based on the notion that individuals who are highly placed in an organization's hierarchy have the legitimate authority to mandate change. At the other end of the spectrum, it is also possible to promote change through persuasion and broad-based participation in the development process by end users (Chinitz, 1995; Lai, 1995; Noble, 1995; Pennington, 1995). This problem-solving (PS) model is accompanied by normative-reeducative change strategies whereby end users adopt changes because they have themselves identified problems that affect them directly. Consequently, they respond to these problems by reeducating themselves as necessary and by developing their own solutions to these problems through action research. In the process, end users change their

own cultural perceptions of how to conceptualize and conduct teaching.

It is also possible to bring about change by selecting among different models and strategies of willed change on a contingent basis (Rondinelli, Middleton, & Verspoor, 1990); this hybrid model of change is called a linkage model and uses any or all of the change strategies identified above as appropriate. For example, it is appropriate to use legitimate power to mandate relatively simple administrative innovations (e.g., requiring teachers to attend an orientation). However, more complex, academic innovations, such as TBLT, which involve teachers taking much greater personal risks and thus having to deal with much higher levels of uncertainty, are best diffused on a problem-solving basis (for further discussion and exemplification of how a linkage model has been used to manage change in one curricular and teacher innovation project, see Markee, 1997). Note also that when the sociocultural and psychological conditions are right, change can happen in a more or less unplanned fashion through a horizontal process of social interaction (SI) (Rogers, 1983, 1995). The skilled change agent ensures as much as possible that the organizational environment is supportive of such unplanned change.

I will not discuss these various models in any detail here (for further discussion, see Markee, 1993, 1997). It is enough to say that whereas RD&D and CP models are both top-down models of change, the PS model is a bottom-up approach to change. This is an important distinction: Whereas top-down models of change may promote innovation in the short term, they are typically less successful in the long term. Users' initial decisions to adopt innovations whose diffusion is predicated on empirical-rational or power-coercive change strategies are often only skin deep. Furthermore, adopters often disconfirm these initial decisions in the long term (as previously outlined as phase 4 of the adoption process in the "Adopts" section of this article). This is attributable to the lack of ownership that end users typically feel toward innovations that come down from higher authority (as discussed in the "Why" section of this article). Because users are effectively excluded from the RESEARCH and development phases or from the decision-making processes that underpin a decision to innovate, potential adopters have little personal stake invested in making these innovations work. Consequently, top-down innovations often wither away due to

lack of support. When top-down strategies are used, it is best to view these as the starting point of a long and complex process of social change that ultimately depends on persuasion for its long-term success.

Bottom-up models of innovation are better suited to promoting long-lasting change because end users have high levels of ownership. Not surprisingly, they are typically very committed to making their own solutions work. However, in the short term, end users may experience frustration and disappointment in getting the answers they require. Teachers are often not trained to formulate and execute RESEARCH or research—be this experimental or ethnographic—and the extra effort required to develop such skills may be prohibitive in terms of what they have to do in their "real" jobs. Furthermore, because the technical quality of action research is often low, at least initially, it is rare for such research to be published by the leading journals of the field (Crookes, 1993). Thus, in terms of the role that SLA research can play in promoting change in applied linguistics and language teaching—that is, in terms of how the field is socially constructed—language teaching professionals face a fundamental dilemma: Teachers are unlikely to adopt innovations that are based on basic RESEARCH that they do not own while researchers are unlikely to accept the validity or utility of action research that they do not regard as technically well executed.

SOME CHANGES IN THE LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFESSION THAT WOULD PROMOTE TBLT

At this point, someone is bound to make the observation that there is nothing so practical as a good THEORY. Indeed, this is precisely the kind of argument that Krashen (1983) implicitly uses in the previously quoted citation, "Given a brief workshop or inservice, the most practical, most valuable information we can provide [teachers] is a coherent view of how language is acquired, a theory of second language acquisition" (p. 261). However, the question remains: To which THEORY or theory is Krashen referring? Obviously, Krashen is talking about abstract THEORIES of SLA, such as Monitor THEORY, which are typically the domain of RESEARCHERS, rather than theories of everyday practice, which are typically the province of teachers (Edelsky, 1991). However, from a diffusion of innovations perspective, the claimed

practicality of SLA THEORIES is nonsense: As already noted, many SLA RESEARCHERS do not even accept that their work has any applicability to the classroom. Even when RESEARCHERS claim some degree of applicability for their THEORIES, their claims of practicality usually amount to divisive nonsense. This is because by making this claim, RESEARCHERS inevitably engage in a discourse of unequal power, in which the practical concerns of teachers and their grounded insights into the problems of the teaching-learning process receive less weight than the abstract, often supposedly generalizable views of RESEARCHERS. This situation obtains despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of RESEARCHERS have long ago ceased to teach regularly in the language classroom (M. Clarke, 1994).

What can we do to change this situation? Whether we think of ourselves as applied linguists or as teachers, we need to make explicit the values and beliefs to which we often unconsciously subscribe and, if necessary, restructure our attitudes. In particular, we must rethink how we accord high or low status to different participants in the field. We must recognize that the linchpins of all lasting educational innovation are teachers, not RESEARCHERS (Markee, 1997; Stenhouse, 1975), and that the power relationships that exist between teachers and RESEARCHERS must become more equal (M. Clarke, 1994; Richards, 1987, 1990a, 1990b). This, of course, is easier said than done. Furthermore, this change is not going to happen overnight, for the reasons discussed earlier in the sections "Where," "When," and "Why." However, we can make a useful start toward achieving this goal by taking at least two actions: We must (a) review the standards of accountability that we use to judge current SLA RESEARCH, particularly that which uses an experimental methodology; and (b) reevaluate the kinds of empirically based enquiry that the profession values.

Current SLA RESEARCH (even that which claims some degree of pedagogical applicability) is written by RESEARCHERS for other RESEARCHERS. Because the likely readership of this article includes RESEARCHERS as well as teachers, I want to emphasize that I believe that this situation will not (indeed, should not) change. THEORY construction in SLA is an important activity in its own right (even though it may not be as important as some RESEARCHERS would have us believe), which contributes valid insights into how TBLT might be constructed.

As a result, teachers should accept that it will always be difficult for them to access the discourse of RESEARCH, simply because it is the product of a professional culture that is very different from their own. However, this does not mean that traditional SLA RESEARCH (particularly experimental RESEARCH, which is often the most difficult to understand for teachers) cannot be more explicitly grounded in the real world. If it were better grounded in the real world, such RESEARCH would be more attractive to a broader range of stakeholders in language education than is currently the case. Consequently, potential consumers of SLA RESEARCH who are currently repelled by its disregard for real-world issues might decide that it is worth the extra time and effort required to read the SLA literature, despite the fact that it may still be somewhat difficult to read. Furthermore, this change would be to the mutual benefit of all concerned (recall that, as discussed in the "Why" section of this article, an innovation's relative advantage(s) always influence whether potential adopters will decide to adopt or reject it).

The benefits to teachers are obvious: Although still requiring effort to process, more SLA RESEARCH would potentially become more relevant to teachers' concerns. In terms of the benefits that would accrue to RESEARCHERS who adopt such a recommendation, I believe that, put simply, experimental RESEARCHERS⁷ who make greater efforts to ground their work in the real world will produce better (in the sense of more tightly designed) RESEARCH. More specifically, if RESEARCHERS routinely included the full range of sociocultural factors, which are discussed in the "Where" section of this article, as intervening variables in their RESEARCH designs, we would have better SLA RESEARCH than we are currently accustomed to reading. As it is, much of this RESEARCH makes sweeping claims of generalizability that are simply not sustainable. For example, there is no reason to believe that the results of RESEARCH regarding the value of tasks mediated via small-group work (which has typically been carried out under experimental conditions in North American universities) will necessarily be applicable to the classrooms of inner-city high schools in the U.S. The populations in these two social contexts are quite different from each other, so we should beware of generalizing the results obtained from one sample to other populations. Similarly, there is even less reason to expect that the results of such RESEARCH will

be generalizable to language instruction in, say, rural schools in Burkina Faso or Uruguay (see also Markee, 1994b).

The greater conservatism that I am calling for in SLA RESEARCH is relatively easy to implement because this innovation is compatible with the culture of academia, which aims to make claims that are properly hedged. However, this is a relatively minor change. RESEARCHERS—and by extension, the professional journals and organizations that they control—must make a far greater adjustment: They must also accept that teachers' action research on TBLT is a necessary and worthy part of the professional literature. In saying this, of course, I do not deny that collections of teachers' action research have been published by some journals, but the journals that publish such research are rarely, if ever, the flagships of the profession. Furthermore, if it is published at all, there is a tendency to put such research into "special issues," thereby marginalizing it as a nonmainstream type of enquiry. Teachers' experiences of the issues that are important in language teaching and learning thus continue to be subtly undervalued by the RESEARCH community.

There are at least three objections that can be made to these proposals. First, action research is wasteful because it perennially reinvents the wheel. From a diffusion of innovations perspective, I would argue that the propensity of action research to reinvent the wheel is a strength, not a weakness. Because it represents the fruit of teachers' own efforts, teachers have high levels of ownership for the results of such research. Furthermore, action research on TBLT can function as a valuable bridge between the different worlds of SLA RESEARCHERS and teachers, particularly if RESEARCHERS are willing to act as nondirective change agents who help teachers to situate in a larger context the local problems that teachers wish to solve. Though always practically motivated, action research potentially draws on both SLA theory and THEORY to conceptualize the problems that teachers are interested in solving. Thus, from a RESEARCHER'S point of view, action research on TBLT may function as a resource that can be used to popularize SLA THEORY and to give teachers' research greater intellectual depth. From a teacher's perspective, action research can not only provide the necessary incentive to consult potentially relevant portions of the literature on SLA THEORY, but it can also act as a positive step toward breaking the

status quo of the current unequal power relationships that obtain in the profession by making journals and conferences take notice of their work.

Second, as already noted in the "How" section of this article, it may legitimately be objected that action research (whether on TBLT or anything else) is rarely of high enough quality to be published. This resistance to action research may be attributed in part to the discourse of action research, which often differs from that of more traditional applied linguistic RESEARCH. We should not be content to live with this state of affairs. If action research can serve as a bridge between different stakeholders in educational change, then it is surely in everybody's interest to ensure an improvement in the typical level of action research that is intended to be submitted for publication. In the context of graduate programs in applied linguistics at U.S. universities, at least, where graduate students are often concurrently teachers, faculty members should not only be willing to act as nondirective change agents when appropriate, but they should also lay the foundations for institutional support of action research by their universities. As internal change agents within their own departments, they should encourage, possibly require, teachers to use their own second or foreign language courses as laboratories for curricular innovation. Beyond that, they should use whatever legitimate authority they have to develop action research courses as part of the graduate program's curriculum in applied linguistics. This would enable faculty members to share their technical expertise in the design and implementation of action research with graduate-student teachers and to teach them how to investigate and resolve in a principled fashion the problems that confront them in their own classrooms (for an example of what I am advocating here, see the symposium on action research edited by Markee, 1995).

Finally, it may be objected that the job of teachers is to teach and that they should not be expected to conduct research or RESEARCH of any kind. From a diffusion of innovations perspective, there is some merit to this argument. Most teachers, particularly in the public sector, are already overburdened with their teaching duties, so there are serious questions of feasibility that must be addressed before action research can become common practice in the language teaching profession. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the principal goal

of the action research movement is to engage teachers in a self-motivated process of professional development. Professionally developed teachers are good teachers: In the long term, one way of ensuring that standards of teaching are maintained is to make sure that teachers receive the necessary administrative support and incentives (e.g., release time, financial rewards, or both) from the appropriate educational authorities so that they can engage in the professionalization that action research can provide. Although it is true that such support is rare or nonexistent in the U.S., we should remember that language teaching (particularly English language teaching) is a world-wide profession. We should therefore not dismiss such proposals because federal and state government support for teacher professionalization through action research has existed in Australia for some 15 years (for a discussion of how teachers who work for the Australian Migrant Education Program receive administrative support for action research, see Bottomley, Dalton, & Corbel, 1994; Burns & Hood, 1995). The Australian experience demonstrates the potential viability of the ideas put forward here. However, if such ideas are to have any chance of being implemented in the U.S., it will be necessary for professional organizations like the MLA and TESOL to lobby federal and state legislatures for support. Clearly, the success of such lobbying efforts would be a long term proposition without a guarantee of success. However, if Australian educators were able to engage successfully in the political process and secure the kind of government support that was needed to buttress the proposals discussed here, there is no reason why American educators should not seek to emulate the success of our Australian colleagues.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have outlined a framework for understanding a broad range of factors that influence how change actually occurs in language education. Furthermore, using insights gained from this framework, I have outlined a number of proposals that might facilitate the diffusion and actual use of innovations, such as TBLT, by teachers. I recognize that much of what I have said with respect to the role of SLA RESEARCH in this regard is highly controversial, and I am aware that many colleagues will flatly disagree with many, if not all, of the positions that I have advanced here. I make no apol-

ogies for the controversial nature of these proposals. I believe that I have tenably argued that SLA RESEARCH can be a resource for changing teachers' professional cultures but that it is by no means the only, nor even the most important, resource that teachers actually use to develop their professional competence. However, the proposals outlined here are necessarily quite preliminary and need much more elaboration. As Niccolò Machiavelli remarks in *The Prince*: "There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things" (cited by Rogers, 1983, p. 1). We therefore need much more theoretically motivated RESEARCH and practically driven research on the areas sketched out here so that teachers and applied linguists can better understand the complexity of the issues that must be addressed if our attempts to restructure the language teaching profession are to have any hope of success.

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank Bill VanPatten, Richard Young, and three anonymous *MLJ* reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and Renee Clift for bibliographic suggestions. Any inaccuracies or misinterpretations in the paper remain my own.

² Of course, we must complexify this initial statement by noting that for some researchers—John Schumann, for example—SLA is a "pure" discipline. Thus, individuals who share this point of view may have no interest whatsoever in applying SLA research to language pedagogy. Alternatively, other researchers (e.g., Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988), although interested ultimately in applying the results of SLA research to the classroom, believe that its results are not yet robust enough to be applied. However, there is no doubt that still other researchers believe that real progress in language pedagogy can only be achieved by developing a solid foundation in SLA research and disseminating its insights to teachers now.

³ I wish to clarify that as someone who does both RESEARCH and research, I value RESEARCH as a resource that can, under certain circumstances, be used to improve language pedagogy. As a teacher educator and curriculum specialist who is sympathetic to the impatience that many teachers feel for RESEARCH, I do not share Krashen's (1983) rationalist belief that all change should be based on the application of basic RESEARCH insights. This, of course, does not mean that all my RESEARCHER colleagues belong to the rationalist camp. Nor does it mean that

all RESEARCHERS who do not belong to this camp will necessarily agree with the arguments that I advance here. Finally, I most emphatically do not claim to speak for teachers. None of these groups is monolithic: Let individuals speak for themselves.

⁴ Of course, I recognize that TBLT has its critics (e.g., Sheen, 1994, who provides a valuable critique of the work of Long and others in this area). Thus, readers who are skeptical of the value of TBLT may accuse me of what Rogers (1983) calls a proinnovation bias, that is, of accepting too hastily that TBLT is a valuable innovation. Such a charge would be unfounded. My main reason for using TBLT to illustrate this discussion is that tasks have become important tools for RESEARCHERS and teachers working on the cutting edge of SLA studies and language pedagogy, respectively. Thus, whatever one may think of the RESEARCH that underpins TBLT, the close links between SLA RESEARCH and the innovation of TBLT are undeniable. Furthermore, as I argue in more detail later, the framework that I outline here could be used just as easily to analyze the diffusion of any innovation, not just TBLT.

⁵ Some writers (Miles, 1964; Nicholls, 1983) distinguish between innovation and change, claiming that innovation entails a fundamental alteration in the status quo, whereas change entails relatively minor adjustments in values and behaviors. For reasons of simplicity, I do not observe this distinction.

⁶ I acknowledge the value-laden nature of these and other terms used in other subsections of this article (e.g., "Why"). I have not changed these terms in order to maintain common terminological ground with the disciplines from which they originate.

⁷ Of course, SLA RESEARCH methodology is not monolithic. Qualitative RESEARCH offers insights into the process of language learning, which are as important as the results of experimental RESEARCH. However, I specifically focus here on the benefits that experimental RESEARCHERS might expect to accrue because experimentation is still the dominant methodology in SLA studies.

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