**Jennifer Gadbow**

**Writing Sample
Dissertation**

**Before**

Chapter 1

## Introduction

This dissertation addresses instructors’[[1]](#footnote-1) use of, and attitudes toward, task-based language instruction (TBI). A review of the related literature on curriculum innovation, adult learning, and instructional approaches will be followed by the research design and use of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) and Level of Use (LoU) focused interview. Analysis of the data identified attitudinal, developmental, and procedural changes within the Foreign Language Program (FLP) instructional staff as they implemented a task-based language curriculum.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand language instructors’ attitudes toward the task-based approach. The foreign language program (FLP) curriculum was developed after a thorough review of existing language curricula and syllabi (by contract through Surface, Ward, & Associates, 2010). The program goals are to develop the ability among personnel to use language to communicate directly with local peoples, improve counterpart relations, enhance operational capability, and decrease dependence on interpreters/translators. A communicative (Hymes, 1972; Krashen, 1982) task-based foreign language curriculum (Ellis, 2003; Long & Crookes, 1993; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1984) was developed (by contract through Diplomatic Language Services, 2012) and adopted as a “theoretically defensible and practically feasible” approach (Skehan, 1998). The foreign language curriculum was created using concepts of adult learning theory (Knowles, et al, 2005; Mezirow, 1997), task-based, learner-centered instruction (Blumberg, 2009; Mahn, 2013; Nunan, 1996; Weimer, 2013; Willis & Willis, 2008), and communicative language instruction (Ellis, 2012; Krashen, 1982; Skehan, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2001), in general. It is within this greater context that the research questions were developed and situated.

# Theoretical Framework

The following section serves to highlight the major concepts and theories upon which the dissertation is based. While the focus is on adult learning theory and instructional approaches (task-based, communicative, and learner-centered language instruction), the dissertation falls under the broader context of curriculum innovation (Bianco, 2013; Brindley & Hood, 1990; Markee, 1997, Rogers, 2010) and instructors’ reactions to it.

## Curriculum Innovation

 Curriculum innovation is a daunting endeavor due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the teaching and learning processes (Wagner, 1988; White, 1988). One factor behind the success of curriculum innovation is the professional development of teachers in the use of new approaches (Mata, 2012) as “curricular innovation is the starting point of a long process towards educational change” (p. 214). Markee’s (1997) study posits that professional development programs often fail to focus on teachers as the center for implementation of innovative classroom practices. Likewise, teachers are reluctant to adopt innovation because of mismatches between proposed changes and the beliefs and established routines, which they currently hold (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Teacher education assists teachers adaptation to external values and norms that meet local reality (Mata, 2012). However, curriculum innovation focused at the institutional level often precedes the changes in teacher professional development programs. This event has the effect of creating a gap between teacher education and the schools, which may take years before harmonization occurs (Iemjinda, 2011). Teachers may fear that proposed changes may threaten their performance in the near-term and the perceived quality of their work as measured by classroom observations and standardized tests.

Implementation of curricular change is about transforming ideas into practice (Brown, 2007; Katz & Sullivan, 2008; Markee, 1997; Richards & Rodgers, 2012). It focuses on practical procedures that address documented need and operationalize the new construct. To mitigate fear of the unknown, innovators must respond at both empirical and pedagogical levels to present a clear and transparent conceptual framework based on a thorough needs assessment. Once this is done, attention must then turn to the education of teachers. While research in teacher education (Carless, 1998; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013) has increased and new ideas on how best to prepare teachers continues to blossom, Byrum (2012) notes joining theory and practice remains problematic.

#  Adult Learning Theory

 Adult learning theoryholds that adult learners have specific needs such as recognition of previous experience and wanting to know the purpose of activities in the classroom, which change how learning activities should be developed and used. Specifically, Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (2005) note specific characteristics that apply to the adult learner—adults: need to know the purpose of their learning; like to be in control of their own decisions; bring previous experience to the classroom; are eager to learn those things which will help them succeed in real-life situations; are more motivated by internal pressures (e.g., ability to perform well on their jobs) than by external motivators (e.g., pay, promotions). These characteristics do not apply only to adults, but it is the interplay and proportions that are notable in the adult context and should be considered when creating content and curricula.

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) specifically, research follows the same tenets listed above. There is recognition of previous experience, motivation (Dörnyei, 2003), and cognitive and conceptual sophistication (Cook, 2002; Robinson, 2005) particularly from the standpoint that most adults can already communicate effectively in their first language (L1) (Hedge, 2000). Benson (2007) also notes that adults are more capable of autonomous action than their younger counterparts.

#  Communicative Language Teaching

 Of the available options, communicative language teaching (CLT) is probably the most widely-accepted and adaptable approach (Brown, 2007; Ellis, 2012; Nunan, 1996; Richards & Rodgers, 2012). Richards & Rodgers (2012) take pains to say “(b)oth American and British proponents now see it as an approach (and not a method) that aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication” (p. 155). In this context, the four language skills are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. A core strength of CLT is that the learners’ communicative requirements provide a framework for explicit goals regarding the target level of functional competence.

Communicative language teaching is based on the development of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) for real-life application as opposed to mere memorization of discrete knowledge points (Coady & Huckin, 1997) or rules in isolation of context (Krashen, 1982; Mahn, 2013). Simply being able to create grammatically correct structures in a language does not necessarily enable a learner to use language to carry out various real-life tasks (Widdowson, 1978). It is also believed that there is a strong and weak version of communicative language teaching (Howatt, 1984), which is still seen today, more than thirty years later. Almost all language instructors will claim that they use communicative language teaching methods and yet, many use what Howatt (1984) describes as the weak version. In particular, “(t)he weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching” (p. 279). Howatt goes on to say “(t)he strong version of communicative language teaching, however, sees language ability as being developed through activities which actually simulate target performance” (ibid.). In other words, the weak version is more general in context and therefore more marketable in its one-size-fits-most approach, whereas the strong version more directly addresses the learning objectives in an authentic context based on the needs analysis. That way, time is “spent not on language drills and controlled practice leading towards communicative language use, but in activities which require learners to do in class what they will do outside” (ibid.).

#  Learner-Centered Instruction

 Since the goal of the Foreign Language Program (FLP) is to equip learners with a mission-focused language capability, task-based, learner-centered instruction is central to the framework. “The learner-centered view tends to view language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge” (Nunan, 1996). Likewise, the focus of the FLP Initial Course (IC) course and curriculum is on developing a skill that would be applied, or in other words, the focus is the development of a capability within a speech community (Hymes, 1971). Under the umbrella of learner-centered instruction (Blumberg, 2009; Weimer, 2013) lies the precepts of *communicative language* teaching (Brown, 1994; Nunan, 1987; Nunan, 1996) as well as *adult learning theory* (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, 1983; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 1981; Mezirow, 1997) in consideration of the learner population.

Blumberg (2009) details five dimensions of learner-centered teaching. These are the *function of content* which should give the learner the ability to apply content and understand why they are learning it; the *role of the instructor* as a facilitator of learning; the *responsibility for learning* which should be that of the learners with proactive support and expert guidance from the instructor; the *purpose of assessment* which should be to provide constructive feedback and information to the learner about where they are and where they need to be; and the *balance of power*, often centered on the instructor or a non-specialized curriculum, shifts to give learners and instructors input as to what is to be covered and how.

#  Task-Based Instruction

 From the standpoint of innovation, task-based instruction (TBI)is still considered a new-comer to language programs and classrooms.; however, a strength of TBI is its alignment with adult learning theory, in that the tasks used reflect real-life situations (Willis & Willis, 1996) and student interests. The engaging instructional activities (i.e., pedagogical tasks) have direct relevance (Syed, 2001) to the student and increase motivation (Dörnyei, 2002; Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000).

TBIgrew out of Krashen's (1982) theory of language acquisition. It is the application of his theory (Krahnke, 1981; Candlin & Murphy, 1987) that "the ability to use a language is gained through exposure to and participation in using it" (Krahnke, 1987). In TBI, lessons are designed around the language required to perform a specific task (Willis & Willis, 1996), rather than grammatical paradigms or thematic vocabulary (Ellis, 2003; Swan, 2005). In TBI, a lesson might introduce the simple past for third-person singular in order to fulfill the task of reporting what was done by one subject. The grammatical paradigm for the formation of simple past in all its forms will not be presented, nor will any vocabulary not required to directly meet the task at hand. It is through repetition and spiraling of activities during the course of instruction that the grammatical paradigm will be uncovered in its entirety. Likewise, vocabulary is introduced as it is needed rather than for the sake of lexicon building. Solving these real-life tasks "means that learning the target language will be the means to an end rather than the goal itself" (Ramirez, 1995).

The completion of the task and the interaction between learners "facilitates transfer of information they have previously learned and incorporates it with new information they receive as they perform the task" (Powers, 2008) and "is meaningful because learners have a stake in completing the task rather than practicing language for its own sake" (Plews & Zhao, 2010). This focus on "processing new and old information in an interactional manner stimulates transfer" (Krahnke, 1987).

Another strength of TBI is its association with communicative language instruction as TBI represents "the full spectrum of communicative competence, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence" (Canale, 1983). Additionally, the processes of building these competencies involves large amounts of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). As the learners negotiate meaning to accomplish the task, they are provided with input from other learners and the instructor. Completion of tasks "require[s] the learner to apply cognitive processes of evaluation, selection, combination, modification, or supplementation to a combination of new and old information" (Krahnke, 1987). With this communicative approach, input remains comprehensible by the nature of the interaction of self, co-learner, instructor, and linguistic information given when setting up the task.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study examines how language instructors implemented a task-based, learner-centered, foreign language curriculum innovation for adult learners at an instructional facility for military personnel. In task**-**based, learner**-**centered innovations, the focus is on the needs of the learners (Long, 2018). In the current study, the focus was on the foreign language deployment needs of active-duty Navy personnel. Data showed that Navy personnel needed language for special purposes that was geared toward the military and that the language curriculum being used was too general. The need for change was evident to and agreed upon by all stakeholders and the facility contracted language instructors to teach a new task-based, learner-centered foreign language curriculum. This study examines how the language instructors used the new curriculum, which I determined using a levels of use protocol, interviews, and educational artifacts.

In task-based, learner-centered instruction, students engage in tasks that reflect reallife situations and student interests (Ellis, 2018) and lessons are designed around the language required to perform a specific task (Willis & Willis, 1996). This is different from approaches and methods that focus on covering content, such as structural approaches, in which grammar and syntax are presented in a predetermined sequence. Under the former method, the instructor must be skilled enough to motivate students and confident enough with the approach to adequately support them (Van Avermaet, et al., 2006). During the instructional planning stage, instructors must attend to pre-task, during-task, and post-task actions and decisions (Van Avermaet et al., 2006; Van den Branden, 2006). Prior to a class activity, instructors must determine what students must accomplish mentally and physically. Instructors must motivate students to interact during the activity and evaluate whether and how well objectives were met after an activity. Throughout the process, students and instructor are negotiating meaning and reacting to variances in proficiency and motivation levels, knowledge of the content area, and the number of students participating in the activity. Instructors must consider all of these factors when considering task-based curricula.

Although there is a growing trend of research on task-based instruction, scant research exists on language teachers’ implementation of task-based instruction. The present study provides important insights into how learner-centered education is implemented among adult learners and how curriculum implementation can be assessed using a levels of use protocol.

Statement of the Problem

This study arose due to my interest as a manager of a military foreign language program that was engaged in the institutional adoption and implementation of a task**-**based, learner**-**centered, foreign language curriculum for adult learners. Although task-based and learner-centered instruction are increasingly popular (Butler, 2011; Hashem, 2020; Meri Yilan, 2020; Prabhu, 1984; Ulla & Perales, 2021; Van den Branden, 2006; Vieira, 2017), there is limited information on institutional implementation at the instructor level.

Kim (2008) addressed this concern in his analysis of teachers’ English instruction in South Korea at the 6th and 7th grade levels. He reported that implementation of task-based learning failed despite extensive training organized by the Ministry of Education. Kim argued that this occurred because many of the teachers could not reconcile or integrate their formerly held personal beliefs of language learning with the new communicative language teaching methodologies. Lecture, repetition, and memorization are attributes of a transmission approach to teaching and learning; learner-centered curriculum runs counter to this model (Vieira, 2017). Within institutional implementation of task-based instruction, this dichotomy between teachers’ culture of teaching and the learner-centered approach continues to exist. This issue forms the basis for the current study: language instructors were hired because they held expertise in a language, yet the culture of teaching that undergirded their practices was not learner centered. I examine how these language instructors implemented a task-based learner-centered curriculum in this environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, expanding on studies of task-based language instruction, the study sought to determine levels of use—in terms of knowledge and acquiring information, assessing and planning, and sharing knowledge—as instructors implemented a task-based curriculum. This was assessed through oral interviews with instructors, using a rating scale. The level of use rating scale was also used to measure the instructional environment and learner outcomes. The second purpose of the study was to develop recommendations for institutions that were interested in implementing learner-centered language curricula for adult learners of foreign languages.

Significance of the Study

Curricular change is challenging at both the instructor and policy levels: instructors are accustomed to teaching content, and policy makers are looking for metrics that are specifically aligned with the coverage of that content. Capturing and analyzing language instructors’ acceptance and use of a new foreign language program provides insights into how instructors move from a transmission model of language instruction to a learner-centered model. In doing so, this study fills the void regarding task-based, learner-centered, foreign language curriculum for adult learners as a curricular innovation.

Research Questions

In this descriptive study, I sought to know to what level instructors would adopt task-based, learner-centered curriculum. Because instructors had had experiences that were not generally learner centered, it was important to understand how well they understood task-based instruction. However, because knowledge is only a starting point in learning and using a new curriculum, it was necessary to delve further into the instructors’ use of the curriculum. I sought to find out what information the instructors needed, how they shared information, approached assessment of their students’ language, and planned instruction. The following research questions guided this study:

1. In the process of adopting a new, task-based, learner-centered foreign language program, to what level of use will instructors adopt the innovation?
2. To what levels of use will instructors engage in: (a) Knowledge and Acquiring Information, (b) Assessing and Planning, and (c) Sharing?
3.

Theoretical Framework

Relevant theories related to innovation within this study are commercial, educational, and curriculum innovation. Additionally, this study used the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, built upon Hall & Hord’s (2012) change theory, to provide a conceptual lens and methodology for assessing the adoption of a task-based, learner-centered curriculum. These theories all provided insights for understanding the Navy’s foreign language program.

Commercial Innovation in Education

Curriculum is often marketed as a commercial product, but task-based, learner-centered language instruction does not lend itself to commercialization. Even so, understanding commercial innovation in education offers insight into the difficulties involved in the implementation of a task-based curriculum. P

orter (1990) defined innovation from an economic perspective as (1) a process that uses new knowledge and, (2) the processes used to create or improve products themselves. In this sense, innovation includes the creative process and the application of those results. In Porter’s economic framework, the commercialization of a new idea transforms the idea from a thought to a product or service. In education, the innovative product might be an off-the-shelf, one-box solution that educators examine when considering a new curriculum, or an entirely new approach that requires a needs analysis and a certain amount of customization. Some curriculum adoptions are more innovative than others and it is important to determine the level of newness.

 In Cagnazzo et al.’s (2008) review of innovation management tools, the researchers noted that the level of newness was a primary characteristic in most definitions of innovation. Angle and Van de Ven (2000) had previously noted that the novelty of an innovation was relative. For example, innovation, as an idea or product, could be new to an individual, to the level of an entire organization, or, as often seen in the realm of technology, to the whole world. Thus, within the realm of education, an approach considered as practice in the field of nursing, such as scenario and simulation exercises, might be brand new to language instructors, and therefore an innovation in the field of language instruction. Task-based language curriculum in a military language program is an example of relative novelty. In fact, the foreign language program in this study had undergone a number of changes to standardize the curriculum across its smaller components, so moving away from standardized curriculum was a completely new approach. The work involved in turning the innovative idea into a curriculum was made more difficult by a culture of standardization prevalent within the military institution.

To understand the work entailed during innovation, Cagnazzo et al. (2008) described the management of milestones involved in this process. Based on their analysis, the authors fit process milestones into three categories: idea generation, acquisition of full knowledge, and complete product/process implementation and monitoring (p. 320). In curricular terms, these milestones equate to analysis, design/development, and implementation/evaluation. As with most systematic processes, individual elements are interdependent and require sufficient management to ensure success. These milestones generally relate to the military institution, but Eveleens’ (2010) framework linked more directly with the military foreign language context.

Eveleens (2010) reviewed 25 years of innovation management literature and based on type and context, categorized managerial routines that could increase the success of an innovation. Similar to Cagnazzo et al.’s (2008) process milestones, Eveleens (2010) grouped these routines into four stages: idea generation, selection, developing and testing, and implementation and launch (Eveleens, 2010, p. 10). Tasks within these routines included brainstorming, surveys, rapid prototyping, and benchmarking. At each stage, the routines become more practical. In terms of curriculum development, these stages map to lesson creation, activity development, and trialing. To provide continuous evidence that task-based instruction was the correct solution, it was important to rapidly build, trial, and provide data to all stakeholders as the foreign language project progressed.

Eveleens (2010) noted that, despite the risk of failure, an organization must innovate to remain relevant, improve, and/or grow. The need for innovation is imperative and holds true for businesses that must compete for market share or profit, for public organizations that need to improve their services, and for schools to improve their curriculum. As Cooper (2005) stated, “It’s war: Innovate or die” (p. 1). In the case of the Navy foreign language program, innovation was essential because the deployment objectives for each given area of operations were unique to the country and local context. The Navy foreign language program implemented task-based instruction because the previous curriculum did not meet the learners’ needs. Task-based language instruction would offer the flexibility needed for meeting the goals of language learners who were deploying to varying countries.

If not managed properly, innovation can be problematic. Tidd and Bessant (2018) warned of “the propensity to follow and fit research and publications into contemporary fads, rather than to ground the work in more fundamental themes and challenges” (p. 10). This important caveat regarding fads is relevant, regardless of discipline. The allure of an easy fix, not backed by thorough research and analysis, is an innovation dead end and a situation in which curricular selection committees can easily find themselves.

Educational Innovation

Regarding educational innovation, Cohen and Ball (2007) noted that, prior to the year 2000, there was a preference for the term “reform” or the more neutral “change.” Their analysis also noted that most researchers of the time appeared to “believe that none of these reforms were implemented at scale—i.e., widely and well” (p. 2). Moreover, except for three studies (Berman & McLaughlin, 1979; Fullan, 1982; Rogers, 2003), Cohen and Ball concluded that their “scrutiny of the literature revealed no discussions of what might reasonably be expected from innovation in education” (2007, p. 2).

Fullan (1982) has been credited with providing the most comprehensive treatment of innovation under the umbrella of reform and adoption. In *The New Meaning of Educational Change, 4th ed.*, Fullan (2007) explained the “adoption era” of reform: “The goal was to get innovations out there, as if flooding the system with external ideas would bring about desired improvements” (p. 5). Examples of the surge in adoptions would be the federal educational reforms of the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Physical Science Study Committee Physics, Biological Sciences Curriculum Biology*, and *Man: A Course of Study Social Studies.* However, by the early 1970s, it became evident that such massive investments yielded only sporadic, isolated success. Not long after these federal educational reforms, Fullan and Pomfret (1977) documented how “the term *implementation* (or more accurately *failed implementation*) came into the vocabulary of reform” (p. 5; emphasis in original).

As Fullan (2007) so bluntly stated, it is possible “to be crystal clear about what one wants, and totally inept at achieving it” (p. 8). The root of past failures for reform is in the failure to understand the meaning of change. Success hinges on understanding both aspects of innovation—the “what” and the “how” of change. Although there may be pressure from above to innovate, organizations often lack the personnel, expertise, or funding to put the idea into practice. The top**-**down approach often fails because it does not “garner ownership, commitment, or even clarity about the nature of the reforms” (Fullan, 2007, p. 11). Effective innovation management comes through establishing and nurturing shared meaning, thusensuring that all stakeholders come to understand “what it is that should change, and how it can be best accomplished, while realizing that the ‘what’ and ‘how’ constantly interact with and reshape each other” (p. 9).

The source of funding can also lead to mismanaged educational innovation. In a review of 21st century educational innovation in modern higher education, Mykhailyshyn et al. (2018) noted that public funding and competition play a fundamental role in the decision**-**making process. The researchers also found that the call for change was increasingly coming from consumers of educational products and services. Relative to kinds of change, Mykhailyshyn et al. (2018) argued that there had been a subtle change from change for change’s sake, to top-down change “aimed at improving the efficiency of functioning and the development of organization in a competitive environment” (p. 12). In the Navy, the change to a task-based language curriculum was necessary for the functioning of personnel who required language skills that were unique to their deployment objective.

In addition to addressing top-down change and rationale to innovate, Mykhailyshyn et al.’s (2018) review of prevailing approaches identified several components of a modern approach to educational innovation, several of which are relevant to the Navy language program: more student**-**centered, improved organizational and management processes, and increased staff potential and qualifications. The authors further noted that including relevant stakeholders in the innovation increases buy-in and improves the chances of successful implementation. Not only does innovation provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities, it can also be a source of “motivation for development and self**-**development” (Mykhailyshyn et al., 2018, p. 11). When managed holistically, innovation can benefit the organization, staff, and student.

Curriculum Innovation

Curriculum innovation “is the starting point of a long process towards educational change” (Mata, 2012, p. 214). Such innovation is a daunting endeavor due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the teaching and learning processes (Wagner, 1988; White, 1988). Practical elements like infrastructure, technology, funding sources and duration, and student ratios must be considered and factored into the decision**-**making process.

One factor that leads to successful curriculum innovation is the professional development of teachers in the use of new approaches (Mata, 2012). Successful professional development programs help teachers adapt to external values and norms that meet local reality (Mata, 2012). Managers must consider current levels of education, training, and certification of instructors and carefully evaluate whether new requirements will exceed local faculty resources and support structures. For example, changes involving technology, such as requiring faculty to learn management systems, manage tablets, and use online portals all involve training and/or certification and often necessitate additional staffing. Professional development of instructors is essential in curricular innovation.

Historically, professional development programs have failed to focus on teachers as the center for implementing innovative classroom practices (Markee, 1997). This also happened in previous Navy language programming when programs were implemented without any input from the language teachers. It is important that instructors are included from the beginning of the change process. This avoids creating a gap between instructor knowledge and new program implementation (Iemjinda, 2011).

Professional development is essential when instructors are reluctant to adopt an innovation because of mismatches between proposed changes and the beliefs and established routines that they currently hold (Larsen–Freeman & Anderson, 2013). They may also fear that proposed changes will threaten their performance and the perceived quality of their work, as measured by observations and performance reports. These are all hurdles to the successful implementation of task**-**based curriculum. However, if instructors are included in making bottom**-**up adaptations, the results are positive; it “create[s] the possibility for teachers to assert their own beliefs in the interpretation of the policy into classroom practice” (Wallace & Priestly, 2011). This is important to the current study because the Navy language instructors are regularly assessed through observation of their classes and learner outcomes.

Implementation of curricular change is about transforming ideas into practice (Brown, 2007; Katz & Sullivan, 2008; Markee, 1997; Richards & Rodgers, 2012). Ideally, change is implemented by focusing on practical procedures that address documented needs and operationalize new constructs. Clearly articulated needs assessments, conceptual frameworks, and published studies or whitepapers should be made readily available to instructors, discussed in staff meetings and brownbag lunch conversations, and distributed in information packets. To mitigate fear of the unknown, innovators must respond at both empirical and pedagogical levels to present a clear and transparent framework.

The framework must include important milestones, including focus groups, informational seminars, development opportunities, and training events. Although research (Carless, 1998; Larsen–Freeman & Anderson, 2013) has expanded with new ideas on how to best prepare instructors to continue to blossom, Byram (2012) noted that joining theory and practice remains problematic. Including instructors in the change process allows instructors to assimilate new theories and methodologies.

Clarke (2003) provided the encouraging view that when instructors are clear where they stand methodologically, they can choose to teach differently from the way they were taught. Larsen–Freeman and Anderson (2013) expanded upon this view, stating that a discussion of different language teaching methods:

need not lead to the de**-**skilling of teachers but rather can serve a variety of useful functions when used appropriately in teacher education. Studying methods can help teachers articulate and perhaps transform their understanding of the teaching–learning process. It can strengthen their confidence in challenging authorities who mandate unacceptable educational policies. Methods can serve as models of the integration of theory and practice. (p. 14)

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model

Well-suited to innovation theories, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model has been extensively used to explore educational change since it was developed at the University of Texas at Austin in the early 1980s. This development included studies of adult contexts (Saunders, 2012). According to this model, individuals navigate affective stages of concern and progress through levels of use (Hall & Hord, 1987, 2006). As people begin considering and implementing an innovation, their questions evolve. People begin with questions related to themselves: “How will this change affect me?” They also ask questions about the innovation: “What is it?” Eventually they will ask questions about the impact of the innovation: “How will this affect students?” (Loucks-Horsley, 1996).

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model is predicated on the notion that everyone is affected by change. Within an educational setting, administrators, teachers, and students will be affected by the change and must be supported through the change process. Support is necessary for changes to become common practice. There are some questions that need answers to ensure that all relationships are appropriately considered: Which participants act as resources within the innovation? Who are the change facilitators? And who are the users of the innovation? Figure 1.1 shows a relationship model of the innovation system, whereby the change facilitator and the instructors (both non-users and users) are embedded and interact by way of a series of interviews, observations, and interventions. As Program Manager, I served as change facilitator and as part of the resource system. The students were one part of the user system, and the nine foreign language instructors were also part of the user system.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.1]

Looking at this system of relationships—resource system, user system, and change facilitator— is useful for understanding how each individual contributed to the implementation of the innovation. As the current study focused on curricular innovation and adoption, my primary focus was on the instructors. I used levels of use interviews to probe instructors for information on the adoption process. As change facilitator, I then acted as an interface between the administration and instructors, to formulate and provide necessary interventions and material support. As the adoption progressed, a cycle of programmatic evaluation continued.

Summary

This chapter addressed the tension between maintenance of the status quo and innovation in education. In the context of this study, it was essential to understand educational change under the broader framework of commercial innovation in education, educational innovation, and, more specifically, curriculum innovation, wherein ideas were transformed into practice. Whether it be a misalignment of a bottom-up, top-down, or well-meaning, one-size-fits-all design approaches, implementations fail when people cannot reconcile or integrate formerly held personal beliefs with new teaching methodologies. Theories of change provide a full understanding of implementation at the instructor level, and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model provides a method to determine the levels of use of individuals who are implementing the innovation.

1. For the purpose of this dissertation, the terms “instructor” and “teacher” will be used interchangeably. The author will make no attempt to differentiate or make value judgements on the terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)