Diffusion of Innovation: A Plea for Indigenous Models

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Abstract

Much of curriculum innovation in English language teaching in the context of former colonial countries has been derivative rather than generative, imitative rather than self-initiated or self-regulatory. This trend is in part the result of historical exigencies that made the importation of ELT approaches, methods, and techniques for classroom pedagogy from mainstream educational theory and practice in the core countries of the West a 'natural' and almost inevitable practical necessity. Such categorical espousal of mainstream western paradigms that fail to take into account existing pedagogical practices that are rooted in organic, homegrown traditions is unlikely to work and therefore may turn out to be of questionable relevance and value. Not surprisingly, then, attempts at energizing the ELT scenario with innovative curricula have not had much success—resulting frequently in what Holliday has aptly called "tissue rejection," owing to their incompatibility with the "local rhythms" of the contexts and cultures in which these innovations have been transplanted (Holliday, 1994). A more insidious consequence of this trend has been the devaluation and suppression of local practices and the marginalizing and silencing of the voices of local practitioners. We need to develop a more ecological and responsive curriculum, one whose pedagogy is firmly anchored to the specific strengths that local practitioners bring to the classroom, where the local teachers' voices are heard, and where the teaching-learning process is carried out in a more critical and context sensitive way. The article explores the conditions and the parameters that could lead to the creation of such an indigenous curriculum model and identifies aspects that need to be taken into account in creating such a model.

Introduction

This article focuses on the diffusion of curriculum innovation in former colonial countries with specific reference to English language education, undertaken as part of the transfer of technology from core to periphery countries (Phillipson, 1992). Starting

from a sociolinguistic vantage point and moving towards an educational one, it argues that in a large number of cases the innovation introduced in these countries have been, at best, derivative in nature, involving either the wholesale adoption or a modified version of the principles, approaches, methods and techniques for classroom pedagogy from the educational theory and practice of countries of the West. This trend continues into the twenty-first century, despite the fact that a number of these approaches were invented in the first place as a logical solutions for addressing certain contingencies that arose in these countries that were historically unique and context-specific. For instance, the credibility of the Audiolingual method was established mainly on the basis of its successful implementation in training American soldiers in the foreign languages they expediently needed to be able to master during World War II. Communicative language teaching and the notional-functional syllabus was introduced by the Council of Europe primarily in facilitating the teaching of European languages for promoting trade and fostering cooperation to accord with the needs and demands of the European Common market. It becomes highly questionable when such predefined solutions to inherently unique contexts are then universally applied to educational settings elsewhere that are quite different in terms of their socio-political histories, their cultural and educational contexts, and not least of all, their economic circumstances. It should come as no surprise then, that such innovations, often introduced as technical aid projects from the West, are generally met with resistance, hostility and even rejection. The history of educational reform has shown that approximately 20 percent of educational innovations enjoy successful implementation (Parish & Arrends, 1983) and that in spite of large and expensive campaigns, disappointingly few proposed "improvements" catch on (Fullan, 1982). It is a well-known fact that 75 per cent of innovations fail to survive in the long term or die out (Adams & Chen, 1981).

A fundamental problem with the "center-periphery" model of development is the failure to take full account of the social, cultural and/or educational needs of the "recipients" of the innovation. As a result, the project aims often come into conflict with what Holliday (1993, p. 3) refers to as the *local rhythms* of the profession leading to "tissue rejection" (Holliday, 1992, following Hoyle, 1970), namely, the failure of the innovation to take root in the target context. This has created an enhanced concern in the profession for what has been termed "appropriate methodology" (Holliday, 1994), a more context-sensitive approach that eschews the wholesale transfer of methodologies from one context to another.

As I have shown elsewhere (Rubdy, 2000), on rare the occasion when development aid projects did achieve success, this was because project developers were sensitive to local conditions and willing to adapt, even 'transform,' the innovation, modifying their original designs in response to the needs and values of the local ecosystem. Laudable though this attempt may be, I go on to suggest that, it may still be less eco-friendly and not quite empowering for the community of local educators to see their previous contributions being devalued and derecognized when the externally imposed innovation is toted as a superior form of pedagogy to that which was in place. I therefore argue that unless their own agency is enhanced, and their voices heard, by

allowing these professionals to articulate their own solutions and pedagogical alternatives in a collaborative and dialogical fashion with project developers, aid projects will continue to fall by the wayside, failing to evoke a complete sense of ownership on the part of the local participants.

Furthermore, I hope to show, on the basis of curriculum renewal initiatives adopted in India and Singapore, two countries I am most familiar with, how centralized, top-down large-scale innovations supported by the state/educational authorities in these countries failed to achieve the full potential of their objectives, despite considerable effort and good intent. I then argue that the time has perhaps come for the creation of indigenous models of educational change that are directly motivated by and rooted in the socio-cultural and educational contexts that accrue in a number of ex-colonial countries, and which for this very reason may have greater authenticity and value for their users.

World Englishes and Their Implications for the Diffusion of Innovation

Whereas the last half of the 20th century witnessed the gradual dismantling of the British Empire, resulting in a demographical and socio-political reconstitutioning of regions in different parts of the world that were formerly British colonies, paradoxically, it also saw the firm entrenchment of English in these regions, particularly among an elite group of educated citizenry who not only appropriated it as an instrument of upward social mobility but developed also a certain sense of social identity in relation to it. The last two or three decades, in particular, have been marked by a phenomenal spread of English as a *language of wider communication* in a number of these newly independent nations, not just among the elite, but an increasingly varied and multifarious populace, inhabiting new and unfamiliar social contexts. Inevitably, through processes of acculturation the language has become highly differentiated. The result is that New Varieties of English (Kandiah, 1998; Gupta, 1994; Foley et al., 1998) have emerged, marked by specific ecological, cultural, linguistic and other characteristics that are radically different from those of Britain or North America. These developments have added to English large new dimensions of historical and social experience, as characterized by Kachru (1988) in his sociolinguistically-based polymodel of three concentric circles of World Englishes. Thus communities in the Outer Circle have come to speak identifiable, new institutionalized varieties of English as against the traditional (British or North Australian) varieties of the Inner Circle and the performance varieties of the Expanding Circle. Kachru's arguement that the appropriateness and acceptability of these institutionalized varieties, therefore, should not be assessed against their deviance from or conformity to the Inner Circle varieties but in terms of the sociolinguistic profile of the community that uses the variety and the sociocultural and communicative contexts in which it is used is by now fairly well known. Accepting this world Englishes perspective has important ramifications for both the speakers and learners of English and for English language curricula in these countries in so far as they create a need to reflect the realities of the changing role of English in today's world.

To move our focus specifically onto ex-colonial countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Nigeria, Singapore and the Philippines, many of which belong to Kachru's Outer Circle, these are richly multilingual, share common histories in terms of colonization and subjugation, and common post-independence developmental goals. The phenomenal spread of English in these countries, carried mainly through globalization, as they engage themselves in the tasks of postcolonial rehabilitation and reconstruction, has resulted in the emergence of different Englishes through sociolinguistic processes variously referred to as nativization, hybridization, localization or acculturation. Such post-colonial varieties of English have become a legitimate medium through which various significations of nationalism, resistance, and local histories and cultures have been voiced, reflecting a process of decolonization, where 'owning' English or appropriating it according to the speakers' own needs and aspirations has come to represent one of the manifestations of independence or self-determination (Tupas, 2000). These sociolinguistic realities, which form the backdrop for an overwhelming demand for English as a source of opportunity, reveal the complex nature of the task that confronts the educational innovator. Educational reform via foreign educational models have been frequently brought into play, through developmental aid projects implemented as part of the transfer of technology from core countries to ones in the periphery, or as Holliday (1994) puts it, from BANA countries to TESEP contexts. The question remains, however, whether and to what extent such imported models of innovation have been successful in achieving the desired goals of innovation.

A number of researchers have suggested that attempts to transfer methodologies from the West to other countries have been at best misguided and at worst disastrous (Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991; Pennycook, 1989, 1994; Holliday, 1994; Markee, 1997). Phillipson contends that such a 'centre-periphery' model of development perpetuates the dependence of underdeveloped countries on developed ones. These analysts have begun to question the validity of the conceptual and methodological foundations of TESOL, particularly with reference to the new multilingual and multicultural contexts in which English has been transplanted.

In an acerbic but impressive critique of the dichotomy traditionally made between ESL/EFL contexts, Nayar (1997, p. 15), for instance, argues, that there are in fact two (even three) differing types of ESL contexts, which he calls ESL1 and ESL 2. ESL1 emerged historically out of Britain's engagement and participation in the spread of English in the Raj and has the following characteristics:

1. Since English is not native to the environment few speak it as a native language.
2. English is used widely by an influential section of the people as a medium of communication in a variety of domains like education, administration, and commerce. The learners/users may be multilingual and may use English as a link language between them.

3. Though English is not native, there is a certain amount of environmental support for English in the form of, for example, popular English language media and some indigenous literature in English.
4. English enjoys some officially approved national status and social prestige.
5. Communication with an NS is not a primary or even likely objective of learning.

In contrast, Nayar (1997, p. 16) suggests that what he calls ESL2, has derived its popular core meaning from the ethno-demographic perspective of an immigrant-oriented, monoglossic society, the main dimensions of which he characterizes as follows:

1. ESL is usually acquired or, rather, taught in the native environment ideally by native-speaking teachers. (The crucialness of environmental support is a repeated theme.)
2. The goal of ESL instruction and learning is to interact competently with NSs and eventually integrate into the native English speaking community.
3. ESL is seen not just as a tool for communicative ability as integration into the target community but also as an emancipatory step toward the privilege of admittance into and full participation in the target society, for socioeconomic respectability and upward mobility.

Non-native speakers of English who reside in the United States or Great Britain, and to some extent Australia, exemplify this situation. In addition, Nayar notes, for historical reasons a native acquisition environment and the goal of eventual Americanization are the most essential features of the U.S. conception of ESL.

The point that made here is that since very few variables of ESL1 correlate or co-vary with the variables in ESL2, clearly, it follows that a number of assumptions in SLA theory, based on English SLA within the narrow context of ESL in the U.S.A. or Great Britain are likely to be of limited cross-linguistic validity or value:

> The sociocultural and affective domains of language learning as well as the political and economic factors that control language policy, language use, language availability, and teaching conditions make ESL1 so different from ESL2 as to make many of the sociolinguistic principles, theoretical assumptions, and pedagogical practices of one anything from ineffective to inoperable in the other. (Nayar, 1997, p. 24)

For instance, objectives such as social survival that form the central core of organized ESL/EFL learning in these ESL2 contexts, are in most cases peripheral to mainstream TEFL in India, where, as Tickoo (1987, p. 137) suggests, English is learnt for objectives many of which are primarily served by first languages in Europe or in North America. In a country like India the learning of English is geared to cognitive roles, serving as the main window on the world of science and technology, and to

bring together educated groups of individuals belonging to different linguistic groups. He points out that what comprises the strength of some of the best known alternative syllabuses generated in the West in the last few decades can in general be seen to be their greatest weakness in their application to learning environments such as those in India. In many ways most of them appear "to offer India-based answers to characteristically West-European needs," "based on a 'strong' and stereotypic view of language acquisition, language transfer and interlanguage development which is hardly applicable at all to acquisition-poor environments (citing Sajavaara, 1986) and text-book dominated classrooms" (Tickoo, 1987, p. 136). This being the case, "the models and therefore the means adopted are bound to be different from those that suit the adult who, for example, works towards the Threshold Level in the European Unit-Credit System" (citing Van Ek, 1975).

Discussions such as these have begun to pose a major challenge to the ethnocentricity of Western frameworks, and raise serious questions as to their relevance, appropriateness and value in relation to the socio-cultural and educational realities of these nations in the "the second diaspora of English" (Kachru, 1992). The urgent need to reexamine current concepts of diffusion of innovation in the light of these discussions makes the infusion of a World Englishes perspective in TESOL (Brown, 2001) both logical and imminent.

Factors Influencing the Implementation of Educational Innovation

A curriculum innovation project, by definition, is about making change through conscious intervention at all the three levels of the curriculum: approaches, materials and values. Because the changes brought about by innovation relate not just to the way people behave, but also to the way they *think* about certain issues, such changes will not only be quantitative, they will also be qualitative (Kennedy, 1988). Also, "because decisions about language curriculum rapidly cease to be decisions about ideas and become actions which affect people" (White, 1987, p. 113), the management of a project requires, in addition to skills in the organization and administration of material resources, considerable expertise in the management of change.

Diffusion of innovation researchers generally agree that effective planning is crucial if a diffusion/implementation effort is to meet with success. The planning should be deliberate, determinative, collaborative, future oriented and structural (Michaletz, 1985, cited in Henrichsen, 1989). However, although structure in a plan is critical, the importance of flexibility, of willingness to alter the structure when required, cannot be understated.

Bringing about educational change is often a long, complex, anxiety and conflict-ridden operation with many unforeseeable obstacles and problems (Fullan, 1982). This is because any innovation is part of several interacting systems and subsystems and areas which at first sight appear to have little to do with the innovation itself can begin to have considerable influence on the degree of acceptance of the innovation (Bowers, 1983; Kennedy, 1987, 1988; Markee 1996; Maley, 1984; White, 1987). Bowers

(1983), likens it to a spiders' web, which when touched at any one point sets the whole network in motion. On the basis of his experience at Ain Shams University in Cairo, he shows how decisions made at one point will have a knock-on effect at other points in the system, which in turn may restrain or even inhibit such decisions. For example, decisions to introduce a new text book will lead to questions about in-service teacher training, which in turn result in questions about resources such as time, money, the availability of trainers, and so on. Kennedy's (1988) experience on a materials project in Tunisia, leads him to identify social, political and cultural systems as crucial determinants. He maintains that these systems form hierarchical, 'higher level' systems successively influencing those below them. Practitioners who wish to introduce innovative syllabuses into an educational system must therefore recognize the potential impact—whether positive or negative—of various sociocultural as well as institutional constraints on their activities (Markee, 2001).

It is becoming increasingly evident that in change efforts across cultural boundaries, compatibility with the culture of the host country can be a decisive factor and cannot be taken for granted. Compatibility involves the degree to which potential adopters feel an innovation is "consistent with their existing values and past experiences" (Henrichsen, 1989, quoting Evans, 1968). Henrichsen suggests that two types of compatibility are necessary: (i) between the innovation and its intended users, and (ii) between the resource system and the intended user system. Potential mismatches between these components would have to be spotted and promptly remedied for the implementation to stand a chance of success.

Maley in fact identifies cultural characteristics as "the most powerful factors in the implementation of any language program" (Maley, 1984). And, he suggests, that perhaps the most important among them is the idea that a society has of itself. There are societies that are outward looking and that welcome innovation, whereas others look inward and are more tradition-bound. A clash may arise when the agent of change if an outsider, applies his own rate and concept of change to the society in which he is innovating. White observes that however beneficial an educational innovation might appear to its creators, the values and history of the surrounding culture must be taken into serious consideration before moving forward with reforms. If other cultural spheres perceive ELT innovations as incompatible with or disruptive to their agendas, reforms will be resisted, or modified to fit within established norms (White, 1987). The intended-user society's willingness to accept foreign ideas and practices is thus critical in cross-cultural change efforts.

There is virtually unanimous agreement that an educational system is essentially an organic outgrowth of a society's unique history and culture. (Beauchamp, 1986, cited in Henrichsen, 1989). Hence, as Henrichsen rightly points out, this history and culture must form the background against which reforms must be attempted and the foundations upon which change campaigns must build. For one thing, the prevailing educational philosophy of the host institution/country—whether egalitarian or elitist, authoritarian or participatory, product-oriented or favoring process, knowledge- or skills-oriented, encouraging of learner-dependence or learner-initiative—will strongly

influence the implementation (Maley, 1984, p. 92). In addition, in many Asian countries, the pressures of examinations, which form a powerful instrument of the education system, can facilitate or hinder change. This general situation leads Maley to lament, "Many a good scheme has been drowned in the washback from an intractable examination system" (p. 93). Morris (1985, cited in Karavas-Doukas, 1998, p. 41) provides an account of secondary school teachers in Hong Kong who rejected an innovation emphasizing a heuristic style of learning despite expressing favorable attitudes towards it because the new approach did not enable teachers to cover the exam oriented syllabus. Teachers felt the new approach to be wholly dysfunctional because it required them to ignore the expectations of their pupils, principals and colleagues.

The ultimate aim of all educational innovation is to bring about improvement in classroom practice and enhance student learning. However, in cross-cultural efforts at innovation it cannot be assumed that students will accept a foreign innovation unquestioningly or feel comfortable using it if it does not fit in with their 'learning style' (Henrichsen, 1989, pp. 90-91). On the basis of his experience of Asian classrooms, Maley presents what he calls 'the most common profile of learner expectations' as follows: "learners who expect the teacher to take a preponderant role in the classroom, who expect to have a book each and to learn it, who believe that there must be one *best* method which will magically (and unrealistically rapidly) bring them up to a high level of competence, who will expect to work long hours out of class—but in rather traditional memorization modes, and who may expect a very different program *content* from the one they are offered" (Maley, 1984, p. 95). It is such deeply entrenched expectations that have resulted in the poor uptake of a number of laudable learner-centred practices that form an integral part of the tenets of communicative language teaching, leading change agents to eventually question their very relevance to Asian contexts.

Similarly, while teachers are a key factor in the successful implementation of educational change, they are known to have established, well-entrenched (often tacitly held) beliefs about the teaching learning process and the roles of teacher and learner in the classroom. These beliefs or 'theories' guide their judgments, interpretation and classroom behavior. If any incongruity exists between the innovation project's philosophy and the teacher's theories, the teacher will tend to interpret new information in the light of their existing theories and will tend to translate innovatory ideas to conform to their existing practice. Teacher resistance can thus form a major barrier to educational innovation. Karavas-Doukas (1998) points out how teachers in various studies (citing Aziz, 1987; Nunan, 1987; Mitchell, 1988; Burns, 1990; Lawrence, 1990) claim to be following communicative language teaching principles, while observations of their classrooms reveal little, if any, evidence of communicative language teaching practices. Teachers therefore need to be given the time and space to understand new ideas and new roles, develop appropriate skills and adapt the new ideas to their classroom context through teacher education programs that are comprehensive, systematic, and ongoing.

Even more important is developing changed perspectives if real change is to occur. As Karavas-Doukas (1998, p. 38) puts it, "Apart from familiarizing teachers with the theoretical and practical implications of a particular innovation, teacher training should ultimately strive to make teachers innovators in their own right." The diffusion of innovation literature holds the development of 'ownership' towards the innovation, that is, the degree to which participants feel that the innovation 'belongs' to them, as a crucial ingredient for its success. This can only come from an experiential sense of satisfaction and empowerment derived from directly participating in the project activities. From this point of view, then, since teacher training is by definition other-regulated it can only be empowering for the trainee if it contains within itself seeds of self-regulation. Karavas-Doukas (1998) suggests that teachers be given extensive opportunities to experiment with new ideas and become skilled and confident in using them. She quotes Fullan and Steigelbauer, who succinctly state:

> Educational reform will never amount to anything until teachers
> become simultaneously and seamlessly inquiry oriented, skilled,
> reflective, and collaborative professionals. This is the core agenda for
> teacher education, and the key to bringing about meaningful effective
> reform. (Fullan and Steigelbauer, 1991, p. 326)

Wise counsel though this may be, it seems a highly demanding set of expectations to hold of those already battling with problems such as large classes, overload, lack of time and material resources, lack of institutional and infrastructural support, and so on. This is true particularly of teachers working in many Asian and South East Asian contexts. Maley depicts the realities of some of the classrooms in China he is familiar with:

> [A] major language program which had to start without hardware, and
> with very little software either, because orders had not been placed on
> time; an institution with three language laboratories in crates because
> the buildings to hold them had not yet been constructed; a photocopier
> rendered unusable because no paper had been provided for it; sets of
> text-books on listening skills without the cassettes which perform an
> essential role in their use; video equipment which was incompatible; a
> language laboratory which caught fire after being used once and which
> could not be repaired since the nearest qualified technician was in
> Norway; equipment locked away and unused on the grounds that it was
> too valuable to use. (Maley, 1984, p. 97).

It is easy to see how the frustration of working under such difficult circumstances can exacerbate the natural tendency for individuals to resist change, yet teachers are expected to be open to change, to cope with change and make it an integral part of their working environment (Karavas-Doukas, 1998, p. 38). Notwithstanding these difficulties, teachers *have* and *do* develop skills in finding creative ways of dealing with such exigencies, although they may not necessarily conform with the dominant norms of the TESOL profession. In addition, as Holliday points out, the increasingly

technologised discourse of the TESOL profession, which has now become a part of the project culture, can have an alienating effect on teachers of the host country, creating an 'us'—'them' perception, in which 'they' 'don't know the technology' and are 'easily dominated' while at the same time giving 'a false image of consensus' (Holliday, 2001, p. 173, citing Smith, 1995). Both these factors harbor hidden dangers of deep division; it is all too easy for the expatriate expert visiting these contexts on short term development projects to perceive of existing local practices and their contexts as being wholly inferior and to devalue them.

Dangers such as these have led Holliday to stress the need for change agents in cross cultural aid projects to cultivate greater sensitivity to the host country's culture. The themes of pedagogical appropriateness and cultural continuity have thus formed the centerpiece of Holliday's (1982, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2001) work on language and development throughout. As he puts it, "cultural continuity is achieved when meaningful bridges are built between the culture of the innovation and the traditional expectations of the people with whom we work" (Holliday, 2001, p.169). He reflects on his enlightening experience of working with local teachers in South Africa, whose handling of the seminar indicated subtle, organic, organizational skills which were markedly different from Western oriented seminars in that the leadership role was not identified in any particular member but was shared and observes, "We British tutors could not possibly have affected this with the physicality of what was becoming evident as a *local rhythm* which was distinct from our own" (1995, p. 63). He concludes that it is important for expatriate experts to be able to integrate elements of the project with these local rhythms of the user system in ensuring project sustainability. He cautions however, that these rhythms may be opaque to expatriate eyes, the very different world views making it difficult for the external expert "to clearly see the values and priorities of the other side" (Holliday 1995, p. 64, emphasis in original). As he explains it, culture "A relies more on a rhythm which focuses on carefully staged forward planning, informing and checking, whereas B relies more on the development of good relations which make staged informing and checking less necessary." The important issue here may not be which one of these is *superior* but which one is more *appropriate* to the specific social context.

In similar vein, Murphy (1999) calls for the need to rethink the roles of expatriate experts, and the relationship of the community with the donor agency. Murphy detected a deep contrast between educational development projects and rural development projects. In addition to most educational change being top-down, other important differences that emerged are:

1. The initiative taken by communities in rural development projects in proactively approaching the funding agency, thus ensuring majority support for setting up the projects. Whereas, in the case of most binational educational projects the approach is made through ministries, "at a level well above the target community, without . . . the educational community even knowing that they were to happen" (Murphy, 1999, p. 218).

2. The rural projects generally brought people together, whereas the ELT projects tended to create division, as, for instance, between English language teachers whom the project favored and their colleagues teaching other languages.
3. The rural communities were involved in all decision making from designing their own projects to evaluating the project; in the case of educational communities the main goals and the key aspects of the project are generally decided elsewhere.

In other words, there was no equivalent of the expatriate project leader or director, giving rise to the kind of patron-client relationship that pervades so many educational projects. This obviously resulted in a greater sense of agency and self-determination among the rural community, which in turn facilitated collaborative team work and co-operation—precisely the attributes that Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991, p. 326 quoted above) state as prerequisites for successful educational reform.

Diffusion of Innovation in India and Singapore

In the light of the above discussion, I take up for illustration here curriculum renewal initiatives typically adopted in India and Singapore. Although they share similar colonial histories, the two countries are distinctively divergent in a number of ways. From one point of view (Joseph & Ramani, 1998), given India's size and the magnitude of its educational problems, large-scale, top-down interventions are doomed to failure. In contrast, a number of factors such as the relatively small size, the ready availability of resources and infrastructural and technical facilities, the highly pragmatic and businesslike manner in which educational mandates are carried out aided by a mind-set of unquestioning obedience to authority, have all contributed towards making top-down reforms work for a country like Singapore. It would be interesting to compare the implementational processes generally adopted in these countries, particularly with reference to large-scale innovation supported by the state/educational authorities and to consider what lessons can be learnt for educational innovation in general.

A prosperous, modern, smoothly-run city-state where life is fairly well-regulated and disciplined, Singapore is a young country and in many ways the antithesis of what India is—in size and also in spirit (Nadkarni, 1995, pp. 8-9). The triumph of capitalism and the economic motivations that feed it are very much in evidence in the language and educational policies adopted in Singapore as well as in the management of its four official languages (Pennycook, 1994; Chew, 2000). The language policy that has evolved in Singapore is one of 'pragmatic multilingualism'. Singapore has four official languages: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. However, English dominates, both in the institutional and private life of the nation. It is the language of government, of administration and employment. It is the medium of instruction in all schools and tertiary institutions. Moreover, its perceived importance for, and actual use in, higher education, international trade, and modern industry and technology have strengthened over the years. It is the only one of the four official languages whose informal use extends across all ethnic groups and socio-economic levels. It has been

suggested that the role English has come to play in Singapore makes it quite unique in the world since no other former colony has gone on to officially adopt English as the working language. This ownership of the world's foremost auxiliary language among Singaporeans is not just a reflection of its practical utility as a 'neutral' tool of communication (Pennycook, 1994, p. 224) in a multilingual society but, as some scholars (Chew, 1999, p. 40) suggest, because of the widely held perception of its value as 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), a virtual "doorway to economic prosperity" (James, 1998, p. 99).

Given the kaleidoscopic variety of its peoples and its rich cultural heritage, with eighteen major official languages and over a thousand minority languages and dialects, India, on the other hand, presents an extremely complex demographical, linguistic and socio-cultural ethos. The adoption of a single common language throughout India as a medium of instruction and of government in similar fashion to that of Singapore therefore would be simply unthinkable, indeed highly unrealistic. Nadkarni reaffirms the intimate connections that exist between languages and culture in India, when he observes:

> [U]niformity of any kind is unsuited to the Indian spirit. . . . Any attempt to impose one language over the whole of India will have disastrous consequences. India has many rich sub-cultures within what may be called the Indian culture, and linguistic diversity is a part of this cultural diversity. India can survive and thrive only as a multilingual country. (1995, p. 6)

Soon after independence English occupied an unenviable place in the republic of India, having lost its primacy as the official language of the Raj to Hindi and became the associate official language of the nation. However, once India had outgrown the phase of self-conscious nationalism it was soon realized that "this unwanted legacy of the Empire would continue to be used to perform pivotal roles in many important aspects of the newly-independent nation's life" (Tickoo, 1987, p. 111). Today, English functions as a pan-Indian language, particularly among elite groups, despite the impressive spread of Hindi since independence in many parts of the country and in spite of the consolidation of the dominant languages in each state (Khubchandani, 1983).

India has officially followed a three-language formula: throughout India, at the secondary school stage a student has to learn at least three languages, one of which is English. The medium of instruction in higher education is generally English, despite efforts to reduce its importance. The three-language formula is not entirely satisfactory as a solution to India's language situation, being too mechanical a framework to be able to accommodate the complexity of the communication networks that operate within the country, but a better alternative has not been found. To quote Nadkarni once again:

> Our basic problem is that even in independent India, we have striven to
> be no more than imitators of the West in shaping our social, political
> and cultural institutions. I*n matters of language, our situation is so
> unique in its complexity that we have to evolve our own solutions.* This
> we have yet to do. (Nadkarni, 1995, pp. 6-7; my emphasis)

In matters of educational priorities too and the manner in which the two countries
went about implementing them India and Singapore show a clear contrast. The
strength of the Singapore educational system comes from its schools; it pays a great
deal of attention to primary and secondary education, post-graduate education having
been promoted only in recent years. In India primary education has been neglected for
a long time, India having been very keen on promoting tertiary education, fashioned
closely in the mold of British universities. Among the criticisms made with regard to
the quality of India's tertiary education is its excessive adherence to the academic
inheritance from the colonizers (Phillipson, 1992). While the study of English in the
University departments continued to be dominated by English Literature studies, the
post-independence period in the history of language teaching in state-run schools in
India was characterized by grammar translation, memorization of paradigms, explicit
teaching of grammar and a selection of canonized texts. The benefits of research in
linguistics and applied linguistics had yet to trickle down to these institutions (Tickoo,
1987).

I shall briefly examine two models of curriculum reform that took place in India,
which enjoyed a considerably high profile at the time they were introduced. Although
a huge time lag exists between them, there appear to be many similarities in terms of
the constraints that project teams faced and the way in which these constraints
eventually influenced the final impact of the projects.

The Case of India

One model of innovation extensively used in India in the early days of ELT reform
was the cascade model, thought to provide an attractive solution to the training of
teachers in circumstances where numbers are generally large and resources limited.
One of the best examples of this model was the 'Madras Snowball', a massive project
aimed at retraining 27,000 teachers of English in Tamil Nadu. Introduced with the
help of the British Council in 1959, during the heyday of the structural approach
against a background of concern for falling standards, the cascade model of training
was intended to have a direct effect on teachers in the classroom and *have immediate
results* (Smith 1962, cited in Gilpin 1997). Twenty teachers were trained in a
situational-structural syllabus with an oral presentation methodology and then were
sent back to train other teachers (hence 'snowball'). The project, as Widdowson (1968)
shows, was a colossal and disturbing failure. Teachers continued to use the grammar
translation method widely prevalent in India at the time. It failed because the oral
methodology (Prabhu, 1987, p. 119) was neither relevant nor sustainable in the context
of Madras schools. As Pennycook observes, "Perhaps the very inappropriacy of the

metaphor of the 'snowball' to the context of Madras is indicative of such a misguided project" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 151).

Gilpin (1997) cites as reasons for its failure, an over-reliance on outside expertise, the crowding of expertise at the top of the cascade, evaluation which focused on the process of the cascade itself rather than on the participants (both teachers and pupils), the content and methodology of the training itself and the improper use of time. She suggests that the discrepancy in time between the initiation of change (which occurred in 1952) and the implementation of the training module (which began in 1959)—with the new classroom materials being introduced somewhere between these two dates— "gave the new syllabus and materials time to become adapted to current practice before action was taken via the cascade" (Gilpin, 1997, p. 192). Some teachers who would have already made the materials their own would see no reason to change their practices.

More importantly, this was a top-down transmission model, which perceived teachers as deficient without taking into consideration the culture of the teachers. Gilpin notes, "In the description one gets no feeling that the teachers themselves were consulted about any part of the change, nor that their strengths as teachers were in any way brought into the training programmes" (1997, p. 192). She contrasts it with another project carried out more recently in Thailand (Hayes 1991), also using cascade, which contained more ingredients for success than the Madras one. Although the program in Thailand was coordinated nationally, sustainability at the local level was taken care of effectively by granting local centres a real role in curriculum and examination development and in-service teacher education. Not only did the local centres have a great deal of autonomy, but:

> [T]he co-trainers work with teachers from the local area on adapting teaching materials for the local context, developing test materials and examinations, and improving the quality of classroom practices *on a collaborative basis. They are seen as more experienced colleagues, are invited to observe lessons, and generally operate on what resembles a mentor relationship.*" (Gilpin, 1997, p. 193; my emphasis)

In short, despite using external expertise at national and regional levels, it built on a previously well established in-service infrastructure, adapted to the local rhythms.

The second model of curriculum renewal in India discussed here is far more recent and a far more psycholinguistically sophisticated and communicatively oriented one (Mathew, 1997), significant because it represents an attempt at a teacher-driven project undertaken for the first time in the recent history of education in India. The CBSE—ELT Project was an impressive attempt at curriculum renewal undertaken at the secondary level in 1988 by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) involving about 3000 schools in the country. Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK, through the British Council in India, the project involved changing the English A course for classes 9 and 10 of the CBSE 12-

year programme with initial academic guidance and inputs from British consultants. This time fifty teachers from the CBSE schools received training in syllabus design and text book writing, test design and evaluation, and in-service teacher training at the College of St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth, and also assisted the college staff in putting together the new communicatively oriented package 'Interact in English.' On their return home, they helped train a percentage of teachers to adopt the new course in schools.

Introduced in 1993, the main objective of the course was the fostering of skill acquisition through a communicatively oriented curriculum; its main thrust was therefore interactivity with a heavy emphasis on interaction between the learner and the teacher on the one hand and among students themselves through group discussions, projects and practical exercise, on the other (Mathew, 1997). But it has been pointed out that of the three components of the course, comprising an interaction-oriented main course book (MCB), a grammar-oriented workbook (WB) and a literature reader (LR), two of them, namely, the WB and the LR, mainly uphold established tradition in both teaching and testing (Tickoo, 2000, p. 114). The project evaluation team has acknowledged the tenuous link that holds between the performance of students and skill-based teaching which the MCB promotes: "Therefore any meaningful skill-practice that happens in the classroom is at best a hypothesis and at worst incidental" (Mathews, 1997, p. 57). A recent study done on CBSE schools in Chennai (Raja Kumari, 2001) also revealed that teachers seem to display the superficial trappings of communicative language teaching in their use of the MCB without having internalized its underlying principles.

In the second phase of its implementation, the CBSE undertook a massive Curriculum Implementation Study with the help of a team of specialists at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL, now named EFLU, The English & Foreign Languages University), Hyderabad. This phase of the project served both to implement and evaluate the course over four years. The study envisaged intensive involvement of teachers from the CBSE schools in all aspects of curriculum development as a strategy for ensuring sustainability (Mathew, 1997), and expended much effort to make it work. However, Tickoo remains critical of the claim that the project had "its underpinnings in a bottom-up approach to curriculum development." He questions the significance of the involvement of just fifty of the many thousand CBSE teachers in the development and implementation of the project as a basis for calling it a bottom-up project (Tickoo, 2000, p. 114).

To give the project its fair share of credit, it must be acknowledged that the new curriculum was a major departure from the routine exercises in textbook revision most secondary Boards engaged in. Set within a learner-centred framework and a communicative approach to language education it was able to introduce to an extent a new ELT method, fostering skill-acquisition through interaction, "where the teachers talk less and students talk more and the class appears to be interactive and skill-based, if on the surface at times" (Mathew, 1997). It was also able to successfully utilize collaboration as a possible 'methodology' for on-going teacher development, by

encouraging teachers to be their own researchers. "Teachers at different hierarchical levels including principals coming together, willing to share expertise, work, time, physical facilities were all a significant step forward … " (Mathew, 1997, p. 56).

However, apart from the fact that the innovation was itself conceived and implemented in a piecemeal fashion, unaccompanied by similar changes at the lower levels, the assumption that a dose of interactivity in the ninth and tenth year of English would by itself set right its absence in the eight years of schooling that preceded and two that followed begs the question. In addition, as Tickoo points out, since the scope of the reform was pan-Indian, involving some 3000 schools, a major problem would be that the provision for ELT varied markedly between different type of schools—central, state, and private, it's provision being weakest in most state schools as against that in private schools which however would also tend to "vary greatly across the spectrum based on where they are located, who runs them and why" (Tickoo, 2000, p. 115). Not surprisingly, the CIEFL-based evaluation findings reveal that those who "express a general liking for the course and see its relevance to real life needs" are the better-equipped private schools. Whereas the central schools and government schools (which constitute the majority) feel that "the whole Interact package is expensive and not worth all the cost and effort." There are also recurring references to the fact that the new curriculum has an urban and bright student bias, neglects the weak student and goes against the teacher's own beliefs on what literature and grammar teaching constitute (Tickoo, 2000, p. 117). The Evaluation study concludes that curriculum change "has only been cosmetic and not advantageous especially to the weak learner."

Another undermining factor has been the pressure of examinations. Unfortunately, given the importance of public exams in India, most schools accord utmost priority to teaching to the exam, forcing learners to fall back on time-tested ways of exam preparation. To quote Tickoo on the subject once again, "That an examining board is unable to influence the established patterns of classroom interaction should surprise no one. CBSE's failure lay in its belief that the novelty of its imported wares and their aggressive dissemination would be enough to alter the substance of teaching. It did not" (Tickoo, 2000, p. 117). He observes that the reason why the CBSE—ELT Project failed to work in mainstream TEFL was its inability to take note of two fundamental facts: first, the purposes served by important aspects of the system like year-end examinations; and second, the society's expectations, beliefs and behaviours which shape what happens inside and outside the classroom. He goes on to note:

> The pioneers apparently believed in the efficacy of their remedy regardless of who introduced it where, under what circumstances or for how long. Their faith in it is also comparable to that of the structuralists of the World War II days. Then as now the answer being known at the Centre, the way to reform lay in its faithful dissemination in the peripheries. (Tickoo, 2000, p. 115; citing Phillipson, 1992)

Tickoo's position is that in the case of mainstream ELT (ESL1) in most of Asia, which is worryingly characterized by the absence of real educational change, a different

classroom culture and learning milieu accrues from those found in the ESL (ESL2) world in the West. Similarly, important sub-systems and supports inside a curriculum occupy different positions and serve dissimilar goals from those they do in ESL2. The various agendas—expressed or hidden—that govern the subsystems, such as prescribed textbooks and examinations, should also be viewed as part of the system. He cautions against the temptation to ignore all these "in opting for a richly funded technology transfer whose strengths were seen to lie in a superior view of language and a well-defined theory of language learning" (Tickoo, 2000, p 119). The lesson to be learnt from both the Madras Snowball and the CBSE—ELT projects then, is that in pursuing global strategies in local conditions "Curriculum design and development, especially where large systems/institutions are involved, is best attempted by people who understand the system—its politics, its structure and its strength" (Tickoo, 1987, p. 134), if we are to avoid tissue rejection.

The Case of Singapore

Singapore presents a different kind of scenario. Education in Singapore is largely under the control of the central government, with a centralized curriculum. All schools in Singapore, come under the administrative umbrella of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE takes the initiative for syllabus design, development, revision and review, usually in response to policies motivated by social, economic and political forces and/or changing trends in the ELT theory and practice. Textbooks are now locally produced, and teachers are locally trained. Under a policy of bilingual education, all students in Singapore are required to take lessons in English (designated as the first language) and one other official language (the second language), usually the language associated with the students' ethnic classification. Minimum language requirements form a basis for admission to secondary schools, pre-university colleges, and tertiary institutions. It has been observed:

> [The] implementation of the societal multilingual policy, with English as a common working language, is actively carried out by the educational system through the streaming structure of the entire school system, manoeuvring of language curriculum design, gate-keeping by examination requirements, and by extra-curricular activities. (Kuo & Jernudd 1994, p. 32)

This has resulted in a pronounced ideology of meritocracy.

Singapore has seen a number of reforms in the English curriculum since the 1950s reflecting the changing role of English in Singapore and globally. Many of these innovations have been informed by theories in mainstream ELT adopted from the West. The more prescriptive emphasis on oral work and grammar in the 1950s and 60s, during the post-independence phase with its concern for national cohesion and economic survival (Ang, 2000) gave place to an emphasis on functional literacy in the 1980s as a means of producing a "meritocratic and industrialized as well as an ordered and disciplined society" (Selvan, 1990). The mid 1980s and early 1990s saw a move

towards purposeful language learning through a communicative and integrated skills approach to teaching English, where the learning of grammar was incidental. Some of the programs that were introduced during the various phases of syllabus development in the 1980s were the Active Communicative Teaching (ACT), Reading and English Acquisition Program (REAP), and the Shared Book Approach (SBA); the last two in particular aimed at encouraging reading among students and immersing them in a meaningful and rich language learning environment. Interesting for purposes of the discussion here is also the English Language Syllabus 2001, with its aim of helping pupils to become independent lifelong learners, creative thinkers and problem solvers who can communicate effectively in English. This syllabus for the 21st century is looked upon as mirroring the emerging trends of economic globalization and developments in information, communications and scientific technology.

Any new pedagogical approach or syllabus reform initiative in language education in Singapore is generally accompanied not only by changes in textbooks but massive efforts at teacher training. Indeed, the MOE's emphasis on training and retraining takes cognizance of the fact that teachers have an important role to play in helping to sustain change, and is therefore favorable to curriculum reform and educational change. If anything, this is a reflection of how in Singapore belief in planning as a guiding ideology makes the government intervene in a proactive fashion in domains of language communication and language education. "The policy relies on a forward-looking and anticipatory model of noting, and acting on, problems and opportunities, be they economic, cultural or linguistic" (Jernudd 1982, cited in Kuo & Jernudd, 1994). From this point of view, planning does not require that problems have already occurred in order to create a demand for their remediation. A good case in point is the new English Language Syllabus 2001 and the current move to train some 8000 teachers in the latest techniques of grammar teaching in an energetic bid to eradicate the troubling spread of the homegrown vernacular, 'Singlish', as part of "The Speak Good English Movement" (Rubdy, 2001) launched recently. The proficient use of English is seen as necessary for the continued growth of the economy. As part of the measures being taken to make the teaching of English more rigorous in school and prevent the erosion of English language standards among the young, teachers are being given an intensive dose of instruction in functional grammar under the assumption that acquiring a metalanguage will help fill the 'gaps' in the teachers' and students' knowledge of English.

On the face of it then it would appear that since the mechanisms of educational change are locally generated and sustained by the MOE and do not overtly fall under the core-periphery mode of technology transfer Singapore is free from problems that generally plague the importation of external models. The reality is quite different. Possibly ensuing as much from its limited human resource as from an avid admiration of Western material and technological progress, in all matters crucial—whether banking, industry, or education—Singapore has always looked up to the West, as when Switzerland became the role model in the early days of building up its efficiency oriented banking system or transforming itself into the clean and green garden city it is today, or when it looked to European metropolitan cites for models in creating its

world class airport and its tourism industry, and more recently, to the USA in restructuring its two universities into what is envisioned as the 'Harvard and MIT of the East' in a bid to become a regional knowledge hub.

Thus it is that as a post-colonial state, Singapore has deferred outside her national boundaries for her benchmarks in the education system as in other matters. As a general principle, the school system in Singapore adopts the norms that are recognized at international centres of language development and management. For English, Singapore follows a British norm, represented locally by the British Council but upheld through a variety of personal and institutional links, in and out of the world of education (Kuo & Jernudd, 1994, p. 33). Students are not only required to speak English but Received Pronunciation (RP) is held up as the preferred variety (however unattainable) by the educational authorities as a model for speaking good English. As Kuo and Jernudd observe, "Given the exoglossic norms of the official languages, the Singaporean language teacher and user have to exert a distinct effort to gain access and keep up with the production norms and standards that have their creative sources outside Singapore" (Kuo & Jernudd, 1994, p. 33).

Singapore has until now looked to Britain for the validation of English language for two important school leaving examinations, the GCE 'O' and 'A' Level Examinations. A long-standing practice followed at the prestigious National University of Singapore has been to send all exam papers and answer scripts for higher-level examinations to external examiners in British universities for vetting. And at the tertiary level, particularly with reference to university studies in engineering, science and business, new tie–ups with overseas universities are being forged, while it is quite customary for authorities to hire the services of foreign experts and external consultants to advise, guide and provide significant inputs into the decisions taken regarding appropriate models and new initiatives for Singapore to adopt—whether in education, trade or business—in staying competitive within the region.

That many of the curriculum implementation initiatives introduced in Singapore schools have been largely successful is evident from a number of studies (Mok, 1987; Chea, 1997; Ang, 2000) that appear in the journals of the Regional English Language Center (RELC) and the various documents published by the MOE. However, serious doubts have also been raised as to their durability and sustainability. For instance, while describing the effectiveness of the REAP program in promoting reading and language learning, Chea at the same time expresses reservations about its sustainability in helping bring about changes in classroom literacy practices. "(But) for any innovation to be successfully implemented, there has to be what Zainal described as 'socially shared understanding related to values, beliefs and norms held by different groups of people involved in the change process'" (Chea, citing Zainal, 1992, p. 27). Unfortunately, we do not know how much of this shared understanding has developed through the REAP years, and without a fit between teachers' beliefs and the REAP philosophy, it would be an uphill task sustaining the changes introduced" (Chea, 1997, p. 27). She reports how at the same time that teachers were affirming that the classroom culture was becoming more learner-centered as a consequence of adopting

REAP strategies, a conflicting trend perceived was that they were becoming more examination-oriented. Even more so than in India, examinations are powerful gatekeepers of the Singapore system. Success in examination gives the Singaporean ultimate access to tertiary institutions in Singapore or those in the UK, USA, Australia as well as to prestigious positions in the labor market. Hence, Chea foresees that "it is inevitable that elements of the examination culture will become more dominant in the later years of schooling, and these will also serve to shape and reshape the literacy learning environment in Singapore" (1997, p. 28).

Chea's attempts to investigate the sustainability of the REAP project after about eleven years of its existence threw up mixed results. She reports:

> While Reap was not implemented in all Singapore schools, its
> instructional strategies and principles have been made part of the
> national syllabus since 1990 and should therefore have some impact on
> all classrooms. This is certainly not the case, and as expected, none of
> the classes I have seen came close to those we saw in the early years of
> REAP. (1997, p. 29)

She mentions how at one of the pilot schools she visited a row of spanking new computers, brought in as part of the comprehensive IT package in these schools had replaced the library corners that had been proudly set up for the REAP program.

> [N]ext to these new machines, moved out of its place at the back of the
> class, was the library cupboard now locked up and pushed out of its
> corner into whatever space there was left . . . the scene was symbolic of
> one innovation being ousted by another. (1997, p. 29)

It was also perhaps symbolic of a lack of ownership towards the innovation. Chea stresses the need to ask a more fundamental question as to why changes are introduced in the first place. She concludes, "If they are introduced because they are the latest, and not because they bring about definite improvements in teaching and learning, then perhaps we are being trendy rather than informed" (1997, p. 30).

Considerations such as these combined with the lack of freedom teachers are allowed within the education system, lead us to question how conducive Singapore really is to innovation and change. Since all major decisions are already made by those in authority, on the advise and approval of external consultants and a few subject specialists dawn from selected schools, teachers have little say. "The professional's role is seen as primarily one of implementation" (Gopinathan, 1980, p. 179). There is no climate for homegrown ideas to flourish. Indeed, it is likely that local initiatives might even be devalued, simply because they are local and do not emanate from the West. In short, as James remarks, the perspective taken in Singapore gives little if no place for individual agency. "It would seem that there are no voices, only the message. Or perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that the many conflicting voices merge into one bureaucratic voice under the legitimating agency of education" (James, 1998,

p. 105). As a result whenever an argument or issue is foregrounded in education, it has seldom been contested. In its singular pursuit of excellence in becoming a 'World Class' nation, clearly the preference for Singapore has been to import frameworks that have worked in other parts of the world for instant implementation, often lock, stock and barrel, uncaring of local initiatives and unheeding of voices from the ground.

Thus if educational innovations in India have remained largely derivative at best, those in Singapore may be said to be imitative. Yet the efficiency of the bureaucracy set up to regulate reforms initiated by such centralized mandates, the skilled lower order personnel that service its mechanisms, and the well-oiled infrastructure that has increasingly come to characterize Singapore as one of the best cities in the world to live and work in, aided by the unquestioning compliance of the teachers, students and parents, lead to their unanimous acceptance with little overt resistance. Questions may still be raised, however, as to whether the authority and coercion that come from top-down initiatives in getting the job done, such as is adopted in this efficiently run island–state, make for a qualitative difference in the educational changes brought about in this way.

Towards an Indigenous Model of Diffusing Innovation

While the developmental aid projects undertaken in India reflect a lack of sensitivity to the constraints of the local context, that is, cultural discontinuity, the mode of non-consultative, top-down curriculum reforms adopted in Singapore explain why sustainability may be problematic despite acceptance, calling into question 'the meaning of educational change' (Fullan, 1982). What would be the attributes of an alternative model of diffusion appropriate to these contexts? Holliday and Cooke (1982) have successfully demonstrated how through a purposeful means analysis, socio-cultural and contextual pressures that act as constraints, if taken into account from the start, can be prevented from interfering with the implementation process and used to advantage in ensuring a better 'fit' with the ecosystem. This has been viewed as an instance of 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1965) which change agents themselves might undergo in the light of the dilemmas presented by such constraints. Through a process of contingent reasoning and strategic application of insights gained on the project they are able to revise their initial blue prints to effect change (Rubdy, 2000). In this case, we no longer speak of using theory to 'transform' reality, but of transforming (refining or reformulating) the theory itself to accommodate reality, thus carrying to its logical summation goals of an ecological orientation to language pedagogy as proposed by Holliday (1994), Markee (1997) and others.

Another crucial factor involves the agency of the local teachers and teacher educators. Typically, in large-scale reform measures persons most directly affected by the innovation—the learners, the teachers and the teacher educators or local specialists of the host country—are generally not party to the decision-making. As a result, the importation of syllabuses and instructional materials, however sophisticated, illuminating and instructive, is perceived by these recipients of innovation precisely for what they are—alien importations that are not rooted in their own contexts, are not

an organic outgrowth of their unique history and culture. Hence they do not carry with them the conviction of being able to offer appropriate solutions. As a consequence, a considerable amount of energy and effort has to be invested in changing the mind-sets of the recipients in the host community in order to create a sense of ownership toward the innovation. At the same time, there is also deep damage done by the tacit assumption that the host country personnel are unable to organize language education reforms in their own countries. Flew rightly shrinks from this view of a one-way transfer from culturally superior expatriate curriculum developer to culturally inferior counterparts as 'potentially patronizing' (Flew, 1995, p. 76) and recommends 'mutual learning' between people from different cultures. In similar vein, referring to an 'infusion' rather than a diffusion model, which entails adopting the perspective of a World Englishes paradigm in place of the traditional Inner Circle world view of English, Brown suggests, "Having successful teachers from these large classroom settings prepare lessons on how to teach large classes, which could then be infused into current Methods courses, would help Inner Circle teachers learn from Outer and Expanding Circle colleagues" (Brown, 2001, p. 110).

It is crucial therefore that the local personnel's agency is fully engaged, not devalued. This can only happen if they trade their role as 'recipients' or 'consumers' of ready made solutions formulated outside and become generators or 'shapers' of innovation in a collaborative and dialogical fashion with the expatriate project developers. This kind of participatory engagement has already been set in motion (Alderson, 1992; Breen et al., 1989; Weir & Roberts, 1994). I would like to suggest that the time has perhaps come for the creation of indigenous models of diffusion that are more integral to the experiential realities of the socio-cultural and educational contexts of ex-colonial countries, and which for this very reason may have greater authenticity and validity for their users. An indigenous model would have to be distinct in two ways—firstly, in the way it takes account of and positively exploits the richly multilingual/multicultural nature of the local settings of the host community and its role in characterizing the teaching and learning of English; and second, in conceptualizing innovation as a two-way, collaborative, problem-posing and problem-solving enterprise in which both external expert and local personnel reciprocally work to consider alternatives, doing this entirely from the viewpoint of the locals.

Holliday captures this spirit aptly when he states that, "There needs to be an alternative way of looking at the people we work with in innovation scenarios—in their own terms rather than in ours" (Holliday, 2001, p. 175). However, laudable as Holliday's recognition is of the need to get "closer to the ways of the recipient" (citing Smith, 1995, p. 67), he nevertheless stops short of advocating a model that is wholly indigenous in orientation for these countries. Even as he warns of the dangers of an ideological technologised discourse coming into play in discussions of stakeholder-centeredness, the conception of innovation he carries is still woven within a largely monolingual paradigm or world view of TESOL ideas emanating from the centre, rather than a two-way mutually enriching activity.

Exploiting Ethnography

An alternative model of diffusion, particularly suited to ex-colonial, multilingual countries in Asia and South East Asia, would be one that conceptualizes innovation as anchored within the socio-cultural experiences and values of the local indigenous context. In a country like India, for instance, large scale innovations involving a national curriculum and thousands of teachers in thousands of schools may not be the way to bring about change. School-based initiatives such as those successfully tried out by Stenhouse (1975) may hold more self-sustaining and generative value for the teacher and school (Mathew, 2001). Such a model would require the expatriate ELT specialist to work on an everyday basis with a small and locally manageable group of teachers, preferably at the grassroots level, simply because these are contexts that present the most impoverished use of English and need strengthening the most, to gain an understanding of the teacher's problems from the inside in a manner that is closer to the ethnographic model adopted in 'illuminative evaluation' by Parlett and Hamilton, (1977):

> The task is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex
> reality (or realities) surrounding the project: in short, to 'illuminate'….
> The researcher starts by familiarizing himself thoroughly with the day-
> to-day reality of the setting or settings he is studying. In this he is
> similar to the social anthropologists or natural historians. His chief task
> is to unravel it; isolate its significant features; delineate cycles of cause
> and effect; and comprehend relationships between beliefs and practices,
> and between organizational patterns and responses of individuals.
> (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977, p. 99)

Characteristically, in illuminative evaluation there are three stages: investigators observe, inquire and explain the new situation, drawing upon their interpretive human insight and skills. Edge advocates a similar "process of teachers exploring their own situations in order to become more aware of how they do actually go about their work" (Edge, 1996, p. 18), citing as an instance Naidu et al.'s (1992) report of this kind of research:

> By naming what we do we have recovered our practice, which
> otherwise might have been lost irretrievably (a fate we believe that
> many teachers have suffered). Further, we can now identify for
> ourselves what aspects of our practice we are confident of and what we
> need to strengthen. We can also account for our more satisfying lessons
> in terms of our appropriate and timely use of some of these skills. What
> for us has been most valuable is the awareness-raising exercise that we
> collectively experienced by articulating our unacknowledged repertoire
> of skills as teachers. (1992, p. 261)

Such a process will enable the external change agent to generate a critical discourse, based on seeing what is hidden and predefined when innovations are freely exported,

and give the local personnel a heightened awareness of the pre-established values that exist as well as of what baggage the innovations may be carrying in terms of new values. Gathering informed descriptions of what constitutes existing classroom practice, including teachers' best practice, is a first task. Such descriptions would help to improve knowledge of Asian classroom contexts as well as cultures and the underlying value systems they embody. But more importantly, they will help lay it open to dialogue, improving the possibility of more productive negotiations between existing practice and what is new.

McKay (1992) also points out the advantages of adopting an emic (from the inside and holistic) perspective in minimizing the tendency for change agents and expatriate teachers to be ethnocentric. She cites Damen's (1987, p. 63) model of 'pragmatic ethnography' which provides a practical three step method of inquiry, reflection and application for coping with cross-cultural differences in the classroom. While McKay discusses this model in relation to teachers and students, clearly it has applications for change agents as well. Other models oriented toward action research with affinity to ethnographic studies (Kemmis, and McTaggart, 1988; Brindley & Hood, 1991; Brindley 1991; Crookes, 1993; Hedge, 1998) also suggest useful frameworks for teacher empowerment.

The one major issue in countries like India would be the massive number of teachers of English and the practicality of implementing change in this fashion. But this problem is perhaps not insurmountable, once again, if we eschew interpreting innovation necessarily as emanating from the outside in or from top to bottom. As Joseph and Ramani (1998, see also Maley, 1987) observe, there are Indian teachers who engage in innovative practices (and this is true of Singapore as much as any other country). But ELT specialists need to seek out these and document and disseminate their practice. This would entail small-scale, school-based innovation with schools becoming sites of pedagogic change as ELT specialists and grassroots teachers together embark on a joint exploration of alternative strategies for practice. Such an exploration should ideally include learners as well, drawing upon their experiences of the learning milieu and making them *the focal point* for the development of classroom work in a manner suggested by Breen et al. (1989). Obviously, a one-off, pull out type of program involving "the JIJOE: the Jet-in Jet-Out Expert" (Alderson & Scott, 1992) will not do, but a long-term commitment for continual reciprocal engagement on the part of the external consultant will be called for. When ELT specialists take on direct language teaching roles alongside practicing teachers in a sort of 'professional activism' (Prabhu, 1987), opportunities can be created not only for the restructuring of specialist theory but for the teachers' contributions to be affirmed and their voices to be heard and respected, giving the innovation a better chance of survival.

Such a step does not imply the shutting off or the rejection of any valuable inputs that change agents from developing countries may have to contribute through transfer of technology. Indeed, this would only prove to be a futile effort, and an undesirable one at that, to set the clock back, developmentally. But the developmental projects that result from the adoption of such a stance, where teaching professionals from both

center and periphery come together in a professional activism, would certainly allow for the evolution of more eco-friendly, even if hybrid (Henrichsen, 1989), frameworks that may in the long run be more relevant and integral to the local contexts in ways that imported foreign formats can hardly ever hope to be. In addition, the give and take that must surely be a necessary part of such a dialogical relationship should help increase cross-cultural understanding in a way that would prove far more enriching and mutually beneficial to both (core and peripheral) educational communities, helping make Julian Edge's (1996) plea for "building futures together," not just a slogan but a vision to work toward.

Exploring Heterogenity

We live at a time when world English is a mosaic of many non-native—and 'nativized' varieties (Prodromou, 1992). Yet many of the diffusion of innovation models in the literature still fail to include elements that are culturally responsive to the learning milieu of the host country and so may be suitable for use only in monocultural contexts. Similarly, not only is the rich multilingual presence in a number of these countries ignored, but often scant attention is paid as to whether the promotion of the innovation does violence to long-standing indigenous educational traditions and practices associated with the teaching of some of these languages (Seidlhofer, 1999, cites translation and rote learning as examples) and how such a stance might affect the ultimate success of the innovation.

A crucial element of an indigenous model would therefore construe ESL in a way that truly integrates it with the plurilingual and pluricultural community within which it functions, quite different from the conventional conceptualization of ESL as an isolated component of bilingual education. Integration can be worked out in terms of the interfaces between English and the indigenous languages, the classroom methodology used in the teaching of both and the content of ESL itself. In all these countries—in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines as much as in the countries of Africa—English exists in a linguistic ecology of several languages and there is much interconnectedness and give and take between them. This radically calls into question the notion of native speaker's 'ownership' of English (Widdowson, 1994) and challenges the monolingual, Anglo-centric assumptions and ideologies that underlie much of aid—packaged ELT (Phillipson, 1992; Prodromou, 1992; Rampton, 1990).

Research done in comparative contexts of learning and use is showing its value in terms of transfer of skills and also in learner's awareness of what is involved in learning a language. We know now that a bilingual's language is an untapped resource and not just a source of fossilized forms. "The creative bilingual has code-switching as an additional communicative strategy, an extra handle to connecting with others. Monolingual speakers may sometimes miss the point: proficiency is not everything but effective communication is" (Pakir, 2000, p. 25).

In introducing changes, whether in classroom management or teaching techniques, it would be useful to stay informed about the established patterns and practices found in other language classrooms and even subject classes in these countries, for instance. Since the indigenous languages with which English co-exists is each shaped and moulded by similar societal pressures, bilingual professionals may have certain insights to share with their ESL counterparts, which currently polarized conceptions of ESL disallow and encourage them to see as conflictual instead of as complementary.

Joseph and Ramani (1998, p. 220) observe that in countries like South Africa and India while multilingual policies are highly developed multilingual practices are either invisible or non-existent. They stress the need for ELT specialists to engage in multilingual practices (professional activism) themselves and to make the practices of creative teachers widely visible in bridging the huge chasm that exists between multilingual consciousness and practice. Brown (2001, p. 113) likewise tells us how speakers of the Outer and Expanding Circle varieties of English in the program she teaches continuously remark on the lack of relevance of material in standard methods courses to their needs in their countries.

From her experience of teaching English specifically in the Expanding Circle settings, Seidlhofer (1999) speaks of "a sense of breaking the professional mould," as reflected in a broader conception of what it means to teach English going hand in hand with a more comprehensive view of the English or Englishes to be taught. She points out that what is usually considered a weakness of the local professional relative to the native speaker teacher of English may actually be their strength. "As insiders of the culture in which they teach, they are in a position to exploit materials and methods in a way which is meaningful in their setting and enhances their students' learning" (p. 236) even if this means that in some cases their interpretation of concepts and use of materials turns out to be a far cry from the original intentions of Inner Circle authors, as beautifully illustrated by Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) in the context of EFL in a Vietnamese classroom.

Integrating ESL with the local socio-cultural and learning milieu in this way has implications not only for classroom methodology but the content focus of the curriculum as well. For instance, the notion of 'communicative competence' as a goal for ESL outside native speaker settings has in recent years come under severe criticism since, typically interpreted as competence in the target culture, the content it has spawned would seem irrelevant for learners of English in, say, Vietnam or Thailand or Cambodia. Furthermore, as Prodromou (1992) points out, its equation with notional and functional categories, as people invite, apologize, make requests in London, Bristol, or Cambridge, has resulted in the trivialization of content and the complex processes of language use, in addition to being culturally inappropriate. Prodromou stresses the importance of ELT as education, (citing Brumfit, 1980; Cook, 1983; and Abbott, 1987) arguing that ELT has long been practiced in an educational vacuum. As an antidote to this trend, Maley convincingly builds a case for the legitimacy of utilizing materials in ESL classrooms drawn from the flourishing literature currently available in Indian and Asian writing.

Yet another instance of integrating ESL with multicultural practices is Pennycook's (2001, citing Ibrahim, 1999) description of African students in a Franco-Ontarian school in Canada identifying with hip hop and similar forms of popular culture, thus adding another dimension to this picture—that of language and identity. This suggests that preconceived ideas of English being learned only through formal classroom contexts, or in Preisler's terms (1999, cited in Pennycook 2001), only in its 'pure' forms of 'English from above' ("the promotion of English by the hegemonic culture for purposes of 'international communication') than 'English from below' ("the informal—active or passive—use of English as an subcultural identity and style" p. 259) may also need to be challenged. This is what Pennycook in fact does, in advocating on the one hand the need to incorporate 'minority' linguistic and cultural forms into the classroom, and on the other of getting those in dominant cultural groups to "be able to see multiple ways of speaking, being and learning". Following Ibrahim, Pennycook puts forward the radical idea of the need for ESL curricula "to engage with forms of popular culture, not, ... as an uncritical adoption but rather as a process of critical investigation" (2001, p. 92). His main thesis is to suggest a 'postcultural' curriculum which battles against predefinition and cultural fixity, which will contain a mixture of the global and the local, and which "would make the curriculum a site for student research not institutional imposition" (p. 94). There are echoes of this view in Holliday's (1999) notion of 'small cultures' and Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) who speak of the possibility of creating a 'middle culture'.

Part of integrating ESL with the rich and vibrant multilingual and multicultural practices in ex-colonial countries and extending the ownership that is already felt towards the English language to issues relating to the *teaching* of that language would be to engage both teachers and students in bringing to the curriculum renewal process and the process of classroom instruction "multiple, hybrid forms of language and culture" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 94) that they can best resonate with. This could take the form of pop culture in one country, folk culture or literature in yet another. What is important to recognize is that curriculum practices where teachers make creative use of the multilingual and multicultural resources that students bring to the learning process would render the problem of ownership a non-issue.

To summarize, two elements appear to be critical towards conceptualizing an indigenous model for curricular innovation in developing Asian and South East Asian countries: (i) a collaboratively worked out understanding of the local situation—as it is perceived from the inside out rather than interpreted from the outside, and (ii) a more integrated vision of ESL which not only situates English within a complex mesh of linguistic and cultural pluralism but also views it as fully participating in this heterogeneity. Without doubt, a commitment to generating such a model is a task that calls for considerable effort on the part of both expatriate and local personnel. But the measure of 'cultural continuity' that can be achieved would make the task worthwhile and the commitment strong if it is shown to be a more enduring and acceptable method "of winning hearts and minds" (Everard & Morris, 1985, p. 223) of those most intimately involved.

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