



Innovation and Change in TEFL

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Abstract

- Our field of Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language has not been a static one.
- The innovations have reflected what has been learned from research and practice, bringing in ideas and knowledge from such fields as linguistics, education, and neuroscience. They also reflect the needs of external factors.
- We have tried to be wise and not throw out what is perceived as effective as we move forward, but have brought those effective and best practices forward with us.
- The challenges in innovation and change have been: breaking through the “old-guard” barriers, disseminating information adequately enough, providing enough and appropriate training, and getting the triumvirate of curriculum-testing-materials to work together in a synchronized way to make effective changes in the instruction and learning processes.

How the Field of Language Education has Changed: A Brief Historical Perspective

material and text-focused

audio-lingual

Methodologies

student-centered

early 1900s

1940s and 50s

1970s and 80s-----present

Caveats about Changes

- Be aware of the different change agents and both kinds of changes that are taking place
- Be prudent with change and not just change for the sake of changing, but change because there is a need
- Use change to improve desired educational results and work environment

What Changes Have People at TESOL Talked about?

- We are now in a post-methods era
 - We will continue to look at the methods and apply them in our teaching today when they are appropriate and applicable
 - We should keep in mind past understanding and best practices, and build on them
 - We are progressing in understanding of students learning

More on Changes from TESOL

- Our knowledge base should be more than just a survey of TEFL
- Action research and reflective teaching are the keys to our work
- We should also look at what the field of education has to offer us in TEFL, and not be too insular

Today's trends

- Higher standards and more accountability
- More proficient users of English
- More curriculum review and innovation
- New professional vocabulary
- Vibrant renewed discussion on culture and language
- Hot discussions on the changes in English

Internal Changes (more thoughts)

- Where are they from
 - Research and development in our field
 - e.g. research in neurosciences looking at brain-based teaching
 - Ministries and administrators
 - e.g., when should students begin language study
 - changes in textbooks or methods
 - changes in assessment

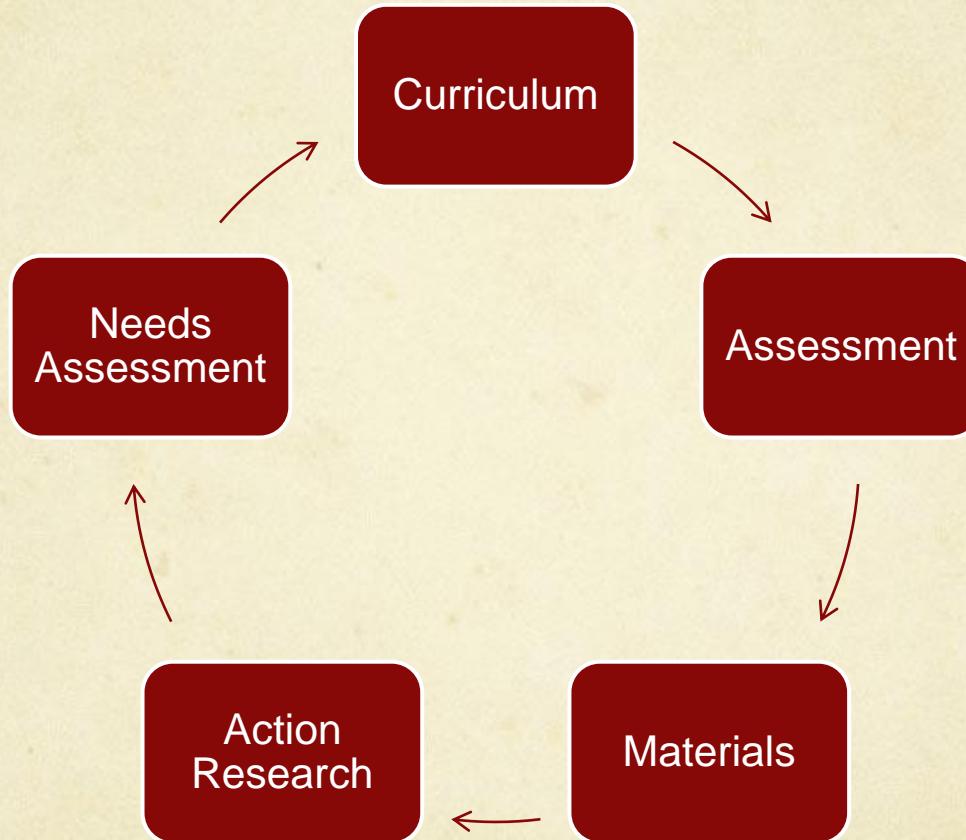
Internal Changes: More Student-centered Classes

- Started looking at learning styles and strategies
- Incorporated Multiple Intelligence theory into our lesson planning
- Looking at what motivates students to study English and the contexts in which they will be using English
- Teaching English as a life skill rather than just a tool to pass exams

Internal Changes: What Research Is Telling us--Focusing on Learners

- Motivation: Why do they study English?
 - Aspirations vary
 - Needs/desires vary
- Contexts: How will they use English?
- Axiom: One size does not fit all.
- Axiom: Teach English as a life skill and not just as a tool to pass an exam.

All the parts need to work together



Internal Changes: What Research Is Telling us

- “Balance curricular scaffolding and frame works with open-ended explorations and task-based instruction/activities.”

Chisholm, Osterweil, Blanca

Internal Changes: What Research Is Telling us--Focusing on Learners

- Students learn best when using language in performance of meaningful tasks.
- Students should solve problems with language in the classroom, not just parrot words.
- Language is made up of ideas and phrases, and that words are not always the unit of analysis.

Chisholm, Osterweil, Blanca

Internal Changes: What Research Is Telling us--Focusing on Learners

- The four freedoms of play are the same as the four freedoms for language learning
 - Freedom to experiment
 - Freedom to fail
 - Freedom of identity
 - Freedom of effort

Internal Changes: What Research Is Telling us--Focusing on Learners

- **Intrinsic motivation and meaningful tasks are the primary keys to a student's learning.**

Internal Changes Coming down the Road: What Research Is Telling us -- Focusing on Teachers—Learning Communities

- Teachers are beginning to empower themselves:
 - Doing situated research
 - Finding new ideas and ways
 - Conducting action research
- Teachers are forming learning communities
 - An example
 - A way of sharing of understanding, views and information among educators

Learning Communities

- Help us reflect on our own teaching
- Help us make sense of change (internal and external)
- Are about everyone sharing
- Help with planning
- Help reduce stress

External Changes: Where Are They from

- Are from outside the profession
- May be a result of globalization as a result of more mass media, improved communication technologies and mass transportation
- May be a result of improvement in technology

External Changes: Advances in Technology Bring Changes to Society and Industry

- The way not only in which we work but also in the ways in which we engage each other and entertain ourselves are changed.
- Industries and governments have stronger needs for people who are either bi-lingual or multi-lingual.
- This creates changes in language policies

Change in Industry and Society

- The changes in industry and society are also creating a higher demand for accountability from us.
 - **need speakers and writers, not good test scores**
- The whole concept of speakers engaging other speakers in a global community brings up the issue:

World English or World Englishes?

Communication is the Target

- More non-native speakers than native speakers
- Focus is on speaking and writing to be understood
- Not essential to have a native speaker accent

Changing English

- Language is defined by the users
- English is growing and changing globally to meet the needs of those who use it.

Changing English

- Twitter and tweat
- My bad
- That's my DNA
- Language speakers embed their own culture into English
 - Chinese making requests in English
- Many students know the changes before we do!

Why Changes Happen Differently in Different Countries: the Change Process

- Different change agents
- Different factors driving the change
- An example from Togo, West Africa
 - Work with the change agents at different levels: the ministry, the headmasters, the teachers, the students and the parents

Change is Inevitable

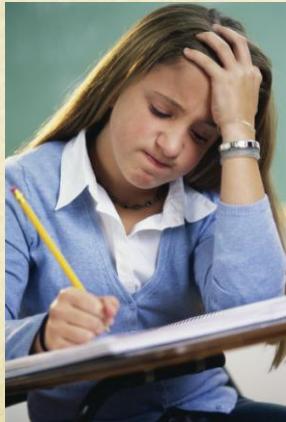
- Be aware of the process of change
- Not everyone will have your knowledge base and understanding
- Good and adequate communication are the keys to a successful change process

Partnership of Engagement



Students

- LEARN

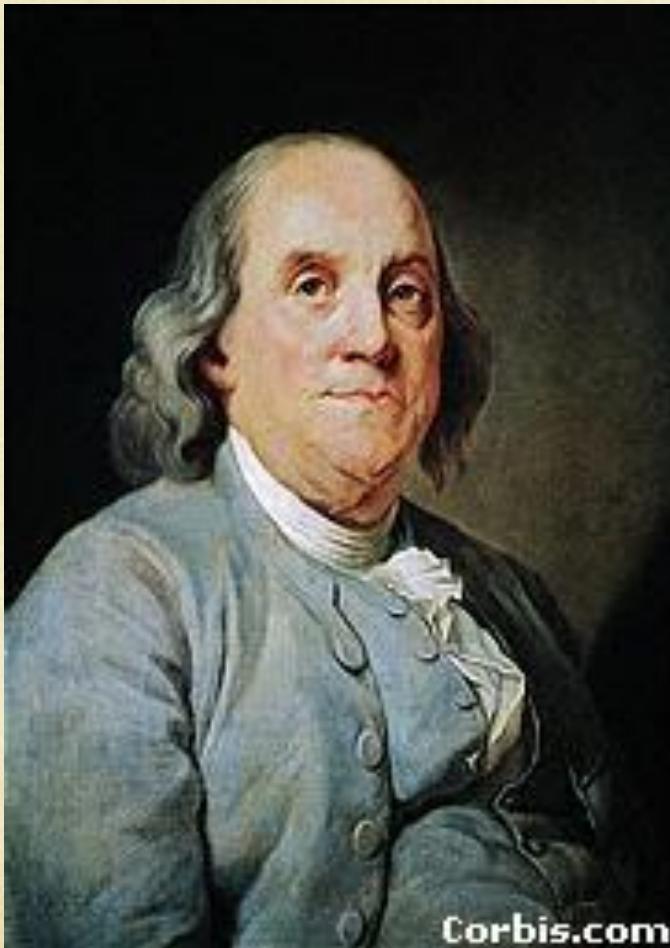


Teachers

- INSTRUCT



Ben's Wisdom



- **Tell me and I forget.**
- **Teach me and I remember.**
- **Involve me and I learn.**



Knowledge is more powerful than
memory

Teaching and Learning



In summary

- We need to make sure
 - our classes are student centered and provide the students the four freedoms of learning
 - the new books, materials, and assessments will reflect the new technologies and the understanding from brain-based and other current, relevant research
 - we keep abreast of what is happening in the world that has impact on us and our students
 - our professional organizations help us to keep abreast of what is happening in our profession
 - we begin doing action research to inform ourselves about our teaching and our students' learning.
 - participate in professional learning communities to keep ourselves fresh and to keep our creativity and edge

We have some exciting times ahead!!

STAY TUNED!!