Postgraduate Distance Learning programmes

ESSAY COVER & DECLARATION SHEET

IMPORTANT: Please complete ALL sections of this template and PASTE it into the FIRST PAGE of your essay

Student ID number	1306114
Module Number (1-6)	5
Title of Degree Programme:	M.A (Taught) Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language
Title of Module:	ELT Management & Sociolinguistics
Assessment Task No.	MN/14/01
First or second submission (second submission is used for resubmitted work only)	First
Date Submitted	11/30/14
Name of tutor	Brad Serl
Word Count	*3255*

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare:

      a) that this submission is my own work;

      b) that this is written in my own words; and

      c) that all quotations from published or unpublished work are acknowledged with quotation marks and references to the work in question; and

Date: 11/30/2014

Module 5: ELT management & Sociolinguistics

MN/14/01
Working with your own definition of 'culture', how important do you think 'culture' is when considering change and innovation and why? Give examples from your own teaching/learning situation and/or from the change literature as appropriate.

3255 Words

Submitted 11/30/2014

Contents

1.0 Introduction

As technology helps the world to become smaller, understanding culture is as important as ever. In the 21st century, cross-cultural interactions with ESL speakers is becoming increasingly common in the field of education. Correspondingly, it is necessary to understand how important culture is with regards to change and innovation in the language classroom. In an attempt to do so, this paper will begin with a review of the literature on culture, change and innovation. Next, how culture affects change and innovation will be examined. Moreover, specific examples in Asia and the author's context will be considered. Lastly, an investigation into how issues that arise from culture can be minimized will be addressed.

2.0 Literature review

Before exploring how important culture is when considering change and innovation, a review of the pertinent literature is required. In the next section, this paper will attempt to define culture, change, and innovation, and explain how they are related with regards to English language teaching (ELT).

2.1 Culture

Culture has, and always will be, difficult to define. Anthropologists in the mid 1950's found 164 separate definitions, and by the 1990's there was still no consensus (Spencer-Oatey, 2012:1). Modern definitions of culture tend to be quite broad for this reason. Macionis (2012) states that culture is "what we think, how we act, and what we own" (58). Hofstede (n.d.) explains that culture is simply what distinguishes groups from one another. Kramsch (1998) describes culture as membership in a society with history with common ideas (10). As shown, culture is indeed "fuzzy" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008:3) and a "highly complex phenomenon" (Ho, 2009:63) and may in fact be "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Kumaravadivelu 2003:716 citing Williams, 1976:76).

It should be noted that culture and language are naturally inseparable because language expresses cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998) so cultural understanding is necessary for communicative competence (Kramsch, 1993). Successful pedagogic competence therefore requires cultural awareness (Flowerdew,

1998: 327).

With these definitions in mind, 'culture' in this paper will describe the intangible ways in which societies and groups are unique from one another because of their common beliefs and shared ideals.

2.2 Change & Innovation

Change is a process of learning new ideas (Fullan, 1991). To be more specific, change in education is a change in practice, requiring new materials, new behavior and/or new beliefs (Fullan, 2001: 39). Innovation is specifically designed to "improve a specific educational setting" which sometimes results in a change (Hadley 1999: 92). Therefore, change and innovation are not the same thing. Fullan (1985) claims that innovation is a complex and dilemma-ridden issue that involves a process of anxiety, support, assistance and feedback that is best tackled long-term (392-396). Within an educational setting, Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Mannings (2002) citing House (1981) state that the "innovation process is actually an interaction of cultures, where change blends new ideas with the cultural history of a school" (53).

Innovation is implemented in a top-down (i.e. owners or managers making decisions) or bottom-up (i.e. employees collaborating) system (Stephenson, 1994). With regards to ELT, innovation must be an informed change brought about by research and/or experience, which results in the adaptation of pedagogy that promotes language learning in a more successful way (De Lano, Riley & Crookes, 1994: 489).

3.0 How Culture Influences Change & Innovation

Culture plays a crucial role in change and innovation in an ELT context. Culture is systemic (i.e. part of different interrelated systems), with culture being the most "powerful" influence because it affects politics, administration and behavior (Kennedy 1998: 331, Appendix 1). Since culture has such a strong influence on almost all aspects of life, it is extremely important to consider with regards to change and innovation. Consequently, there are numerous barriers to innovation and change that are

present in a cross-cultural setting. These include values and beliefs, cultural ethnocentrism, saving face and incompatibility of a cultural trait with change (Ellsworth, 1999: 168, citing Zaltman & Duncan, 1977: 68-72).

Implementation is also an issue. Hayes (2012) explains that there are four reasons why change and innovation are unsuccessful. For example, the nature and speed of change expected is too great, resources are constrained, conflicts exist with the role expectations of teacher and student, and the fact that change is driven by those who do not have to implement it (48). Successful innovation in a classroom setting is therefore quite difficult because it requires a "change in teacher's behavior or beliefs" (Ferguson, 1993:28). Because cultures have different ideas about what an innovation should accomplish, "innovations that are successful in one context may have to be adapted (or even rejected) in another" (Murray & Christison, 2012: 61). In the next section, this paper will explore how these cultural factors specifically influence change and innovation in the ELT classroom, particularly in Asia.

4.0 The Asian Context

Keeping in mind that Asia is a broad term which encompasses numerous countries, cultures and histories, this section will view how it can affect change in an ELT environment. The current paradigm in China, Japan and South Korea will be explored and explained, using the previously established definition of culture to understand how it influences change and innovation.

4.1 China

China and its huge population and ancient traditions sometimes clashes with modern ELT strategies. Jin & Cortazzi (2006) explain that this clash is because students in Confucian-based cultures learn, are taught, and have different extrinsic/intrinsic motivations from their counterparts in the West (13; Appendix 2). This Chinese "Culture of Learning" focuses on how education can strengthen a person and a nation, improve social mobility, cultivate moral qualities, focus on the accumulation of knowledge, the importance of textbooks, the harmonious hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, and that through effort and determination, anyone can be successful in education (Hu 2010, 96-98). While research has shown that bilingualism correlates with increased earning potential, significant

government investment into changing ELT, it has not been enough to produce changes to the established fundamental classroom practices, which stifle innovation (Hayes, 2012: 47).

Xiyuan (1988) shows how in China these focuses have allowed the outdated Grammar-Translation method to flourish well into the 21st century (73). Naturally, this has led to difficulties in introducing new teaching strategies that encourage a more communicative classroom. Littlewood (2004) explains how CLT in China has met resistance because it is incompatible with public assessment demands and conflicts with values and traditions (244). Since Chinese culture has such an impact on change and innovation, Xiyuan suggests that although the "English language is foreign, the method of teaching it should be Chinese" (1988, 76).

4.2 Japan

Other Asian countries face similar issues. Carson (1992) citing Duke (1986) notes that Japan also uses "traditional techniques such as memorization, repetition, and drilling rather than creativity and innovation" (in Kabuto, 1999: 12). Furthermore, the main purpose for English at the secondary level is to prepare students for university entrance exams (O'Donnell 2005: 305). Consequently, teaching using outdated methods may still be the most practical approach (Sato, 2010: 198). In addition, establishing rank and seniority at the individual and organizational level is also very important in Japan, and the person proposing an innovation is just as important as what is proposed (Hadley, 1999: 96). This often leads to significant headaches for those attempting to implement change.

4.3 South Korea

With regards to ELT innovation, South Korea has many of the same problems because English is learned on an "assembly line" (Nunan, 2005: 6). Students use rote memorization, have strict classroom roles, lack oral proficiency and useful learning strategies, and receive a large amount of pressure from their family, school and society (Duck & Finch, 1997: 48). This pressure extends to teachers as well. While somewhat dated, Li's (1998) interview with a teacher is still relevant:

> If your kids find that you cannot always answer their questions very confidently, you are going to lose their respect and finally lose them. In our culture, teachers are supposed to know everything and be always correct. (Jin-Kyu, July 17, 1995) (687).

Although there is unhappiness from both students and instructors, Korea remains a test-driven society in the 21st century contrary to stated educational goals (Finch, 2006: 41, 58-59). New teaching techniques such as CLT and task-based language teaching are often opposed in Korea because there is fear they do not prepare students well enough for traditional form-based exams (Littlewood, 2007: 245). This is in part due to the National University Entrance Examination only testing students' grammatical knowledge and reading ability (Li, 1998: 692). Consequently, teachers are forced to comply with government recommendations and teach exam-based classes (Shim & Baik, 2004: 246). Again, the need for change is well known but would require "drastic conceptual changes in general in society" but is unlikely because "exam culture is so deeply rooted in sociocultural history in Asia" (Butler, 2011:46).

5.0 In Context

With reference to previous examples, the extent to which Korean culture affects change and innovation in an ELT setting is significant. This can often be attributed to the top-down nature of Korean businesses, which in some ways are very efficient, but tends to lack cooperation and collaboration. In the following section, this paper will provide examples and an analysis of how these cultural traits have affected change and innovation in the author's personal context. For this analysis, Kennedy's (1988) outline of change participants in an ELT context is useful. They are adopters (the group or person initiating the change), implementers (teachers), clients (students and parents), suppliers (material designers) and entrepreneurs (outside change agents) (334).

5.1 Misguided Change

A specific example demonstrated how culture can affect change and innovation in early 2010, when I worked at a private English academy ('Hagwon' 학원) in Daegu, South Korea. This hagwon was an owner-run language school that was typical of an organizational culture where power is concentrated in the hand of a central authority figure, similar to a spider's web (Waters, 2009:431).

Due to a parent's complaint, the manager (adopter) proposed a change in classes. Instructors were now required to check students' (clients) homework thoroughly, in class. When my coworkers and I (the

implementers) were told this, we immediately resisted. Fifty minute classes did not afford enough time to teach effectively and classes would suffer as a result. Although our protests were heard, we were told that the decision had been made and that was final. At the beginning of a class, we were to collect the student's workbook homework and correct them, a process that took upwards of thirty minutes. Meanwhile, the students read aloud a passage from a book, over and over again, until the teacher was finished. This usually left only ten to fifteen minutes to actually teach the class and assign homework. To compound this problem, students who didn't do their homework were sent out of class to a detention room to complete their assignments, during class. The savvier students realized that this was a good way to get out of speaking class. Teachers and students were both frustrated and perplexed. After months teaching this way, a new student dropped out after their first class. Their parents had obviously found this format unacceptable and complained. The following day, we had a meeting where our manager told the staff to stop what we were doing immediately, and revert back to the original way we had taught.

Part of the reason why this innovation was not successful is because Korean culture discourages challenging your superiors and disrupting the harmony of the workplace. It is no surprise then that South Korea's culture of age-dominated hierarchy with group-drive mores makes innovation extremely difficult (Finch 2006: 57). Furthermore, Kennedy (1988) states that for innovations to have a chance at long term impact, participants should feel like they have ownership (i.e. the innovation 'belongs' to them) (337-338). In this environment, my coworkers and I did not have any ownership of the idea or its long terms effects because we only had year-long contracts. When the native English teachers complained about situations such as this, they were discouraged because of age, rank, seniority and nationality. This particular situation happened towards the end of the native teacher contract period which meant that fighting over it was neither worthwhile nor productive. In this scenario it's not surprising that curriculum innovations are "rarely implemented as intended" (Karavas-Doukas, 1995: 53).

5.2 Lack of Change & Innovation

Problems like the one above are not isolated instances. Since late 2010, I have been teaching at another hagwon in a suburb of Seoul, South Korea. At this institution there is a distinct lack of innovation and

meaningful change. To be specific, students twice a month must complete online homework which is extremely time consuming and difficult, almost doubling the workloads of elementary and middle school children who are already bogged down by public school exams and other subject material. This has been a constant point of contention between foreign staff, local teachers and students. Students hate the work, often waiting until the last minute to submit it or not completing it at all. Parents then complain to the local homeroom teacher that their foreign teacher gave their child a poor grade. The teachers in turn ask the foreign staff to allow the students to make up their assignments, which the students do in class, making the whole online process pointless. The students still continue on to the next level, regardless of their arbitrary score which is on a scale from 60-80. Foreign teachers then have to change grades which originally took hours to input. This process is repeated every semester and has gone on for years.

There are a few reasons why this environment has had a lack of innovation and change. Currently, the adopters (management) see no reason to adapt. First of all, the clients, in general, are happy. While the current system is less than ideal, overhauling it would likely create more problems and cause a lack of revenue. Second, there is a disconnect between adopters and implementers. The owner and managers are likely ignorant of many of the problems with the system, since it doesn't directly affect them. Again, this is due in general to the Korean staff being deferential to authority and the foreign staff being too 'low on the totem pole' to have any meaningful impact with regards to change and innovation.

5.3 Other Issues

Another reason for a lack of innovation is the previously mentioned test-driven environment in which these schools operate. The ultimate goal of schools like the ones in the previous examples is to prepare students for their university entrance exams, not communicative competence. Therefore, until the exams change on a national level, innovations are less likely to occur.

Although these examples highlight the negatives of cultural influence on change and innovation, there are some positives as well. Earlier, this paper mentioned a drastic change occurring overnight. While it's implementation could have been more thought out, the speed with which it happened was significant. In many western ELT situations, changes are often long, bureaucratic processes where minute details are endlessly fought over. In this respect, a top down approach helps minimize the time

spent debating a change and allows an organization to implement it. It must be kept in mind that most teachers are not experts in business (Walker, 2011a: 327) and language schools are commercial enterprises concerned with turning a profit (Walker, 2011b: 491) and must act accordingly.

It is important to take into account and adjust to cultural differences between the innovators and the implementers (Stephenson, 1994: 226). Also, incompatibility of a cultural trait with change is a given factor (Ellesworth, 2000: 170). Thus, a bottom-up approach may not be appropriate in situations such as these and other solutions should be explored. This brings us to our next section, which will look at some of the ways that the impact of culture can be minimized when change and innovation are desired.

6.0 Moving Forward

Innovation and change are not impossible tasks. While the research and anecdotal evidence shows that culture has a great impact on change and innovation, it should not be looked at as insurmountable force. In the following section, this paper will explore some ways in which meaningful change and innovation can be implemented.

6.1 Lack of Understanding

One of the most common reasons change and innovation fail in a cross-cultural setting is due to a lack of understanding from both locals and expatriates. Holliday (1992) makes the point:

> Western ELT inherently demands innovation, and that this should be a factor to be taken into consideration whenever local and expatriate ELT personnel work together in local institutions. The expatriate work culture is inherently a culture of change, which local lecturers must learn to cope with, if they are to work effectively with expatriates, and which must itself learn local cultures if it is to have appropriate effect (230).

A foreign teacher should be aware of the local culture and mindset since it has a great impact on classroom interaction, especially in an ELT class (Yaylaci, 2013: 901). As shown, learning, understanding and adapting to local cultures can be an effective strategy towards the implementation of innovation and change.

6.2 The Innovation Process

The process in which an innovation is put into practice affects its potential for success as well (Wedell, 2009: 397). In order for an innovation to be successful, those responsible for curriculum changes must consider two points of view. First, identifying the degree of cultural impact a change will create is crucial. Second, identifying how these changes will affect the balance of other language education systems (such as funding, timing, sequencing, etc.) currently in place is also important (Wedell 2003: 447-448). De Lano, Riley & Crookes (1994) suggest gathering support from all those who would be affected by the change, such as teachers, administration, students and parents because innovations need strong local advocates and communication should be kept open (491).

6.3 More Solutions

Other strategies are available to instructors as well. Litz (2005) citing Hutchinson & Torres (1994) explains that textbooks play a "pivitol role in innovation" because they offer support, help with new methodology and introduce change gradually (6). Flowerdew (1998) suggests group work is better suited to the Chinese context because it minimizes individual responsibility of errors (326).

Simpson (2008) gives western teachers ideas on what they should do in a cross-cultural context. They include keeping regular office hours, creating a supportive environment, proving feedback as encouragement rather than criticism, putting instructions on the board, asking students questions directly, and incorporating western culture in their lessons (390). In terms of personal and professional development, instructors may also consider writing their own language biographies, taking a Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) survey, observing the local language teachers, observing other EFL teachers, conducting classroom research, using anonymous teacher evaluations, reflecting on daily occurrences, and developing mentoring relationships with other experienced teachers (390-391). Many of these techniques would be easy, effective ways to ease cultural issues and develop a classroom better suited to meaningful change.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has shown that culture is an important factor when considering change and innovation in an ELT context. The historical and contextual examples support the need for understanding and adaptation of cultural traits by language teachers in foreign language teaching situations. Local culture should be taken into account before attempting a change to assess compatibility. Teachers should be aware of any cultural issues that may arise in their classrooms which may be eased by using the techniques and ideas mentioned above.

8.0 References

Butler, Y. G. (2011). The implementation of communicative and task-based language teaching in the Asia-Pacific region. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 31(1), 36-57.

Carson, J. G. (1992). Becoming biliterate: First language influences. Journal of Second Language Writing, 1, 37–60.

De Lano, L., Riley, L., & Crookes, G. (1994). The meaning of innovation for ESL teachers. System, 22(4), 487-496.

Duck, H.T. & Finch, A. (1997) Promoting and Developing English Conversation Skills at Tertiary Level: A Process Approach in a Traditional Setting. English Teaching (Korea) 52(3), 47-65.

Duke, B. (1986). The Japanese school. New York: Praeger.

Ellsworth, J. B. (2000). Surviving Change: A Survey of Educational Change Models. ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology, Syracuse University, 621 Skytop Rd., Suite 160, Syracuse, NY 13244-5290.

Ferguson, G (1993) "Implementing Innovation in Language Education. Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics 4: 27-39.

Finch, A. (2006) Task-based supplementation: achieving high school textbook goals through form focused interaction. English Teaching, 61(1), 41-95.

Flowerdew, L. (2005). Integrating traditional and critical approaches to syllabus design: the 'what', the 'how' and the 'why?' Journal of English for academic Purposes, 4(2), 135-147.

Fullan, M (1985) " Change Processes and Strategies at the Local Level. The Elementary School Journal. 85/3: 390-421.

Fullan. M (1991). The New Meaning of Educational Change. New York, Teachers' College Press.

Fullan, M. (2007). The new meaning of educational change. Routledge.

Hadley, G (1999) "Innovative Curricula in Tertiary ELT: A Japanese Case Study." ELT Journal 53/2: 92-99.

Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., Moore, S., & Manning, S. (2002). Learning to change: Teaching beyond subjects and standards. John Wiley & Sons.

Hayes, D. (2012) Planning for success: Culture, engagement and power in English language education innovation. In Tribble, C. (ed) (2012). Managing Change in English Language Teaching: Lessons from Experience. British Council. http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/books-resource-packs/managing-change-english-language-teaching-lessons-experience

Ho, S. T. K. (2009). Addressing culture in EFL classrooms: The challenge of shifting from a traditional to an intercultural stance. Electronic journal of foreign language teaching, 6(1), 63-76.

Hofstede, G. (n.d.). The Hofstede Centre, National Cultural Dimensions. http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html/

Holliday, A. (1992). Intercompetence: Sources of conflict between local and expatriate ELT personnel. System, 20(2), 223-234.

House, E. (1981). Three perspectives on innovation: Technological, political and cultural. In R. Lehming & M. Kane (1981), Improving schools: Using what we know. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. Language Culture and Curriculum,15(2), 93-105.

Hutchinson, T. and E. Torres. (1994). 'The Textbook as Agent of Change'. ELT Journal. Volume 48/4.

Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2006). Changing practices in Chinese cultures of learning. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 19(1), 5-20.

Karavas-Doukas, E. (1995). Teacher identified factors affecting the implementation of an EFL innovation in Greek public secondary schools. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 8(1), 53-68.

Kennedy, C (1988). "Evaluation of the Management of ELT Projects."Applied Linguistics 9/4: 329-342.

Kramsch, C. (1993). Context and Culture in Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). Language and culture. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematizing cultural stereotypes in TESOL. TESOL Quarterly, 37(4), 709-719.

Li, D. (1998). "It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine": Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. Tesol Quarterly, 32(4), 677-703.

Littlewood, W. (2004). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. Language Teaching, 40, pp 243-249.

Litz, D. R. (2005). Textbook evaluation and ELT management: A South Korean case study. Asian EFL journal, 48, 1-53.

Macionis, J. (2012) Sociology. 13th Edition. Prentice Hall.

Murray, D.E. and Christison, M. (2012) Understanding innovation in English language education: Contexts and issues. In Tribble, C. (ed) (2012). Managing Change in English Language Teaching: Lessons from Experience. British Council. http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/books-resource-packs/managing-change-english-language-teaching-lessons-experience

Nunan, D. (2005). Important tasks of English education: Asia-wide and beyond. Asian EFL journal, 7(3), 5-8.

O'Donnell, K. (2005) Japanese secondary English teachers: negotiation of educational roles in the face of curricular reform. Language, Culture and Curriculum. 18: 300-16.

Sato, R. (2010). Reconsidering the effectiveness and suitability of PPP and TBLT in the Japanese EFL classroom. JALT journal, 32(2), 189-200.

Shim, R. & Baik, M. (2004). English Language Teaching in East Asia Today: Changing Policies and Practices. In H. Kam & Wong R. (Ed.), English Education in South Korea (pp. 241- 261). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Simpson, S. T. (2008). Western EFL teachers and East-West classroom-culture conflicts. RELC journal, 39(3), 381-394.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) What is culture? A compilation of quotations. Global PAD Core Concepts. Available at Global PAD Open House. http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural

Stephenson, S (1994) "Management and Participation in ELT Projects." ELT Journal 48/3: 225-232.

Waters, A. (2009). Managing innovation in English language education. Language Teaching, 42(04), 421-458.

Walker, J. (2011a). Being professional in English language teaching services: A Delphic panel study. Quality Assurance in Education, 19(4), 307-334.

Walker, J. (2011b) English Language Teaching management research in postcompulsory contexts: still 'crawling out'?, Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 16:4, 489-508,

Wedell, M. (2003). Giving TESOL change a chance: Supporting key players in the curriculum change process. System 31.4, 439–456.

Wedell, M. (2009). Innovation in ELT. ELT journal, ccp053.

Xiyan, L. (1988). An analysis of factors that hinder TESOL innovations in China. TESL Reporter, 21(4), 70-77.

Yaylaci, Y., & Islam, A. (2013). Teaching Across Cultures: Considerations for International Language Teachers in Kazakhstan. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 103, 900-911.

Zaltman, G., & Duncan, R. (1977). Strategies for planned change.

9.0 Appendix

Appendix 1 (Kennedy 1998: 331)
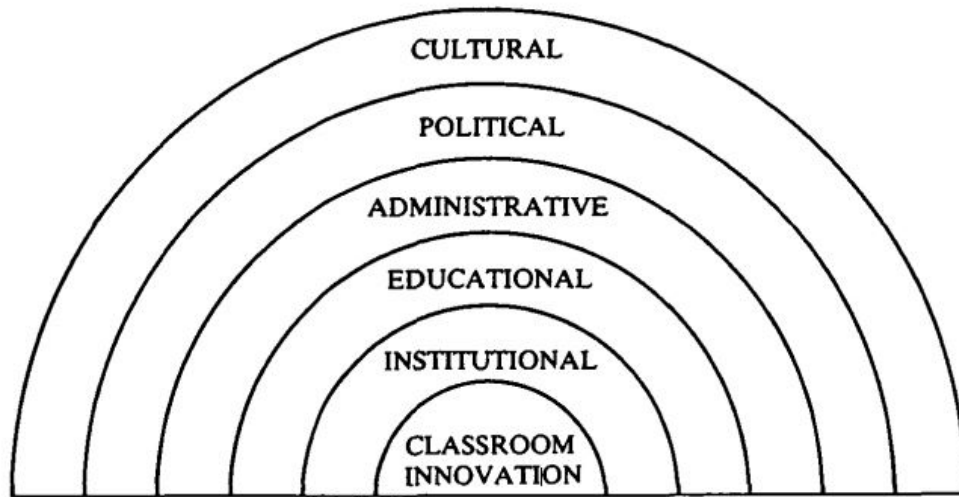
Figure 1: The hierarchy of interrelating subsystems in which an innovation has to operate
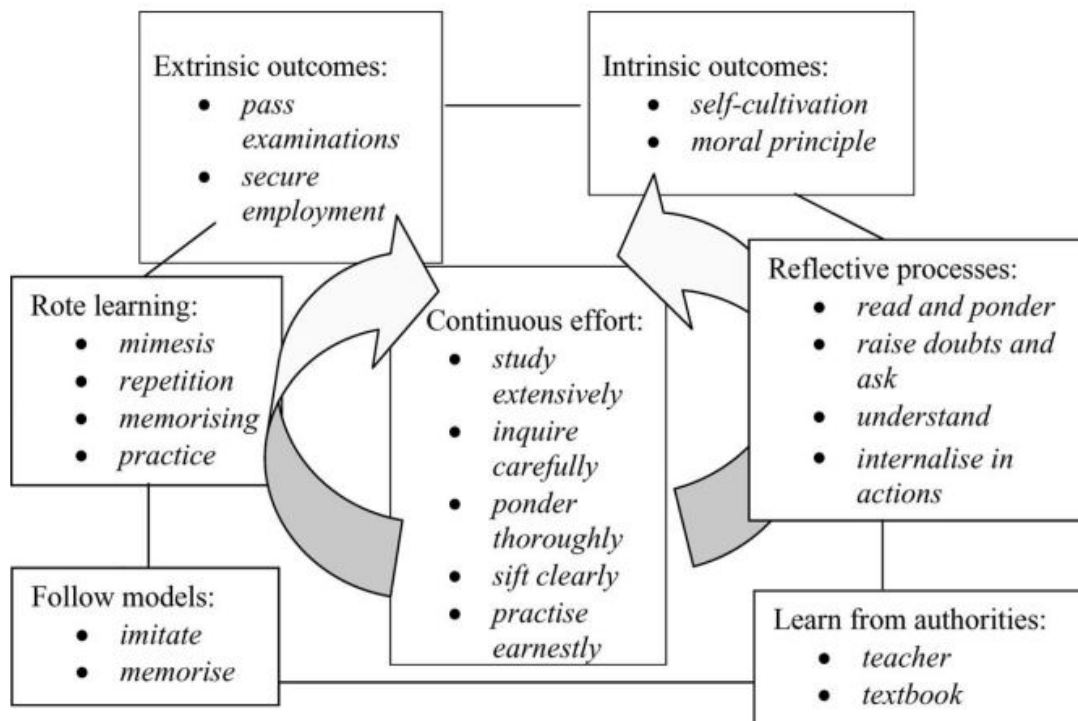
Appendix 2 Jin & Cortazzi (2008: 13)

Figure 2 Student learning activity in Confucian heritages