

Change Theories

An Assignment Submitted by

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Introduction

In the context of globalization of all the processes that take place in the world, communication stands apart as an issue of major concern. Effective interaction is the factor that predetermines success of any type of information exchange. Thus, language barrier might become a major obstacle for achieving this goal that can even lead a country to alienation from the rest of the world. In this regard, Saudi Arabia is the country where the need for an international language is particularly apparent in view of the technological, educational, and economic perspectives that it provides. The contemporary world is not static, but a dynamic unity dictates its rules and demands for changes. Consequently, modern approach to education should be applied, and English should be included in the educational curriculum accompanied by the effective integration strategy to ensure public acceptance, as well as the effective teaching approaches. In this framework, this paper analyzes how Change theories might facilitate the process of recognition and the effective implementation of the English language into the Saudi Arabia reality.

The Need for Change

The reality is so that the community does not always realize the need for change. It might start as a non-popular tendency supported by a small group of people and soon cover the whole country. Thus, Gladwell points out three peculiarities of change: its contagiousness, big effects of small causes, and abrupt character of a change (Burke, 5). All the three issues are true in application to language learning: if one of the businesses starts using English in daily activities, it will soon induce its partners to do the same; when English is implemented in the curriculum in a small community, it will sooner or later become an issue of global concern on a national scale; it

is impossible to predict the gradual character of the English language proliferation: once supported by masses this idea will acquire the global character. It is also important to realize that any action starts with the idea. In our case, if the idea of the need for an international language is persuasive enough to be accepted by masses, it is the matter of time when it ceases to become an idea and starts realizing itself. Any controlled change is impossible without the effective management. Good managers know that the peak of success is the right time to think about future changes; at initial stages they might inform people about the need for change and start a program that is supposed to bring about that change. However, the change itself does not occur according to these rules (Burke, 12). Indeed, language acquisition is not a mathematical task. One can only try to predict how quickly English might become the second language after the local one. At the same time, too many factors remain unpredictable: acceptance or opposition, proliferation or localization, development or stagnation, etc. In this regard, a leader of change has only one chance to succeed – to adapt to the alternating environment and act accordingly. For example, one of the most stable and traditional sectors is education. External environment also changes for higher educational establishments, and they need to adapt if they aim to continue their existence (Burke, 18). Thus, implementation of a new subject into a traditional curriculum might become a problem. However, it is necessary to overcome the obstacles preventing this from happening; otherwise, soon university education will become detached from reality and will not be able to satisfy the needs of the contemporary community. Currently, the demand in English as an international language is so high that it is not reasonable to ignore its vitality as a part of the academic curriculum.

In evolutionary vs. revolutionary perspective of change the latter one involves much greater resistance, so the former one is usually observed. Thus, Orlikowski and Weick and Quinn

indicate that evolutionary change means continuity; even separate small continuous changes conducted simultaneously can lead to significant effect if there are enough of interdependencies between them (Burke, 78). If applied to the matter of consideration of this paper, implementation of English into the academic curricula of several universities simultaneously will initiate the process of evolutionary development of its implementation into the curricula of other educational establishments. Similarly, if several major businesses accept English as a language of their business communication, this will motivate already existing, and potential partners and employees to comply with this demand.

An important part of tracing the progress of change implementation is its assessment with the help of various rating instruments. Thus, for example, a popular Neo-Personality Inventory (Neo-PI), which is closely connected with the theory of “Big Five” – the five qualities of an ideal leader – outlines the factors of evaluation. They include neuroticism (inclination to anxiety and depression), extraversion (degree of inclination towards others), and openness (readiness for new knowledge) (Burke, 95). In our opinion, the Neo-PI tool can be used as a universal tool for evaluation of the language implementation progress in various communities. With the help of open surveys, neuroticism, extraversion, and openness of people might be effectively assessed. The results of such analysis will be useful for the effective leadership decision that will facilitate integration and help visualize and overcome barriers. Though, this instrument is not able to provide a comprehensive picture of attitudes and reactions towards the change, it can be used for obtaining quick results and reacting promptly. Anyway, evaluation, reflection, and feedback are vital for ensuring progress of any new implementation. After a certain period of time evaluation should be repeated and its results compared with the data obtained from previous research. This will allow to outline the tendency for evolution or degradation of a change and act accordingly.

A recent research conducted by Reina C. Neufeldt concerns the matter of how a change can be implemented through dialogue. Though the author concentrates on how interfaith dialogue can contribute to peace-building in the world, the key premises of the article might be successfully applied to ESL curriculum. Stating that three perspectives – theological, political, and peace-building in the presence of constructive dialogue – are required, the author emphasizes the need for a proactive approach (Neufeldt, 365). In our case, this model can also be applied at the three levels: theological (explanation of the need for an international language as an effective tool of communication that will not undermine the religious foundations in the country, but strengthen them); political (the need for international language should be propagated by governmental and political bodies); peace-building (ability to speak one of the world's most widespread language will only promote peace in the country as there will be fewer instances for miscommunication). All this, if applied in the form of a constructive dialogue with the general public and not induced by force, will form the positive image of the English language in Saudi Arabia, which predetermines the future success of the changes related to it.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates how Change theories might be successfully applied with the purpose of promoting the English language as a means of international communication in Saudi Arabia. Taking into account the peculiarities of change, its abrupt character, the need for adaptation, evolutionary approach, interdependencies, evaluation instruments, and multi-level approach to the implementation of ESL into educational curricula, it is possible to facilitate the process of its recognition, acceptance, and minimize public resistance. At the same time, the proper approach to evaluation and reflection will allow to assess the success of ESL implementation in Saudi Arabia.

References

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