
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Post-Method Perspective in Tertiary Education in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

Kumaravadivelu's seminal work on post-method pedagogy (1994, 2001, 2003, 2006) has signaled a pressing need to break away from conventional methods of language teaching and, in the meantime, announced the dawning of the post-method era. The latter has suggested pedagogic parameters and macro-strategies to place the ELT profession on a new trajectory. Within this scope, it has become a requisite to investigate this perceptual shift in the Moroccan teaching environment. The present research thus aimed to determine whether English language instructors in tertiary education subscribe to the post-method pedagogy or still rely on established methods. To verify the claim, the practicality and useability of macro-strategies were put to the test. 123 English language instructors from 12 Moroccan public universities willingly accepted to respond to an online survey questionnaire. It has been shown that over half of the participants adhered to the post-method pedagogy. Upon testing the influence of macro-strategies on the pedagogical decisions of instructors, the percentage massively upsurged. That was a key indicator for the transition into the post-method framework in some public universities. This represents ample evidence for the existence of the post-method perspective in tertiary education in Morocco.

KEYWORDS

Post-method pedagogy, established methods, macro-strategies, English Language Teaching.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 January 2024

PUBLISHED: 21 January 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.1.7

1. Introduction

For a whole century, the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession had been inextricably entangled in the net of conventional methods. During that era, the death of an established method usually implied the emergence of another. Richards and Rodgers, in their inventory of teaching approaches and methods in ELT, have accounted for eighteen methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Some gained worldwide popularity but dismally failed to maintain it. Witnessing the waxing and waning of various established methods has resulted in the growth of a new movement that has taken a stand against the relentless pursuit of the ideal method. To cite a few, some renowned theorists such as Kumaravadivelu, 1994 Prabhu, 1990 Allwright, 1991 Stern, 1992 have overtly expressed their dissatisfaction with the concept of method. They have highlighted the widening schism between theory and practice and accordingly proposed an alternative to the existing models. In alignment with the post-modernists' views, which gained massive ground in the 90s of the past century, the post-method movement similarly came to cut all ties with those pre-packaged formulas and suggested, according to advocates, realistic ideas to systematically guide the process of teaching and learning. Even though a number of studies have been conducted on this theoretical perspective around the globe, not much has been produced to examine its pedagogical impact on English language teachers in the Moroccan context.

Within this scope, the present study is intended to mainly focus on the post-method pedagogy in tertiary education in Morocco. It is important to gauge its magnitude and influence on the decisions of English language instructors. To this end, pointed questions about the topic have been formulated to guide the course of the research. They are articulated as follows: To which era do English language instructors belong, Method or post-method? Are they aware of the post-method macro-strategies? Which of

these strategies tends to inform the decisions of language instructors? These questions aim to get to the bottom of the issue and unravel the mystery surrounding the existence of post-method pedagogy in the Moroccan context.

2. Literature Review

The emergence of post-modern reasoning in the mid-twentieth century has led to the subversion of established methods in English language teaching (ELT). "The rise of post modernism signals the ascendancy of a potentially revolutionary interpretation of the field" (Weideman, 2017, p. 134). Advocators of this philosophy strive to debunk the claim that there is a universal truth or absolute reality (Lyotard, 1984). Truth is multifaceted and totally dependent on the particularity of contexts. This scepticism with regards to monolithic thinking is expressed by Lyotard as "incredulity towards metanarratives." The post-modernists thus highlight the enormous value of contextualized knowledge and total acceptance of multiplicity of perspectives. Their credo is cemented in "subjectivism, relativism and freedom from predetermined constraints" (Ur, 2014, p. 134).

Post-method thinking rejects the one-size-fits-all approach to explain social phenomena. "Postmethod pedagogy allows us to go beyond and overcome the limitations of method-based pedagogy" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 34). This new trend has significantly altered the perception of established methods in the eyes of instructors. Advocators of post-method pedagogy overtly declared their non-reliance on conventional methods since they could not live up to the expectations of both learners and teachers. "Their influence in the field strove to take applied linguistics beyond methods in its designs of language interventions" (Weideman, 2017, p. 134). The goal is to disentangle practitioners from the compelling nature of idealized methods that existed in the 20th century and set them out on a new journey that promises better results. Breaking away from conventional methods, according to post-method subscribers, is not a choice but a pressing need. Studies have provided evidence for the inadequacy and the dysfunctionality of the concept of method. Kumaravadivelu explains that:

"The teachers who are trained in and even swear by a particular method do not conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures. The teachers who claim to follow the same method often use different classroom procedures that are not consistent with the adopted method. The teachers who claim to follow different methods often use the same classroom procedures, and over time, teachers develop and follow a carefully delineated task-hierarchy, a weighted sequence of activities not necessarily associated with any established method" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 30).

As expressed above, there is a mismatch between theory and practice. It is next to impossible to remain consistent with the directives of a conventional method. Instructors usually appropriate practices or procedural models that might be incongruent with their cherished method. Therefore, the post-method pedagogy comes to stress "the need to go beyond the limitations of the concept of method with a call to find an alternative way of designing effective teaching strategies" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 537). This means that the concept has reached a dead end since there will never be and has never existed a method that fits all teaching contexts (Nunan, 1989).

To transcend the inherent limitations of conventional methods, a conversion to a bottom-up approach has been carefully undertaken. Instructors are no longer supposed to blindly implement the directives of a method verbatim. On the contrary, they are required to create a theory of their own. "The post-method condition empowers practitioners to construct personal theories of practice" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 32). This approach adds realism to the practice of English language teaching and, in the meantime offers a leeway to language instructors to appropriate and even generate classroom procedures that are context-sensitive. Kumaravadivelu explains that "the post-method condition recognizes the teachers' potential to know not only how to teach but also how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33). Because of the dichotomous relationship between theory and practice, instructors are encouraged to conduct classroom-based research (Brown, 2007). In fact, this new trend has put emphasis on the importance of "how classroom learning can be shaped and reshaped by teachers as a result of self-observation, self-analysis and self-evaluation" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33). To achieve this goal, Allwright and Bailey (2002) designed a system referred to as Exploratory Practice (EP) to help language instructors probe into teaching practices and measure the effectiveness of trusted ideas.

The contextual, pedagogical and ideological dimensions necessitate the inclusion of a systemic design that allows practitioners to constantly revamp their theory of practice. To this end, Kumaravadivelu (2003) has devised a triad system that is based on pedagogic parameters. These parameters do not operate independently but are inextricably intertwined. The parameter of particularity, for instance, means that "language pedagogy must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 538). Instructors, within this framework, should not be oblivious to these particularities. Another parameter that operates within this system is that of practicality. It aims not only at encouraging instructors to construct their own context-sensitive theories of practice but assisting them to practice their own theories. The third parameter, referred to as the

parameter of possibility, highlights the instructor's and learner's individual identity, thereby helping them to identify and understand the reasons for their subjugation (Freire, 2012).

In accordance with these parameters, Kumaravadivelu (2003) suggested ten macro-strategies which provide a theoretical foundation and broad actions to ultimately assist instructors in their endeavors to create their own theory of practice. To better understand the functional role of these strategies, Kumaravadivelu clearly explains that "macro-strategies are defined as guiding principles derived from historical, theoretical, empirical, and experiential insights related to L2 learning and teaching. A macrostrategy is thus a general plan, a broad guideline based on which teachers will be able to generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques" (2003, p.34). These macro-strategies are:

1. Maximize learning opportunities: Instructors should create a learning environment that offers favorable opportunities for effective learning.
2. Minimize perceptual mismatches: This means that instructors should take into account any disagreement, at the level of perception, between the intentions and interpretations of learners and their instructors.
3. Facilitate negotiated interaction: Learners are highly encouraged to take agency and initiate meaningful interactions.
4. Promote learner autonomy: Learners are encouraged to become self-reliant and are assisted through the process of constructing a proper learning strategy.
5. Foster language awareness: This mainly focuses on imparting metalinguistic knowledge about L2 to learners.
6. Activate intuitive heuristics: This implies that extensive exposure to a rich input is necessary to acquire communicative competence.
7. Contextualize linguistic input: This highlights the interwoven relationship between use and usage as well as context and linguistic input.
8. Integrate language skills: This entails that listening, speaking, reading and writing should be integrated into a lesson design and not viewed as discreet items.
9. Ensure social relevance: Instructors need to cast heedful eyes to attend to social, economic, political, cultural and educational particularities of their teaching context.
10. Raise cultural consciousness: This means that individual cultures should be foregrounded and not subdued. Learners thus become informants and representatives of their own cultural identities.

The aforementioned macro-strategies are the kernel of the post-method pedagogy. They are meant to guide language instructors in the construction of their theory of practice. In the current study, we intend to determine whether these strategies exert some sort of influence on our sample. By acknowledging the existence and the relevance of this knowledge in their teaching contexts, instructors will then confirm their adherence to the post-method pedagogy. However, it is important to know if the emergence of this new trend has effectively led to the effacement of established methods. Penny Ur thinks the opposite because "The concept of language teaching method is still predominant in professional discourse" (Ur, 2014, p. 6). From another perspective, Bell sees that "method imposes practices top-down; post-method constructs practices bottom-up. Taken together, they may mediate the negative features of each point of view taken in isolation" (Bell, 2003, p. 332). The arguments for or against the post-method condition are not a point of contention in the current paper, but the purpose is rather to know the predominant teaching philosophy in tertiary education.

3. Methodology

The current study aims to test attitudes towards post-method pedagogy in tertiary education. To achieve this goal, a survey questionnaire, which comprises factual and attitudinal questions, was administered to glean quantitative data. One hundred and twenty-three English language instructors from twelve Moroccan public universities were accepted to respond to the questions. The target population in this research is spread out across Morocco. To reach out to a large number of participants, a letter requesting heads of the English departments to share the questionnaire with their faculty was electronically sent to twelve public universities. An uneven number of participants from all of these sites submitted their responses. The table below shows their distribution.

Table 1. Number of participants from each university in Morocco.

| Public Moroccan Universities | City | Number of Participants | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University | Fez | 13 | 10.5 |
| Cadi Ayyad University | Marrakesh | 25 | 20.3 |
| Abdelmalek Essaadi University | Tetouan – Tanger | 8 | 6.5 |
| Chouaib Doukkali University | El Jadida | 12 | 9.7 |
| Hassan II University | Casablanca | 4 | 3.2 |
| Hassan I University | Settat | 4 | 3.2 |
| Ibn Tofail University | Kenitra | 14 | 11.3 |
| Ibn Zohr University | Agadir | 10 | 8.1 |
| Mohamed, the First University | Oujda | 4 | 3.2 |
| Mohamed V University | Rabat | 11 | 8.9 |
| Moulay Ismail University | Meknes | 11 | 8.9 |
| Moulay Slimane University | Beni Mellal | 7 | 5.6 |

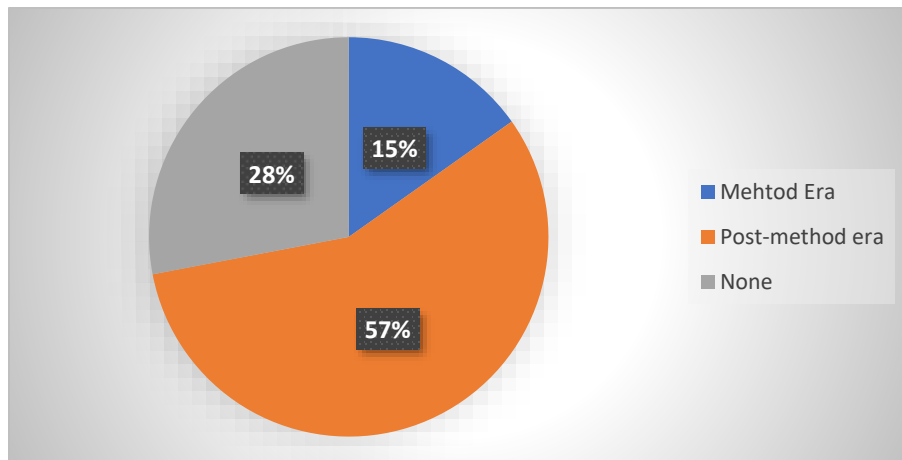
It is important to note that the average number of language instructors working in each English department is about thirty. The number varies based on the size of the local population of the host city. Based on their websites, Cadi Ayyad, for instance, employs thirty-two language professors, whereas Sid Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Sais Faculty, does not exceed twenty-one. As for participants, they are experienced language instructors since the vast majority have taught English for more than five years. 17.8 % of participants have about 5 to 12 years of teaching experience, 15.4 % between 12 and 20, 17.8 % between 20 and 30 and 13.3 % have accumulated more than 30 years of experience. Our participants hold the highest academic degree in either linguistic or literary disciplines. This proves that the sample, with regard to qualifications and classroom experience, is professionally mature, and that will definitely increase the validity of the study.

The collection of the data took about nine months. The process started in January 2022 and ended in September of the same year. In order to gather relevant information about the subject matter, factual and attitudinal questions have been designed and emailed to our participants, who were collaborative and responsive.

4. Results

To carry out a study on post-method pedagogy in tertiary education, close-ended questions were formulated and addressed to our target population. The aim is to determine whether post-method reasoning is prevalent in Moroccan universities or whether the reliance on conventional methods is still continuing. In theory, there is a reference to two ideologically distinct and asynchronous eras, method and post-method. To ascertain the exact era to which they belong, a direct question has been raised. It explicitly asks participants to identify their methodological affiliations. From the total participants (n= 123), 15.2 % confirmed that they belong to the method era, meaning that this category still adheres to an established method to achieve learning goals. The other group, as the pie chart shows, accounts for the highest percentage, with 56.8 percent of our pool of language instructors falling into the post-method category. 28 percent of the participants confirmed their non-adherence to any of these eras. Generally, this entails that there is a significant presence of post-method advocators among the participants, with the highest prevalence in comparison with the remaining categories.

Chart 1: Representation of Method and Post-method Era



To further test the validity of the aforementioned claim, another question has been addressed to the participants. It explicitly asks our group of English language instructors about the macro-strategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003). The knowledge of these strategies is an indication that the participants, especially those who have been identified as post-method subscribers, are guided by a set of principles that significantly influence their teaching methodology. The analysis of this question might additionally help us find participants who are aware of the macro-strategies but do not adhere to the post-method philosophy. The figures show that the overwhelming majority of participants, about 83.4 %, know the macro-strategies of the post-method pedagogy. On the other end of the spectrum, only 16.2 % of respondents attested that they were oblivious to their existence. Another interesting piece of information obtained from studying the data is related to the category of participants who belong to none of the two eras. By comparing responses, it seems that only 10.4 % of respondents have no idea about post-method pedagogy. Though it is a small percentage, there might be valid reasons behind this choice. That is a point that will be discussed at length in the previous section.

Table 1: Awareness of Kumaravadivelu's Macro-strategies

| | Percentage of participants | Numbers of participants |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Aware of Macro-strategies</i> | 83.7 | 103 |
| <i>Not aware of Macro-strategies</i> | 16.2 | 20 |

As Table 1 shows, the majority of participants confirmed that they are fully aware of the post-method macro-strategies. This is, of course, a great stride towards providing valid responses to the research questions; nonetheless, it is important at this point of the study to identify the kinds of strategies that guide participants in selecting the appropriate teaching methodology. Kumaravadivelu's macro-strategies have been adopted to examine whether our pool of English language instructors uses some or all of these strategies in their teaching practice. It is also an opportunity to find out, from the ten macro-strategies, the ones that are generally applicable and particularly relevant to our participants' teaching environment. These are the ten macro-strategies of the post-method pedagogy: maximize learning opportunities, minimize perceptual mismatches, facilitate negotiated interaction, promote learner autonomy, foster language awareness, activate intuitive heuristics, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, ensure social relevance and raise cultural consciousness.

Table 2: Macro-strategies for post-method pedagogy

| Macro-strategies | Percentage of participants | Number of participants | Ranking |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>maximize learning opportunities</i> | 81.3 | 100 | 1 |
| <i>minimize perceptual mismatches</i> | 19.5 | 24 | 9 |
| <i>facilitate negotiated interaction</i> | 60.9 | 75 | 5 |
| <i>promote learner autonomy</i> | 75.6 | 93 | 2 |
| <i>foster language awareness</i> | 58.5 | 72 | 6 |
| <i>activate intuitive heuristics</i> | 29.2 | 36 | 8 |
| <i>contextualize linguistic input</i> | 58.5 | 72 | 6 |
| <i>integrate language skills</i> | 73.9 | 91 | 3 |
| <i>ensure social relevance</i> | 32.5 | 40 | 7 |
| <i>raise cultural consciousness</i> | 70.7 | 87 | 4 |

Overall, the vast majority of participants show awareness of the post-method macro-strategies for language teaching. Some strategies, based on the above figures, are more commonly used than others. *Maximizing learning opportunities* seemed to top the list of strategies that Kumaravadivelu devised to frame the post-method pedagogy, with almost 81 %. It is immediately followed by *promoting learner autonomy* with an average of 75.6 %. 73.9 % chose *integrating language skills*, then comes *raising cultural consciousness* with 70.7 %. Further down the scale is *facilitating negotiated interaction* with 60.9 %, followed by two strategies, *fostering language awareness* and *contextualizing linguistic input*, with 58.5 %. *Ensuring social relevance* has received 32.5 %, whereas *activating intuitive heuristics* did not exceed 29 %. At the bottom of the scale comes *minimizing perceptual mismatches*, with 19.5 %. The numbers are revealing as they have given us an idea about the variations in the representation of macro-strategies among participants.

5. Discussion

The post-method paradigm came to eradicate the concept of method. Advocators have attempted to debunk idealistic views on established methods and, by the same logic, put an end to an entire century's search for the best methods (Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990; Kumaravadivelu, 1994). This shift came as a result of the inability and the impossibility of conventional methods to live up to the expectations of ELT practitioners (Brown, 2007). Language instructors and theorists alike have expressed their dissatisfaction with the concept of method and, in the meantime, sought to find an alternative to it (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Thus,

the post-method pedagogy emerged to bring realism to language teaching practice as Kumaravadivelu explains that “such a pedagogy would take seriously the sociopolitical, historical conditions that create the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lives of teachers and learners” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 72). According to adherers, this pedagogy gave not only meaning to practitioners but also a sense of empowerment. Within this conceptual framework, the current study seeks to examine the effect and magnitude of the post-method philosophy in teaching English in Moroccan universities.

Though the Moroccan experience in ELT is quite recent, English language instructors in tertiary education have surely taken up a stance towards post-method pedagogy. The analysis of the data revealed that almost two thirds of participants belong to the post-method era. This implies that this pool of language instructors does not subscribe to any conventional method but adopts a bottom-up approach to language teaching (Weideman, 2017). In fact, their methodology of teaching is informed and framed by the particularity of their contexts. This is usually referred to as “principled pragmatism” or “a sense of plausibility” (Prabhu, 1990), which zeroes in on the way teaching is constantly altered to face contextual challenges. It is definitely the sociocultural environment that seems to have the upper hand over other dominators. It has a strong influence on the decisions that language instructors judiciously make when forming their “theory of practice” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). It is, therefore, important to note that more than half of the participants embrace this methodological perspective. This has led us to dig deeper to know if this group of instructors use guiding principles, termed ‘macro-strategies’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), to help them steer the course of actions.

The analysis of the data has shown that over 80 % of participants are well-aware of macro-strategies. The percentage has increased by 26 % in comparison with the first question. This shows that the overwhelming majority subscribes to the post-method pedagogy. Although some of the participants claimed that they do not adhere to any particular conceptual framework, their response to the second question proves that not only do they know about the post-method pedagogy but also recognize the existence of macro-strategies. This is palpable when looking at the percentage of participants who confirmed their acquaintance with the strategies of the post-method philosophy. These generic guidelines probably enable instructors to generate classroom practices that are congruent with the particularity and sensitivity of their teaching context. It seems that there is a didactical relationship between classroom procedures and the macro-strategic framework since the accumulation of classroom experiences tends to feed the theory of practice, discussed within the parameter of practicality (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The treatment of the second question has also led us to demonstrate that only 10.4 % of all participants (n= 123) do not know about the post-method pedagogy. There are a number of possible reasons that can be cited with regard to such a result. Some professors, for instance, usually teach content subjects related to either linguistics or literature. They do not take freshmen or sophomores who mainly study the language during the first and second semesters of university instruction. There is also the possibility that they are not interested in the ELT field since their areas of expertise are totally different and do not intersect with the pedagogy of language teaching. To better clarify this point, maybe an interview with this category should follow up. A sequel article would probably fill these gaps and respond to other pending questions.

Following a logical progression in our investigation, the emphasis is now on the ten macro-strategies that Kumaravadivelu laid out and by means of which instructors can build a personal theory of practice. Another time, it was confirmed that participants had chosen most of these strategies, not to mention all. Based on the analysis of data, some macro-strategies have more prevalence than others. Their relevance to contextual exigencies is irrefutable. It has been pointed out that their appropriation, on the contrary, provides guidance and enables instructors to make informed and judicious decisions. Interestingly enough, the vast majority try to maximize learning opportunities and promote learner autonomy in their teaching environment. Slightly different but highly prevalent in their responses are the integration of language skills and the raising of cultural consciousness. Their inclusion is unquestionably crucial to the achievement of effective language instruction. That, of course, explains why about two-thirds of our participants selected them. As for facilitating negotiated interaction, fostering language awareness and contextualizing linguistic input, they are also deemed important by a number of respondents. In fact, no one can deny the implications of these macro-strategies on the process of teaching and learning. The rest of the strategies, like ensuring social relevance, activating intuitive heuristics and minimizing perceptual mismatches, are not recognized by the majority. Their irrelevance to the university context is materialized; nonetheless, a few of the participants selected them in their responses. Generally, the implementation of all these macro-strategies puts language instructors within the parameters of the post-method pedagogy. At this point, it is safer to admit that the post-method reasoning has influenced the vast majority of language instructors from the sample.

6. Conclusion

The post-method perspective is at the heart of the current study. A number of steps have been taken to determine whether English language instructors in tertiary education belong to the post-method era. To achieve this ultimate goal, a survey questionnaire was administered to one hundred and twenty-three professors working in English departments from twelve Moroccan public universities. After the analysis of the data, it has been shown that over 57 % of the participants confirmed their adherence to the post-method pedagogy. Interestingly, the percentage increased to 83 % when participants were asked about macro-strategies.

Not only do they know about their existence, but they practically influence the course of actions in English language classes, thereby informing instructors' decisions about the process of teaching and learning.

It is worth mentioning that this perceptual shift from method to post-method has spread all over Europe and America and has eventually reached an African country like Morocco. Nonetheless, the results of the current research are not conclusive. Although the questionnaire was intended to target a larger population across Morocco, only 123 instructors agreed to fill it out. The size of the sample used in the study is not enough to draw generalizable conclusions about the topic. However, it is notable that the results achieved so far tend to inspire a sequel article that treats the issue of post-method pedagogy from a different perspective. It is preferable to undertake a qualitative study to dig deeper into the matter since the personal narratives of practitioners will certainly provide richer information about the post-method pedagogy in Moroccan academic settings.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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