English Language Teaching **PERSPECTIVES**
(A peer reviewed Open Access Research Journal)
ISSN: 2594-312 x
Vol. VII Issue (1-2) August 2022, pp. 46- 53
eJournal site: http://ejournals.pncampus.edu.np/ejournals/eltp/

Post Method Pedagogy: Opportunities and Challenges in EFL Context of Nepal

Narayan Prasad Sapkota

Article History:
Submitted 27 Dec 2021
Reviewed 28 April 2022
Accepted 21 July 2022
Corresponding Author:
Narayan Prasad Sapkota
Email:
sapkotanarayanprasad@gmail.com

Publisher
Department of English Education
Faculty of Education, P. N. Campus, Nepal
Email: enged@pncampus.edu.np
URL.:www.pncampus.edu.np

Abstract

Post-method pedagogy is an attempt to go beyond the quest of the best method or method-based restrictions in language teaching. Pedagogy in these premises is not limited to classroom activities, teaching materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation procedures, but also covers traditionally overlooked areas such as historical, political and socio-cultural experience. It is a tripartite system with the three pedagogic parameters such as particularity, practicality, and possibility. This research was conducted to explore the opportunities and challenges of adopting post method pedagogy in the EFL context of Nepal. The research uses document analysis and auto ethnographic evidences as the source of data. The analysis of data results that the application of three pedagogic parameters of post method pedagogy is an opportunity to improve the EFL practices in Nepal. The research also indicates that there are diverse challenges to bring these pedagogies into practice. This research implies the urgency of post method pedagogy for improving EFL situation of Nepal is urgent.

Keywords: *Methods, particularity, possibility, post method pedagogy, practicality*

Introduction

Though SLA theorists and language teaching methodologists often recommend one or another approach and method for teaching and learning a second language, no particular method has been seen as perfect in the specific teaching context. There have always been attempts to search for the best method for the systematic teaching of a foreign or second language. English language teaching (ELT) has been influenced a lot due to the emergence of different methods over the time. The unsatisfactory learning outcomes of a particular method has flourished different methods in the field of language teaching. Some methods in ELT include the grammar translation method, the direct method, the audio-

lingual method, the communicative approach, the suggestopedia, the total physical response and so on. Richard and Rodgers (2005) state, "The effective English teaching is thought to be about using a method correctly by applying its prescribed principles and techniques." The above-mentioned methods provide different trails to language learning and teaching. Some focus on learning grammatical structures while others focus on real communication (Richards, 2002). Though they have competitive advantages as Stern (1985) opined "Almost every established method claims to be better than the previous ones, yet none can prove its optimal quality and is recommended as the most appropriate for ELT convincingly." So, a teacher has to develop a more effective alternative way which consists of personal theories devised by teachers inside a classroom.

Only one language teaching method is not a complete set of classroom procedures that are required in different situations. In this regard, Widdowson (1990) claims that in the classroom, it is not possible for a language teacher to follow a particular method. More than one method can be used in a single classroom. In the same way, Kumaravadivelu (2006) states that methods have little capacity to explain the complication of language teaching. Similarly, Brown (2002) claims "No single method would bring final success in foreign language teaching." Hence, post-method pedagogy emerged as a reaction to the limitations of the methods. Post-method does not indicate the death of methods. Following Richards and Rodgers (2001) it is an "attempt of the teachers to make necessary adjustments and modifications to already established method" to make it suitable according to the local contexts in which the teaching and learning takes place.

The methodology that requires teachers to be context-sensitive and autonomous is characterized as the 'post method pedagogy'. In this post-method era, the traditional methods are considered dead. Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggests, "What is needed is not alternative methods, but an alternative to method." This statement advocates for the teacher-autonomy. This does not mean a teacher should overlook the ideas, principles, approaches, underlying assumptions, references and procedures of the established approaches and methods; but to adapt and innovate the best and specific one that is useful for their specific contexts. The innovative approach and method may ensure in successful teaching in their specific contexts. Kumaravadivelu (2001) visualizes a post method pedagogy as a three-dimensional system consisting of three pedagogical parameters: (1) a pedagogy of particularity, concerned with context-sensitive language education based on a factual understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural and political particularities; (2) a pedagogy of practicality, constructing teacher's own theory of practice; and (3) a pedagogy of possibility, concerned with sociopolitical and sociocultural features of the learners. It is to be noted at this point that concept of post method pedagogy itself has been understood with some more themes in recent years (Scholl, 2017). On the whole, the concept of post-method not only purposes to go further than the limitations of the traditional methods, but inspires a more democratic attitude to teaching and learning.

The close observation of post method pedagogy with reference to EFL context of Nepal invites some questions to be addressed. Has the need of post method pedagogy been felt in Nepal? If yes, is Nepalese academic and pedagogic setting well prepared to cope up with the spirit of post method pedagogy? These questions are to be addressed in broader scale to have a comprehensive picture of EFL pedagogy in Nepal. The present research attempts to address these questions from experiential ground with the aim of exploring opportunities and challenges of post method pedagogy in EFL

context of Nepal.

Literature Review

The English language teaching tradition has been a subject of colossal alter over time. In the sixteenth century, French, Italian and English gained importance over Latin as a result of political change in Europe (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, until the 19th centuries, foreign language learning was connected with the learning of Latin and Greek only. Along with the popularity of the English language, late in the 19th century, the conventional method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method (Brown, 2000). The late nineteenth century and whole twentieth century has undergone consistent changes and shifts in ELT principles and practices depending on the spread of English language, its contexts, uses and its status.

Nevertheless, until 20th century, which marked the traditional period, English language teaching (ELT) largely focussed on the traditional practices such as grammar translation method (GTM). Since then as modernism entered the practices in language education, ELT was challenged by the "forces of reform" (Howatt, 1984) and traditional practices were replaced by, as Howatt says, "…saner, more rational, and more practical" (Howatt, 1984) approaches. During the Modern era or the age of method in ELT, from the emergence of Direct Method in 1920 experts and practitioners in the field, sought to find the best method of teaching English with the best results or learning outcomes in a given period of time (Brown, 2002).

However, with the emergence of postmodernism in ELT, ideas like 'perfection', 'objectivity' and 'observable science' were rejected and ELT started seeking cognitive efforts on the part of learners. In this way, on one hand ELT in postmodernism era challenged the established practices, and on the other hand, it incorporated new concepts like constructivism, critical thinking, multiple intelligences, and worked towards the advancement of the field. It was believed that in a language classroom, one may need and use several methods and approaches or even no organised method for effective teaching. Pennycook (1989) says that method is a prescriptive context. It should be rejected because the tailor made single sized garments do not fit all. It then took such a turn that any single method for teaching English language was rejected as the ultimate one, and initiated the gradual "demise of method era" (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). In other words, the very conception of the method itself changed and occupied different ground.

On the whole, ELT approaches, methods, materials and assessment models have been continuously revised to seek native like best teaching practices and learning results in the last one century. But the recent practice believes that the stress on best method and result is a misleading (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), and the current need is to explore endless possibilities of multiple realities of pedagogy. Pedagogy is now not limited to classroom strategies, teaching aids, curricular objectives, and evaluation procedures, but also covers a wider historical, political and sociocultural experience that influence L2 education (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). Post method pedagogy is, thus, both a paradigm shift in teaching methodology, and better seeking movement. It was evident from an empirical study conducted by Poudel (2018) which showed positive attitudes of teachers towards post method pedagogy in Nepali context as well.

Though exploration of opportunities and challenges of post method pedagogy can be approached from several perspectives, the present research is designed to revisit the EFL context of

Nepal corroborating the basic tenets of post method pedagogy with autoethnographic evidences.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the opportunities and challenges of adopting post method pedagogy in the EFL context of Nepal. To accomplish this aim, I have adopted document analysis and auto-ethnographic anecdotes as the sources of data. To record the basic tenets and premises of post method pedagogy, three major publications of Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001 & 2006) were used. The meaning and understanding developed from these documents are then used to evaluate the author's autoethnographic annecdots experienced since last one and half decade. The autoethnographic evidence are presented, described, and explained in the respective parameters of post method pedagogy.

Results and Discussion

Post method pedagogy is a result of tripartite pedagogies: particularity, practicality and possibility. The constitutive possibilities and challenges of these pedagogies in Nepalese EFL context is discussed in the separate headings below.

A Pedagogy of Particularity

The pedagogy of particularity emphasizes the need of understanding particular situation of classroom and social context. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2001) claimed:

> Language pedagogy, to be relevant, 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 … All pedagogy, like all politics, is local. To ignore local exigencies is to ignore lived experiences. (pp. 538-539)

In this way, via the pedagogy of particularity, Kumaravadivelu highlights the urgency of addressing local realities. In other words, it is an attempt to formulation of local pedagogy. He further opines that highly acknowledged communicative approach was found making students "terribly exhausted", and "creating psychological barriers to learning" in Indian context (Shamim, 1996, p. 109 as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2001). While saying this, he suggested we should not depend on the methodologies inherited from abroad, and teacher autonomy should be respected. Nepalese ELT context is not different from Indian context, rather further complicated it is. Context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge can emerge only from the practice of particularity; this can account for the need of the day in our context.

Coming to the realities, in Nepal, most of the students are made to mug up things. Teachers writing a long essay on the board and asking students to recite the next day is the usual practice of free writing. Personally speaking, I remember my high school English teacher who used to teach English stories in the way that could exactly be retold to my illiterate mother - all in colloquial Nepali language. I am still reported about more or less the same practice of ELT in my village. I was taught the English textbook designed in communicative approach but unfortunately, I had heard about pair work and group work only in ELT materials and practice course in my university education. After my bachelors' degree, I joined a private boarding school as an English teacher, and there I could see and observe the wide hiatus between what the students used to bring in schools and what would happen in the school. Right after winter vacation, the topics in English class used to be something like Nelson Mandela or writing an email. I could read the difficulty faced in visualizing Mandela's personality or the mechanism of writing an email, in students face. My colleagues and I had no options and

autonomy in incorporating their experience and our experience into our pedagogical process. Finally, with forceful motivation, students used to come in our track and would get the things done. Whatever they mugged up used to be transferred into figures in the report cards, and we used to be boastful on our success. We can think how pathetic the situation of ELT is in our context. Now after getting acquainted with the pedagogy of particularity under post method pedagogy, I imagine how fruitful the pedagogy of particularity would be in that condition.

But in the context of Nepal, pedagogy of particularity has a danger as well. The parameter of particularity discards the idea of a flawless method and instead stresses that teachers' critical mindfulness of environmental factors should be the main consideration for language teaching and learning. The question here is how to ensure the teachers' professionalism to be able to practice the pedagogy of particularity. Government doesn't care about their schools. I had once volunteered in my school in the village after my intermediate. Management was terrible. Teachers were busy in political discourses and activities. Trainings were unproductive and teachers were not indifferent to the need of update with research and study. Teachers were supposed to be those who didn't land in any other jobs. They were not found convinced in what and why they teach. In addition, students were not worried about their future. With the consensus of teacher and students, the whole year could pass doing nothing. In this condition, the pedagogy of particularity, with key role of teachers in incorporating local context in pedagogy, may be detrimental until and unless there is strong monitoring mechanism.

A Pedagogy of Practicality

The pedagogy of particularity is related to the pedagogy of practicality. What is particular cannot be achieved or understood without its practical ground. In the literature of post method pedagogy, practicality is not limited to the everyday practice of classroom teaching, rather it encompasses the relationship between theory and practice. Theories also do have two basic orientations. Professional theories are developed by experts whereas personal theories are developed by teachers by incorporating professional theories in practical situations. A pedagogy of practicality blurs this "theory dichotomies by encouraging and enabling teachers themselves to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize" (Kumaravadivelu, 1999b as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 539).

The limitation of the pedagogy of particularity likely to be encountered in Nepalese ELT context is compensated by the pedagogy of practicality as (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) puts the basic premises of the pedagogy of practicality as:

> If context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge has to emerge from teachers and their practice of everyday teaching, then they ought to be assisted in becoming autonomous individuals. This objective cannot be achieved simply by asking teachers to put into practice theories conceived and constructed by others. It can be achieved only by helping teachers develop the knowledge and skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to construct their own context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge that will make their practice of everyday teaching a worthwhile endeavour. (p. 541)

Pedagogy of practicality, thus, keeps teacher-generated theory of practice in the center. It is based on the belief that "no theory of practice can be useful and usable unless it is generated through practice" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 541). Ongoing education system of Nepal is characterized by dual education: public and private (Pradhan, 2018). Educational investment, the language of instruction, resource condition, and social perception are some of the grounds on which these two models of

education sharply differ. Within each setting, Nepalese EFL classrooms are further diverse in nature. In this scenario, the application of the pedagogy of practicality requires high degree of professionalism on the part of teacher. However, indicators of government's level of concern, orientation of school leadership, teachers' integrity and professionalism, impacts of trainings, perception about teaching job, and student culture seem to have caused challenges in the application of the pedagogy of practicality.

A Pedagogy of Possibility

The roots of the pedagogy of possibility rests on Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. The pedagogy of possibility emphasizes that social inequality can be exposed, and the status quo can be questioned through critical pedagogy. In addition, it believes that individuals have the possibility to improve their identities, and social transformation occurs. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2001) opines:

> The experiences participants bring to the pedagogical setting are shaped not just by the learning/teaching episodes they have encountered in the past, but also by the broader social, economic, and political environment in which they have grown up. These experiences have the potential to alter pedagogic practices in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners, curriculum designers, or textbook producers. (p. 543)

Post method pedagogy seeks to empower practicing teachers in their attempt to develop a suitable pedagogy based on their local acquaintance and local understanding. This is where comes to play the pedagogy of possibility which rest on critical pedagogy. Now the need is of critical pedagogy as Hawkins & Norton (2009) opine "critical pedagogy is directly concerned with social action and educational change." This type of pedagogic practice aims to empower people to challenge oppressive situations in their lives. Being critical in education means to focus and see on how dominant ideologies in society shape the construction of social system which sooner or later privilege certain groups of people, while marginalizing others. Thus, it is imperative to see how dominant ideologies underpinned by dominant traits related to caste, gender, religion, geography, economy, language etc. enact to dominate their counterparts. This type of investigation will help to gear the whole education system towards equilibrium.

Nepalese ELT is still not free from oppression of one type or another. The experiences Nepalese students bring to the pedagogical setting are moulded not just by the instructional activities they have met in the past, but also by the broader social, economic, and political environment in which they have grown up. These experiences have the capacity to change pedagogic practices against the assumptions of planners and leaderships. In the process of informing itself to the existing socio-political ground, a pedagogy of possibility is also related to individual identity. Unlike in other disciplines, language teaching provides its stakeholders with challenges and opportunities for a search for subjectivity and self-identity. The issues may not be broader ones related to caste or ethnicity or gender, but even in the issues of child right, pedagogy of possibility is constitutive in our context. Private schools, for example, are found giving torture as some of them restrict students to get involved in extra-curricular activities. They don't want overall development of students. They just want to show to others that their students got good grades.

Conclusion and Implications

ELT methodology is said to have moved beyond methods to the post method condition. Post-method pedagogy is a paradigm shift in the field of English language teaching. It provides a new

perspective to the teaching and learning of English language which develops the potentialities of the teachers. Post-method has emerged to make teaching and learning of English successful because none of the methods is complete in itself. Post-method is not the demise of methods. In other words, post-method pedagogy does not indicate the end of methods, rather it includes our understanding of the limitations of the concept of method and our aspiration to go beyond those limits. It is just the adjustments and modifications to the already-established method so that it could best suit the local situation in which the teaching and learning takes place. In this sense, it is not a method, rather it is the amalgamation of different methods. Therefore, post-method pedagogy triggers new visions in the growth of teacher by distinguishing the potentiality of the conventional teaching methods and the post-method pedagogy. It makes a teacher autonomous, reflective, problem solver, programme evaluator and dynamic who analyses the sociopolitical and sociocultural aspects of the situation and makes his teaching context-sensitive. The language teacher develops a new method of teaching on the basis of his class, level of the learners, their background, their age, goal of the teaching and so on. In this way, post-method pedagogy is a more democratic approach to teaching, and in practicing it teachers can enjoy full autonomy inside the classroom.

Three principles or pedagogies, practicality, particularity, and possibility, summarize how post method defines L2 teaching. The application of post method pedagogy, nevertheless, can be a major breakthrough in improvement of current EFL practices of Nepal. Educational system, pedagogical practice and ideology related factors seem to have created the challenges for true internalization and application of post method pedagogy in Nepal.

Post method pedagogy at least gives the courage to the teachers to argue that their approach to teaching is their overall philosophy of teaching. Nepalese EFL teachers should be provided with the skills and techniques needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to understand contemporary educational developments as well as to gain required linguistic and cultural knowledge so that they build up the confidence for successful delivery of particularity, practicality and possibility-based education. The precise demarcation of these three pedagogies, and idealization of the context are still a problem in our Nepalese ELT milieu.

References

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Longman.

Brown, H. D. (2002). English language teaching in the "Post-Method" era: Towards better diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. In J. C. Richards, & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Hawkins, M., & Norton, B. (2009). Critical Language Teacher Education: *Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education.* Cambridge University Press.

Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford University Press

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition : *TESOL Quarterly, 28,* https://doi.org/10.2307/3587197

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, *35*(4), 537. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588427

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Paudel, P. (2018). Teachers' perception on postmethod pedagogy in EFL classes of Nepal. Prithvi Academic Journal, 1 (1), 46-57. http://pncampus.edu.np/OnlineJournal/prithvi_vol_1/5.pdf

Pradhan, U. (2018). National education system in Nepal: between the 'local' and the 'global'. https://doi.org/ 10.5040/9781474244329.0014.

Richards, J. C. (2002). Theories of teaching in language teaching. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 19-25). Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2005). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Scholl, J. (2017). Reconceptualizing post-method pedagogy. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW), 15*(3), 96–101. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318967061

Stern, H. H. (1985). Review of J. W. Oller and P. A. Richard-Amato's methods that work [Book review]. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* (*7*), 249–251.

Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford University Press

Mr. Narayan Prasad Sapkota is a teaching assistant of English Education at Prithvi Narayan Campus, T.U., and is earning his M. Phil in English Education from Nepal Open University. He has attended various trainings and presented papers in conferences organized by professional organizations. His areas of interest include Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and English Medium Instruction (EMI). He has also published various articles in these fields.