
Pedagogical Shift in ELT through Post-method Pedagogy

Dr. Arun Nepal

Associate Professor, English Education, Mahendra Ratna Multiple Campus, Ilam

Email: arun.nepal@mrmc.tu.edu.np

Abstract

As the field of language teaching has been influenced by different methods and approaches developed over time, the pedagogy journey has been shifted from method-based teaching to post-method pedagogy. This article critically examines the same pedagogical shift from method-based model to post-method pedagogy that the ELT situation at present is in a transitional period regarding language teaching applying the beliefs and principles of both PPP (i.e., presentation, practice, and production) model and PPP (i.e., particularity, practicality, and possibility) pedagogy. The beliefs, principles, features, and criticisms published in different books and journals at different times are major sources of information for this article. The critical examination of those ideas in connection with my own teaching-learning experience showed that the pedagogical shift from method-based teaching to post-method pedagogy is a turning point in language teaching because the method-based model prescribes teaching procedures without considering the contextual, practical, and political factors and issues, whereas post-method pedagogy gives primary emphasis on those contextual factors and local issues. Thus, *psychological, contextual, glocal, socio-economic/political, and research-based teaching and learning perspectives* have been discussed as the major themes of this article.

Keywords: Psychological, contextual, glocal, particularity, practicality and possibility

Introduction

Pedagogical shift follows the natural route of change and transformation, being an active agent of such ongoing adaptation and transformation that gradually happens in a society. Psychological beliefs and practices, contextual factors, socio-economic conditions, political beliefs, and change influence the pedagogical move from one period to another. ELT experts and scholars have prescribed different ELT methods and approaches, justifying this natural route of gradual change and transformation even in English language teaching. Howatt and Widdowson (2004) have examined the history of English language teaching, dividing its history into three parts; i.e., part one (1400-1800); part two (1800-1900); and part three (1900- the present day) that indicate a kind of pedagogical shift over some time primarily in the field of ELT. Such shift is mainly a result of a change in psychological, contextual, social, and political conditions that gradually occurs in society as an ongoing social process of change and transformation. The pedagogical shift from the method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy is also the result of the same social change and transformation in general and ELT in particular.

This article focuses only on the pedagogical shift from the method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy that happens at the end of part three (i.e., 1900-the present day), as Howatt and Widdowson (2004) have examined. Moreover, the method-based PPP model was more popular only in the late 1960s, which is one of this article's concerns. The method-based PPP model indicates the sequences of a lesson that begins with a presentation of “context and situation of language” (Harmer, 2007) and moves from controlled practice to production or free practice stages in a classroom. This method-based PPP model was more popular in the 1970s, and many teachers have been practising it in their practical life. However, Richards and Rodgers (2001) claim, “The notion of methods came under criticism in the 1990s” (p.247); as a result, the method-based PPP model was also criticized for being unable to reflect principles of second

language acquisition. Thus, the inadequacy of the method-based PPP model led to the pedagogical shift from the method-based PPP model to the post-method PPP pedagogy.

Prabhu (1990) says, “Different methods are best for different people or different teaching contexts” (p.163). Prabhu further justifies his claim by emphasizing the “teachers’ sense of plausibility” that is more similar to one of the post-method conditions, “principled pragmatism” put forward by Kumaravadivelu (2003) that “focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and reshaped by teachers as a result of self-observation, self-analysis and self-evaluation” (p.33). Then, Kumaravadivelu further discusses the post-method PPP pedagogy as three parameters of pedagogy that each teacher should teach language contemplating the specific sociocultural conditions (particularity) that differ from one context to another; the connection or integration between theory & practice (practicality); and the issues of identity and the political situation (possibility). Thus, this article attempts to examine this pedagogical shift from the method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy more critically connecting the crucial features of language teaching immediately before the birth of the method-based PPP model, during the method-based PPP model and the shift to the post-method PPP pedagogy as three parameters of post-method pedagogy.

Methodology

The interpretive approach that emphasizes the meaning-making process is this article's main methodological ground; secondary sources like books and journals are major sources of gathering information connecting them from one period to another. My own English language teaching experience for more than two decades at a constituent campus of Tribhuvan University in Nepal and the theoretical and practical ideas given in the curriculum and the materials of higher levels, primarily in the department of English education, along with the research done during the teaching career led me to write this article focusing on the pedagogical move over some time.

Result

This article focuses on the pedagogical move from the method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy that presents the results of the pedagogical movement in the late 1960s and onwards, as mentioned in the article's introduction section. The crucial factors that greatly influenced this shift are psychological, contextual, sociocultural, socio-economic, and political changes. For example, the method-based PPP model results from several mini-shifts regarding psychological factors. Gowda (2010) justifies this psychological shift by contemplating transitioning from behaviorism to cognitive to humanistic psychology. Here, the teacher attempts “to bring about change in the learner behaviors” (p. 163) based on the beliefs and principles of behaviorism; cognitive psychology emphasizes the “change in knowledge structure of the learner” (p. 164) that relates the parts into a meaningful whole; and the humanistic psychology focuses on active learning process “reconstructing knowledge driven by learner’s needs” (p. 165) that treats a learner a ‘whole’ person. Likewise, the pedagogical shift moves in a cumulative way adding even other contextual, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political factors in addition to the psychological aspects. Therefore, this article presents the result of this pedagogical shift dividing this shift into three periods focusing on the major features that changed immediately before the method-based PPP model, the birth of the method-based PPP model, and the emergence of the post-method PPP pedagogy as in the following paragraphs.

Bedrock of the Method-based PPP Model

Although the method-based PPP model was practiced by the end of the 1960s, it resulted from the evolutionary pedagogical change that happened immediately before that time. As mentioned earlier, language teaching was influenced by psychological learning theories like behaviouristic, cognitive, and humanistic psychology, which were more popular in the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s. Audio-lingual method (ALM) was developed based on beliefs and principles of behaviorism that focused on

the presentation and practice of grammatical structures and vocabulary, like in different experiments done by Pavlov and Skinner in the 1950s to develop the behaviouristic theory. Chomsky (1957 and 1965) attacked the views of behaviorists and focused on the linguistic competence and meaning of those structures and vocabularies, and the bedrock of the method-based PPP Model was laid.

Birth of the Method-based PPP Model

The birth of the method-based PPP model is primarily connected with the concept of competence and, more importantly, the emergence of communicative competence put forward by Dell Hymes (1972) that emphasizes not only the meaning of grammatical structures and vocabulary in isolation but also the appropriate use of those structures and vocabularies in specific contexts that may convey different meanings from one context to another. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), “Communicative competence includes grammatical competence (also formal competence); socio-linguistic competence (also sociocultural competence); discourse competence and strategic competence” (p.99). The concept of communicative competence led to the development of a new approach to language teaching that focused on communicative competence as a goal of language teaching. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state, “The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as communicative competence” (p.159).

Meaningful communication requires the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and the appropriate use of those grammatical structures and language in different contexts. Furthermore, meaningful communication is almost impossible, limited only in controlled practice following only 2 Ps like presentation and practice; instead, it requires free practice in meaningful contexts known as production. In other words, meaningful language learning and teaching follow the method-based PPP model. Harmer (2007) further justifies this claim that a teacher presents the language creating meaningful

contexts at the presentation stage; then “the students practice the language using accurate reproduction techniques such as choral repetition” (p. 64) at the practice stage; “later, the students, using the new language, make sentences of their own, and this is referred to as production” (p. 65). Although many ELT practitioners have been applying this method-based PPP model in their practical life, it has become obsolete due to its inadequacies that cannot address the other factors like specific sociocultural and political backgrounds of teachers and students. As a result, the post-method era emerged, focusing on three pedagogical parameters - particularity, practicality, and possibility put forward by Kumaravadivelu (2003), which is supposed to be the post-method PPP pedagogy in this article.

Emergence of the Post-method PPP Pedagogy

Richards and Rodgers (2001) say, “The heyday of methods can be considered to have lasted up till the late 1980s” (p. 245). They further claim that “some spoke of the death of methods and approaches and the term ‘post-methods era’ was sometimes used” (p.247). They also discussed the five major criticisms of methods and approaches regarding the inadequacies of those prescribed methods and approaches. The first criticism was “the ‘top-down’ criticism” that the methods and approaches marginalized the role of teachers and viewed the learners “as the passive recipients of the method” (p. 247). The second criticism was made focusing on the “role of contextual factors” that methods and approaches ignored the role of “cultural context, the political context, the local institutional context” (p. 248). Thirdly, they also pointed out “the need for curriculum development processes” (p. 248) through rigorous interaction with the stakeholders instead of implementing the curriculum prescribed by any method and approach.

The fourth criticism was made emphasizing the “lack of research basis” that the method-based PPP model became obsolete and “does not reflect principles of second language acquisitions” (p. 249). The final criticism of method and approaches was related

to the “similarity of classroom practices” that “it is very difficult for teachers to use approaches and methods in ways that precisely reflect the underlying principles of the method” (p. 249). Such criticisms regarding the inadequacies of methods and approaches opened the door for the rise of the post-method PPP pedagogy as three parameters of pedagogy put forward by Kumaravadivelu (2003) that can address those inadequacies of method and approaches and lead the ELT practitioners to teach a language being free from the limited prescriptions prescribed by a different method and approaches over some time.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) are not only the people who pointed out the inadequacies of methods and approaches but also other scholars like Ellis (1989) and Prabhu (1990) claim that no single method can address the need of everyone that varies from one specific context to many other particular contexts where different teachers and students having different psychological, sociocultural, educational, political beliefs and background participate in language teaching and learning activities. Kumaravadivelu (2003) attempts to address such inadequacies by putting the concept of post-method pedagogy as an alternative to traditional methods and approaches that “overcomes the limitations of the method-based pedagogy” (p.34).

Kumaravadivelu (2003) further suggests “post-method pedagogy as a three-dimensional system consisting of pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility” (p.34) that attempt to address the deficiencies of the traditional methods and approaches focusing on the particular needs and interests of the specific group of learners and teachers who are from certain sociocultural setting (i.e., the first ‘P’ or particularity); the connection between the theory and practice through ongoing reflection and action (i.e., the second ‘P’ or practicality); and the socio-political condition and the individual identity of both teachers and learners having different beliefs that differ from one socio-political situation to another (i.e., the third ‘P’ possibility). Thus, the emergence of the post-method PPP pedagogy is a significant pedagogical shift in the history of language

teaching that is an effort to be free from limited prescriptions prescribed by different methods and approaches at different times, ignoring the role of various factors like contextual, sociocultural, socio-political, and educational and so on. The following paragraphs will discuss some of the crucial factors that influenced the micro-level pedagogical shift.

Discussion

The shift from the method-based PPP model to the post-method PPP pedagogy is a pedagogical shift resulting from many other micro-level mini-shifts. The micro-level changes follow an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary one in ELT. Some major micro-level shifts can be examined from psychological, contextual, glocal, socio-economic/political, and research-based teaching and learning perspectives.

Psychological Shift

As mentioned earlier, the method-based PPP model primarily results from a psychological shift from behaviorism to cognitive psychology to humanistic psychology. The significant change led the learning process from a mechanical approach to a more meaningful and creative learning process. The audio-lingual method (ALM), which was based on behaviorism, emphasized rote learning through repetition, focusing on accuracy and giving less emphasis on the more meaningful and appropriate use of language in different contexts. Indeed, ALM was limited only to the first 2 Ps (i.e., presentation and practice) influenced by behaviorism. The third P (i.e., production) resulted from the psychological shifts from behaviorism to cognitive to humanistic psychology that emphasized meaning, fluency, and contextual factors to achieve the goal of language learning, i.e., communicative competence.

Contextual Shift

Although the method-based PPP model emphasized the contextual factors while teaching a language, the post-method PPP pedagogy emphasized local linguistic, sociocultural, and political contexts that differ from one context to another. Moreover,

the post-method pedagogy's first “P” (i.e., particularity) justifies the claim that more context and location-sensitive pedagogy leads each teacher and learner to consider the specific contextual factors while engaging in teaching-learning processes.

Glocal Shift

Method-based PPP model is more prescriptive that prescribes the same techniques and procedures to apply everywhere in the world, giving less emphasis on local realities; however, the post-method PPP pedagogy attempts to use the essence of the slogan ‘think globally and act locally’ giving much power on local needs, interests, norms, values and many other local realities that differ from one community to another, one educational institute to another, one class to another and so on. Furthermore, post-method PPP pedagogy emphasizes putting the globally accepted theoretical knowledge into practice following the spirit of the second “P” (i.e., practicality) that encourages teachers to theorize from practice at the local level and practice what they theorize as a way of their teaching career.

Political shift

Social change and transformation result from political change that deeply affects every nut and bolt of society. Both teachers and students are influenced by their socio-economic/political beliefs and the issue of identity that plays a crucial role in teaching-learning activities. The third “P” (possibility) of post-method pedagogy indicates considering such serious problems as socio-economic, socio-political and the issue of identity. This is one of the most important pedagogical shifts to entertain while teaching that was less considered in the past before the emergence of post-method PPP pedagogy or during the method-based PPP model.

Research-based Shift

The trend of teaching has gradually been shifting from teaching only to teaching and researching simultaneously, carrying out several action researches reflecting the actual problems in every classroom. Learning strategies-based education contemplating

the principles of self-regulated learning theories has led teachers and learners to be involved in research-based teaching and learning activities to improve their academic life. The process of theorizing from practice and practicing what has been theorized also requires basic research skills. Thus, the post-method PPP pedagogy has brought about an important shift transforming the traditional role of the teacher into a teacher researcher that encourages each teacher to develop a method appropriate to their specific context.

Indeed, I was interested in writing this article because these psychological, contextual glocal, political, and research-based shifts influenced my pedagogical transformation to a great extent. When I began my teaching career, I attempted to teach following basic principles, procedures, and techniques of prescribed methods as strictly as possible. However, such efforts could not give satisfactory results, and I began to teach, considering contextual factors that differ from one context to another, attempting to theorize what I practice and practicing what I theorize. I also tried to teach contemplating learners' social, cultural, educational, and political beliefs. These attempts gradually led me to become a teacher-researcher, which has become a way of teaching life these days.

Conclusion

Although many mini-pedagogical shifts occurred over some time in the field of language teaching, the change from a method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy is one of the most important shifts at present that has become the major concern of almost all ELT practitioners and the ELT experts in the world. Psychological, contextual, glocal, socio-economic/political, and research-based teaching and learning perspectives greatly influenced the shift from the method-based PPP model to post-method PPP pedagogy. If ELT experts and practitioners are ready to implement the message of post-method PPP pedagogy in their practical life, quality change may take place even in the field of language teaching. Therefore, policymakers, curriculum designers, material developers, ELT practitioners, and all stakeholders may take further

steps to improve quality by contemplating the pedagogical shift from a method-based PPP model to a post-method PPP pedagogy.

References

- Ellis, R. (1989). Researching classroom language learning. In C. Brumfit & Mitchell (Eds.), *Research in the language classroom* (pp.54-70).
- Gowda, M. S. (2010). *Learning and the learner: Insight into the processes of learning and teaching*. PHI Learning Private Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English* (new Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Howatt, A. P. R. & Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *History of English language teaching* (2nd Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. Yale University
- Prabhu, N. S. (1990). There is no best method – why? *TESOL Quarterly* 24(2): 161-176.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Pearson.