

Post Method Pedagogy and Remodeling Method-Based English Language Teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Language Teaching has always looked for an all-inclusive ideal method applicable to all contexts but ironically this search has bred many methods of language teaching. CLT method has been the most preferred method of ELT in non-English speaking countries like Bangladesh for several decades. Though CLT promised a lot in terms of developing English language skills, in most contexts it has failed to fulfil those promises. In the context of Bangladesh, English proficiency has seen a gradual decline since the introduction of CLT as the prescribed method of instruction for ELT. Therefore, a necessity to go beyond the concept of method in ELT has now become a priority. The concept of Post Method Pedagogy (PMP) provides ELT practitioners in Bangladesh with that opportunity. PMP entails cultural sensitive ELT practices that consider the socio-cultural realities as an inseparable part of ELT practices and empower both learners and teachers. The principles of PMP, therefore, seem appropriate for remodelling ELT practices in Bangladesh. This study focuses on PMP, the challenges of method-based language teaching in Bangladesh and how to use PMP to remodel ELT in Bangladesh. This study further opens doors to more empirical study in this field.

Keywords: Method-based ELT, CLT, challenges, contextual realities, PMP, particularity, practicality, possibility, classroom instruction etc.

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I. Introduction

The history of language teaching is predominantly the history of the search for an all effective method (Jahan, 2015). In the field of language teaching, the need for a single and ideal method has given rise to several methods over the years (Islam, 2020). In the last five decades shifting from one method to another method of language teaching has been the norm in this field. Ultimately Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method was adopted as the prescribed form of language teaching in most Afro- Asian and Latin American EFL/ESL contexts during the 1980s and 90s but it faced numerous problems and did not produce the desired results (Paul, 2022; Huda, 2013a; Afroze et al.,2008; Jarvis and Atsilarat, 2004; Sato, 2002; Yu, 2001; Li, 1998; Chick, 1996; Shamim, 1996; Prabhu, 1987;). It created widespread dissatisfaction all over the world as it had indeed generated a problematic situation both for teachers and learners alike. This led to the notion that there is a necessity to go beyond methods and consequently gave rise to the concept of post method pedagogy (Scholl, 2017; Huda, 2013a). The concept of “post method pedagogy” (hereafter referred to as PMP) is a reaction to the prevailing idea of methods and their inability to perform (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, English language teaching ELT in Bangladesh endured an abrupt change in the form of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Huda, 2013a). It happened so suddenly that everyone related to the field of ELT in Bangladesh was shocked and in the dark. No one knew what this method was and how to apply it to the Bangladeshi context (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Mehtab, 2012). The efficacy of CLT, a culturally insensitive and ambiguous method, came into question and was found wanting as the condition of English education gradually regressed (Paul, 2022; Huda, 2013a). It faced many challenges and soon it was evident that this method was not fecund (Paul,2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018, Huda, 2013a; Barman et al., 2006, Roy, 2016). As a result, it seems now is high time to consider a paradigm shift to the concept of PMP in remodelling instructional practices of ELT in Bangladesh. This article is going to focus on the concept of PMP, the challenges of method based ELT in Bangladesh and how and what principles of PMP can be utilized to remodel ELT in the context of Bangladesh

II. Literature Review

Post method is a result of the poor efficacy of method. There is a clear distinction between the two concepts. "A method is generally understood as a package of guidelines about how language teaching should be done" (Huda, 2013a). Richards and Rogers (2001) explain a method as "a specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and of language learning" (Richards and Rogers, 2001). It is simply a set of assumptions regarding the process of teaching and learning. A method has a set of procedures that a teacher has to practice in the classroom (Nunan, 2003). Method is again defined as consisting "of a single set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) and post-method can be defined as a process where the teacher himself/herself constructs classroom procedures and principles based on his/her prior knowledge and experience and/or certain strategies of teaching language (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). PMP condition can be defined as "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 socio-cultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). To put it another way, the concept of method is based on theorizers creating "knowledge-oriented" theories of pedagogy and post-method is based on teachers creating "classroom-oriented" theories of practice (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). In this sense, post method is very different from the concept of method. Consequently, no method should therefore be capable of replacing or substituting post method.

The post method pedagogy is not an alternative method of teaching language but rather an alternative to method (Chen, 2014). Researchers such as Kumaravadivelu (2006, 2003, 2001, 1994), Jarvis (1991), Richards (1990), Prabhu (1990), Pennycook (1989), Stern (1985), etc. have challenged the notion of method in terms of language teaching. Methods are supposed to make language teaching easier but there is very little reflection of that in classroom practices in different contexts where these methods seem to have made the understanding of language teaching more obscure (Jahan, 2015; Pennycook, 1989). So, a "wholesale adoption of any method" while teaching a language is not needed (Huda, 2013a, p.8). Huda (2013a) cites Cattell(2009) in saying that multifarious factors are involved in a given classroom teaching situation and so there cannot be one single method that applies to all situations (Huda, 2013a). As a result, the proponents of PMP argue for the independence of teachers and practitioners in the development of instructional practice in a given situation. Prabhu (1990), rather than looking for "one best method" emphasizes enhancing the practising teachers' "sense of plausibility" by incorporating pedagogic principles necessary to achieve such expertise (Prabhu, 1990). The teacher's subjective understanding of a teaching situation based on experience should be the guiding principle in the creation of instructional practices in the classroom taking into account the socio-cultural milieu (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2003, 2001, 1994); Jarvis, 1991); Richards, 1990; Prabhu, 1990; Pennycook, 1989; Stern, 1985).

Researchers like Pennycook (1989) question the underlying interests of the prevalent teaching methods while Richards (1990) urges us to look beyond methods and explore how language teaching works in real contexts. Kumaravadivelu's (2006, 2003, 2001, 1994) conception of PMP addresses all the above-mentioned researchers perturbs. Kumaravadivelu (2006, 2003, 2001,1994) through his idea of PMP challenges and criticises the western-based colonial nature of ELT in non-English speaking countries like Bangladesh and proposes a culture and context-sensitive pedagogy where teachers' autonomy is at the centre.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) put forth the notion of an adaptable framework of three key parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. The parameter of particularity means the teachers' practices should be sensitive to their local contexts that is to say language teaching practices should 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 socio-cultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). This parameter enables teachers to evaluate teaching situations and identify problems and solutions (Al-kadi, 2020). The parameter of practicality refers to the conformity of theory and classroom practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). A theory that cannot be applied in classroom practices is redundant (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). This parameter dictates that teachers should be theorizing and practising what they theorize in classroom situations. Possibility refers to the parameter whereby language teaching entails tapping into the learners' self and socio-political awareness to empower them (Jahan, 2015). This parameter dictates that language teaching should not be a means not only to learn a language but also a means to become aware of one's self-identity (Huda, 2013a). Language education should provide learners with opportunities and challenges that enable them to critically evaluate themselves in terms of socio-cultural and political realities.

The above-mentioned parameters comprise ten interrelated macro-strategies:

(a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) ensure social relevance, and (j) raise cultural consciousness (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). These strategies create a link between macrostructures (cultural,

historical, political, and social dimensions) and microstructures of the pedagogical endeavour (Al-kadi, 2020). These macrostructures are the stepping stones that will guide teachers regardless of their experience and context in theorizing language teaching and successfully practising these theories in classroom contexts. The concept of PMP considers both learner and teacher as an inseparable part of learning and at the same time takes into consideration the socio-cultural realities of language teaching context with the view to empowering teachers and learners (Huda, 2013a).

III. The challenges of method based ELT in Bangladesh

ELT in the context of Bangladesh has always been a very problematic subject (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018). Bangladesh is still banking on the notion of methods to carry out ELT practices (Huda, 2013a). After the Grammar Translation Method, the prescribed method of ELT in Bangladesh since the late 1990s has been the method of CLT (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018, Huda, 2013b). Syllabus, curriculum and books were designed following the CLT method in Bangladesh to improve the quality of ELT and learning in Bangladesh but it has not produced the desired goals (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016, Rahman and Pandian, 2018, Huda, 2013a, 2013b, Afroze et al., 2008). Since the inception of CLT in Bangladesh, it has faced numerous obstacles and challenges and is found not appropriate in terms of socio-cultural and economic realities.

Firstly, when CLT was introduced into the national curriculum and books were fashioned accordingly and the medium of instruction was in the target language culture (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016, Rahman and Pandian, 2018, Rahman and Karim, 2015, Afroze et al., 2008). As a result, there was a discrepancy between the learners' culture and the culture of the instructional materials. This created a problem for both teachers and students who were unaware of the English culture. Though later on books and materials were developed that were sensitive to the Bangladeshi context, the process of instruction in the classroom created further chaotic situations (Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Roy, 2016; Rahman and Karim, 2015). According to Rahman and Karim (2015), among many other problems "one of the implementation problems of CLT in Bangladesh is that the approach is not always appropriate with the socio-cultural context of the country" (Rahman and Karim, 2015). Both teachers' and learners' orientation to the teaching and learning process is very different from western orientation.

Teachers in Bangladesh hold a very authoritarian position and do not prefer students talking or asking too many questions in the classroom. They are active figures in the classroom while the students are passive listeners (Roy, 2016). So, even though many teachers were given training on CLT most teachers did not practice those in the classroom context (Huda, 2013a, Mehtab, 2012). Learners are also not very enthusiastic to practice learning English following the CLT method. Rather than performing the prescribed tasks in the textbook, they prefer to read translations and solve model questions (Roy, 2016; Huda, 2013a; Mehtab, 2012; Islam, 2011). Further, the deep-rooted cultural values in the learners such as not asking too many questions in the classroom, being silent and not sharing or giving personal input while the teacher is in the classroom are against the methodical principles of CLT (Roy, 2016; Huda, 2013b, Biswas et al., 2013, Mehtab, 2012). These socio-cultural factors have created a chaotic situation in the method based language instruction in Bangladesh.

Secondly, the infrastructural and economic constraint is again a challenge in terms of implementing the CLT method in Bangladesh (Paul, 2022; Ahmed, 2014; Ansaery, 2012; Iftakhar, 2014; Mehtab, 2012; Ansaery, 2012; Tarannum, 2010). For CLT to be effective the class size matters a lot but in Bangladesh due to infrastructural inadequacy classes are usually very big with a lot of students (Roy, 2016; Mehtab 2012; Barman et al., 2006). In such conditions even if teachers and learners want to perform CLT based tasks like pair work, group work or team learning, and communicating exercises it is almost impossible. In a large class teachers naturally are unable to guide or instruct and oversee the progress of all the learners and learners are not able to perform and assess their performance adequately as well (Roy, 2016; Ahmed, 2014; Mehtab 2012; Barman et al., 2006). Further economic constraints that do not allow educational institutes to avail materials and aids such as listening or viewing devices, multimedia tools, and software is a serious obstacle in terms of implementing CLT in Bangladesh (Alam, 2016; Roy, 2016).

Thirdly, there is an apparent lack of knowledge and training for teachers regarding the CLT method in Bangladesh (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016; Ansaery, 2012; Iftakhar, 2014; Mehtab, 2012; Ansaery, 2012; Tarannum, 2010). Teachers in Bangladesh lack in-service and preservice training regarding CLT (Roy, 2016). Very few teachers' training institutes exist and they are not adapted to provide the teachers with proper training on CLT method (Biswas et al., 2013). Consequently, teachers very seldom try to practice CLT prescribed tasks in the classroom and those who do invariably fail to do so because of the lack of training and experience. It is one of the major obstacles to the successful implementation of CLT method in Bangladesh (Ansaery, 2012).

Fourthly, the socio-economic predicament of teachers in Bangladesh can also be held responsible for the deplorable condition of CLT (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016; Ahmed, 2014; Ansaery, 2012; Iftakhar, 2014; Mehtab, 2012; Ansaery, 2012; Tarannum, 2010). The earnings of a teacher in Bangladesh are very poor. Most teachers struggle with such a meagre salary and so they resort to other means of earning like part-time jobs, business and most commonly private tuition (Roy, 2016; Ansaery, 2012; Mehtab, 2012; Tarannum, 2010). So

they would rather invest their time in finding other ways of earning money than engage themselves in innovation regarding teaching (Roy, 2016). Further, most rural educational institutes in Bangladesh lack financial support. They do not have the money to employ enough teachers (Roy, 2016). These economic constraints can be attributed to the failure of implementing CLT method in Bangladesh.

Fifthly, there is an apparent inconsistency between the curriculum and the assessment procedures in Bangladesh. This is another challenge CLT method faced in the context of Bangladesh (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016; Ansarey, 2012; Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Hasan and Akhand, 2009; Sultana, 2014; Shurovi, 2014). After the introduction of CLT in the national curriculum books and materials were designed to facilitate the learning of four basic language skills (Roy, 2016; Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). CLT assesses all four skills but in Bangladesh, the assessment system only takes into account the skills of reading and writing. The vital skills of speaking and listening are not tested in any way in public examinations. As a result teachers and learners tend to practice only reading writing and grammar portions of the curriculum in the classroom (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016; Shurovi, 2014; Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). Even though some teachers want to practice the four skills in the classroom they gradually lose motivation as the skills of speaking and listening have no reflection on the outcome of examinations and teach only what is necessary for examination (Roy, 2016; Hasan and Akand, 2009). This discrepancy between what the method dictates and how the assessment is done hampers the build-up of communicative competence.

Finally, CLT method faces many other challenges like most teachers' inability to fluently communicate in English, their attitudes and misconception regarding CLT (Paul, 2022; Iftakhar, 2014; Ansaery, 2012). Most English language teachers in Bangladesh especially in the rural area lack basic English speaking abilities which makes them not use English at all in the classrooms (Alam, 2016, Roy, 2016). Further, many teachers have the wrong conception that in CLT classes grammar should not be taught at all while some teachers prefer the earlier Grammar Translation Method in Classroom instruction (Ansaery, 2012). All the above mention challenges have created a deplorable situation for CLT method in Bangladesh and the situation is getting worse by the day.

IV. Remodeling Method-Based ELT in Bangladesh Using Principles of PMP

In the present scenario of ELT in Bangladesh, a shift toward PMP based ELT practices seems imperative. Only a wholesale adoption of CLT method cannot succeed in improving the horrible condition of English proficiency in Bangladesh (Huda, 2013a). A modification of the method based ELT practices based on socio-cultural realities is the need of the time. Kumaravadivelu's(2001) three parameters of PMP and the macro-strategies can be incorporated into the ELT practices of Bangladesh to meet and overcome the many challenges posed by CLT method (Jahan, 2014, Huda, 2013).

(a) incorporating the parameter of particularity

The parameter of particularity focuses on the concept that teaching practices should be sensitive to a particular cultural context (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). That is to say, language teaching practices should follow a specific cultural context in which the language will be taught regardless of what the target language culture is. Material and instructional tools i.e. books, texts etc. to be used in the classroom should conform to the culture of the context in which language teaching is taking place.

CLT as a method discarded the idea of culture-sensitive content as discussed earlier in the paper. CLT prescribed content is related to the BANA (Britain, Australia and North America) culture (Halliday 1994). As the culture of the contents of the books was alien to Bangladeshi learners they had to go that extra length to understand the meaning of the texts taught in the classroom. Most EFL learners failed to relate to these contents since they had no idea what they meant (Rahman and Pandian, 2018). If language teachers as theorizers create content based on or situations related to the culture of the learners then they can easily relate to them. Though over time textbooks by NCTB have incorporated culture-sensitive content (Rahman and Pandian, 2018), they need more refining with less restriction. This is even more relevant since within the country there are different situations and cultural variances as well. For example, a learner from a city might easily relate to one type of content whereas a learner from a rural area might not relate to the same content as easily. Therefore, teachers can best understand what type of content or material is appropriate for a certain group of learners and create tasks and material to be practised during the language learning process.

(b) incorporating the parameter of practicality

The parameter of practicality dictates that there should be a congruence between the theory and the classroom practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). That is to say, the theory of language teaching should be one that can be practised in classroom situations in any given context. In Bangladesh, as discussed before CLT method is very different at the theory level than what is being practised in the classroom context (Paul, 2022; Roy, 2016, Rahman and Pandian, 2018, Rahman and Karim, 2015, Huda, 2013a, 2013b, Afroze et al., 2008). CLT at the theoretical level puts little importance on learning grammar (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Afroze et

al., 2008, Barman et al., 2006). In CLT method learners are supposed to pick up the grammar of the target language as they learn to communicate in the target language (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Afroze et al., 2008, Barman et al., 2006, Richards and Rogers, 2001) but in the context of Bangladesh where there is very little exposure to English, the inductive process of learning grammar is too improbable. Citing McDonough and Shaw (1993), Huda (2013a) opines that in situations like Bangladesh where the exposure to English is very limited, a deductive process of grammar learning is necessary (Huda, 2013a). On this ground, PMP provides teachers with the opportunity to incorporate deductive teaching of grammar into classroom practices since teachers have the freedom to theorize what needs to be taught and how. If this proves fruitful then the teachers can build upon this theory or if they face problems they can adjust accordingly. Also, teachers can design examination procedures that complement both learners' abilities and public examinations. The parameter of practicality is here applicable since teaching deductive teaching of English is relevant in the context of ELT in Bangladesh (Huda, 2013a).

(c) incorporating the parameter of possibility

The parameter of possibility entails empowering learners to engage in the language learning process and developing awareness of their social, economic and political realities. This parameter necessitates empowering the voiceless to speak from their collective experience of history culture, language and tradition and enables the marginalized and the outcast to reclaim their status as a participating entity in a community (Simon, 1987). According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), the parameter of possibility promises “the development of the overall academic ability, intellectual competence, social consciousness, and mental attitude necessary for learners” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and enables them to be autonomous in the form of social, academic and liberatory perspective (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

In the context of Bangladesh empowering language learners to be more autonomous is paramount in this day and age. Culturally as discussed in the earlier sections Bangladeshi students tend to be silent entities in the teaching-learning process. They do not speak or ask too many questions in the classroom or interact with the teachers (Roy, 2016; Huda, 2013a). The application of the parameter of possibility will allow the learners to speak up and be an active entity in the language learning process. A classroom that provides learners with the opportunity to interact and voice their opinion about the process of learning, as well as the content of learning in a congenial atmosphere controlled by the language teachers, will enable learners to be more aware of themselves and to be more confident in their abilities (Huda, 2013a).

Bangladesh is a country with a large population, developing economy, cultural diversity and tradition, and historical importance. Learners developing awareness of the social, economic, cultural and historical realities both local and global again can increase their intellectual faculties and equip them with the necessary knowledge to relate to their self-identity. According to Huda (2001), this parameter allows students to recreate their own identities concerning their context and outside contexts (Huda, 2013a). This will develop not only their language skills but also their overall academic prowess.

V. Problems of Remodeling ELT Based on PMP in Bangladesh and Solutions

Like any pedagogic theory, PMP has its limitations. Though the principles of PMP can be applied to ELT for creating effective language teaching-learning practices, some socio-economic and knowledge-based constraints need to be addressed properly.

Firstly, PMP requires teachers to be more proactive (Khany, 2014). Teachers must “understand and identify problems, analyze and assess information, consider and evaluate alternatives, and then choose the best available alternative that is then subjected to further critical evaluation” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In the context of Bangladesh as discussed earlier teachers tend to not employ themselves in the innovation of teaching procedures, especially in secondary and higher- secondary levels of education. Various social and economic constraints are the cause of this. Teachers would rather employ themselves in part-time jobs, business or most popularly private tuition than spend time theorizing about language teaching due to the unstable financial conditions (Roy, 2016). So, before expecting teachers to devote themselves to becoming theorizers, their social and financial stability need to be given priority.

Secondly, most teachers in Bangladesh, especially in the rural areas, do not possess the knowledge and competence to become theorizers (Huda, 2013a). With such a limited knowledge it seems fictitious to expect them to theorize teaching and learning practices that would ensure fecund ELT. Huda, (2013a) opines that instead of every teacher theorizing about language teaching, researchers should take that responsibility and theorize based on the socio-cultural realities of Bangladesh (Huda, 2013a).

Thirdly, due to the economic situation in Bangladesh, there is a serious lack of teaching-learning aids (Paul, 2022). If PMP theorizers need to employ teaching aids that are not available in every teaching institution PMP would face the same problem as CLT did.

Fourthly, many researchers have found that in situations where PMP has been used to teach English, the outcome has not always been very reassuring (Islam, 2020; Seidi, 2019; Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2018; Chen, 2014; Hazratzad, 2009). More research needs to be done in this field. What principles of PMP can be utilized properly in language teaching for effective and positive outcomes and how these principles will be incorporated into classroom practices need to be addressed through empirical evidence.

VI. Conclusion

The method-based ELT practices in Bangladesh have met their fair share of criticism for being insensitive to the social and cultural realities. CLT method failed to bring the desired improvement in the quality of English teaching and learning that was expected of it (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Huda, 2013a; Afroze et al., 2008; Jarvis and Atsilarat, 2004; Sato, 2002; Yu, 2001; Li, 1998; Chick, 1996; Shamim, 1996; Tickoo, 1996; Prabhu, 1987). The quality of English proficiency has worsened over the last two decades in Bangladesh (Paul, 2022; Rahman and Pandian, 2018; Huda, 2013a; Afroze et al., 2008). Faced with such a critical situation, ELT Bangladesh has to now look at remodelling method-based language teaching using a culture-sensitive pedagogy like PMP. It provides ELT practitioners with the freedom to incorporate ELT practices that are suitable in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh. The three parameters of PMP not only empower teachers by giving them autonomy to practice what they theorize but also provide learners with the opportunity to engage in the learning process as self-aware entities. Although PMP can have a positive impact on ELT in Bangladesh, some aspects of PMP need proper research before using in the classroom context.

This paper finds the parameters of PMP as a suitable stepping stone in remodelling the current CLT dominated ELT in Bangladesh. This paper is not without its limitations. It uses secondary data to evaluate PMP's effectiveness in remodelling method-based language teaching. So, there are always provisions to use primary data to evaluate the effectiveness of PMP in remodelling ELT in Bangladesh.

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