

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

ENGAGING POSTMETHOD STRATEGIES WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE COVID 19 CONTEXT

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Jackson K David¹, Dr. M Poonkodi² Engaging Postmethod Strategies while Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language in the Covid 19 Context-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17 (7). ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: postmethod pedagogy, macrostrategies,microstrategies,postmethod condition, remote learning

Abstract

This study is an attempt to relate Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogy with the present context of teaching remotely in the context of the ongoing pandemic, Covid 19. After analyzing the perceptions of the research sample towards postmethod pedagogy quantitatively, the responses from the participants were qualitatively analyzed to investigate their practices of teaching EFL/ESL online. This mixed method of study explores how the teachers of Kerala working in different educational scenarios have perceived Kumaravadivelu's postmethod strategic framework as an approach in their teaching-learning process and how they have employed the macrostrategies of postmethod while teaching remotely during the time of Covid 19 pandemic. The ten macrostrategies, based on the three dimensional system with three pedagogic parameters—particularity, practicality, and possibility—have been studied, investigated and found as relevant for language teaching while teaching remotely or teaching online.

1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak that has been declared as a global health emergency state by the WHO Emergency Committee since late January 2020 (McAleer ;Velavan and Meyer) has been finally declared as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta). The pandemic has caused various

levels of disruptions in education globally. According to the reports from UNESCO on March 29th, more than 165 countries have announced school closures to slow the spread of the disease, or more importantly, to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 by adopting safety measures like self-isolation, shielding and social distancing (Doucet). The current statistics says: “As of 4 September 2020, approximately 1.277 billion learners are currently affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic” (“Impact”, Wikipedia). UNESCO has already appealed to search for practical solutions and to quote the Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay: “The goal is to identify and share the best innovations to keep children learning during the pandemic, and to help lay foundations for more inclusive and equitable approaches to education when the crisis subsides” (“Closing”).

As there is not a single institution or individual that has not been affected by the pandemic, anyone can imagine the challenge forced upon the educators to move on when there are no guidelines on how to adapt and transform. Those who are in the field of teaching learning—professionals, educators, practitioners etc have been given the task to respond swiftly and sensibly towards the emerging educational needs and challenges so that they can facilitate the process of learning while ensuring the learners their opportunities to learn and develop their skills socially, emotionally and cognitively. Many questions do arise in this context like what pedagogy would be amicable to be practiced to support the continuation of teaching and learning as the pandemic is getting unfolded and what are the policies and practices of the educators to provide a stable, safe and supervised routine in the process of facilitating learning so that the learners benefit academically, psychologically and socially with the least amount of learning gaps. In other words, while implementing the learning and teaching strategies for the current discussed situation educators or the practitioners should be convinced that the strategies employed are visualized under the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility.

Particularity is important as educators and practitioners “must swiftly design responses – and with specific contexts in mind – as the pandemic runs its course” (Fernando 2); or in other words: “Flexibility is key when planning for distance education...” (Doucet 1). Practicality should also be one of the keen concerns as the learning strategies ought to “include carefully considered long-term solutions that address the inequities in education that are exposed when schools are not physically accessible... (and) that ensure teacher voices as a major part of the solution.” (Doucet 1). The parameter, possibility should discuss how the present crisis can derive innovations in the field of education. In other words: “What we need now are innovations that give educators the platform to enhance learning for a truly inclusive and equitable education for all” (Doucet 7). Thus the parameter of possibility would help in deciding the learning strategies that acknowledge the lived experience of the learners and teachers in the process of equipping themselves to become online/remote/distance learners and teachers.

Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogy is based on the above mentioned three pedagogic parameters—particularity, practicality, and possibility that not only discusses "...issues pertaining to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also a wide range of historical, political, and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education" (Kumaravadivelu, "Toward" 538). What he has been discussing as a pedagogy based on the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility is very much relevant in our present context of remote teaching as it provides space to inculcate the holistic interpretation of particular situations, to contain the pedagogical thoughtfulness of a reflective teacher and to sensitize the participants in the process of learning to the prevailing sociopolitical reality ("Toward" 543). This paper is an attempt to qualitatively validate the relevance of using the macrostrategies of the postmethod pedagogy—which is based on the three pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility—in the present context of remote teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of Postmethod Pedagogy—an Overview

English language teaching has witnessed continuous deliberations in bringing out the best method to impart English as a foreign or second language that includes oral approach, grammar translation method, audio-lingual method, direct method, content-based teaching and communicative approach throughout the ages. However, the whole concept of finding out a general method that fits all has also been perceived as a colonial construct when problematised from a postcolonial perspective by some researchers like Pennycook, Prabhu, Canagarajah and Kumaravadivelu. Even the role of English as a political construct and the status of the language being used as a lingua franca all over the world have been discussed critically. For instance, Canagarajah has argued that "(t)he domination of English is therefore not only a result of politico-economic inequalities between the centre and periphery, it is also a cause of these inequalities" (*Resisting* 41). Kachru's three-dimensional model of Inner Circle (where English is the native/first language), Outer Circle (where English is used as a second language) and Expanding Circle (where English is used as a foreign language and for international purposes) demonstrates the political, cultural and social positioning of English language teaching and learning all over the world as the classification gives room for discussing the topics like linguistic/cultural imperialism, western globalization etc ("World Englishes"). We can find similar arguments in the works of researchers like Pennycook and Phillipson where they deliberate how English maintains its colonial nature to assert its dominance.

Simultaneously another perspective has been emerged regarding the practicality of employing methods. For instance, Richards and Rodgers have mentioned the prescriptive nature of the methods that gives no room for the lived experience of the teachers and learners ("Content"). Allwright highlights the relative unhelpfulness of the existence of 'methods

(“The Death” 1). He criticizes even the concept of how it is built, the wastage of time spent in “learning how to implement a particular method” and how “it breeds a brand loyalty... [and] complacency” (“The Death” 7-8). Pennycook also describes the concept of method as invalid and prescriptive when he states: “It is also highly questionable whether so-called methods ever reflected what was actually going on in classrooms” (“The Concept” 608).

Criticisms have also been leveled against Communicative Language Teaching, Task-based language teaching and Content Based Instruction for they too have failed to address context related issues especially when implemented in countries outside the Inner Circle—in other words, when they are used to teach English as a second/foreign language. For instance, Küçük has questioned the relevance of using authentic texts:

As the learners in BANA institutions have access to English they can read authentic texts, they can take place in authentic conversations. However, the learners in Turkey always question the authenticity of the materials and activities because some of them already know that they will not have the chance to go abroad and use the language just for communication. (“The Application” 5)

Moreover, most of the methods do overlap in theory and practice (Kumaravadivelu, *Understanding* 163) and “What appears to be a radically new method is more often only a variant of existing methods presented with the fresh paint of new terminology that camouflages their fundamental similarity” (Rivers 283). This condition, as elaborated here, which problematized the existence of methods when set against the backdrop of the last decade of the twentieth century has been termed as “postmethod condition” by Kumaravadivelu in his much discussed article, “The Postmethod Condition: (E)Merging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching.” He says that postmethod condition is an awareness that drives us to break the unending cycles or web of methods (“The Postmethod” 28).

Postmethod condition has started enquiring the “possibilities for redefining the relationship between the center and the periphery” to result in redefining the stature of teachers from merely mechanical executors of what has been prescribed through methods to actively thinking decision makers where they “search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method” (“The Postmethod” 29). Thus the significance of “location specific and classroom oriented practices” is highlighted where the teachers reflect their own practices while teaching. It promotes teacher autonomy and teachers are empowered “to theorize from their practice and practice what they have theorized” (“The Postmethod” 30). Principled pragmatism is another feature of postmethod condition that discusses “how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal” (“The Postmethod” 31). This feature echoes Prabhu’s much discussed concept—“teachers’ sense of plausibility”. Prabhu describes it as teachers’ “subjective understanding of the teaching they do... (where) teachers need to operate with

some personal conceptualisation of how their teaching leads to desired learning with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them”(172). The stated conceptualization might have sprung up from different sources including their lived “experience as learners and teachers and through professional education and peer consultation” (“The Postmethod” 31).

Three aspects of learner autonomy namely, academic, social, and liberatory are proposed in postmethod pedagogy which is based on a three-dimensional system made up of three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, “Toward”). According to Kumaravadivelu, particularity is a key feature of postmethod pedagogy and he states that “post method 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” (*Understanding* 171). Practicality discusses how theory and practice are related from a postcolonial perspective. The parameter criticizes methods as colonial constructs where the western “theorist produces knowledge and the teacher consumes knowledge” and elaborates how non-west countries are misrepresented so that West could “marginalize local knowledge” to construct marginality (Kumaravadivelu *Beyond* 544). To quote Kumaravadivelu, “The parameter of possibility is derived mainly from Freirean critical pedagogy that seeks to empower classroom participants so that they can critically reflect on the social and historical conditions contributing to create the cultural forms and interested knowledge they encounter in their lives” (*Beyond* 544). Thus the postmethod pedagogy proposed by Kumaravadivelu addresses issues that span from classroom strategies to problematising the sociopolitical and cultural milieu in which the transaction is conducted or anticipated.

No doubt that “the postmethod learner is an autonomous learner” (Kumaravadivelu, “Toward” 545) and the three aspects of learner autonomy—academic, social, and liberatory— as mentioned have been discussed in postmethod pedagogy. Academic autonomy discusses how learners are equipped with “a set of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective techniques that they can use for successful learning”. Moreover, learners are also encouraged to make use of the newly opening up opportunities on learning strategies and “to monitor their learning process and maximize their learning potential” (“Toward” 546). Social autonomy is interpersonal and can be understood as learners’ ability and willingness to function effectively as cooperative members of a classroom by “seeking their teachers intervention to get adequate feedback on areas of difficulty and to solve problems... collaborating with other learners to pool information... taking advantage of opportunities to communicate with competent speakers of the language” (“Toward” 546-547). In other words, social autonomy refers to “the fact that among the strategies and activities associated with increasing metacognitive awareness and learning management skills are some that involve interaction with others” (Broady and Kenning 16). The liberatory aspect of learner autonomy empowers learners to become critical thinkers by helping “learners recognize sociopolitical

impediments to realization of their full human potential and by providing them with the intellectual tools necessary to overcome those impediments”(Kumaravadivelu, “Toward” 547). In short: “If academic autonomy enables learners to be effective learners, and social autonomy encourages them to be collaborative partners, liberatory autonomy empowers them to be critical thinkers”(“Toward” 547).

2.2 Postmethod Strategic Framework

Kumaravadivelu elaborates the postmethod strategic framework for language teaching consisting of macrostrategies and microstrategies. He defines macrostrategies as “general plans derived from theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning/teaching,” that give teachers a broad guideline to “generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques” (“The Postmethod” 32). The appended table (Table 2.2) briefly discusses the ten macrostrategies put forward by Kumaravadivelu as the strategic framework for postmethod pedagogy including their functions and the role of the teachers.

Table 2.2

	Macrostrategies	Function	Role of the teachers
1.	Maximize learning opportunities	Teaching as a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities	Strike a balance between the role as managers of teaching and the role as mediators of learning
2.	Minimize perceptual mismatches	To recognize the potential mismatches between teacher intention and learner interpretation	To take actions to minimize the potential mismatches between teacher intention and learner interpretation
3.	Facilitate negotiated interaction	To ensure meaningful learner-learner, learner-teacher classroom interaction	Learners are encouraged to initiate topic and talk, not just react and respond.
4.	Promote learner autonomy	To make learners autonomous by helping them learn to learn and learn to liberate	To equip the learners with the means necessary to self-direct and self monitor their own learning.
5.	Foster language awareness	To create general and critical language awareness	To draw learners’ attention to the formal and functional properties of the language
6.	Activate intuitive heuristics	To internalize the underlying rules governing grammatical usage and communicative use.	To help the learners in the process of their grammar construction
7.	Contextualize linguistic input	To contextualize language usage and use	Linguistic input is provided in linguistic, social and cultural contexts
8.	Integrate language skills	To integrate language skills holistically	To expose the learners to the holistic nature of learning and employing language skills and to make them understand the role of language across the curriculum
9.	Ensure social relevance	To sensitize teaching and learning	To become sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which learning and teaching take place
10.	Raise cultural consciousness	To treat learners as cultural informants	To encourage learners to share their lived experience where their subjectivity, knowledge and identity are highly valued.

The listed macrostrategies, as stated, are only guiding principles for teachers to come up with their own microstrategies to materialize a specific macrostrategy in classroom teaching. Microstrategies can be defined as “classroom procedures that are designed to realize the objectives of a particular macrostrategy. Any type of microstrategy depends on the local learning and teaching situation. The possibilities are endless” (*Understanding*208).

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Questions

Remote teaching during the pandemic times of our present is investigated under the purview of the “context-sensitive postmethod pedagogy that is informed by the parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility (that) entails a network of ten macrostrategies derived from the current theoretical, practical, and experiential knowledge base”(Kumaravadivelu*Understanding*) in this research. The following are the research questions.

What are the perspectives of English language teachers’ towards the implementation of Kumaravadivelu’s Postmethod Strategic Framework in their classroom?

How do teachers/ ELT practitioners/educators employ postmethodmacrostrategies while teaching online during the Covid 19 pandemic?

What are the concerns/issues/challenges and scopes while teaching online from the postmethod perspective?

3.2 Research Design

Mixed methods research has been employed to conduct this study as the integration of qualitative and quantitative data provides deeper and better understandings of the research problem. Moreover, it facilitates in improving the quality of evaluation as the limitations or constraints of one type of data may be balanced by the soundness or stability of the other. The relevance of using mixed method evaluation in research has been validated by many like Creswell and Greene. For instance: “What distinguishes mixed-method evaluation is the intentional or planned use of diverse methods for particular mixed-method purposes using particular mixed-method designs” (Greene 255). Parallel data gathering strategy has been utilized to gather data so that quantitative and qualitative data have been gathered at the same time. However, personal interviews have also been conducted among some of the research participants for better clarification.

3.3 Research Sample

18 teachers—aged from 34 to 58 years, teaching English in various positions like High School Assistant, Higher Secondary School Teacher, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and ELT practitioners holding MA, M Phil and PhD in English language and literature, Education and Mass Communication and Journalism—participated in this study. The years of their teaching ranged from 4 to 30 years. Some of them are transnational teachers who work in the Middle East.

Table 3.3
Participants' Characteristics

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION				POSITION					GENDER		TEACHING EXPERIENCE		
MA	M Phil	PhD	CELTA	HSA	HSST	Asst. Prof.	Associate Prof.	ELT/ Lect.	F	M	1-10	11-20	21- 30
14	01	02	01	01	02	08	01	06	08	10	05	05	08
18				18					18		18		

3.4 Research Instrument

This research is conducted to explore the experience of teachers/facilitators in postmethod pedagogy, especially their adaptation to teaching online in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. As mentioned in the research design, a parallel data gathering strategy has been utilized. Thus the online questionnaire sent to the participants had two segments— Part 1: Perceiving postmethod approach in the process of learning and Part 2: Implementing the macrostrategies of postmethod approach in teaching during Covid-19 pandemic. Part 1 perceives how the teachers as practitioners of English language teaching inculcate postmethod pedagogical approach in their teaching. Their perception on employing the concept of postmethod pedagogy is recorded in a 5 point Likert Scale where the responders, here the teachers/ELT practitioners, specify their level of agreement to the postmethod macrostrategies mentioned in the process of teaching-learning in five points: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neutral; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree. Part 2 discusses qualitatively how the teachers are able to implement the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy during the times of remote teaching.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Among the invitation sent to about 30 EFL/ESL teachers online who are employed in India and abroad, 18 EFL/ESL teachers volunteered to become participants in this research. As detailed, a parallel data gathering strategy has been utilized so that the research instrument containing the two segments— Part 1: Perceiving postmethod approach in the process of learning and Part 2:

Implementing the macrostrategies of postmethod approach in teaching during Covid-19 pandemic were sent to those 18 EFL teachers. They were requested to record their perception on employing the concept of postmethod pedagogy in a 5 point Likert Scale to specify their level of agreement to the postmethodmacrostrategiesmentioned in the process of teaching-learning: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neutral; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree in the first segment, namely, Part-1. In Part 2, those 18 EFL/ESL teachers were requested to make written reflections regarding their practices incarrying out online EFL/ESL learning and the challenges they encounter while implementing the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy during the times of remote teaching. Furthermore, some of the volunteers,whose written reflection on their practices in carrying out remote teaching during the pandemic—adhering to the macro-strategies of the postmethod pedagogy—found attractive and impactful,were interviewed to investigate further. Semi-structured interviews were administered using online platforms and phone calls and the interaction with each participant lasted for about 20 minutes. Those selected volunteers were requested to converseabout their teaching procedures andto give details about the online learning tools used so that they couldldemonstrate their practices of online teaching and learning while explaining the specific microstrategies employed under the stated macrostrategies designed in the postmethod pedagogy format during the COVID-19 pandemic as referred in their written reflections in Part-2 of the questionnaire. They were also encouraged to talk about the challenges they encountered while carryingout teaching-learning remotely.

The collected data were carefully reviewed in the backdrop of the research questions, postmethod pedagogy and some of the prominent online learning theories like “community of inquiry” model for online learning environments developed by Garrison, Anderson and Archer;Connectivism (Siemens)—a learning model that acknowledges major shifts in the way knowledge and information flows, grows, and changes because of vast data communications networks; Online collaborative learning (OCL) proposed by Linda Harasim and integrated Multimodal Model for Online Education proposed by Anthony G. Picciano. The follow-up interview listening tracks were listened multiple times along with their transcripts to obtain initial points of the practices of online EFL learning and its challenges. Editing was done to the responses and the data that sounded repetitive, irrelevant and unimportant were deleted and the relevant and appropriate responses and extracts on the practices of remote learning & teaching and the challenges they posed that come under the purview of the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy were analyzed, deliberated and arranged. Coding was done to consolidate, sort and validate the data under the required areas of response.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question: 1- What are the perspectives of English language teachers' towards the implementation of Kumaravadivelu's Postmethod Strategic Framework in their classroom?

Table 4.1

No.	Postmethod Macrostrategies	Corresponding Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Maximize learning opportunities	Teaching is a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities.	66.7%	27.8%	—	—	5.6%
2.	Minimize perceptual mismatches	Learners have the freedom and flexibility to initiate and manage a discussion.	61.1%	38.9%	—	—	—
3.	Facilitate negotiated interaction	As a teacher, I try to minimize the gap between teacher intention and learner interpretation.	33.3%	50%	11.1%	5.6%	—
4.	Promote learner autonomy	Teachers should promote learner autonomy.	77.8%	22.2%	—	—	—
5.	Foster language awareness	Language awareness has to be fostered among learners.	83.3%	11.1%	—	5.6%	—
6.	Activate intuitive heuristics	Students should be given an atmosphere where they discover things by themselves.	88.9%	11.1%	—	—	—
7.	Contextualize linguistic input	Linguistic input should be contextualized to benefit the learners.	77.8%	22.2%	—	—	—
8.	Integrate language skills	Language skills should be taught holistically.	72.2%	27.8%	—	—	—
9.	Ensure social relevance	Teachers should accept the diversity of the world views that the learners bring to the classrooms.	83.3%	16.7%	—	—	—
10.	Raise cultural consciousness	Teachers should be aware of the societal, political, economic, educational environment of teaching/learning.	88.9%	11.1%	—	—	—
		Average	73.33	23.89	1.11	1.12	0.56

The responses of the participants in the 5 point Likert Scale to specify their levels of agreement to the postmethod macrostrategies mentioned in the process of teaching-learning are projected here (Table 4.1). The table analyses the perspectives of the teachers (Research Participants) towards implementing postmethod macrostrategies in their classroom. As reflected, the respondents generally believe in implementing and practicing postmethod strategic framework in their classrooms.

4.2 Research Question: 2-How do teachers/ ELT practitioners/educators employ postmethod macrostrategies while teaching online during the Covid 19 pandemic?

Teachers/ELT practitioners/Educators responded to the part-2 of the questionnaire enthusiastically and positively analyzing the possibilities of employing a postmethod strategic framework while teaching remotely during the Covid 19 pandemic. Part-2 of the questionnaire contained ten questions deliberating the ten macrostrategies of Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogy that may be employed in the backdrop of the pandemic. For each of the Postmethodmacrostrategy, the most representative extracts from the participants' responses were picked out. The written reflections are labeled as 'WR' whereas the interviews are labeled as 'Int'.

As a facilitator, how do you maximize the learning opportunities of your students? What all efforts have you taken during the pandemic time to ensure it?

Most of the respondents focused on their practices of remote teaching to comment on this question. They deliberated their practices including on how to conduct their transaction with the students creatively, interactively, effectively and how to create opportunities so that the learners take charge of their own learning. They shared some of the microstrategies used to employ the macrostrategy—maximize learning opportunities.

Providing variety of study materials online using shared folders was one of the oft- repeated response.

“Making it as interactive as possible enabling students to hear their own voices and exposing them to other worldly views through available resources....” (T12, WR)

“I do flip teaching where students are given the resources beforehand so that they are able to read/ view the content before the class begins....”(T5, WR)

“I attach YouTube video links in my Google Classroom. Learning Management Systems like Moodle and Peoplesoft are also made use of for attendance marking and grades inputting purposes. In addition, ready to use materials in the form of PPTs, YouTube videos, Word documents, and PDF documents are created and uploaded into Blackboard Learn / Google Classroom” (T16, WR).

“As a co-learner we have devised the entire curricula to different modules and learners themselves took charges to transact it....” (T2, WR)

Online platforms like Zoom, Blackboard and Google Meet/Hangout were used for video conferencing and online teaching.

“As a facilitator, I employ Blackboard Learn and Google Classroom for managing my students' online learning” (T16, Int.).

“During pandemic I switched over to online virtual platform like Google Meet, Zoom, Google class room etc.... (T3, WR)

“Gettingthem engaged in assignments which are discussed in an ensuing live session, and ensuring that the students are given live classes and recordings of live classes....” (T8, WR)

Virtual online tools like break rooms, virtual boards, chat rooms, discussion forums etc were used to do pair/group discussions while engaging students to do collaborative work.

“I use Google web tools where they can collaborate and work together. I also use different kinds of virtual boards that I can share and all students can write and draw on the same canvas....” (T18, WR).

“Using synchronous and asynchronous online tools in parallel mode....” (T6, WR)

Google web tools like Google forms were used for creating Practice questions/Formative assessments in the areas of Grammar, Vocabulary, Listening, Reading and Writing.

“We have provided online guidance, assistance, materials and self evaluation modules via whatsapp& Google forms....” (T10, WR)

How do you facilitate negotiated interaction among your learners, especially during the time of the pandemic?

Negotiated interaction, one of the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy should be a challenge to be implemented while teaching remotely. However, the respondents of the research have shared the microstrategies they employ to facilitate negotiated interaction. Generally, they all have talked about the role of blended learning or the relevance of mixing both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

“I strongly believe that with the right use of different apps and web tools, we can replicate our regular classes online. So I don't see much difference in my transactions during COVID or pre-COVID times. I start my class with warm-up activities to get students; attention. Students contribute their share as they do in a regular class” (T18, WR). Some respondents do talk about making the students presenters so that they can share their views (T11 WR) and some respondents have tried using digital realms like breakout rooms and chatrooms of online conference applications like Zoom and Google Meet (T5,T7, T16,T18 WR) to do peer group discussions.

“In my classroom students are expected to share their learning and understanding through presentations and discussions for which collaboration opportunities are provided through breakout rooms in online classes” (T5, WR).

Whatsapp messenger has also been used effectively by teachers (pair work, group work) to understand the perspectives of the learners better (T1, T6, T9, T13 WR).

“With Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, a reliable online collaborative learning solution and Google Classroom—as it is easier to use and more accessible, I can make my learners feel like they are together. I use Whatsapp to share materials, to give information about tasks or projects and to give personal feedback to students.” (T16, WR).

What all steps would you ensure to sensitize your teaching to minimize the mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation? What strategies would you employ to ensure it when you teach remotely?

The respondents generally talked about employing the microstrategies like checking learners’ comprehension and presence by asking concept check questions, using simple instructions, giving examples and checking them randomly on screen (T14, T18, T17 WR) and conducting formative assessment where teachers respond to students individually and in groups (T5, T8 WR). Some of them talked about participatory learning (T3 WR) and some have deliberated about providing spaces for minimizing the stated mismatch while planning the lesson where they employ strategies like “continuously insisting them to keep responding and asking doubts” (T14 WR); “giving a clear picture about the learning materials and learning outcomes in advance” (T11 WR); “encouraging them to summarize and interpret the content and provide opportunities for them to initiate discussions” (T7 WR); “stating the learning objective and relevance of the topic in the beginning so that students are clear about learning outcome/ goal” (T5 WR).

How would you facilitate learners to infer and internalize their learning? How do you practice it during the Covid 19 context?

Various microstrategies that facilitate learners to infer and internalize their learning during the remote teaching were recorded in the questionnaire.

Extra reading or extensive reading

Many respondents have mentioned the relevance of extra reading- how they share folders and files of extra reading online (T14 WR). “A very effective internalising process is story telling, connection with stories and favourite movies” (T12 WR).

Using interactive websites.

Some teachers use interactive websites to collect students’ responses, reflections. “www.menti.com is an interactive website. I usually use to collect my students' questions and responses” (T18 WR).

Getting students to make inferences

This microstrategy has been employed by many teachers to facilitate learning via feedback sessions, discussions and online remedial measures. (T2, T3, T15, T17 WR)

Formative Assessments.

Many respondents have mentioned the relevance of increasing assessments generally, formative assessments in forms of activities, tests, quiz etc as a microstrategy so that students get an opportunity to express what they have inferred or internalized (T11, T7, T3, T1, T9, T8 WR).

“Google forms, Quizlet, and Kahoot are some of the assessment applications which are employed for doing formative assessments” (T16 WR).

There were other suggestions like facilitating contextual learning using online tools (T10 WR); exploiting the chances of task based learning (T16 WR); and “to include more 'visible thinking routines' (for eg: Connect- Extend- Challenge) which require students to make connections to what they have learnt and extend it to new knowledge they come across” (T5 WR).

How do you foster language awareness among the learners? Brief your practice of the same in the pandemic times?

Encouraging students to use contextual and thematic language while they present their reflections, inferences and content summary: “For e.g. teaching Anne Frank’s Diary, language elements related to the political and historical context is given emphasis” (T12 WR); encouraging students to use metacognitive techniques to understand how do they learn (T18 WR); providing language input like reading texts to improve language awareness and to evaluate them using Vocabulary Quiz, Sentence building pyramids, Conversational English practice, tasks on synonyms and expressions, dialects, online quizzes etc (T14, T5, T1, T13, T6, T15, T8 WR); enhancing discussions online via interactive platforms, webinars and chat box (T11, T4, T7, T15 WR), and including activities like reviews, narrations, new reporting and reading editorials (T2, T10, T9 WR) are some of the responses received regarding the microstrategies that can be employed to foster language awareness among the learners.

How would you equip your learners with the means necessary to self-direct their own learning? Enumerate your tactics in fostering learner autonomy in these days of teaching remotely.

The following are some of the microstrategies employed by the teachers to foster learner autonomy—one of the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy.

Flipped classroom

Many respondents utilize the benefits of flipped classroom during this pandemic time (T1, T5, T8, T11 WR). “Self paced works and assignments on

the basis of already circulated learning materials or shared Electronic Contents; giving advance level topics related to teaching materials and asking students to work on it followed by presentations in the synchronous meeting” (T11 WR)

Encouraging students to become owners

To encourage students to create their own materials for learning is another prominent idea being practiced during these days of remote teaching and learning. (T14, T7, T16, T5, T13, T6 WR). “Make them create their own Narratives, appreciation, criticisms, diary entries, notices, announcements etc at first hand and to submit for feedback” (T14 WR). “Students are given the choice to choose the texts/ extracts they want to discuss in class and take ownership of their learning. They are asked to examine how best they would like to demonstrate their learning- writing, podcast, presentation, mind map or any other means and choose a strategy where they can deliver their best. They are involved in making the criteria/ rubrics for their task to have a greater awareness of what is expected from them” (T5 WR)

Enable students to think critically using metacognitive strategies of learning.

Encouraging students to reflect on their learning critically has been employed as a microstrategy to foster self directed learning by the respondents of my study.

“Metacognition helps my students to be a self-aware problem solver and take control of their learning” (T18 WR); “Continuous interactions and critically oriented activities helped me a lot” (T2 WR); “In online learning, students are supposed to shoulder more responsibilities for their own learning” (T17 WR); “Through day to day learner interaction via Whatsapp, they are equipped with challenging activities suitable for cognitive, affective & psychomotor domains...” (T15 WR); “...by providing freedom to share their ideas and critical thinking in the available platform (T3 WR) are some of the responses recorded towards that direction.

Peer promotion and group discussion are other areas explored (online) to instill autonomy.

“Peer promotion is what I mainly try to develop intrinsic motivation. Necessity for self empowerment is instituted as a part of every lesson pointing out the benefits of this free time. Resources provided are chosen to explore the areas further which creates a degree of autonomy (T12 WR)

“...peer learning using Google meet Group discussions...(T10 WR)

How would you contextualize linguistic input, especially in these days of the pandemic, to promote the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic use of language?

Encouraging students to share their own experiences that involve cultural and local premises (T14, T2, T10, T7, T6 WR)

“Using real life situation of lock down which restricted mobility and social mingling which demanded pragmatic approach to learning, syntactic patterns were introduced in related contexts” (T10 WR)

“By insisting them: to share their own experience with the class, to find examples from /local cultural scenario/ premise and even from their personal experience, to find ideas from their beliefs, customs and practices” (T14 WR)

Contextualization and context developing activities are used online (T18, T17, T12, T5 WR)

“Context developing activities like matching an expression with right contexts fill in exercise, dialogues, role plays, converting text into different discourses, Analysing structures and how they are used etc are also possible in online classes” (T18 WR)

. “They are encouraged to use the new terms/ vocabulary in their speaking and writing. An awareness of audience and purpose makes them use language for varying contexts with sensitivity” (T5 WR)

Give exposure to the students to read and listen so that they speak and write

“By introducing the learners to literature, newspapers, films, dramas, TV news, radio programmes etc related to the context” (T13 WR)

“Through publishing online students’ magazines, newsletters & news papers and by conducting online debates & discussions based on the syllabus (T15 WR)

“Create an ambiance that forces the learner to communicate only in target language which automatically enables him to learn the features of language/linguistics” (T1 WR)

What would be your strategy to integrate the language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) among students? How do you make the integrated skills teaching possible during these days?

The respondents have discussed the microstrategies they employ during this pandemic to address the postmethod macrostrategy, namely, integrating the language skills among the students. The following are some relevant practices to mention:

“Integrating language skills can be done very easily when you teach online. For example I send a passage to my students and ask them to answer some comprehension questions. This is sent via Google Classroom. The comprehension questions are given via Google Forms. This activity is usually followed by a 10 minutes face to face interview via GoogleMeet with the students about the answers they have written. Here in these activities you can see all the skills are integrated well” (T18 WR)

“Encouraging learners to conduct webinars” (T2 WR)

“Move from receptive skills (Reading & Listening) to productive skills (Writing & Speaking) practice. Help students with the main ideas, key vocabulary and important details in the text. Have suitable tasks to produce language based on the input information” (T17 WR)

“Integrating various teaching methods with enough student participation and minimal teacher presentations” (T11 WR)

“In a classroom situation, my strategy is to get the learners to do some projects in groups of three or four. So, a project-based approach is sought after. Even in an online teaching scenario, I see to it that this approach is ‘do-able’. But, quite recently I have made my learners do the project individually. The approach gets the learners exposed to a wide range of activities (listening, reading, in speaking, and writing) that allows me to have variety into the lessons taught” (T16 WR)

“Any lesson has all four skills integrated into it. Students do close reading and annotating a text as preparation for class. Then they share their ideas with peers through discussions and presentation where they have to articulate ideas with clarity. To give and receive feedback students practice active listening skills. Writing tasks with clear guidelines and check lists for self evaluation allow students to improve their writing skills. Students follow the strategy of planning, drafting, editing and revising their writing” (T5 WR)

“A task like a telephone conversation and writing down the details of it and passing it to another will integrate all the language skills among the students” (T13 WR)

How do you ensure social relevance while teaching?

Encouraging the learners to read between the lines (T12 WR); exposing the learners to topics of contemporary relevance and do discussion on how are they connected (T14, T2, T17, T7, T16, T5, T8), thus “integrating learning and social issues” (T4) for which “topics are chosen from news and newspapers and also from their family & social situations” (T10); “by associating language input to immediate surroundings” (T6); “applying various drama techniques like Simulation, Pantomimes, mimes, Improvisations and dramatization of protest, mock drill etc” (T3) are some of the microstrategies suggested by the respondents of this research for the postmethod macrostrategy—ensure social relevance.

How would you acknowledge and initiate the lived experience of your learners while teaching remotely?

The microstrategies suggested by the practitioners of English language teaching for the macrostrategy, “raise cultural consciousness” generally focus on acknowledging and appreciating the works of the learners while making the learners to do reflections where they voice their lived experience.

“In my online class, I have introduced a system of daily feedback. After every class students are given a chance to voice their lived experiences in the classroom” (T18 WR).

“Reflections are what I rely on for this purpose- both written and spoken” (T12 WR)

Other suggested microstrategies include contextualization of the lesson (T17, T11, T10 WR) where students express personal elements; participatory learning (T3 WR); experience based learning (T2, T16, T13, T6 WR) where the learners reconstruct their experience; empathetic learning (T7, T5, T1 WR) where the learners write journals, essays, memoirs or epistles.

4.3 Research Question 3- What are the concerns/issues/challenges and scopes while teaching online from the postmethod perspective?

Most of the respondents, as already stated, have shown their agreement to employ postmethod pedagogy while teaching English as a second/ foreign language. However, they have raised some issues that bothered them while teaching online. The concerns they have shared can probably affect the quality in the output of the microstrategies employed in accordance with the macrostrategies envisaged in the postmethod pedagogy. They also have discussed the scopes and opportunities while teaching online. The relevant responses pertaining to the concerns/issues/challenges and scopes while teaching online of the selected research participants, collected through interviewing/communicating with the selected volunteers online and over calls, are consolidated here.

4.3.1 The concerns/issues and challenges

Students’ financial background v/s learning remotely

Interactions with the some of the respondents have zeroed in one of the most crucial concerns while teaching or learning online—the financial condition of the students and how it can affect online teaching. According to them due to financial constraints, some of the students do not have smart phones and are struggling to do their online learning (T14, T6, T10 Int.).

“There are instances that some students do not have their own smart phone and the reason is that their parents cannot afford to buy one for their children” (T14 Int)

Another problem that originates from financial constraints is that the learners are not able to afford sufficient internet quota for online learning. As most of the classes are online, the small internet quota they have procured might not be enough to do their remote learning comfortably.

“It is a fact that some of the students do struggle to complete their assignments online, as they don’t have enough data” (T6 Int)

Unstable internet connection

Most of the participants of this research have mentioned this issue when I communicated with them as a follow-up to the questionnaire being sent. Generally, it occurs in remote areas. However, there are instances—as narrated by some of the respondents—where it is hampered even in the metros cities and towns.

“I live in a village and the area is mountainous and hence it’s always a problem while communicating with my students online. All of a sudden voices lag and you are kicked out of the system. My students too experience similar situations often” (T14 Int.).

“There are some learners in my class who do not have a stable internet connection to attend online classes. The internet coverage is a problem in mountainous areas and the students from these areas suffer” (T16, Int.)

“I come from a town and sometimes the bandwidth becomes so weak and the online video conference become inaccessible” (T2 Int.).

Low digital literacy

This is another area of concern that has popped up while communicating with some of the respondents. According to them, it includes not only students, but teachers too. This is obvious as both the teachers and students are using the online platforms and online tools/ applications to this stature for the first time.

“There are a few students with low digital literacy. It is really challenging for me to teach students with various learning style in an online environment” (T16 Int.).

“Some of us as teachers and students had some hiccups in the beginning while going online as everything is new for us. For instance, I still have problems while using breakrooms online. However, now we are getting used to it” (T13 Int.).

Catering weak students

This issue has been another significant area of concern among the teachers who have participated in this research. Weak students or those who have low cognition face difficulties to be at par with others in the new environment of learning. It would affect negatively while employing the postmethodmacrostrategies of fostering language awareness, minimizing perceptual mismatches and facilitating negotiated interaction, especially. Hence it is a challenge to find out ways and means to support them while teaching remotely.

“Some students are very weak in comprehension and it’s difficult to give them extra support online” (T 10, Int.).

Misperceptions about online learning

Some respondents talk about the misperceptions that students have about online learning. According to them, some learners have wrong notions about online learning. They think that online learning is an informal one and hence they are not serious.

“There are some students in my class who are not at all serious about this online teaching. They don’t submit their assignments on time. They think this is an interim arrangement” (T16 Int.)

“In the beginning, one or two students of my class were passive—they were seen online but they always kept them mute and their cameras were not turned on, in spite of telling them to turn on their cameras. They thought that their holidays were still on. It took some time for them to understandit” (T18, Int.).

Students’ Motivation and the abuse of technology

Students should be self motivated or should be motivated within so that they can initiate, direct and take charge of their own learning, otherwise there are lots of possibilities in remote learning for them to get distracted. “This is a scenario where the same technology that equips students to be active learners can backfire and distract them. Nowadays, the mobile phones or the laptop provide dual screens that can be used for showing participation in a class and watching a movie or browsing simultaneously” (T18 Int.).

The challenge of conducting assessments

As most of the teaching curriculums give emphasis to summative assessments, the fair conduct of examinations becomes mandatory and this is the scenario where the biggest challenge lies. “Even though security measures like web cam monitoring and browser control strategies can be adopted while conducting an online exam, a fool proof conduct of an online exam is not possible in the given contexts as lots of technological tools and applications are available to bypass these controls” (T18 Int.).

Teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy

Teachers have a crucial role in postmethod pedagogy as the strategies of postmethod are coined and practiced by them. To ensure the benefit of teacher autonomy which is a core principle of postmethod pedagogy, teacher efficacy has to be ensured. “Closely related to the task of professionalizing the teaching force is the role of the personal and professional beliefs that teachers bring with them” (Kumaravadivelu, “Afterword” 319). Teachers have to attain technical aptitude to an extent (for conducting live, interactive sessions) along with their teaching aptitude. Reflexive teaching is a must and teachers should improve and adapt to the situation. As the world is getting digitalized it is mandatory for the teachers to talk according to the level of the students. They should also be equipped with some hardware and software for the smooth conduct of their

live, interactive classes. Apart from a computer and a quality microphone, a stylus would help a teacher to do corrections online. “My students usually send me their responses on paper and I do the correction through annotation using Kami- an annotation software” (T18, Int.).

4.3.2 The benefits and scope of teaching online

Online teaching saves time.

Some of the respondents are of the opinion that classroom management is comparatively easy while teaching online and teachers can use his/her time solely for teaching. Thus teachers can do an effective presentation in lesser time—“I can do a 45 minutes face to face traditional class in 20-25 minutes when I do it online” (T18 Int.).

Use of interactive tools

Teachers can give a feel of the regular classroom by using many interactive tools to teach English as a second/foreign language. For instance, Whiteboard.fi is a free web tool used as a sharable Virtual board. It is free and log in is easy. “The advantage of using the tool is that the teacher can see all the students’ board with their log in names. But the student can only see his/her board and the teacher’s board. So privacy is maintained while doing an online discussion/activity” (T18, Int.). There are other interactive tools mentioned by the respondents of this study that they employ widely in their classroom such as Kahoot and Quizlet for teaching vocabulary; Google Docs for correction and so on (T16, T18 Int.)

However, some of the participants of this study have pointed out that it is advisable to use web based tools instead of platform based tools as the latter may have compatibility issues while in application. Most of the respondents of this study use web based tools like Google Docs, Google Presentation, and Google Classroom. They use those interactive tools to engage students effectively, for instance, to conduct a discussion or correcting a Writing Portfolio. “For online teaching, web based tools are shared among students as they make the online learning effective through interaction” (T18, Int.)

Flipped classroom can be effectively employed using online. Students can go through

the shared teaching materials that include videos, PPT, PDF and come prepared for the practice in the live session. Topic introduction can be given online and practice can be done in the class.

Discussion

The results show that teachers conducted their classes online during the pandemic where they used several online learning platforms and applications as learning management systems and also employed them as tools for

interaction and to provide additional practice. Thus teachers used learning management systems online to check attendance and created study materials that could be easily accessed by the students in the forms of audio scripts, PowerPoint, videos, Word and PDF documents. They also created quizzes and questionnaires in Google Forms and in other similar applications to assess students' understanding of what they were learning. Majority of the research participants used Google Classroom as learning management system where they uploaded their created materials. Some of them used their own websites and YouTube channels to impart their learning. Applications like Whatsapp were used for sending announcements and messages. Those applications were also used to do discussions online. Majority of the respondents used Zoom or Google Meet for their online live video classes. Blackboard was also cited as an effective learning management system employed for teaching English online by one of the research participants. Chat boxes of the applications like Zoom, Google Meet and Blackboard were used to conduct creative discussions for lead-in and also for feedback, reflections and reviews. Also, majority of the teachers conducted their online teaching in synchronous mode whereas there were some teachers who conducted their classes in asynchronous mode. However, the most important thing to be noted is that the research participants did not follow any method based instruction while imparting English as a Second/Foreign language and they were trying to implement the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy knowingly or unknowingly via several microstrategies that could be delivered while teaching remotely. The details have been investigated and presented in the results section.

The concerns and issues faced by the teachers while teaching remotely can be to an extent, solved by devising suitable microstrategies for the postmethod macrostrategies. More care should be taken from the side of the teachers to provide simple, clear instructions to the students for instance, about how to do the assignment or what is the purpose of the assignment or how to submit the assignment so that it can facilitate negotiated interaction between the facilitators and learners by minimizing the perceptual mismatches. They should also align the activities in such a way that they are meaningful and can gain students' interest to motivate them to do the tasks. For instance, managing weak students to an extent is possible by employing interactive tools and following a microstrategy where a preliminary test can be conducted to find who the weak students are and the interactive tools can be used to support them. The pandemic scenario gave momentum to teacher autonomy and the teachers are empowered "to theorize from their practice and practice what they have theorized" (Kumaravadivelu, "The Postmethod" 30). However, teachers should not forget the principle of principled pragmatism, one of the features of postmethod condition that discusses "how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal" ("The Postmethod" 31). When teacher autonomy is ensured in postmethod pedagogy, it also initiates a dialogue on teachers' performance where the need to enhance their efficacy becomes important as the efforts of teachers are aimed to meet the growing diversity of learners' needs. In other

words, “Teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning” (Brown 8). Consequently, “Pedagogically successful teachers research their own teaching and the teaching of others and thereby become better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching performance; effective teachers willingly examine critically what they are doing in classroom” (Ghanizadeh255).

Conclusion

The present research—Engaging postmethod strategies while teaching during the time of Covid 19 pandemic—highlights the relevance of implementing the macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy during this pandemic time to teach English as a Foreign/ Second language remotely. Thus it gives contribution to the literature on postmethod pedagogy and to the literature on online language teaching and learning in EFL/ESL context from the teachers’

perspective. The research very well documents the role of teachers as envisaged in the postmethod pedagogy who are autonomous and hence responsible to make the learners independent and autonomous learners by employing the macrostraegies of postmethod pedagogy. Thus as we have seen, the teachers are obliged to create the ambience to maximize learning opportunities by employing online management systems and applications; they must be trained to prepare their lessons with sufficient knowledge and skill so that perceptual mismatches between the learner and the teacher are minimized and negotiated interactions are facilitated; they have to foster language awareness by activating intuitive heuristics so that the learners become autonomous learners; they should reflect their practice critically to integrate language skills while contextualizing linguistic input; they should acknowledge the learners’ lived experience and their cultural, social background; and should raise the interest of the students and motivate them through socially relevant topics while teaching English as a second/foreign language.

This paper also emphasizes the need for professionalizing the teaching force to promote a culture of continuous professional development. It also states that the curriculum of teacher education should be modified where there should be modules for technology enhanced language learning, as the integration of technology in language learning is inevitable. Postmethod pedagogy advocates the same and according to the words of Kumaravadivelu:

This demand puts an enormous burden on the shoulders of teachers and teacher educators, not only to equip themselves with high levels of professional knowledge and skill, but also to continue to upgrade them from time to time. This is particularly true for language teachers because language is the prime tool that carries global images and global flows. (“Afterword” 318)

In this paper we have discussed the postmethod pedagogical practices conducted in the field of teaching English as a Second/Foreign language during the times of Covid19 and the effectiveness of employing the macrostrategies of Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogy while teaching remotely. The research sample of this study included only teachers from Kerala—a southern state in India—working in different parts of India and abroad. However, the procedure adopted for the research and its results imply the significance and relevance of the study despite the limited sample size. The study also reaffirms the role and relevance of postmethod pedagogy while teaching online to improve the teaching outcome. Hence more relevant researches are expected in the investigation of the practice of postmethod pedagogy while teaching remotely and for the need to professionalize the teaching force to promote a culture of continuous professional development.

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