

## TEFL IN THE POST METHOD ERA

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### Abstract

This study aims to review the implementation of steps in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from a post method point of view. The research is an analytical study using a literature review approach to describe the results and to draw conclusions. The results of the literature analysis show that basically there is no fundamental theoretical difference between the method and post method. Regarding the implementation of teaching English from the post method point of view, there is no fundamental difference found in the steps of teaching English in methods that existed before the era of the post method. Therefore, the energy of debate between proponents of method and post method can be directed to find the best and appropriate steps in teaching English to students.

**Keywords:** TEFL, Post Method Era

### INTRODUCTION

The theory of teaching second and foreign languages has long been studied by teaching experts and is still a hot debate among them. The term method was first introduced by Edward Anthony in 1963 when he proposed three different kinds of concepts in teaching a foreign language, i.e. approach, methods, and technique (Purwoko, 2010; Soto, 2014; Tasnimi, 2014) which are considered as a hierarchy. Anthony emphasizes that the source of practice and principles in teaching foreign languages is the approach. Plans in teaching foreign language material based on the approach chosen are called a method, while techniques are certain strategies or procedures used to achieve goals. Then these three concepts were modified by Richards and Rodgers (1982) and the sequence changed to approach design and procedure. Then, the method is used as a philosophical concept covering approach, design, and procedure (Purwoko, 2010; Tasnimi, 2014).

This debate continues when Prabhu (1990) in line with what Richards and Rodgers expressed (1982), states that the method is a class activity and the theory that underlies it. Then Bell (2003) distinguishes between methods with “m” and Methods with “M”. The former (method) shows the practices in the class, while the latter (Method) refers to a set of practices in the class that are already standard which is considered as a reference and cannot be changed or modified (Tasnimi, 2014). The debate heated up in the 1990s to 2000s when Kumaravadivelu (1994) and followed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) issued a new concept that spoke of the post method era.

Looking back to the history of criticism of teaching methods, it has started since the 1960s. Many experts, such as Allwright (1991), Kelly (1969), Kumaravadivelu (2006), Mackey (1965), Pennycook (1989), Prabhu (1990), and Stern (1983) have criticized and doubted the existence of methods of teaching language. However, *the post method* era terminology (post method condition) was first used by Kumaravadivelu (1994). In response to the post-method concept, experts mostly criticize his statement that the method is dead. One of those who criticize the most was Bell (2007) who states that in the minds of teachers, methods never die as also cited by Shakouri (2012). This claim is supported by Hall (2011). He states that teachers cannot be completely free of choosing the way they teach since they are influenced by social conventions, student expectations, and school policies, especially about how to teach and what methodologies to use.

Furthermore, Hashemi (2011) also states that the post method concept without methods is just a theory. It cannot be implemented without practices. In other words, it is just a way of thinking, not a way of acting. In addition, Vishwanathan (2014) also says the same thing in the conclusion of his research. It is premature to say that methods no longer exist, even though they exist by themselves when teachers need structured support to communicate with their students. Even Mozayan (2015) emphasizes again that the idea of a method does not seem to be completely lost. However, if deeply examined, these scientists do not disagree with *all* of Kumaravadivelu's (1994) post method concepts. Rather than that, they provide critiques of existing post method concepts and provide their own views on the concept of the post method era as did Richards and Rodgers (2001).

## **METHODS**

This research uses a literature review approach to describe the results and draw conclusions. Results and conclusions are made based on the references read by the authors. Sugiyono (2012) provides a definition of literature study as a theoretical study related to activities to collect information relevant to research topics through books, scientific papers, theses, dissertations, encyclopedias, the internet, and other sources. There are 18 sources of relevant information to the topic of this research consisting of books, journals, and internet sources used by the author to explain the results and conclusions of this research.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study are presented in three sessions covering different concepts of *approach* and *methods* from the standpoint of post method principles of foreign language teaching in the post method era, the implementation of the principles post method in foreign language teaching, and classroom practice view.

### Differences in the concept of approach and method in the post method era

The concept of *method* in the view of Richards and Rodgers (2001) refers to a specific instructional model or system based on a particular theory of language and language learning. A method consists of detailed content specifications, teacher and student rules, and teaching procedures and techniques. The *method* is considered as a standard. As a result, there is an obligation to obey and there is no occasion for individual interpretation. Besides, the *method* is also a set of procedures that must be learned through training and it was designed in such a way. While the *approach* is seen as a collection of the essence of theories about language, language learning, and a collection of principles of language teaching. In the *approach*, there is no specific set of techniques or procedures that must be used in teaching language. Various interpretations can be made on the *approach* according to the practice in the classroom. *Approach* also provides as much room as possible for individual interpretation and application. In summary, they offer a new concept that *method* and *approach* are two very different things, if not contradictory. *Method* is considered as something that is binding. *The method* is considered to have procedures that must be followed by the teacher. Whereas the *approach* is considered as something that is freer where the teacher can use any method in the classroom as long as the objectives of the learning are achieved. This statement on *approaches* and *methods* is also in line with what Zakeri (2014) views that practitioners in English Language Teaching (ELT) are no longer comfortable with only one method of teaching, especially after the emergence of the *post method era concept*. Today, teachers take a technique from one *approach* and engineer it with another *approach*, depending on the needs of the class, teaching context, and institutional policy to overshadow. In other words, teachers are asked to be more productive in adapting teaching materials to the existing curriculum.

Drożdżał-Szelest (2013) says that *approach* is the opposite of the *method*. *Approach* is more flexible and therefore requires individual interpretation (in this case the teachers) in practice in the classroom. While the *method* is the opposite of the *approach*. It really does not allow any other interpretations. Furthermore, he points out that the *approach* places knowledge of language teaching methods and the ability to implement them in the classroom as very vital in language teaching. In this point of view, the teacher must be able to develop a *personal approach*, an approach in which the teacher not only follows the existing steps but the teacher is expected to be able to use their own methods. These methods result from understanding what happens in the classroom. In other words, the teacher must be able to analyze what is happening in the classroom and find and implement methods that are in accordance with the circumstances of the class.

### Principles/characteristics of English teaching in the post method era

There are twelve principles for implementing the concept of post method in the classroom proposed by Brown (2002) as also stated in Tasnimi (2014), namely: (1) automaticity; (2) meaningful learning; (3) anticipation of reward/punishment; (4) intrinsic motivation; (5) strategic investment; (6) the language ego; (7) self-confidence; (8) risk-taking attitude (wrong or right); (9) the connection between language and culture; (10) the effect of the target language (native language effect); (11) Interlanguage; and (12) communicative competence. *Interlanguage*, as mentioned, is one of the important characteristics of the *post method* era. In this context, *interlanguage* is defined as the process of language development experienced by students to achieve language skills in the target language. According to Murray (2009) *interlanguage* is part of the principles of linguistics that the teacher must understand and is part of the characteristics of the

*post method* era. In line with that, Sukarno (2012) stated that one of the steps in implementing the *post method* procedures in the English classroom is finding the socio-economic, linguistic (including backgrounds *interlanguage*), and culture of students. In summary, the *post method* sees *Interlanguage* as something natural in learning a foreign/second language before students can speak well in the target language (the language to be learned).

Meanwhile, according to Kharaghani (2013), there are three characteristics of the *post method* era, namely: (1) evaluation of the scope and meaning of the method; (2) power redistribution theory-making between practitioners and theorists; and (3) student autonomy and language learning strategies. One of the most important characteristics among the above, for it is directly related to classroom practice, is student autonomy, which is the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. There are five principles proposed by Cotterall in carrying out student autonomy that teachers and curriculum makers must always pay attention to, namely: (1) student learning objectives; (2) the language learning process; (3) tasks; (4) learning strategies; and (5) reflection on the learning that is taking place (Cotterall in Kharaghani, 2013).

Each student has different learning goals. This difference is based on differences in the motivation of each student in learning languages. According to Ellis (1991), there are two forms of motivation for a person to learn a foreign language or a second language, namely: *integrative* and *instrumental*. So, students who have integrative motivation will learn foreign languages just like they learned their first language. They will try to use the foreign/second language they learn in their daily life. Conversely, students with instrumental motivation learn only to meet predetermined targets, such as passing an exam with good grades. They do not learn to be able to use a second/foreign language in their daily social context. In terms of this motivation, the *post method* sees this as part of the individual differences that must be considered by the teacher. These differences in learning objectives will have an impact on other things, such as the language learning process, assignments, reflection, and also learning strategies. The language learning process must be adjusted to the motivation of the individual students. Teachers in this case must know their students well so that the teacher will find it easier to make assignments in accordance with the goals of students learning a language, which in the end is expected to improve students' language skills by doing these tasks. Learning strategies in the *post method* view must be based on the *concept of choice*, in which students are given a choice of strategic steps to take in learning (Kharaghani, 2013). The choice of these steps depends on their own will to decide which strategy is more beneficial to them. Here the teacher acts as a negotiator in determining appropriate learning strategies. This concept of choice will also reinforce the reflection that students will have at the end of the lesson. They will think about their own strengths and weaknesses and then make plans for future lessons.

### **Implementation of post method principles in foreign language teaching**

In practice, the concept of the *post method* makes the teacher the main source of knowledge about teaching (Fat'hi & Khatib, 2012). Therefore, for implementation, a foreign/ second language teacher must be able to provide good input to his students. Sukarno (2012) suggests five steps in implementing the *post method* in the foreign/second language class, especially English as follows: (1) finding the socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds of students; (2) identifying student characteristics; (3) adopting, adapting, selecting, and developing, or creating appropriate language teaching materials; (4) applying certain methods in delivering certain material based on the background and characteristics of the students; (5) reflect on what they (students) have learned and plan for further learning.

In the *post method* view, a language teacher must conduct a thorough analysis of his students. The first thing to do is to find out who the student is. Knowing general information about students is very important because it is closely related to what will be taught and how the material will be taught. This is in accordance with what McNeil and Wiles explained as stated in Sukarno (2012) that a very good start for teachers in the teaching-learning process is to find out some general information about their students, such as ethnicity, family background, family status, parental education level, religion, and orientation. It also emphasized that individual differences should be taken into account in language teaching. The differences include gender, age, motivation, and personality. In addition, students' linguistic abilities should also be a concern because this ability is closely related to their environmental and family backgrounds. This linguistic ability will affect students in their ability to use the foreign language they are learning (or more commonly referred to as *interlanguage*).

The second step is identifying student characteristics. This is closely related to students' learning styles and strategies. Furthermore, teachers must assist their students to realize the different potentials that exist in each student, such as multi-intelligence, logic/ mathematics, visual/ spatial, kinesthetic, auditory, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal/ linguistic. In this case, the teacher must be more aware and understand the different learning styles of students because of different cultural backgrounds. Culturally and linguistically, children study in schools with different norms and customs. In addition, teachers must also pay attention to student learning strategies. There are students who learn quickly (*direct strategy*) and there are students who learn slowly (*indirect*). This difference must be understood by the teacher as a natural thing so that the teacher can wisely carry out the learning process with an approach that is very likely to differ from one student to another.

Hence in the third step, a language teacher must have good critical skills in preparing material according to the needs of each individual student. Teachers can adopt, adapt, or even create their own material as long as the material can improve the abilities of their students. In addition, the material chosen or made must be able to improve students' language skills for use in their daily life context.

In the fourth step, the teacher can apply the methods that are appropriate based on the student's background. This is in line with the principles of the *post-method* era discussed earlier. In the *post-method* era, teachers have the freedom to use methods to convey learning materials. Even the teacher is allowed to use procedures or techniques that s/he creates by himself based on his analysis in the classroom and also the experience and knowledge that s/he has of the students s/he teaches.

The last step, reflexing of the learning that has been done together. Teachers in this case must reflect, analyze and evaluate, what is working and what is not working in their teaching and learning process. If problems are found, teachers and students can communicate and find the causes, and find the best solutions. The purpose of this activity is to get better learning by planning the next learning process. By doing reflection, it is hoped that in the future the same mistakes will not be repeated.

### **Classroom practice view**

Seeing the application of the five principles above in the classroom, the author interviewed 10 students who took English as a General Subject (MKU). The students were from the non-En-

glish Language Education Study Program and the authors found several things that are in accordance with these principles. First, the authors found five students who studied English only because their parents forced them. So that in learning, they seem forced, and some even dislike English lessons. To these students, the teacher provided motivations that aim to direct them not to perceive English as a burden from their parents, but they must realize that English is the main key to accessing the outside world. In addition, the teacher also suggested that they try learning methods that make them happy, such as playing (gaming) such as *scrabble*, role-playing, or even just watching movies they like (they can use English films or films with English subtitles). Second, the authors also found that gender factors greatly influence the language learning process. Most female students prefer and are more motivated to learn English than male students. Female students are also more active in expressing their ideas even though they have limited vocabulary. Meanwhile, male students prefer to remain silent, some even do not want to at all (even though they are only asked to read the reading text that is already available). Third, the authors also found that there were students who tended to prefer just one or two skills in learning English. There are students who prefer speaking and listening, some just like writing, and some are very happy with grammar questions. After knowing these differences, the researcher as the teacher carried out different treatments, for example for students who liked speaking, the writer would ask them to make conversations and play roles (role play). For those who like writing, the writer asks them to make a daily journal which will be collected on the last day of study each week. While for students who like grammar, the writer asks them to help make corrections to their friends' daily journals. Fourth, related to teaching material, the author uses existing textbooks according to the needs and abilities of students, for example, making adaptations to the order of delivery, for example, Chapter V is taught before CHAPTER I and II), the author also looks for other suitable references, for example from the internet and some other suitable book. In fact, the author also uses higher-level teaching materials to teach at lower levels, for example using a handbook for English study program students to teach MKU. This is done after evaluating that the students being taught have sufficient abilities and the material is also very suitable for their abilities. Fifth, the writer also asked students to fill out a personal questionnaire for reflection. This questionnaire is independent of the official questionnaire held by the university at the end of each semester. This questionnaire can be given at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the lesson. The questionnaire that has been filled in by students can be discussed at the following meeting to find solutions to common problems or solutions to what is still lacking in learning.

## CONCLUSION

The debate between supporters of the method and the post-method era is common in academia. However, being trapped in endless debates and differences of opinion will certainly not be of any benefit to the development of the world of foreign or second language teaching. Therefore, one thing that practitioners and theorists should be aware of, namely both method and post-method aims to make learning a foreign or second language more enjoyable for students, especially in English majors in improving their communication skills according to the required context. From that, it can be concluded that there is no inappropriate method if the method is used according to its specific context in learning.

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