

Collaborative Teacher Development through Post-method Language Teaching

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Abstract – The present study attempts to explore the efficiency of collaborative teacher development through post-method language teaching based on Kumaravadivelu's Framework. At the outset, three groups of participants were randomly assigned in three classes, each with 15 participants, with exclusive treatments. The first group received post-method macro- and micro- strategies through teacher study group techniques, the second through action research techniques, and the third via narrative inquiry. The treatments continued for 15 subsequent sessions. After the treatment, a post-method methodology test and a paper-based TOEFL were administered to determine the knowledge of post-method and language proficiency of the participants. The analyzed data showed no relationship between language proficiency test and post-method knowledge of the participants.

Keywords: action research, narrative inquiry, post-method, teacher study group.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of language teaching methods and language teacher education has a long history with multitude rises and falls of the discipline. Teaching by itself is a very complex phenomenon, and when it comes to second language teaching, it becomes a more complicated phenomenon since language is both the subject and object of the study. In this history of development of methods, no one claimed any superiority of one method to another; on the contrary, an agreement upon the weaknesses and strengths of each method to the methods following it could be recognized.

Different methods of language teaching ranging from Grammar Translation Method to Audio-Lingual Method, Silent Way, Dessuggestopedia, and some more, were all introduced and worked out throughout the enlightenment of method era; however, each one could survive for a short period of time. This alternation continued to the so-called last method CLT. Although other methods came to existence after CLT, the premises and principles were all originated from Communicative Approach. Since the 1970s CLT has been one of the most popular teaching methodologies around the world in second language education.

CLT initiated the shift of emphasis to the notion of fluency and where errors are seen as being a part of development. In traditional classes, teachers were seen as the providers of the knowledge and the mere controllers of the class. In this method, teachers should facilitate learning rather than expand knowledge. Thus, CLT represents a major change and is considered one of the main approaches to second language education (Richards, 2005).

Concerning the notion of method, Kumaravadivelu (1994) asserts that language teachers would not need to study the historical development of methods anymore. He believes that such a view is counterintuitive and counterproductive (p. xvii). Others possess different view towards methods of second or foreign language teaching. Freeman and Anderson (2011) believe that “a study of methods is also a means of socialization into professional thinking and discourse that language teachers require in order to rename their experience, to participate in their profession, and to learn throughout their professional lives” (p. xi).

Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Allwright (1991), Stern (1992), and Kumaravadivelu (1994), criticize the method era and propose the demise of methods searching for an alternative to methods rather than an alternative method. Since then, the new era of post-method commenced and the principles of Kumaravadivelu’s Framework constructed the skeleton of post-method language teaching.

Accordingly, this study intends to avoid the developmental process of language teaching methods, and prefers to focus on the shift from method era to post-method era and scrutinize the essence of Kumaravadivelu’s post-method framework. On the other hand, the study is within the framework of teacher education and different concepts ranging from collaborative teacher education to narrative inquiry in that discipline.

Kumaravadivelu further postulates ten macro-strategies which construct his post-method framework. They are (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. By the using these macrostrategies as guidelines, practicing teachers can design their own microstrategies or classroom activities. In other words, macrostrategies are made operational in the classroom through microstrategies. Kumaravadivelu (2003) claims that by exploring and extending macrostrategies to meet the challenges of changing contexts of teaching, by designing appropriate microstrategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom, and by monitoring their teaching acts, teachers will eventually be able to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice.

On the other hand, the issue of teacher education and the importance of the role of teacher in language classrooms have been emphasized through the last couple of years. Cochran-Smith (2004) states that it is good news, which simply reiterates what most educators have believed for years. Nearly all teacher educators attribute students’ achievements and their life chances to the teachers’ work in classrooms. This belief can be both beneficial and hazardous. It is beneficial because teachers are given pivotal role, and perilous because teachers are blamed for inefficiency for student performance. In this study, collaborative teacher development techniques are manipulated in different classrooms as beneficial enterprise for the achievement of better results.

The other aspect of this study refers to the notion of collaborative teacher development which is considered as a systematic investigation in the realm of language teaching and learning and in which a teacher voluntarily collaborates with other teachers who

are involved in the same process. Johnston (2009) suggests four different possibilities of collaboration:

1. Teacher's collaboration with other teachers.
2. Teacher's collaboration with university-based researchers.
3. Teacher's collaboration with the students
4. Teacher's collaboration with others involves in teaching and learning such as administrators, supervisors, parents, and etc.

These types of collaborations or partnerships are widely used in the process of language teaching throughout the last couple of years. Johnston (2009) argues that collaborative teacher development can take different forms framed within different approaches to teacher development. The forms can range from team teaching, action research, narrative inquiry, cooperative development, to teacher study groups and dialog journal writing.

A. Teacher Study Group

An important collaborative form of teacher development is teacher study groups. It can take various forms but all contain the fundamental feature of organized forms of interaction among teachers. It is defined as a group composed of teachers who meet on regular basis to share and discuss professional topics and issues based on their shared interests, beliefs, and practices.

The general goal of the TSG is to help teachers begin to think about and ultimately to use research-based instructional strategies in their classrooms by integrating the TSG content into their existing curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of the TSG is not to change a curriculum, but to enhance implementation of that curriculum by using research based strategies that may not be included in teachers' guides.

To defend the need for collaboration, Palmer (1998) states that the sources the teachers need in order to grow as teachers are abundant within the community of colleagues. Matlin and Short (1991) indicate that by means of the TSGs, teachers have an opportunity to think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practices, blend theory and practice, identify personal and professional needs and develop their own classroom innovations (p. 68).

Constructing a TSG needs some initial preparation and thought. Herner and Higgins (2000) state that the first issue to be considered is the participants who will attend in the group and whether faculty or other staff members will be involved or not need to be determined. Apart from participants, group size, group goal(s), time and place of the meetings, and how participants will be grouped should also be carefully planned. They suggest that grouping may be determined by grade level, subject matter taught, or teachers' interests and needs.

The formats of teacher study groups vary depending on the purpose the group is formed for. One type of study group is formed online via e-mail. As Bowman et al. (2000) suggest that this type of study group may be beneficial because it can engage people from all

over the world. Other formats are job-alike groups, school-based groups, topic-centered groups, issues discussion groups, and teacher research groups.

Birchack et al. (1998) list four features of teacher study groups: voluntary commitment, building community and care, challenging the thinking of participants, and integrating theory and practice. They believed that voluntary commitment is necessary, since teachers should be responsible for their own learning and development, and stated, —This belief is violated when they are forced to attend the group (p.16). They also asserted that the study group is not a place where the members share only their professional concerns but they share their personal concerns and frustrations, as well. To do so, they should build community, and get to know each other better which facilitates their sharing and thinking about their teaching practice deeply and critically. About integrating theory and practice, they argued that it is not meaningful if the group members exchange practical issues without discussing the underlying theories and concepts that provide the base for these practical ideas and activities.

B. Narrative Inquiry

The discussion about why narrative inquiry seems a powerful pedagogical choice first necessitates a definitional understanding of narrative. At its most basic level a “narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events” (Abbott, 2002, p. 12) that are connected by subject matter and related by time (Scholes, 1981, p. 205). Bruner (1996) suggests why narrative inquiry may be a powerful pedagogical tool when he argued that narrative is the means by which we make sense of our experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) define narrative inquiry as “the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future” (p. 21). Language teachers find out that narrative inquiry provides a voice for them to challenge the assumption of their professional standing within the realm of language teaching.

Narratives are not stories of individuals; they are social and relational. Johnston (2009) believes that narrative inquiry is considered as a collaborative teacher development, perhaps, due to construction of shared stories by the teachers and learning throughout the process of narration. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) argue that storytelling, letter writing, autobiographical writing, documents such as class plans and newsletters are the basis of data subjected to inquiry.

C. Action Research

Action research is research strategy that pursues action and knowledge in an integrated fashion through a cyclical and participatory process. In action research, process, outcome, and application are inextricably linked (O’leary, 2004). Burns (1999) looks at action research differently and believes that action research has philosophical roots in collaborative action. McNiff and Whitehead (2002) assert that action research involves learning in and through action and reflection.

Action research has as a main purpose the generation of knowledge which leads to improvement of understanding and experience for social benefit.

Action research is usually organized in a cycle of identifying a problem through careful observation, reflecting on the dimensions of the problem, designing a change that addresses the problem, implementing the change, and assessing its effectiveness through careful observation (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

The present study mainly attempts to investigate whether there is any relationship between Post-method language teaching, particularly Kumaravadivelu's framework, and language proficiency of Iranian EFL teachers in three teacher development programs consisting of teacher study group, action research, and narrative inquiry.

Consequently three research questions were posed to detect the differences between groups:

1. Does teacher study group's level of language proficiency have any relationship with post-method EFL teaching knowledge?
2. Does action research group's level of language proficiency have any relationship with post-method EFL teaching knowledge?
3. Does narrative inquiry group's level of language proficiency have any relationship with post-method EFL teaching knowledge?

II. METHOD

A. Participants

A total of 36 English teachers holding BA and MA participated in this study. They were of both genders, majority of whom were female teachers. They had all passed methodology courses at different universities in Iran. These teachers were interested in entering the program voluntarily after seeing the announcements to the program at universities and different institutes in Karaj and Bandar Abbas. At the outset, they were equally and randomly classified into three groups entitled as Teacher Study Group, Action Research Group, and Narrative Inquiry Group, and each group contained 12 participants.

B. Instruments

At the beginning of the study, two post-method tests based on Kumaravadivelu's (1994) Framework were developed by the researchers. The tests had 40 multiple-choice items each, ~~one~~ and were designed one for pre-test and one for post-test. The tests were first administered to a number of candidates at Karaj University and their reliability was computed by KR21 formula. The reliability index was 0.84 which indicates that the tests were reliable. Next, one of them was given to the participants as a pre-test to measure the participants' knowledge of post-method methodology. The test was rated and the results were kept for future statistical use in the study (see Appendix A)

The second instrument used in this study was a paper-based TOEFL. It was administered to determine the participants' level of language proficiency. This was done to

compute the correlation between the participants' language proficiency and their knowledge and performance of post-method EFL teaching.

C. Design

The design of the study was quasi-experimental. This design is used because there was no randomization. All three groups were given treatments. For the first two questions, there was one independent variables (language proficiency), and one dependent variable (post-method knowledge). One-way ANOVA was used for computation.

D. Procedure

At the outset of the study, all three groups were given a post-method test. The test was developed by the researchers and validated by the help of other methodology instructors at university and computation of KR21 formula. The test was given to evaluate the methodology knowledge of the participants. The test had 40 multiple choice items and the participants were to answer them in 25 minutes. After the test administration, the test papers were corrected and a score out of 20 was assigned for each exam paper.

As already mentioned, there were three groups in this study who participated fifteen consecutive weeks of instructional treatment, each taking nearly two hours. However, the type of treatment was basically different in three different classes.

In the first group (i.e. Teacher Study Group), Kumaravadivelu's framework (1994) was exercised through teacher study group procedure. In this group, the participants were asked to form a teacher study group and share their understandings and problems in the process of acquiring principles of post-method language teaching.

In the second group (i.e. Action Research Group), the treatment began with Kumaravadivelu's Framework of Post-method. His framework consisted of ten macro-strategies, each of which owned at least two micro-strategies. The researcher presented the materials by giving lectures in the classroom. After teaching each macro-strategy entailing one or more micro-strategies, there was an instance of action research for each participant for a better understanding of the lesson. Leung (2007) believes that there should be a teacher-student unity oriented toward joint accomplishment of the learning tasks (p.262). He argues that the guidance provided by the teacher could not be predesigned because it is not possible to know in advance what feedback and support would be required by the student. If there is any misunderstanding or any complexity among the students, then the teacher (researcher) will attempt to remove it and make sure every participant fully obtained the intended material.

In the third group (i.e. Narrative Inquiry Group), the treatment commenced with the introduction to post-method, but narrative inquiry was practiced in the classroom instead of action research. In the narrative inquiry, the participants were required to tell stories about the problems they encountered in their teaching experience and seek to find the way to tackle them based on the principles of post-method language teaching. Language teachers found the fact that narrative inquiry provides a voice for them to challenge the assumption of their

professional standing within teaching foreign language. In this group, first, the researcher introduced one of the macro-strategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1994) and elaborated on that, and then teachers were given time to talk about their own experiences regarding the topic.

After the treatment which took fifteen sessions, the researchers gave the participants a test of paper-based TOEFL to find out the participants' level of language proficiency.

E. Data Collection and Data Analysis

To investigate the research questions 1, 2, and 3, first, the data were tested for normality. Next, a matrix of correlation was made to measure the degree of togetherness between the three groups' level of language proficiency and their post-method EFL teaching knowledge. The formula was Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which was employed in SPSS software version 17 (SPSS Inc., Released 2008).

III. RESULTS

As it was discussed earlier, all research participants were randomly assigned into one of the three collaborative teacher development groups, namely, TSG, ARG, and NIG that were held in language center in Karaj (Language and Thought Academy) and Islamic Azad University at Bandar Abbas. Now in order to test the normality of distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistic were used. Table 1 shows the results of the normality tests.

Table 1: Tests of Normality for the Distribution of Scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Study Group TOEFL	.145	12	.200*	.937	12	.457
Action Research Group TOEFL	.154	12	.200*	.945	12	.566
Narrative Inquiry Group TOEFL	.205	12	.173	.886	12	.104

Shapiro-Wilk's statistic is the best indicator of the normality for samples with fewer than 50 participants. As the results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test reveal, the presence of non-significant values (i.e., 0.45, 0.56, and 0.10) is indicative of the fact that the distribution of the scores for all three groups is normal. Besides the normality test, Levene's test was also used to ensure the homogeneity of variances.

Table 2: Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances

TOEFL			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.144	2	33	.867

As table 2 shows, the significance value for Levene's test is 0.867, which is greater than .05. Therefore, we can conclude that the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. Now the data obtained from TOEFL test is computed.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of TOEFL Test for All Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Study Group TOEFL	12	569.00	588.00	5.8033E2	6.18405
Action Research Group TOEFL	12	568.00	587.00	5.7975E2	5.67490
Narrative Inquiry Group TOEFL	12	570.00	586.00	5.8050E2	5.14340
Valid N (listwise)	12				

As table 3 indicates, the highest mean in all three groups was 588 belonging to study group and the lowest mean was 568 pertaining to action research group. This shows that the participants' level of language proficiency was rather high. This issue verifies that the participants can be classified as proficient language teachers. The TOEFL test was correlated with a test of post-method methodology knowledge.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Post-method Knowledge for All Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Study Group Post Method Theoretical Knowledge Posttest	12	11.00	17.00	14.0833	1.92865
Action Research Group Post Method Theoretical Knowledge Posttest	12	16.50	19.00	17.5417	.78214
Narrative Inquiry Group Post Method Theoretical Knowledge Posttest	12	10.00	18.00	15.5000	2.19504
Valid N (listwise)	12				

As table 4 displays, the highest mean ($M=17.54$) belongs to action research group and the lowest mean ($M=14.08$) is for teacher study group. This verified that the participants in action research group were more knowledgeable in methodology than members of the other groups. Now the scores of the TOEFL test are correlated with the scores of post-method methodology knowledge of the participants to find out whether there was a correlation between the language proficiency of the participants and their knowledge of post-method. To do so, Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula was used and the following results were obtained.

Table 5: Correlation between Proficiency Test and Post-method Knowledge Test

		TOEFL	Post Method Theoretical Knowledge Posttest
TOEFL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.810
	N	36	36
Post Method Theoretical Knowledge Posttest	Pearson Correlation	-.041	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.810	
	N	36	36

The total correlation of all three groups indicated that there was no significant correlation between language proficiency test (TOEFL) of the participants in all three groups and post-method methodology knowledge ($0.81, p = <0.05$).

IV. CONCLUSION

As the result of the data analysis in above-shown tables, there is no significant correlation between the knowledge of post-method theoretical knowledge of the groups and their language proficiency. However, this does not mean that there is no relationship between teachers' proficiency and their knowledge of methodology. Canagarajah (1999) believes that it is not necessary to have a native like command of a language in order to teach it well. Medgyes, (2001) also believes that there should be a threshold proficiency level which the teacher needs to have reached in the target language in order to be able to teach effectively in English. Others perceive the same issue from different perspectives and attempt to examine the relationship of proficiency with other variables. For example, Seidlhofer (1999) studies the correlation between levels of language proficiency with language teacher's confidence and believes that a teacher who feels to be weak in the target language will have reduced confidence in her teaching ability and an inadequate sense of professional legitimacy.

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Appendix A

1. Postmethod pedagogy is a three-dimensional system consisting of pedagogic parameters of -----.
a. strategy, cohesion, and coherence b. particularity, practicality, and possibility
c. method, approach, and design d. cooperation, collaboration, and individuality
2. *Connecting with the Campus Community* is one of the microstrategies of -----.
a. maximizing learning opportunities b. minimizing perceptual mismatches
c. fostering learning autonomy d. promoting learner autonomy
3. -----mismatches refer to the teacher and learner perceptions of stated or unstated short- or long-term instructional objective(s) of language learning tasks.
a. Pedagogic b. cognitive c. cultural d. linguistic
4. ----- mismatches refer to mental processes such as remembering, perceiving, recognizing, and inferencing.
a. Cultural b. Cognitive c. Communicative d. Linguistic
5. The parameter of ----- relates to a much larger issue that directly impacts on the action of classroom teaching.
a. possibility b. practicality c. particularity d. probability
6. The parameter of practicality entails a teacher-generated theory of -----.
a. action b. activity c. practice d. exercise
7. Critical pedagogists take the position that any pedagogy is implicated in relations of -----, and is implemented to create and sustain social inequalities.
a. classroom and teacher b. society and social status
c. prestige and freedom d. power and dominance
8. -----mismatches refer to stated or unstated paths chosen by the learners to do a task.
a. Procedural b. Cognitive c. Cultural d. Linguistic
9. The parameter of ----- is derived mainly from the works of critical pedagogists of Freirean persuasion.
a. possibility b. practicality c. particularity d. probability
10. The parameter of ----- requires that any language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu.
a. possibility b. practicality c. particularity d. probability
11. The parameter of ----- then is opposed to the notion that there can be an established method with a generic set of theoretical principles and a generic set of classroom practices.
a. probability b. practicality c. particularity d. possibility

12. The parameter of ----- seeks to tap the sociopolitical consciousness that participants bring with them to the classroom.
a. probability b. practicality c. particularity d. possibility
13. ----- are defined as guiding principles derived from historical, theoretical, empirical, and experiential insights related to L2 learning and teaching.
a. Microstrategies b. Macrostrategies c. Autonomies d. Possibilities
14. Helping learners learn how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct and self-monitor their own learning is ----- microstrategy.
a. maximizing learning opportunities b. minimizing perceptual mismatches
c. fostering learning autonomy d. promoting learner autonomy
15. Kumaravadivelu (2003) believed that it is better to treat a text as a -----.
a. tool b. pretext c. course book d. work book
16. This macrostrategy highlights how language usage and use are shaped by linguistic, extralinguistic, situational, and extrasituational contexts.
a. minimizing perceptual mismatches
b. fostering learning autonomy
c. promoting learner autonomy
d. Contextualize linguistic input
17. Which of the following can enhance *learning opportunity*?
a. monolog b. exercise c. learner involvement d. communication
18. In post method, a general plan, a broad guideline based on which teachers will be able to generate their own situation-specific, need-based or classroom techniques are -----.
a. macrostrategies b. microstrategies c. possibilities d. practicalities
19. This macrostrategy emphasizes the recognition of potential perceptual misconception between intentions and interpretations of the learner, the teacher, and the teacher educator.
a. maximizing learning opportunities
b. minimizing perceptual mismatches
c. fostering learning autonomy
d. promoting awareness
20. This macrostrategy takes teaching as a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities, a process in which teachers strike a balance between their role as managers of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts.
a. Activate intuitive heuristics
b. Integrate language skills
c. Ensure social relevance
d. Maximize learning opportunities
21. "I understand it but I am unable to express my ideas or give an answer because I am not confident of talking in class". This is an indication of ----- mismatch.
a. linguistic b. pedagogic c. strategic d. communicative

22. "I am not clear about the overall approach I need to take in order to work on that. This is called a ----- mismatch.
a. strategic b. pedagogic c. procedural d. linguistic
23. "I try to find out whether what I already know about compliment is correct or not. This is a sign of ----- mismatch.
a. cultural b. procedural c. strategic d. evaluative
24. One way of improving learner autonomy is the implication of -----.
a. styles b. intelligence c. attitude d. strategies
25. Levels of formality involved in interpersonal communication are one way of -----.
a. fostering language awareness b. maximizing learner autonomy
c. minimizing tension d. activating intuitive heuristic
26. In postmethod activating intuitive heuristic is emphasized. *Heuristics* refers to -----.
a. the study of research
b. the implication of learner autonomy
c. the democracy and liberation in education
d. the process of self-discovery on the part of the learner
27. At the initial stage of autonomy, the emphasis is simply on -----.
a. raising the learner's awareness of the reasons behind it
b. allowing the learner to choose from a range of options given by the teacher
c. learner determination of his or her own goals, tasks, and materials
d. practicing autonomy
28. The microstrategy of ----- is based on language learning scenarios proposed by teacher.
a. contextualizing linguistic input
b. Activate intuitive heuristics
c. Integrate language skills
d. Ensure social relevance
29. Dictation as an exercise is a way to -----.
a. contextualize linguistic input
b. Activate intuitive heuristics
c. Integrate language skills
d. Ensure social relevance
30. The narrow view toward autonomy maintains that the chief goal of learner autonomy is -----.
a. to learn to learn b. to learn to liberate
c. to be dependent c. to be free of chores
31. The ----- is a sustainable state of affairs that compels us to fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education.
a. post-method pedagogy b. method pedagogy
c. method condition d. post-method condition

