

Journal of English Language
Teaching and Learning
University of Tabriz
No. 22, 2018

**Is There a Place for Post-method Pedagogy in the Educational
Context of Iran: Voices of EFL Teachers***

Farzaneh Amiri**

Ph.D. Student of TEFL Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. (corresponding author)

Rahman Sahragard***

Professor in Applied Linguistics Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran.

Abstract

In an attempt to liberate teachers from deficiencies of the conventional methods, Kumaravadivelu (1994) proposed the concept of “post method condition” to overcome the challenges caused by the very nature of methods. The literature regarding post-method pedagogy has indicated that most of the studies focus on its theoretical aspect, while the practical realization has been largely untouched. To this end, the present study was an endeavor to unveil the perspective of Iranian EFL teachers concerning the applicability of this pedagogy. 21 male and female in-service EFL teachers from different cities in Iran (Shiraz, Marvdasht, Bushehr, Tehran, and Gonbad-e-Kavus) participated in this qualitative research where data came from semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. The interview data were transcribed and coded using Straus and Corbin’s (1998) constant comparative method, including three codification processes of open, axial and selective codings. The finding indicated that absence of required autonomy among teachers, teacher’s job security, students’ passivity, absence of critical thinking skills among students, dominance of transmission model of teacher education, inefficiency of the textbooks, teacher’s focus on coverage and grade pressure, and demanding nature of post-method pedagogy as the main pedagogical barriers which prevent language teachers from applying this pedagogy in their teaching practices.

Keywords: method, post-method pedagogy, applicability, EFL teachers, pedagogical barriers

*Received date: 2018/06/10 Accepted date: 2018/12/01

**E-mail: farzane.amiri66@gmail.com

***E-mail: rahman.sahragard@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Since the last two decades, language teaching profession has undergone a dramatic shift in its orientation. Among the conceptual shifts which have received much attention is the beginning of the anti-method movement in the 1980s (Allwright, 1991; Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990) and the emergence of the post-method debate (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). After the successive rise and fall of series of methods in the mid-twentieth century, ELT practitioners came to realize that no single method can be regarded as the optimal framework to guarantee success in teaching a foreign language as it had long seemed to be (Prabhu, 1990). More specifically, as indicated by Allwright (1991), not all methods were highly appreciated and adopted by English teachers due to the difficulty in use, requirement of special training and lacking practical guidelines and applications. McMorrow (2007) argued that methods drawn from one specific context will not be useful elsewhere which has its own peculiarities. Confronted with complexities of language teaching and learning, teachers have understood that no single perspective on language would guide them in their daily teaching practices. In fact, the concept of method was harshly criticized in the 1990s and the profession took a critical stance with regard to the nature and scope of the method. Scholars such as Pennycook (1989), Prabhu (1990) and Stern (1992) criticized language teachers for the uncritical acceptance of untested methods and warned them against the concept of method itself (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

The post-method condition is characterized by leaving methodological arguments to teach effectively by considering the practitioner's views and roles in teaching language materials. According to the ideological bases of this pedagogy, instead of following a specific method, language teachers must find the most appropriate strategies and techniques to enrich their teaching repertoire (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) by assuming learners to be partners in a cooperative venture who are directed toward the enrichment of their learning potentials (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). It is a practice-driven construct that question the traditional conceptualization of teachers as a

channel of received knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003) and stands in remarkable contrast to the traditional view of teacher education in which “teachers are regarded as the passive recipient of transmitted knowledge” (Crandall, 2000, P. 35). As indicated by Widdowson (1990), in this era “it is the teachers who have to act as mediators between theory and practice, between the dominance of disciplinary research and pedagogy” (p.22). On the other hand, according to the general perceptions of this era, teacher educators are granted with the responsibility to play the role of transformative agents who consider issues of teacher’s identity, self, sense of agency and subjectivity to help language instructors play the role of reflective practitioner, capable of coping with challenges of language classroom. Therefore, teaching is not conceived as a craft as it was traditionally and is more related to a dynamic movement which considered teachers as a proactive agent of change (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Contrary to this traditional belief, Kumaravadivelu (2006) maintained that the post-method pedagogy recognizes teachers’ way of teaching and autonomous decision making within the constraint of their academic and administrative environments. In this perspective, teachers are viewed as active agents who can generate new knowledge and contribute to the higher quality of teaching in the classroom. That is, teachers’ knowledge, viewpoints, and experiences in creating their own language theories are greatly valued and it is the teacher who comes to the center of language learning and teaching process. Hence there is a move toward a more bottom-up, process-oriented conceptions of teaching instead of a top-down, product-oriented one (Crandall, 2000).

Kumaravadivelu (2001) believed that the post-method pedagogy is build upon three interrelated parameters. He argued that post-method pedagogy must facilitate the creation of context-sensitive teaching practices based on an awareness of social, political, linguistic and cultural particularities and disagreed with the unquestionable application of professional knowledge that produced predetermined goals and objectives (parameter of *particularity*). In addition, his pedagogy refined the debilitating relationship between theorists and

practitioners by encouraging the latter to construct their own theory of teaching to diminish the borders between “professional theories” and “personal theories” (parameter of *practicality*). Finally, it sensitized teachers to the prevailing realities that exist in educational settings by tapping their sociopolitical consciousness so that they shape and reshape their personal and social identity (parameter of *possibility*). Kumaravadivelu (2001) mentioned that “the boundaries of the particular, the practical and the possible are inevitably blurred. They interweave and interact with each other in a synergistic relationship in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (p.545).

The aim of the present study is to recognize and understand the status and practicality of post-method perspective from the viewpoints of Iranian EFL teachers. This is done by shedding light on the current stance of ELT in Iran to explore the extent to which there exist willingness and conformity to the principles of post-method pedagogy. Since teachers’ experiences are regarded as an invaluable source, it is important to understand how they are enabled to practice English language teaching that is compatible to the instructions that are practiced within the discourse of post-method pedagogy. That is, teachers’ perspectives regarding the post-method and its practicality have definitely much to offer to those who are in a position of making decisions regarding English language policies in Iran.

Furthermore, although a number of studies on post-method pedagogy have been carried out in the Iranian context, the theoretical aspect of this pedagogy has been the focus of the main body of research that are conducted and much of these writings, though insightful, provide information on the philosophical and theoretical underpinning of post-method pedagogy without taking into account its actual realization and implementation in an EFL context like Iran. In other words, most of the research in the realm of post-method pedagogy has been mainly devoted to its theoretical bases while reviewing the available and relevant literature unfolds the fact that previous studies have reflected limited scopes and pursued restricted objectives. Since the current status of post-method in EFL contexts is considered

controversial by many researchers (Fahim & Pishghadam, 2009; Gholami & Mirzaei, 2013; Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008), there is an obvious need for more research on this issue. Therefore, to address this gap, the present study is an attempt to delve into the practical aspect of post-method pedagogy to see the extent to which it can be actualized in the EFL pedagogical context of Iran. In other words, the study tries to probe deeply into ELT context of Iran to identify and analyze the concerns, challenges, and impediments faced by instructors in applying the principles of this pedagogy in their classroom context. As such, the study sought to answer the following research question:

What are the impeding factors in the implementation of post-method pedagogy from Iranian EFL teachers' point of view?

Literature Review

Over the last few decades, a large body of research has been devoted to post-method pedagogy in language teaching in which some were for and some were against the general perceptions of this era. Some of the prior studies concentrated on the perceptions of English language teachers about post-method pedagogy. Advocating the general conceptions of this era, Saengboon (2013) solicited Thai EFL university lecturers' opinions concerning post-method pedagogy by means of semi-structured interview and concluded that although the participants did not directly address post-method strategies, their response patterns signified a high level of understanding of post-method ideologies. In another study, Zeng (2012) conducted a study to explore Chinese novice EFL teachers' conceptions of post-method. In contrast to the previous study, the results of his study suggested that teachers are greatly influenced by exam-oriented education and lack the required knowledge to implement post-method in their classrooms. Similarly, Tekin (2013) investigated novice English teachers' views regarding post-method pedagogy in Turkish EFL context. He interviewed 11 teachers and found out that their knowledge of post-method pedagogy and its realization are very limited. Some of the participants related post-method pedagogy with eclecticism, while the others admitted that

it was the first time they had heard of this pedagogy as part of ELT concepts.

Recently, an accumulated interest on post-method condition has been observed in the Iranian mainstream educational setting as well. As an example, Hazratzad and Gheitanchian (2009) selected 594 Iranian EFL teachers to explore any probable relationship between teachers' attitude toward post-method pedagogy and their students' achievements. The obtained result revealed that the teachers had different attitudes towards a dominant method of language teaching and no significant correlation was found to exist between the two variables. In another study, Iranian EFL teachers' understanding of English language teaching in the post-method era was investigated by Gholami and Mirzaei (2013). 162 language teachers took part in their survey and answered three open-ended questions. The results suggested that despite their positive attitude toward developing post-method pedagogy, Iranian teachers are rather pessimistic about its realization in case the obstacles are not removed. Aboulalaei, Poursalehi, and Hadidi (2016) conducted a study to explore the correlation between the field of study taught and teachers' attitudes towards the post-method strategies. 131 English teachers from an English language institutes in Tabriz, Iran participated in the study and were surveyed by means of a questionnaire. Half of the selected EFL teachers did not have English-related university degree while the other half hold English academic degrees. No significant relationship was found between the two variables and it was revealed that both groups of teachers held similar ideas toward post-method pedagogy and believed that awareness of such strategies can play an important role in their teaching.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach and used techniques based on grounded theory to study the obstacles on the way of practical realization of post-method pedagogy in EFL context of Iran. In a grounded theory approach, "a researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (Strauss

& Corbin, 1988, p. 12). According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorenson (2010), this approach focuses on peoples' experiences to build a theory "from the bottom up" inductively.

Participants

21 high school in-service English instructors from different cities of Iran (Shiraz, Marvdasht, Bushehr, Tehran, Gonbad-e Kavus) constituted the sample of the current study. The teachers had, at least, 7 years of teaching experience and aged between 29 to 56 years. 14 of them were B.A. holder of TEFL, 6 held M.A. in TEFL and one was a Ph.D. candidate of TEFL. Of the participants, 9 were male and 12 were female who were selected based on the qualities of purposive sampling. According to Ary et al. (2010), this type of sampling involves homogenous selection of cases based on the specific purpose who are judged to be representative of the population.

Instrument

Due to its interactive nature, the interview is one of the most powerful instruments among data collection methods (Best & Kahn, 1998). In contrast to the amount of information obtained from quantitative methods, the interview can delve into individuals' experiences and beliefs towards different issues and provide a richer understanding of the specified social phenomenon (Silverman, 2000). Since structured interviews consist of rigorous sets of questions that do not allow one to divert (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a semi-structured interview with a small number of participants was conducted to yield an in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences regarding the challenges and obstacles that they face in implementing post-method pedagogy in their teaching. This type of interview "allows maximum flexibility to follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions, with only minimal interference from the research agenda, where the respondent may reveal more than he/she would in formal contexts, with the interviewer assuming a listening role." (Dornyei, 2007, p.163).

The interview encompassed eight open-ended questions which helped the researchers uncover the important aspects of the phenomenon under study (Ary et al., 2010). According to Alvarez and

Urla (2002), when the number of participants is quite small, this method will provide more rich and useful data which can be used for thematic analysis.

Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

The participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained. Interviewing the teachers took place over an eight-week period until the collected data seemed consistently repetitive. Initially, it was decided to interview more participants; however, after data reached saturation, the information obtained from the current participants seemed sufficiently informative. In this regard, Kolb (2012) stated that reaching data saturation is important since it ensures the adequacy of collected information based on participants' perspectives. To achieve more generalizable findings, the participants were selected from different educational contexts and academic backgrounds. Since this type of research, demanded serious ethical considerations, the participants were assured that their names would not be identified in the publication of the results and that their identity would remain confidential. Furthermore, for the convenience of the respondents, the interview sessions were scheduled based on their preferred time and places. To this end, the participants were asked to arrange certain time in advance and were all interviewed in privacy.

Each interview lasted about 45 minutes on average, however, some extended more than that. In fact, no time limit was set for the interview procedure; nevertheless, the researcher interrupted the conversation and shifted the participants' attention to the focus of the topic in case they deviated from the respective issues. The researcher attempted to provide the participants with ample time to discuss and reflect on the issues critically. In fact, the participants were encouraged to take the lead and discuss the issues at length, while the researcher tried to keep the intervention to the minimum to avoid influencing their responses. Although the interviews were developed and conducted in English, the participants were free to decide on the language they preferred to respond to the questions. This was to ensure that interviewees can meticulously elaborate on their ideas and perceptions regarding the

discussed issues. In addition, interviewees' permission for audio-recording the data for further analysis were also obtained. Accordingly, the interviews were transcribed, studied and used for further analysis.

Techniques based on the grounded theory approach was used to explore the problems faced by EFL teachers in implementing post-method pedagogy. Prior to conducting the interview, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained. In addition, they were assured of the confidentiality and privacy of data collection procedure. Furthermore, interviewees' permission for audio-recording the data for further analysis were also obtained. Once the data were collected, they were immediately transcribed verbatim to be analyzed by the researcher using qualitative content analysis. Based on Strauss and Corbin (1998) "constant comparative method of analysis" the transcribed data were analyzed in three steps. First, the data were codified in the process of open coding in which the data were broken into pieces and labeled into core categories. In the second step, axial coding was employed to put the broken data back together and to make connections between categories and subcategories. Finally, selective coding was used to synthesize concepts and bring the categories together into an overarching theory or framework.

Results

The findings of the problems and obstacles that teachers face in implementing post-method pedagogy in Iran's EFL context is presented in the eight subcategories as follows:

Absence of the Required Autonomy among Teachers

The teachers argued that there is no room left for them to engage in decision making regarding the overall process of their teaching. This stands in sharp contrast to the basic tenets of post-method pedagogy in which teachers should be empowered with knowledge, skills, and autonomy to act in a self-regulated and self-directed manner (Kumaravadivelu, 2005). Although teacher training programs educate teachers in terms of program design, teachers are not provided with opportunities to design or even decide on the content of syllabus. The

nature of curriculum does not recognize the professional autonomy of teachers to exercise their judgment and power. The following comments indicate the seriousness of this factor.

Teacher (T) 8: *I believe that as a teacher, I know my own contextual constraints and in fact, should be in a position to conduct changes in the syllabus or method of teaching to bring out the best of my students. This, however, seems far-fetched and unrealistic since I have to observe the national curriculum and it can be said that somehow, I am deprived of exerting my own autonomy and power.*

T 13: *The concept of teacher autonomy is neglected in Iran's EFL context as teachers are supposed to follow the predefined syllabus that has been prepared for them. Somehow, my autonomy is limited to procedural aspects of teaching.*

Teacher's Job Security

The parameter of 'possibility' of Post-method pedagogy provides a context for teaching regarding the social engagement and political accountability (Khatib & Fathi, 2012). More specifically, it demanded teachers to be sociopolitically conscious and stretch their roles beyond the borders of the classroom and act as transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In this sense, teachers need to reflect and act against the unfair power hierarchy that keeps them marginalized (Giroux, 1988). They should further help learners to create a critical mindset towards language learning experience. However, this principle seemed to be not much welcomed in our context as teachers stated that they refrain from engaging in topics or situations that jeopardize their working position. A major obstacle mentioned by almost all of the participants was the regular occupational constraints. The following examples illustrate the point.

T 6: *I prefer to concentrate on following the exact lesson plan provided by the national curriculum and not discuss topics which may bring me undesirable consequences...no teacher is likely to do so.*

T 21: *I'm not personally open to such changes and I rather keep my political neutral status and concentrate on my own teaching practice.*

In addition, we should consider the fact that we are living in a traditional society where raising such issues which contradict the dominant norm would endanger our professional position. To stay on the safe side, I personally avoid such topics in an educational setting.

Students Being Accustomed to Passive Roles

Post-method pedagogy regarded learners as autonomous individuals who take charge of their own learning process. Freire (1970) maintained that sharing authorities with learners paves the way for more dialogical approaches to teaching in which learners are granted the opportunities to negotiate the syllabus, structures and content of the lessons. Nevertheless, teachers reported that students are not prepared to take the role of post-method learner since they have been accustomed to traditional models of instruction. The following comments highlight this point.

T 10: Passivity is deeply ingrained in our learners. I once tried to share a bit of responsibility with my students and involve them in the process of learning. They acted as if I am incompetent or unable to manage the class properly. Although new textbooks are apparently interactive, not much is really happening in our language classes in practice and it is the teacher who should shoulder all the responsibilities.

T 19: Such power relationships have been established in our educational system for a long time. The teacher is encouraged to play the role of an authority figure who is responsible for transmitting the knowledge. I see myself as being capable of bringing changes to my classroom through the principles of post-method pedagogy, yet at the same time, I guess we have used to such roles for so many years now and it is not possible to change the traditional ways of thinking and behaving easily...Unfortunately, this leads to further passivity and demotivation on the part of students.

The Absence of Critical Thinking Skills among Students

Another major obstacle indicated by teachers is that critical thinking ability has not been sufficiently developed among students. The autonomy of learners as advocated by post-method is related to their

ability to think and act independently, resisting the dominating forces and moving towards emancipation and egalitarian society (Schmenk, 2005). In this sense, this concept is closely related to the previous category in the sense that critical thinking demands learners to step out of their passive roles and promotes in them the ability to expand their understanding and self-awareness and use the acquired competence to question the inequalities and deep-rooted assumptions.

T 2: *The culture of criticizing has not found its place in our educational system yet.*

T 8: *I think most of the learners are completely ignorant of what is happening around them. Moreover, criticizing is considered as taboo and is not prevalent in the classroom. Nevertheless, it's fair to say that teachers have to take part of the blame as they rarely made an attempt to tap learners' critical abilities and analytical powers...but this is also due to the fact that such issues are not strongly emphasized by our system of education and learners are not ready to take responsibility for their own learning either.*

The Dominance of Transmission Model of Teacher Education in Iran

The participants maintained that such programs are based on the top-down model of teacher education in which predefined and prescribed knowledge is transmitted from teacher educator to instructors. Teachers mostly claimed that these courses are not designed to update their knowledge or integrate new approaches in their teaching.

T 5: *It is vital for teachers to become aware of the most current concepts and thinking approaches in their field. That is, at least parts of such programs must be dedicated to the recent developmental changes in English language teaching and teacher education. Instead, the classes that I have attended were purely lecture-based.*

T 9: *In spite of the existence of much debate over the application of post-method pedagogy in an educational context, nothing much has been discussed about it in these courses. In fact, applicants must be*

provided with opportunities to discuss and reflect on such issues and use them to enrich their teaching repertoire.

The Inefficiency of the Textbooks

Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the limited content of EFL textbooks since they provide teachers with working plans that does not allow the teacher to discuss broader topics or engage learners in sociopolitical issues. In fact, teachers maintained that due to the highly structured syllabus and content, they were not able to deviate from textbook materials.

T 10: Our EFL textbooks do not follow the requirements that are advocated by post-method pedagogy. They do not reflect the real-life topics to engage the learners. Even with new textbooks that are supposedly CLT-based, we are still working on reading, writing, and grammar by making use of techniques such as translation and repetition. In fact, the books do not provide teachers with much space to engage the learners in broader sort of topics.

T 16: We do not benefit from rich instructional material to integrate what is practiced by post-method pedagogy in our daily teaching. If I want to do so, I need to develop my own materials which are really time-consuming. On the other hand, I don't think it will be appreciated by school authorities. Overall, it's a futile attempt.

Teacher's Focus on Coverage and Grade Pressure

Most of the participants complained about the pressure to cover the required materials and make students ready for testing. What can be inferred from the teachers' statements is that the high school educational system suffers from the negative washback effects of standardized testing in which teaching is adjusted in a way that meets the requirement of the examinations. Accordingly, to avoid negative consequences at all costs, teachers mostly restrict their pedagogical instruction to those points that are highly valued in the examination.

T 1: With a load of work that we are supposed to do and great importance that is attached to the issue of grading by the educational system, no time is left for teachers to focus on issues such as

implementing post-method pedagogy in our classes. It is very unfortunate to note that teacher's success is often assessed objectively by means of students' pass rates.

T 16: *Contrary to my preferences, I have to tailor my teaching to the final examination. This is disappointing, because I have to limit my teaching to the skills and knowledge that is demanded by the test. I should adjust my time and focus on covering the specified materials and this can actually explain why I'm not thinking of using alternative approaches such as post-method pedagogy in my classes.*

The Demanding Nature of Post-method Pedagogy for Teachers

In general, participants referred to the fact that they may lack adequate professionalism that is demanded by this pedagogy.

T 3: *Post-method pedagogy is very demanding and I feel I need excessive knowledge and expertise to be able to implement this pedagogy in my teaching practice.*

T 6: *I think conducting a post-method class with regard to three parameters of this pedagogy is very difficult with respect to the constraints that we are dealing with in our centralized system. I think even if teachers have the necessary prerequisites, they will face resistance from stakeholders and policy makers, simply because such dramatic shifts in roles and responsibilities are not favored by them.*

Discussion

Analysis of the themes derived from the qualitative data revealed that in general, the majority of the participants believed that the current ELT system is not congruent with post-method principles and that it seems very far-fetched for this trend to become implemented in our context. According to teachers' statements all the decisions on materials, lesson plans, tasks and modes of assessment have been taken by authorities and curriculum planners in advance which does not leave them with any space to pursue their autonomous roles. This can undoubtedly make teachers lose creativity and enthusiasm to proceed with their jobs. Teacher's autonomy plays a central role in post-method pedagogy. In fact, Kumaravadivelu (2005) regarded it as the hearth of this pedagogy.

He further stated that the goal of teacher autonomy is not the reproduction of preplanned package of knowledge but “creating and re-creating personal meaning when they exploit and extend their intuitively held pedagogic beliefs based on their educational histories and personal biographies” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.551). Nevertheless, teachers claimed that their authorities have been taken for granted and that they have no voice in educational decisions. In this way, they will not have much space to use their personal initiative and perform freely. Instead, they are compelled to act within the requirements of prescribed syllabus. In a sense, it can be argued that teachers are trapped in a dilemma between their preferred way of teaching and the one that is favored by educational policy makers, where they are asked to rely excessively on the curriculum to meet the objectives.

In addition, preserving one’s position was stated as another potential obstacle. Teachers stated that they prefer to take a neutral stance and stay away from political issues to keep their working position. They do not seem to be very much interested in playing the role of politically informed educator and tend to keep their conservative attitude toward such issues. This is simply to avoid being negatively influenced by undesirable consequences. As stated by Akbari (2008b), the teacher sometimes feels obliged to bypass some controversial topics because they are rooted in the tradition of the society and questioning them will cost a teacher lost his or her career. Expressing similar ideas, Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009) maintained that teachers are not interested in political issues that may jeopardize their lives, either personally or professionally. In a sense, our educational society is still ruled by specific rules and norms that cannot be easily changed. In other words, “the conservative forces that control the education and society at large have tried to keep critical ideas out of school curricula and classrooms” (Akbari, 2008b, p. 278).

Furthermore, the majority of participants in the study stated that learners got used to their passive roles and are not open to change. The role of learners is reduced to one that engages in the process of rote

learning, which is simply based on memorization and repetition. Kumaravadivelu (2006) believed that helping learners gain a certain amount of control over their learning can trigger them to become involved in decision making and feel the responsibility for their own learning which can ultimately lead to independence and self-reliance. However, as can be inferred, the ideal language classroom that is favored by the proponents of post-method pedagogy goes beyond the linguistic and socio-political knowledge and awareness of students who are mainly submissive of teachers' orders. As Izadinia (2009, p. 10) stated

Getting used to passively receiving the seemingly best knowledge from the upper position, the oppressed develop a sense of silence, submissiveness, and obedience. Putting aside exploring questions, the minds of students will be completely closed towards the deeper and hidden layers of education, that is finding a voice in a society.

Closely related to the issue of passivity is absence of critical thinking skills among learners which was stated by teachers as another major obstacle on the way of post-method implication. Language classes are still seen as a means to improve students' grammatical skills and ignore the fact that "...language is constructed by the ways learners understood themselves, their social surroundings, their histories and their possibilities for the future" (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p.1). Smyth (2000) stated that teachers need to encourage students to analytically question the existing beliefs and provide opportunities for inquiry by giving them the time to reflect on social, cultural and political inequalities. Meanwhile, teachers should refrain from presenting themselves as the sole source of knowledge and remain positive and open to students' challenges and criticism. If higher order thinking and reasoning skills are developed in learners, they will be able to deal with complexities and intellectual challenges of the modern life (Fahim & Ahmadian, 2012). Unfortunately, many teachers in the study believed that students are not capable of questioning the world around them and hence, did not feel the need to foster such skills in their learners. This problem is not limited to our ELT context, as Sert (2006) argued that

critical thinking has not been emphasized overtly in the educational system of many Asian countries.

Teachers also complained about the transmissive nature of teacher education programs and claimed that such courses do not benefit from innovative approaches and were mainly conducted in a lecture-based manner. Obviously, the current programs may not contribute to the implementation of post-method pedagogy since teachers are expected to implement the same transmitted knowledge without serious analysis of its relevance to their respected educational contexts. More specifically, while a more practical approach that is sensitive to educational, social and cultural considerations is required, what teachers in many service programs receive is mainly theoretical and decontextualized (Akbari, 2008a). Hence, English teacher education programs are not capable of training post-method teachers. The findings are in line with that of Fahim and Pishghadam (2009) who concluded that the focus of Iran's teacher education remains positivistic with a major focus on skill transmission.

The inefficiency of the textbooks was another obstacle mentioned by the participants in the study. In Iran, the ministry of education is responsible for material development for all levels which forces teachers to organize classroom activities in line with the textbook requirements. In addition, textbook writers are required to follow special guidelines and avoid controversial topics. As stated by Ashari and Zarrin (2014) political issues affected the process of preparing the materials of the books and authors' choices, which is generally expected in countries that emphasize on achieving standards in school. By the same token, Pishghadam and Saboori (2013) stated that textbooks often reveal an underlying administrative decision which highlights the political investment and direction of policy-makers. According to Akbari (2008a), many of the available textbooks are sanitized and neutralized to satisfy the market potential. He further stated that such commercially produced coursebooks lack the required sensitivity to address the sociopolitical concerns of the society and raise students' awareness regarding broader issues. This is because such materials do

not aim to raise student's self-awareness, but mainly intended to bring about the highly specialized view of various disciplines (Aliakbari & Allahmoradi, 2012). Most instructional textbooks present sterilized knowledge which addresses harmless topics that paves the way for teachers to teach based on banking model of education. They actually take the freedom from teachers and provide them with a specified plan that defines how language should be taught and learned (Akbari, 2008a). That is, even if teachers do not follow a specific method, the textbooks provide them with an exact working guide that takes their freedom to act in accordance with the requirements of post-method pedagogy.

Furthermore, the majority of participants stated that they are influenced by negative washback effects of examinations and were made to regulate their teaching practices based on the demands of these exams. In this sense, they are deprived of exercising their autonomy as a post-method teacher about how best to teach the course; instead, as the only legitimate and acceptable norm in Iranian test-driven education system, they are mainly trying to prepare students to pass these tests. In other words, to preserve their professional status and satisfy the needs of learners, testing comes ahead of learning and teaching and teachers try not to diverge from such accepted practices (teaching to the test) since it is regarded as a measure of their teaching efficiency. In this regard, it is not surprising to see teachers closely align their classroom instruction with the content and format of the standard examination to help their students perform well in the exams. Such impositions limit teachers in practicing their preferred way of teaching as advocated by post-method pedagogy and downgrade their roles to be matched with the requirements of the test. As stated by Ghorbani (2012), the impact of tests is inevitable in a teacher-centered and textbook-oriented education system of Iran, where teacher's pedagogic practice is dominated by high stakes national tests.

Finally, teachers referred to the overall demanding nature of post-method pedagogy. It is hard for teachers who constantly face pedagogical and administrative constraints to act in compliance with

the assumptions of this pedagogy. In fact, the educational context of Iran is not supportive enough to help EFL teachers tackle various pedagogical constraints as a post-method teacher. On the other hand, teachers might lack the required knowledge and expertise to take the role of transformative intellectual who engage in critical inquiry and acts as a change agent striving for better teaching and learning context. Arias Coronado (2014) argued that to play the role of post-method practitioner, teachers need more professional training that help them “recognize, test, criticize and refine their personal teaching practices in an objective and reliable way, which at the same time can derive in autonomous and well-oriented teaching practices.” (p.155). The participants of the study believed that although following the ideas proposed by this pedagogy seems alluring and desirable, in effect, it will be too burdensome for teachers to put it in practice. Apart from teachers’ competency and knowledge, this pedagogy requires certain educational and sociopolitical preconditions for its application, which is currently missing in our ELT community. That is, teachers shall not be considered as the only factor in terms of impracticality of post-method pedagogy due to their limited established roles because as stated by Spratt (2005), “Teachers, like everyone else, operate within an ideological, historical, economic and political context that affect their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.” (p. 23).

Overall, the results of this study are in line with the findings reported by Fahim and Pishghadam (2009) who concluded that it seems very questionable that this new trend can affect the educational setting of Iran as the country follows a conservative and decentralized education system. The outcome is also supported by Pishghadam and Mirzaee (2008) who claimed that postmodernism cannot be put into practice at any level due to the centralized education system which limits the role of teacher to a technician who should cope with instructional and administrative demand at any cost.

As previously mentioned, a model was induced after close examination of the interview data with the participants in which three categories were identified and can be presented as follows:

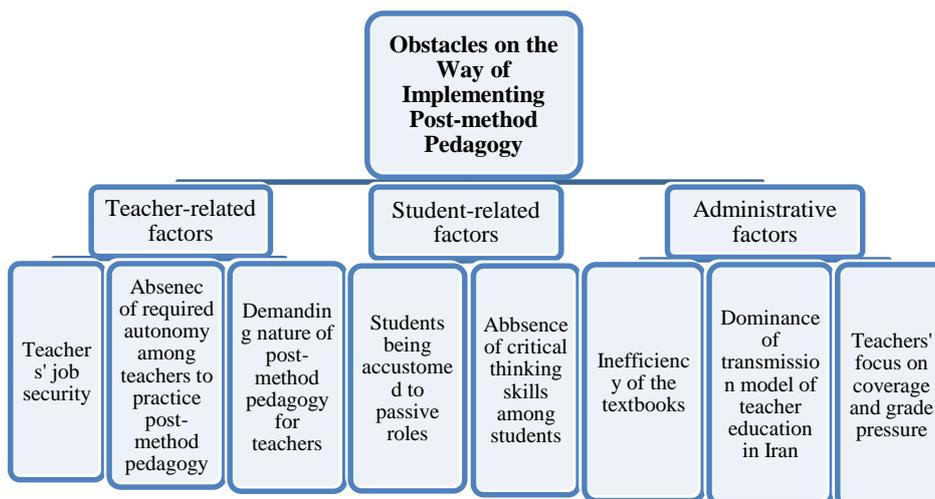


Figure 1. The emerging model for the perceived challenging factors in implementing post-method pedagogy

Conclusion

In this paper, we reported the status of post-method and investigated the extent to which its principles and concepts are considered applicable in the educational context of Iran. In the light of insights gained from teachers' comments, post method pedagogy has not been substantiated well in the Iranian ELT context and the results of this study raises considerable doubts over the feasibility of the three parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility. The present scenario of ELT in Iran does not follow the recent development in the field and the national curriculum requires fundamental reconsideration and revision to meet the demands of an idealistic post-method classroom. Various constraints of the institutions, time, methods, textbooks and evaluation system do not leave teachers with opportunities to move beyond the imposed restrictions. Regardless of the sources of limitations, the demanding competencies of an autonomous and reflective practitioner require a substantial level of skill and understanding about the theoretical and pedagogical aspects of language teaching.

On the other hand, teacher training programs in Iran are hardly effective and it is not expected to direct teachers towards successful implementation of the most appropriate teaching regulations in the

classroom. They are no more than conveying the usual methods in teaching English without any attempt to consider the teachers' ideas and assumptions in shaping their own philosophy of teaching. Considering the importance of teacher education, strengthening such programs seems vital in familiarizing teachers with the latest theoretical and practical changes that are occurring in the field. It is time to put an end to the fantasy of applying the trendy methods and provide teachers with opportunities to practice their own theories and reflect on their teaching experiences. This will gradually help them to arrive at an understanding that no particular teaching model can meet the demands of all learning situations. In developing autonomous and skillful teachers, there is a need to shift the focus and concentrate more on teachers' critical roles with respect to their contextual demands. Nevertheless, mere focus on such programs seems inefficient. To resolve some of the mentioned challenges and provide better conditions for teachers, constant cooperation among different level of educational stakeholders is seriously required.

To conclude, the emergence of post-method pedagogy in this centralized and limiting system of education seems far-fetched and it can be argued that the current stance of ELT in Iran does not support the requirements of implementing this pedagogy due to various pedagogical and contextual constraints. The study may contribute to the existing literature by drawing Iranian ELT community's attention to the existence of local needs that is facilitated by practicing post-method condition and it is expected that responsible policy-makers and stakeholders utilize the study to rethink, reconsider and reconstruct their views of English language teaching and adopt alternative ideologies and theories to improve the quality of education for English language teachers in Iran. As such, it is hoped that the study paves the way for new measures that may be planned to take place in the structure of English Language Teaching in Iran in the near future.

References

- Aboulalaei, M. H., Poursalehi, J., & Hadidi, Y. (2016). The familiarity of EFL teachers with post-method: Considering their field of study. *English Language Teaching*, 3(1), 89-109.
- Akbari, R. (2008a). Post-method discourse and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(4), 641-652.
- Akbari, R. (2008b). Transforming lives: Introducing critical pedagogy into ELT classrooms. *ELT Journal*, 62(3), 276-283.
- Aliakbari, M., & Allahmoradi, N. (2012). On Iranian School Teachers' Perceptions of the principles of the Critical Pedagogy. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 4(1), 154-171.
- Allwright, D. (1991). *The death of the method (Working Papers No. 10)*. Lancaster, England: The University of Lancaster, The Exploratory Practice Center.
- Alvarez, R., & Urla, J. (2002). Tell me a good story: Using narrative analysis to examine information requirements interviews during an ERP implementation. *The DATABASE for Advances in Information Systems*, 33(1), 38-52.
- Arias Coronado, B. (2014). Post-method pedagogy as an alternative to autonomous and well oriented teaching practices. *Enletawa Journal*, 7, 145-158.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C. & Sorenson, C. (2010). *Introduction to research education* (8th ed.). New York: Wadsworth.
- Ashari, N., & Zarrin, N. (2014). Problems in using communicative language teaching in Iran and possible solutions. *Technical Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, 4(4), 257-266.
- Best, W.J., & Kahn, V.J. (1998). *Research in education* (8th ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Crandall, J. A. (2000). Language teacher education. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 20, 34-55.

- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fahim, M., & Ahmadian, M. (2012). Critical thinking and Iranian EFL context. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(4), 793-800.
- Fahim, M., & Pishghadam, R. (2009). Postmodernism and English language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 1(2), 27-54.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Seabury Press.
- Gholami, J., & Mirzaei, A. (2013). Post-method in EFL teaching in Iran: Barriers, attitudes, and symbols. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 1(2), 50-64.
- Ghorbani, M. R. (2012). Controversy over abolishing Iranian university entrance examination. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 1(2), 139 – 152.
- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hazratzad, A., & Gheitanchian, M. (2009). EFL teachers' attitudes towards post-method pedagogy and their students' achievement. *Proceedings of the 10th METU ELT Convention*.
- Izadinia, M. (2009). *Critical pedagogy: An introduction*. In P. Wachob (ed.), *Power in the EFL Classroom: Critical pedagogy in the Middle East*, 7-16. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Khatib, M., & Fathi, J. (2012). Post-method pedagogy and ELT teachers. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 2(2), 22-29.
- Kolb, S.M. (2012). Grounded theory and the constant comparative method: Valid research strategies for educators. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3(1), 83– 86.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The post-method condition: Emerging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 27-48.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a post-method pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(4), 537-560.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2005). *Understanding language teaching: From method to post-method*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). TESOL methods: Changing tracks, challenging trend. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 59-81.
- McMorrow, M. (2007). Teacher education in the post-methods era. *ELT Journal*, 61 (4), 375-377.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2004). *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (1989). The concept of method, and politics of language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(4), 589-618.
- Pishghadam, R., & Mirzaee, A. (2008). English language teaching in post-modern era. *Teaching English Language and Literature*, 2, 89-109.
- Pishghadam, R., & Saboori, F. (2013). Construction, Validation, and Application of a Teacher Status Scale (TSS): A Case of Iranian Junior High School Teachers. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 2(2), 1-26.
- Prabhu, N.S. (1990). There is no best method-why? *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(2), 161-176.
- Sadeghi, S., & Ketabi, S. (2009). From liberal ostrichism to transformative intellectual: An alternative role for Iranian critical pedagogues. *ELTED*, 12, 52-60.
- Saengboon, S. (2013). Thai English teachers' understanding of post-method pedagogy: Case studies of university lecturers. *English Language Teaching*, 6(12), 156-166.
- Schmenk, B. (2005). Globalizing learner autonomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(1), 107-118.
- Sert, N. (2006). EFL student teachers' learning autonomy. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8(2), 180-201.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research*. London: Sage publications.
- Smyth, J. (2000). Reclaiming Social Capital through Critical Teaching. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100 (5), 491-511.

- Spratt, M. (2005). Washback and the classroom: The implications for teaching and learning of studies of washback from exams. *Language Teaching Research*, 9 (1), 5-29.
- Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Tekin, M. (2013). An investigation into novice English teachers' views and beliefs about method and post-method pedagogy in Turkish EFL context. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 4(4), 55-69.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zeng, Z. (2012). Convergence or divergence? Chinese novice EFL teachers' beliefs about post-method and teaching practices. *English Language Teaching*, 5 (10), 64 -71.

