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Postmethod Pedagogy and Its Democratizing Influence on Method

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Abstract

This article evaluates the method, which is a product of continuing efforts in language teaching and the quest for optimal instructional approaches, and the subsequent postmethod era that emerged in response to it. The analysis explores the democratizing impact of the postmethod paradigm within this context and handles its philosophical foundations, parameters, macrostrategies, and the evolving roles of teachers, learners, and teacher educators. By examining the interdependent cause-effect relationship between method and postmethod frameworks, the study highlights the limitations of the postmethod era. It investigates how democratization transforms this process to address its constraints. Through this lens, the article aims to reframe understanding of the postmethod revolution, proposing renewed perspectives on its future evolution by proposing “Glocal Language Teaching Approach”.

Keywords: Method, Postmethod Era, Postmethod Pedagogy, Glocal Teaching, Democratization

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Yöntem Sonrası Dönem ve Yöntem Üzerindeki Demokratikleştirici Etkisi**Öz**

Bu makalede, geçmişten günümüze dek süregelen dil öğretme çabasının ürünü olan ve dil öğretiminin en iyi biçimde nasıl yapılacağı arayışı ile ortaya çıkan “yöntem” olgusu ve bu olguya tepki olarak ortaya çıkan “yöntem sonrası dönem” düşüncesi tartışılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, yöntem sonrası düşüncesinin oluşturduğu demokratikleştirme etkisi değerlendirilmekte, yöntem sonrası eğitiminin felsefesi, parametreleri, büyük ölçekli stratejileri ile öğretmen, öğrenci ve öğretmen eğitimcilerinin rolleri ele alınmaktadır. Yöntem ve yöntem sonrası yapıların arasındaki, birbirine bağlı, neden-sonuç ilişkisi ele alındıktan sonra, yöntem sonrası dönemin sınırlılıkları vurgulanmaktadır. Demokratikleşmenin, bu süreci sınırlılıklarına çözüm sunacak biçimde nasıl dönüştürdüğü araştırılmaktadır. Bu bakış açısıyla makale, yöntem sonrası anlayışını yeniden çerçevelemeyi ve "Küresel-Yerel Dil Öğretimi Yaklaşımı"nı önererek yenilenmiş bakış açıları önermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yöntem, Yöntem Sonrası Sönem, Yöntem Sonrası Eğitim, Küresel-Yerel Dil Öğretimi Yaklaşımı, Demokratikleşme

Introduction

The long efforts to identify the best method in English language teaching have historically been shaped by a top-down, knowledge-centered framework that has aimed at universal applicability across diverse contexts. However, this prescriptive approach often failed to yield consistent outcomes due to the unique characteristics of specific contexts. This led to efforts to impose standardized methods through teachers onto inherently variable settings. Over time, new methods were continuously trialed, yet factors such as learners, teachers, and contextual nuances remained peripheral rather than central to pedagogical design.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) radically declared the end of the "methods era," asserting a transition to a postmethod paradigm. He argued that methods are now obsolete and proposed an alternative framework grounded in three parameters—*particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility*—further operationalized through ten macrostrategies. This postmethod pedagogy redefines the roles of teachers, learners, and teacher educators as autonomous agents. It

emphasizes teachers' and learners' critical, observational, and exploratory engagement through action research. Prabhu (1990) reinforced this change, positing that teachers, guided by the principle of *plausibility*, are the primary architects of pedagogy in the postmethod era because their contextual synthesis of different methods and settings produces practices that can be applied to different contexts. This view led to *Principled Eclecticism*, which is widely adopted by educators who are in search of context-responsive approaches.

Contrastingly, Bell (2003) contested the notion of methods' obsolescence. He claimed that methods such as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which prioritizes context, learners, and teachers, remain attainable and prevalent. He emphasized that methods and the postmethod paradigm exist in a dialectical relationship, mutually fostering each other rather than displacing one another. Aligning with this view, this article puts forward that methods are not extinct but enduring, with the postmethod era acting not as a replacement but as a democratizing influence that reconfigures methodological perceptions. Furthermore, while postmethod pedagogy, which is driven by universal principles and teacher plausibility, offers solutions, it risks isolating teachers without any guidance of structured method-era pedagogical doctrines. Thus, this study emphasizes the necessity of balancing teacher autonomy with supportive, method-informed scaffolding to prevent pedagogical dilemmas, and presenting a new approach.

This article investigates how postmethod pedagogy disrupts centralized, method-driven approaches to language teaching, emphasizing its potential to democratize method-driven approaches and educational practices. By empowering teachers as theorizers and learners as active participants in the learning process and by giving great prominence to the local, postmethod pedagogy has the potential to transform the pedagogical process in a bottom-up direction, inspiring a hopeful vision for the future of language education.

Method

The Critical Hermeneutic Approach combines traditional hermeneutics (interpretation of meaning) with critical theory (analysis of power, ideology, and social structures). Unlike classical hermeneutics, which focuses on understanding texts in their historical context, critical

hermeneutics asks who controls meaning, how language sustains power imbalances and whose voices are marginalized in interpretation. Therefore, the study employs a critical hermeneutic approach (Gadamer, 1975) to analyze the intersection of postmethod pedagogy and democratic education principles, synthesizing key theoretical frameworks to propose a model for language-teaching practices that can provide equality. By comparing Kumaravadivelu's postmethod principles with basic democratic principles, this study suggests a framework for democratizing language education through teacher-learner cooperation with a context-dependent view.

Discussion

Method Era

The concept of *method* has long played a central role in language teaching, though its definition has evolved across scholarly discourse. Anthony (1963) conceptualized method as a systematic, approach-driven plan for language instruction, operationalized through classroom techniques. Pennycook (1989), however, critiqued methods as tools reinforcing societal power structures, diminishing teacher agency, and enabling institutional control over classroom practices. In contrast, Prabhu (1990) framed method as encompassing both classroom activities and the theoretical foundations—beliefs, principles, and *plausibility*—underpinning them.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) expanded this discourse, defining methods as time-bound frameworks that minimize individual variation and are acquired through formal training. They positioned method as an umbrella term integrating three components: *approach* (theoretical foundations), design (curricular and material organization), and procedure (implementation strategies). Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2003a) further reconceptualized the method, arguing that it represents monolithic principles and prescriptive practices imposed on teachers by theorists rather than emerging organically from classroom realities. This critique positioned method as a top-down construct divorced from contextual adaptability.

Transition from Method to Postmethod

The term *postmethod* was first introduced by Pennycook (1989) and later expanded upon by scholars such as Prabhu, Allwright, and Stern (Islam & Schuci, 2017). Prabhu (1990) contends that no universal "best method" exists, as pedagogical effectiveness depends on variables

including learner demographics, contextual conditions, and instructional objectives. He emphasizes that because of the inherent diversity of teaching contexts, distinct methods suit distinct populations and settings. Consequently, the focus should shift from seeking a singular "best method" to identifying contextually optimal practices—a shift that supports innovation rather than methodological chaos.

Richards (1985) reinforces this view, and he advocates for systematic *situational and needs analyses* that account for variables such as learners, teachers, institutional resources, and sociocultural dynamics. He stresses the importance of authentic target language materials, localized attitudes, and goal-oriented frameworks, cautioning that rigid adherence to any single method suppresses pedagogical flexibility, that is, hinders pedagogical flexibility. Watkins (2014) reproduces this critique, noting that no teaching manual should imply a monolithic approach to language instruction. Instead, teachers must avoid dogma, develop their skills through reflective practice, and adapt solutions to context-specific challenges that may occur contextually. However, he acknowledges that novice educators benefit from using established practices while developing experiential expertise in local contexts. While multiple approaches exist, Geyik (2020: 134) strongly advocates for the integration of authentic materials across all language skills, emphasizing that such materials enable learners to more effectively discern and internalize linguistic features in a meaningful context.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) declares the advent of the *postmethod era* and rejects the notion of method altogether. He reframes language education through a transformative lens, prioritizing teacher autonomy, contextual responsiveness, and a macrostrategic framework over prescriptive methodologies. This shift redefines teacher education, emphasizing *plausibility*, which is teachers' ability to synthesize theory, practice, and context, as the cornerstone of effective pedagogy.

Postmethod Pedagogy

Kumaravadivelu (2001) states that the dissatisfaction environment experienced after the repeated consideration of the concept of method and the transition to a teacher education model necessitated the formation of postmethod pedagogy in second language teaching. The postmethod

era presents some possible frameworks that include strategies for classroom practices (Islam and Schuci, 2017). To develop postmethod pedagogy, one should consider Stern's (a) three-dimensional framework, Allwright's (b) exploratory practice framework, Kumaravadivelu's (c) macro-strategy framework (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), and Prabhu's principle of plausibility. Stern viewed the theory as neutral and the method as neutral, suggesting that the method could be overcome through an integrated curriculum structure. Allwright, on the other hand, emphasized the quality of the conditions within the classroom rather than developing teaching methods (Islam and Schuci, 2017). Only Kumaravadivelu (2001) has comprehensively evaluated the postmethod era and well-reflected the structure of education during this period.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) replaced the limited concept of method with three educational concepts: particularity, practicality, and possibility, conceptualizing post-method pedagogy parameters under three headings.

a) Particularity: A context-sensitive language education based on local linguistic, sociocultural, and political peculiarities should be a structure that facilitates progress.

b) Practicality: By allowing educators to construct their own theories, it suggests that the role relationship between theorists and practitioners should be bottom-up rather than top-down, meaning that teachers should be the ones applying theories and also re-theorizing their discoveries through their observations and experiences. This approach eliminates the gap between theory and practice. Here, it is also stated that theorists should actually draw from teachers.

c) Possibility: The possibility variable indicates that the student brings with them to the classroom many factors that constitute their identity, such as their experiences, sociocultural structure, emotional state, gender, race, economic structure, traditions, and similar elements, and that language education should take these into account when developing theories for second language teaching. The three variables mentioned here are interconnected and influence each other (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Kumaravadivelu (2006) has identified 10 large-scale strategies to concretize this philosophy in practice, considering the parameters mentioned above, in the context of post-method pedagogy. These are a) maximizing learning opportunities; b) ensuring reciprocal interaction; c) minimizing perceptual mismatches; d) activating intuitive discoveries; e) increasing language awareness; f) contextualizing linguistic input; g) integrating language skills; h) supporting learner autonomy; i) ensuring social relevance; j) enhancing cultural awareness. Kumaravadivelu (2006) states that teachers can create their own classroom activities using these macrostrategies. Kumaravadivelu (2003) argued that postmethod pedagogy's variables of particularity, practicality, and possibility are alternatives to overcoming the marginalizing effects of the colonial structure of the method and that the framework of large-scale strategies also has the potential to contribute to postcolonial educational projects. Kumaravadivelu's (2003) extensive evaluation is based on viewing the method era through a colonial lens. Kumaravadivelu (2001) assigns roles to students, teachers, and teacher trainers, in addition to proposing parameters and large-scale strategies for eliminating this colonial structure.

Roles Of Students, Teachers, And Teacher Educators In The Postmethod Era

The Student's Role

In the post-method era, the student is autonomous. This autonomy has been addressed under three headings. The first is the concept of academic autonomy, where students define their own strategies and styles, create their own learning approaches by applying them, compare these with processes used by successful language learners, take responsibility, show eagerness to learn, evaluate their own class performance, and make changes in their learning accordingly. Secondly, it is the concept of social autonomy, which refers to aspects such as receiving feedback on points they struggle with through dialogues, collaborating with other students on a project they are working on, and communicating with proficient speakers of the language by participating in socio-cultural activities and conversing with other students. Finally, it is the concept of liberatory autonomy, which emphasizes that they become critical thinkers, recognize socio-political barriers, and possess the necessary intellectual tools to overcome these barriers. These three types of autonomy contribute to the development of students' academic skills, intellectual abilities, and social awareness, enabling them to overcome the challenges they may encounter both inside and outside the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

The Teacher's Role

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), just as post-method students are autonomous, post-method teachers are also autonomous. An autonomous teacher is someone who is self-confident, reasonably competent, willing to develop and work, sensitive to educational contexts in socio-political conditions, and capable of developing their own practice theories. Teachers contribute to the process of self-improvement through exploratory research (Allwright, 1993), the teacher research cycle (Freeman, 1998), and critical classroom observations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Additionally, in their research, they gather questions and surveys that include students' psychological attitudes and socio-political concerns, learning strategies and styles, conduct classroom observations, learn a lot from student profiles, compile researchable questions in terms of subject and structure, and explore the sociolinguistic aspects of students. Teachers generate and reproduce personal meaning, in addition to using parameters formed by the variables of particularity, practicality, and possibility. As Islam and Schuci (2017) state, in the post-method era, teachers convey that when they choose their own teaching paths, they cannot take the risk of choosing what they want because they need to keep some principles and procedures necessary for conducting an effective lesson in mind. Teachers have expressed that it is difficult for them to become completely independent from their past experiences, post-method pedagogy frameworks, and the structures formed by traditional methods. This multifaceted structure requires teachers to act as evaluators, observers, critical thinkers, and theorists. This multifaceted approach is dragging teachers into complexity and leading to the selective approach of the past. "The teacher's sense of plausibility" can enhance efficiency because it becomes more involved in the educational activity and improves the good relationship between the teacher and the student (Allwright, 1984).

The Role of Teacher Educators

Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that during the methodical period, a top-down approach was used, providing teachers with ready-made models and methods, but after the method, the opposite situation occurred, with a bottom-up approach emerging from practitioners, which is more original and involves the instructor's views in the process. The teacher educators realize their role in the postmethod era. First, instead of lecturing about Bloom's Taxonomy or Vygotsky, they ask, "How might this theory clash with your students' reality?" sparking dialogue, not dogma.

Second, they connect new teachers with mentors, online communities, or even a coffee chat with a colleague halfway across the world; for example, a meeting on LinkedIn. Third, during a lesson planning workshop, they might spark new questions in their minds: “Why does the textbook only feature one dominant culture? What if we centre migrant workers’ voices instead?” Fourth, they translate abstract terms like “sociocultural theory” into actionable strategies. Finally, they bridge the ivory tower and the classroom, helping teachers design grassroots studies. Imagine a 3rd-grade teacher partnering with a university to test gamified grammar lessons. This isn’t just professional development; namely, it’s a quiet revolution.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that cultivating autonomous, self-directed teachers requires replacing *knowledge-transmission models* with *inquiry-driven frameworks*. While teachers serve as primary agents of curricular transformation (Kennedy, 1999), teacher educators operate as external yet essential catalysts, challenging institutional inactivity and nurturing teachers' capacity to synthesise theory, practice, and context.

However, this transition demands rigorous adaptation, so teacher educators must relinquish traditional authority and embrace instead a *co-constructivist stance* that acknowledges teachers' experiential expertise. Similarly, teachers wrestle with being isolated from entrenched methodological paradigms, even as they innovate. Kumaravadivelu (2001) frames these challenges not as impediments but as necessary tensions in the decolonisation of language pedagogy.

Method In The Postmethod Era

Postmethod perspectives critique *method* as a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all construct but acknowledge its enduring influence on classroom practice (Block, 2001; Liu, 1995). While rejecting rigid methodological dogmas, these perspectives recognise that methods retain organisational utility for TESOL practitioners, structuring pedagogical principles and classroom procedures (Bell, 2003). Prabhu (1990) reframes eclecticism not as selecting distinct methods for distinct contexts but as integrating diverse methodological elements within *the same context*. Hammerly (1991) initially championed eclecticism as a pragmatic synthesis of effective

practices, but Kumaravadivelu (1994) later critiqued its unprincipled application and argued that uncritical adoption of multiple methods leads to pedagogical incoherence and theoretical vacuity.

This tension is exemplified in novice teachers, and it is emphasised by Islam and Schuci (2017). They observe that inexperienced practitioners, lacking methodological grounding, often struggle in "directionless eclecticism," and this highlights the necessity of structured frameworks. Sbai (2016) distinguishes two forms of eclecticism. The first one is random eclecticism, which is an ad hoc adoption of techniques based on trial-and-error experimentation. The second one is principled eclecticism, which is an intentional integration of methods guided by theoretical frameworks such as Stern's (1992) three-dimensional model or Kumaravadivelu's (1994, 2003) macrostrategies.

Mellow (2002) submits *principled eclecticism* as a postmethod imperative, which includes a pluralistic yet coherent approach prioritising critical evaluation of methods' sociohistorical legacies and alignment with localised needs. Kumaravadivelu (1994) emphasises that such eclecticism demands teachers act as *transformative intellectuals*, systematically assessing methods through the lenses of *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility*.

Paradoxically, the postmethod era remains method-contingent. Its critique of method presupposes method's conceptual and historical scaffolding (Bell, 2003). As Richards and Rodgers (2001) note, methods provide foundational knowledge for teacher development, even as postmethod pedagogy reconceptualises their role from prescriptive scripts to heuristic tools.

Reconceptualizing Method And Postmethod Pedagogy

Prabhu (1990) advocates a paradigm shift in evaluating pedagogical "best practices," arguing that notions of efficacy must be perpetually recontextualized to resist prescriptive universalism. Akbari (2008) states postmethod pedagogy as inherently *democratic*, decentralizing authority by centering teachers' voices, experiential knowledge, and autonomy in decision-making. This democratization aligns with broader postmodern shifts in education, where top-down institutional mandates give way to bottom-up, practitioner-driven praxis (Bell, 2003).

Bell (2003) frames postmethod pedagogy as a product of late modernity, intersecting with progressive educational philosophies such as Deweyan experiential learning, student-centered inquiry, and multicultural critical pedagogy (Winch & Gingell, 1999). These traditions converge in Kumaravadivelu's (2001) *particularity parameter*, which prioritizes context-sensitive, locally-rooted teaching practices. Oprandy's (1999) analogy to human-centric urban planning further illustrates this shift. According to his analogy, just as cities evolve through participatory design, language pedagogy thrives when teachers and learners co-construct methodologies grounded in their sociocultural realities.

Building on Emini's (2014) idea that democratic regimes rely on popular sovereignty, the post-method era reflects a similar shift. Kumaravadivelu (2003) and Bell (2003) draw parallels between the post-method era and the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism, emphasizing the importance of local contexts and grassroots movements. This shift mirrors the democratic principle of self-expression, where the legitimacy of education is derived from local contexts rather than external impositions. The postmethod era also aligns with Kumaravadivelu's (2003) framework of particularity, practicality, and possibility, which values local and contextual practices while remaining sensitive to global influences.

Again, in the post-method era, as Kumaravadivelu (2003) points out, while learning a language that is a Lingua Franca, a language that has become universal, the in-class practices, materials, and guidance, taking into account all local structures, show a transformation towards an egalitarian structure by being nourished locally, that is, a transformation towards the principle of equality in democracy.

In the post-method era, however, the entire burden is placed on teachers, that is, it is left to their discretion. Although the method involves a bottom-up approach, teachers will not only be burdened with making choices but will also need to ensure unity in the materials, content, and assessment they will use. To achieve this, there needs to be a hierarchy shaped by teachers, students, and context, which is a bottom-up approach, as well as a guiding movement from the top down that combines different discourses nourished by people, local contexts, and the environment. This is more applicable to the evaluation and syllabus design aspects of language

teaching structures that Nunan (2015) mentioned while discussing the structures of the curriculum. The third element mentioned by Nunan (2015), methodology, should be shaped by the local context and, in turn, nourish the local context. Here, the transformative effect of democracy on fair decision-making is observed (Emini, 2014).

In the post-method era, it has been expressed that the local structures, which will be formed by teachers and students, will be shaped by the representatives of teachers at the regional and national levels and the language education policy decisions they will make. For the evaluation and content, material creation, and evaluation sections, the determination of content materials and evaluation principles at the regional or national level, based on the method desired and guided by the local, reflects the influence of democracy on the institutionalization of the local. In the postmethod educational structure, it will be necessary to evaluate the results of observations, critical, and experimental reports received from the local context and to establish a unifying and guiding (superior) structure in three areas—namely, materials, content, and evaluation—during the teacher's very intensive process. This guiding structure will not be coercive but rather will become a democratic structure that nourishes itself, as it will integrate what comes from the local and feedback it back to the local. It can be expected to have a mechanism that is guided by the local, nourishes the local teacher with their common feedback, communicates with each other, adopts a democratic structure, and is constantly changing with the universal principles formed by the post-method era, shaping together with the local. The power of accumulation that methods derive from the past is undeniable, but the deadlock that methods encounter cannot be overcome without a post-method perspective.

As Bell (2003) said, when we reduce the issue solely to Communicative Language Teaching Skills and try to weave everything around it, it will lead to confining this democratic structure of the post-method era to boundaries and managing it with only a few small rights given locally on a small scale, resulting in its inability to fully express itself. At this point, what I want to add is that it is a structure that is closer to principled eclecticism but is continuously evolving through critical, experimental, and observational methods in the postmethod era as proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003).

In the postmethod era, one of the best examples of a structure that will nourish the bottom-up principles is the study conducted by Breen and colleagues (2001) among 18 teachers

in Australia. Their research revealed connections between classroom practices, teacher beliefs, pedagogic principles, decision-making, and ongoing thinking processes. The aforementioned bottom-up movement, as outlined in the table, will be systematized at the upper level, shaping formative mechanisms through the logic of feedback and guidance.

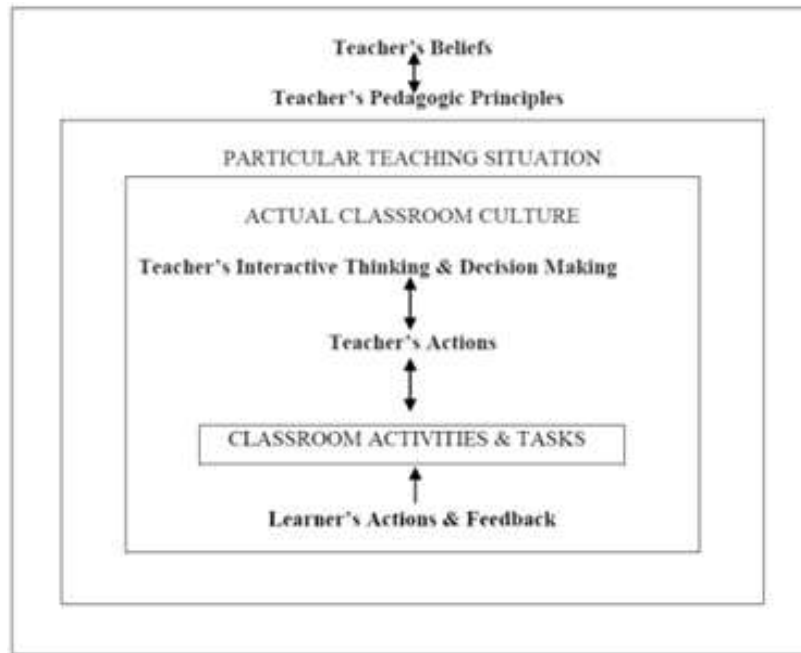


Figure1. Teacher positioning and classroom practices (Breen, 2001: 473)

This bottom-up process, when systematized through feedback circles and policy-informing mechanisms, fosters sustainable pedagogical ecosystems where teachers' plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) drives institutional transformation.

Conclusion

Kumaravadivelu's (2003) incisive critique of the method era situates English language teaching within a colonial matrix—a system perpetuating scholastic, cultural, linguistic, and economic hierarchies. To dismantle this matrix, he calls for epistemic decolonization: resisting the marginalization of non-Western knowledge systems and transcending the self-marginalization engendered by idealizing “native speaker” norms. Postmethod pedagogy emerges as a liberatory project, empowering teachers to reclaim local epistemologies, including context-rooted practices,

materials, and assessments, while reconfiguring the "Self" (formerly colonized subjects) as co-constructors of pedagogical knowledge rather than passive recipients of Methods.

Postmethod pedagogy enacts what Kumaravadivelu (2001) terms transformative autonomy, displacing top-down, center-driven methods with bottom-up, dialogic frameworks. This democratization mirrors democratic governance, including plurality, which integrates diverse voices in curriculum design and policy-making; iterative legitimacy, which sustains pedagogical relevance through continuous critical reflection, experimentation, and observation; and finally collective agency, which positions students, teachers, and teacher educators as co-investigators in knowledge production. Bearing this in mind, we can conclude that both democracy and postmethod pedagogy emphasize principles of empowerment, participation, and flexibility. We can consider that just as democracy empowers individuals to have a voice in governance, postmethod pedagogy empowers teachers and learners to take control of the learning process. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to create context-sensitive strategies (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), similar to how democratic systems encourage localized decision-making (Dewey, 2011). In both systems, active participation is key. Democratic societies thrive on the involvement of citizens, just as effective language learning thrives on the active engagement of both teachers and students. Freire (1970) supports this idea in his critical pedagogy, where he emphasizes learner empowerment and active participation to strengthen the link between democracy and education. Another view is that democracy allows for a diversity of opinions and adaptable governance. Similarly, postmethod pedagogy advocates for adaptable teaching strategies that respond to the unique needs of learners.

As a result, a new hybrid framework may emerge that aligns with the requirements of the post-method era. This framework would first establish local teacher councils to synthesize classroom insights into regional or national policy frameworks. Second, it would allow peer networks to share critical reflections and experimental outcomes. Third, it would ensure dynamic scaffolding, providing teacher educators with conceptual tools, including both Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies and the Method era knowledge heredity. By combining two periods and benefiting from the Method era experiences with a view of postmethod era democratized effect, new and versatile teaching and learning environments can be formed to teach language

considering local and the universal together. This new model can be called “Glocal Language Teaching Approach”, which will unite both local and universal. In the coming studies, this approach can be rationalized in detail.

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