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Algerian Educational System at the Crossroads of Language Pedagogies: Is it High Time a Post-Method Pedagogy Was Contemplated?

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Abstract

In the Algerian EFL context, the pendulum of education has been swinging incessantly between what was otherwise touted by their fervent proponents as well established, tried and tested methods and approaches. This paper however endeavours to set out the underlying factors leading to the demise of the seemingly basic yet elusive concept of 'method'. What is more, it elaborates on the essentials and characteristics of a post-method pedagogy that set it much apart from any method-based pedagogy. Most importantly, the paper urges policymakers, syllabus designers, teacher educators, and teachers in our country to eschew the teaching methods -they seem to swear by- in favour of a post-method pedagogy that has, of late, revolutionized the language teaching and learning enterprise in many parts of the world.

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1. Introduction

Good-quality education is oftentimes regarded as a reliable yardstick against which one can measure the economic prosperity and social well-being of a given country. The obverse is true: a bad-quality education, though, eventually gives rise to an economically backward society. Reforming our education system therefore should be topping the list of our priorities. This can be carried out through acquainting ourselves with the latest theories and research outcomes relative to the broad field of pedagogy.

In recent times, language learning and teaching, our chief concern in this paper, have undergone massive conceptual shifts tilting the balance in favour of a post-method pedagogy and away from method-based pedagogy. The latter is now considered largely obsolete, if not 'dead', due to being riddled with so many setbacks and imperfections. What perhaps makes a post-method pedagogy tower over any other pedagogy is, *inter alia*, its potential for transcending the limitations of any method and creating a context-specific atmosphere that is highly conducive to language learning. As it was not uncommon practice borrowing and adopting the various methods and approaches, especially during their apogee, it is about time those in charge of our educational system gave due consideration to the current trend in language learning and teaching, namely the post-method pedagogy.

Though quite early, at this very juncture, it would be imprudent to evade answering the following pertinent question: given that our educational system is doubtless fully conversant with most of the current educational policies around the globe, which have become 'anti-method', is it doing enough to toss method-based pedagogies to a post-method pedagogy instead? The answer is, to the best of our knowledge, an emphatic 'NO', at least thus far! In addition to the previous question, this paper seeks to answer the following fundamental questions:

1) What does a method really signify?
2) What are the major limitations and criticisms of the methods and approaches?
3) What are the essentials and features of a post-method pedagogy? and why is it important to implement it in preference to any other method-based pedagogy?

The answers to all the above-mentioned questions, whether explicit or understated, will feature in the discussion below.

2. A Glance at History

Within the realm of foreign language (FL) teaching and learning, the last century was deemed the 'methods age' par excellence. This period, in the main, stretches back to the early 1840s during which the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), the first method ever advanced, emerged and gradually gained credence. The Grammar-Translation Method was also known as the Classical Method or the Prussian Method because of its German origins. As the name denotes, GTM rests upon, among other things, extensive *grammar* instruction and *translation* in order to teach a target language (mostly Latin and Greek back then). Though still used in some parts of the world, the

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enthusiasm for the GTM started to wane towards the mid and late nineteenth century following a growing sense of disenchantment on the part of specialists. The changing geopolitical and, most significantly, economic landscape in Europe, warranting good oral proficiency skills (overlooked by GTM) to maintain effective business communication, had prompted linguists to cast a massive doubt on the utility of GTM and start looking for novel, ingenious ways to reform language teaching and learning. The joint efforts of several linguists such as Henry Sweet in England, Wilhelm Viëtor in Germany, and Paul Passy in France resulted in what came to be known as the 'Reform Movement' (Richard & Rodgers, 2014).

The Reform Movement signalled a seismic paradigm shift in how language teaching and learning should be approached. Heavy emphasis on the study of phonetics and the spoken language was one of the paramount outcomes of the Reform Movement. Given the outcomes of this movement, the proliferation of intensive linguistic studies, at the outset of the twentieth century, eventually gave birth to a vast array of methods and approaches– incompatible theoretically yet fairly similar practically–each of which sought to improve language learning and teaching. These approaches, be they functional or structural, include the Competency-Based Approach, the Natural Approach, the Lexical Approach, etc. The methods, on the other hand, include, but not confined to, the Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, the Silent Method, and even Eclecticism. Nearly all policymakers, syllabus designers, and program developers from around the world, including ours, vied to 'shop' for one of these methods and approaches with a view to obviate the need to develop their own. They seem to have overlooked the special socio-cultural contexts (mostly in the United States) wherein these approaches and methods emerged– contexts starkly different from ours.

The limitations of method-based pedagogies -which are not hard to find- have made the concept of methods highly susceptible to serious assaults on the part of educationists and practitioners. The scholars who launched those assaults, mainly towards the end of the twentieth century, have ultimately professed themselves hugely dissatisfied with the concept of *method* and eventually pronounced it dead (Stern, 1983; Widdowson, 1990; Prabhu, 1990). Already dead and interred, many a scholar set about searching for an alternative to 'method' that is far removed from the intricacies and rigidities of the previously devised methods, i.e., a post-method pedagogy. They further delineated the conditions and characteristics of the post-method pedagogy and came up with theoretical frameworks that went beyond the limitations and constraints of method-based pedagogies (Stern 1983; Allwright, 1991; kumaravadivelu, 1994). Further details about the concepts of methods and the major criticisms heaped on it will be explored next.

3. Demystifying the Construct of Method

It is downright impossible to arrive at a common consensus over an exact, inclusive definition for the word 'method'. Aside from its basic, literal sense, the term as currently used in the literature on second

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and foreign language teaching and learning means otherwise. Richards and Rogers (2014) argued that a method refers to "the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning" (p. 1). In a similar vein, Bell (2003) contended that there are three distinct definitions for the term 'method'. The first definition, narrow as it may seem, suggests that a method is *smorgasbord of ideas*: "a grab bag of classroom practices" (p. 326). The second definition, however, views a method as a *prescription for practice*: "a fixed set of classroom practices that serve as a prescription and therefore do not allow variation" (p. 326). The third definition was attributed to Richards and Rodgers (2001) who perceived methods as an umbrella term encompassing the following closely interrelated concepts: approach, design, and procedure. It follows then that despite the slight nuances in the aforementioned definitions, the very construct and implementation of 'method' really smack of rigidities. By dint of its prescriptive nature, which gives little room, if any, for pedagogical flexibility on the part of teachers, the latter is invariably expected to follow slavishly and adhere minutely to the rules and principles generated by learning theorists. A successful teacher, from the vantage point of method gurus, is a person who regards his/her experiential knowledge as a matter of peripheral concern, and who unquestioningly applies the rigid principles and techniques of a given method in their language classrooms exactly as prescribed to them by theorists and authorities in the field.

Kumaravadivelu (2006), on the other hand, posited that the concept of method, albeit at the heart of the language teaching and learning enterprise, is still cloaked in mystery. This bears testimony to the sheer difficulty scholars face when it comes to deciphering the concept of method and what it specifically entails. In effect, we are no doubt far from exhausting the concept of method in these few lines. Given the definitions stated above, and a multitude of others, one can safely conclude that as there is no unanimity amongst experts as to what exactly constitutes a method, the latter will, over the long haul, remain frustratingly nebulous. With such a fuzzy, vague notion in mind, the teachers' practical implementations of the methods in their language classrooms will remain extremely questionable. Overall, this once again proves to be one of the major limitations of the methods. Do we have yet more? The answer is in the affirmative. They are sketched in below.

4. Limitations of Methods

At the turn of this millennium, a staggering number of educationists started to inveigh against the concept of method and eventually lost faith in it. Kumaravadivelu (2003) argued that the concept of method is "too inadequate and too limited to satisfactorily explain the complexity of language teaching operations around the world" (p. 29). In a similar vein, Pennycook (1989) opined that methods have diminished rather than enhanced our understanding of language teaching. Teachers and teacher educators around the globe have voiced out their dissatisfaction with the concept of method in different ways. Based on his theoretical

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and experiential knowledge, Stern (1985), a pioneer in the field of education, concluded that the concept of method is "unproductive and misguided" (p. 251). Likewise, Clarke (1983) contended that the inflated image of methods rings hollow and is nothing short of "a label without substance" (p. 109). Given these realizations, and a host of others, the construct of method was ultimately declared dead and buried (Allwright, 1991; Brown, 2002). In essence, all the professions stated above, a handful though, amount to a simmering discontent amongst many experts over the concept of method and its practical implications. What perhaps seemed to have undermined these scholars' previously unwavering, evangelical faith in the concept of method, to the extent of declaring it dead, was an inordinate number of severe limitations and deficiencies inherent in it. The most serious of which are detailed further down.

Prior to detailing those imperfections, it pays to touch on the frequently held misconceptions of methods amongst their staunch advocates. The most pernicious of them regard methods as ideology-free constructs that are highly likely to attend to the needs and wants of language learning classrooms irrespective of their specific socio-cultural and historical contexts. These misconceptions and exaggerated claims were considered as *professional articles of faith,* or worse still, as *myths.* These myths and so many others have created a grossly inflated, unusually idealized picture of the concept of methods, hence ensuring their long-term survival. Nevertheless, when subjected to rigorous scrutiny both theoretically and practically, mainly at the turn of this century, scholars were able to expose the limitations of methods whereby they shattered the proponents' misplaced, blind faith in them.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) claimed that the success or failure in language teaching by no means hinges upon the implementation of methods as the key factor. Behind such a claim is a considerable number of severe limitations. First, methods were heavily criticized for their 'top-down', prescriptive nature. Put plainly, both teachers and students, passive as they are, should follow minutely the prescribed principles and techniques of the methods. In accord with this very criticism, Omaggio (1986) considered a method "as a 'prepackaged' set of procedures to which everyone is expected to slavishly subscribe" (p. 44). As such, teacher autonomy and teacher creativity, of paramount importance, were deemed foreign to method-based classrooms, largely because prospective teachers, Zeichner (1983) tells us, are primarily considered as mere consumers of professional knowledge (the knowledge conceived by the theorists) who had no part whatsoever in decision-making bearing on the substance and direction of their language programs. The exact same holds true for learners who had absolutely no say on the decisions made about their learning journeys, and whose feedback was deemed highly irrelevant and therefore not welcome. Worse still, in most method-based language classroom, student-centeredness is utterly out of place.

Another telling criticism centers on the methods' total disregard of contextual factors. When applying these methods, teachers turn a negligent eye to a wide range of important contexts, such as the

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cultural context, the political context, the local institutional context, and the context created by both teachers and students. What is more, methods also tend to ignore the interaction of a variety of other factors such as teacher cognition, learner perception, societal needs, political exigencies, economic imperatives, and institutional constraints, all of which can determine the success or failure language teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). There is no denying the fact that most of the methods and approaches adopted around the world are derived from a western knowledge base whose socio-cultural contexts are far removed from ours. The successful implementation of a method in a given country does not necessarily guarantee its success in another. Thus, the claim that methods can linger wherever adopted, regardless of the varied contexts, is quite unfounded, to say the least.

Scholars have also bitterly denounced the concept and application of method on account of the fact that most methods and approaches lack research basis. Put otherwise, most of the claims made by pro-method experts about how languages are learned are not based on second language acquisition research nor have they been tested empirically (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). This again proves that, contrary to popular belief in the scholarly circles, most methods are not sufficiently grounded in science. Although most of these methods were the products of renowned theorists and intellects, lacking a sound scientific basis has doubtless undermined their credibility amongst educationists and practitioners alike. Another major criticism, however, concerns the similarity of classroom practice. That is, though they appear to contrast one another, in actual practice, these methods are proven far from different. The advent of a new method usually came as response to the shortcomings and imperfections of the previous methods. This implies that the set of principles and techniques proclaimed by the new method is starkly different from those of the previous method(s), yet the practical applications of all these methods were more than little similar.

No conspiratorial rhetoric intended, it must be admitted that methods have always been pushing a colonial and imperial agenda. Brown (2002) lamented those quasi-political and mercenary agenda and concluded that, based on work in the power and politics of English language teaching, methods are created by a 'powerful center' often to target the disempowered periphery by means of what Phillipson (1992) labelled as 'linguistic imperialism'. The powerful center represents the most developed countries and former colonizers, most notably Britain and US, and the periphery communities are economically disadvantaged third world countries who fell prey to western colonization. As another, perhaps more detrimental, dimension of imperialism, the powerful center is pushing for the dissemination of English to every part of the world, oftentimes by means of education and media, for the sake of keeping the periphery countries (third world countries) subjugated linguistically, culturally, and by implication, economically. Kumaravadivelu (2006), likewise, argued that the spread of English has been aided

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and abetted by imperial and colonial projects. This colonial agenda, embedded in the very concept and application of method, has indubitably wreaked havoc on various peoples' social cohesion and national pride. It has always worked towards the gradual annihilation and erosion of the indigenous people's rich linguistic and cultural diversity.

The limitations and drawbacks hitherto discussed, among others, have brought the century-old obsession over methods to a grinding halt. Should we then declare the concept of method dead and gone and prepare a 'eulogy'? Too early for that. The method concept, albeit ailing, is still embraced eagerly in many parts of the world, including our country. It has resisted the fierce winds of change if only because the newly emerged anti-method movement came under suspicion and has been impeded by the deeply entrenched classroom practices on the one hand and the educational institutions apathy on the other. Moving to our Algerian EFL context, what comes next is an attempt to prove yet again that the implementation of methods and approaches is of little utilitarian value. We will be discussing the limitations of the competency-based approach, the current formally adopted approach in Algeria at the elementary and secondary levels.

4. The Competency-Based Approach and its Drawbacks

The Competency-Based Approach (CBA hereafter) was the zeitgeist of the 1970s henceforth, whose influence over the field of language teaching and learning was undeniably all pervasive. It was considered as state-of-the art and a significant breakthrough in adult ESL (Auebach, 1986). Historically, Competency Based Education (CBE) is an educational movement that started in The United States of America in the 1970s in response to the limitations of methods and approaches of the time, not least the Objective-based Approach. Probably the most exhaustive definition for CBA is the one proposed by Parker and Taylor (1980) who maintained that Competency-based Approach is "a performance-based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society" (pp. 12-13). This approach was primarily designed for professional and social purposes to help the hordes of immigrants from different linguistic and geographical backgrounds fully and successfully assimilate into the American society. Ensuring their rapid integration into the society entailed the mastery of certain competencies which usually comprised the components of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

Owing to an international obsession over this approach, the Competency-based Approach threaded its way to the Algerian EFL context in 2003 following the 2002 educational system reforms. Prescribed as a proper, longed-for remedy, CBA was appointed as a handpicked, worthy successor of a series of methods and approaches, viz. the Aural-Oral Approach, Objective-Based Approach, the Communicative Approach, etc. The CBA was later on slightly adapted to fit the particularities of the Algerian context. In the Algerian secondary school English language syllabus, for instance, a *competency* is regarded as a composite of three core components: knowledge (savoir), know-how (savoir-faire), and

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know-how to behave (savoir-être). More precisely, they represent the integration of the *knowledge of language*, *language skills*, and *social skills* to be able to use English appropriately in different contexts and situations. These components are embedded in the three language abilities addressed by the Algerian EFL Syllabi: (1) interacting orally in English; (2) interpreting oral and written texts; and (3) producing oral and written texts.

Admittedly, CBA possesses many virtues one should extol; these may include flexibility, individualized learner-centered instruction, learner autonomy, paced learning, to name just a few. Nevertheless, aside from these merits, very much like any other approach or method, the Competency-based Approach is not without demerits. The latter are not confined to the Algerian context. Since it has behaviourist offspring, whose prime aims are observable behaviors and performance, Competency-based Approach does not focus on mental processes of learning, hence inhibiting thinking skills (Aurebach, 1986). Therefore, once again, students' creativity and critical thinking are sidelined and have no place in competency based language classes. Further, through instilling certain values, attitudes, and social roles, Richards and Rogers (2001) highlighted that competency-based approach is a prescriptivist approach giving rise to powerless learners who would act as passive citizens, accepting the status quo rather than challenging it.

Preston (2017) carried out a frontal attack on the very nature of CBA deeming it a 'theory of non-learning', not only a threat to learning but also an existential threat. He argued that CBA lends itself well to business not to humanity, and that it speeds up processes of the capitalization of humanity and the caging of its capacities in a digital frame. Moreover, Richards and Rodgers (2001) considered CBA as a reductionist approach contending that "dividing activities up into sets of competencies is a reductionist approach, and that the sum of the parts does not equal the complexity of the whole" (p. 148). Additionally, CBA is said to impose certain norms, values and behaviours on learners. Evoking the US context during the 1970s, when the concept of CBA was still in infancy, CBA was adopted to teach the mass of non-native immigrants flocking to the land of opportunities (USA) seeking far better life and job opportunities. Culturally speaking, CBA contributed to the *Americanization* of those immigrants by virtue of teaching and imposing certain norms and values utterly alien to them. This again proves how CBA, in its intrinsic nature, instills and promotes the supremacy of the western culture over other cultures.

Much to our dismay, due to the severe dearth of large-scale, longitudinal studies bearing on the outcomes of CBA implementation in Algeria, we are yet unable to lay bare more serious drawbacks of this approach that are specific to our Algerian EFL context. Research in this field is, then, an extremely fertile ground for those interested. The results of any study of that kind might not necessarily be dissimilar from the findings of the most renowned researchers already cited here. Overall, in view of all aforementioned drawbacks -by no means the only ones-, which vastly outweigh the benefits of CBA, we can only leap to the following

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inescapable conclusion: CBA, very much like any other approach or method, appears inherently not capable of guiding us through the intricacies of the language learning and teaching enterprise. Nor is it able to attend to the multifarious, problem-laden language classrooms around the world. Eclecticism, however, was believed to have the magic wand to put things right. In what comes next, we will learn how substantiated that claim is.

5. Eclecticism: Ultimate Panacea or Method in Disguise?

The specialists' age-old search for the 'best method' has unpredictably paid no dividends. The methods have dramatically failed to attend to the various teaching and learning wants, needs, and situations, hence falling short of their enthusiasts' expectations. Method gurus -angst ridden as they were- have refused, rather obstinately, to emancipate themselves from the shackles of methods, taking it upon themselves to persist in searching for the best one. Nonetheless, because classroom realities were in large measure different from what the methods postulated, language teachers resorted to adapting and adopting different features from different methods. The rationale behind such an unprecedented pedagogical practice is the urgent need to compensate for the shortcomings of adhering to just one single method when teaching. The teachers, after trying and testing a wide range of methods and approaches, have become fully conversant with, or so they thought, what works and what does not in their language classrooms. Thus, they developed their own method and called it 'eclectic method', aka *eclecticism*. It follows then that eclecticism, though seemingly broader in scope, is another method dressed in camouflage.

In crude terms, the merits of eclecticism far outnumber those of the other methods; the latter had bequeathed a legacy of virtually insurmountable problems and deficiencies still inherent in the former. Although he hailed teachers refusal to commit to any method or approach -calling themselves *eclectic*- Widdowson (1990) argued that eclecticism has no value whatsoever if it denotes the random, improper use of techniques from different methods. Indeed, what badly hampers any efforts to successfully implement eclecticism in language classrooms is that the teachers lack any adequate training on how to be responsibly eclectic, i.e., what to adapt/adopt from the methods and what not. Following another line of argument, Stern (1992) maintained that eclecticism offers no criteria upon which we can include or exclude parts of the existing methods. This methodological mish-mash has no merit whatever. It worthy of note that the eclectic decisions made by the teachers are, more often than not, based on their intuitive judgement and are therefore not always trusted (Stern, 1992). Moreover, what makes eclecticism an incredibly nerve-racking experience for most teachers is the fact that they need to try their hardest to strike a balance between the techniques and principles prescribed to them by theorists and the techniques and principles they themselves derived from their experiential knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

In a nutshell, following the brief discussion above, we can safely say that wrestling to the ground all the monumental challenges of language classrooms via

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eclecticism -another method- is beyond the realm of possibility. Accordingly, all repeated attempts to come up with the best methods will, in full measure, prove futile and should hence be abandoned. Nunan (1989) frowned upon the concept of 'right method' and counselled to consign it to oblivion. Likewise, Prabhu (1990) believed that our incessant search for a best method- which replaces the other methods- amounts to working towards an 'unrealizable goal'. Our efforts instead should be geared towards finding new ways to help teachers and students become autonomous and active participants in decision-making in order to break free of the rigidities of method-based classrooms. Eventually, an anti-method movement that passionately embraced that very principle and sought to nudge away method-based pedagogies was brought to the fore: it was called a post-method pedagogy. The discussion, henceforth, will center on the post-method pedagogy and the features that set it much apart from other pedagogies.

6. Post-Method Pedagogy: An Anti-Method Movement

The full-scale, practical and philosophical war waged against method-based pedagogies has ultimately come to fruition, not least through laying the foundation of the new budding post-method pedagogy. Prior to that, the scholars' deep dissatisfaction with the concept and application of method -to the degree of declaring it 'dead'- had culminated in what came to be known as the post-method condition. This condition empowered theorizers and practitioners to search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method. Granted, synthesizing the essentials of a coherent post-method pedagogy is mainly accredited to Kumaravadivelu (1994) who presented these essentials in terms of pedagogic parameters (particularity, practicality, and possibility) and pedagogic indicators (post-method learner, post-method teacher, and post-method teacher educator). It is worthy of note that his synthesis draws heavily on the theoretical frameworks developed by renowned scholars towards the end of the twentieth century, most notably Stern's (1983) Three Dimensional Framework and Allwright's (1991) Exploratory Practice Framework. The essentials of a post-method pedagogy are nothing short of a treasure house for curriculum designers and textbook writers, in any country including ours, who aspire to revolutionize their language education classrooms. More importantly, the features and fundamentals of a post-method pedagogy are detailed below.

6.1. Language Classrooms: Context-Specific Learning Spaces

Building a context-specific language classroom is arguably the most important feature of a post-method pedagogy. Any pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities of non-stand speakers of English is totally irrelevant and doomed to failure (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). A context-sensitive (context-specific) language education emanating from the practice of particularity is 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" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). The

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essence of a context-specific classroom is therefore antithetical to the very essence of methods, which claims that one set of techniques and principles is deemed quite sufficient for the attainment of a set of teaching aims and objectives. For a more successful language classroom, we need to foster an awareness of the local, educational, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts. These varied contexts should be taken into account by our policymakers and syllabus designers prior to drawing up an effective teaching agenda.

This very aspect, nonetheless, has had no place in teacher-centered, method-based pedagogies. One of the severe limitations of these pedagogies, as we have seen thus far, lies in their gross negligence of the wide variety of contextual factors inextricably linked to any language teaching and learning settings. Due to the fact that nearly all methods have been the product of western intellects, tried and tested under conditions and socio-cultural realities that are massively different from ours, implemented by institutions and teachers whose wants, needs, and situations are dissimilar to our own, one can safely say that not even the most charitable of optimists would expect these methods to be up to par when applied in our specific Algerian context. A quick glance at the syllabi of middle and secondary school English classes, which are CBA oriented, reveals clearly that the instructional content and the competencies targeted are in large part far removed from the learners' realities and socio-cultural milieu. Because Algerians have linguistically, culturally, and geographically diverse backgrounds, using the same method and content to teach them is tantamount to an educational genocide, as it were. The competencies that we as Algerians need to develop should not necessarily be akin to those advanced by the method (CBA) and taught elsewhere in the world. Therefore, creating a context-specific language classroom that takes account of the particularities of our teachers, learners, institutions, and socio-cultural environment is perhaps the best way to decolonize our education, boost our educational system, safeguard our cultural identity, and buffer the backwash of globalization.

6. 2. Learners: Autonomous and Active Participants

In method-based pedagogies, which were mostly teacher-centered, language learners were perceived as empty vessels, passive recipients of knowledge. Their role was hugely marginalized and they were deprived of their otherwise basic, inalienable right to participate actively in any decision-making process. A post-method pedagogy, however, aims at assigning a leading, meaningful role to learners and treat them as active, autonomous learners. Learner autonomy, within the scope of a post-method pedagogy, as claimed by Kumaravadivelu (2006), has a narrow view and a broad view. The narrow view includes the learners' capacity to learn to learn and the broad view develops in learners the capacity to learn to liberate. *Learning to learn*, otherwise known as academic autonomy, means that the learners need to take charge of their own learning by judiciously using all manner of learning strategies at their disposal to maximize their language learning potential. Perhaps the most comprehensive taxonomy of these

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learning strategies, learners can draw upon, is the one proposed by Oxford (1990). She classified learning strategies into two major categories: direct learning strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies) and indirect learning strategies (meta-cognitive strategies, social strategies, and affective strategies). Teaching learners how to learn effectively, through these learning strategies, will make them autonomous learners and will relieve the teachers of some burdensome pedagogical duties thrust upon them.

On the other hand, *learning to liberate*, aka liberatory autonomy, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006), implies empowering learners with the requisite cognitive tools to help them realize their full human potential in order to be able to challenge their socio-cultural impediments. By helping learners become critical thinkers, we are bridging the gap between what they learn and experience in their classrooms and what they actually need to overcome the complex realities they experience in their socio-cultural milieu. However, within the scope of method-based pedagogies, not least the CBA, the rigid set of principles and techniques prescribed by the methods makes it quite difficult for students to develop critical thinking skills. The post method pedagogy comes to challenge this status-quo and places high premium on providing the students with the necessary intellectual tools that would permit them to solve real-life problems. Another dimension added by the post-method pedagogy concerns shared decision-making. Previously, the learners were no more than passive recipients of knowledge from their teachers, and what maintained this status-quo was the 'top-bottom' model and prescriptive nature of the whole teaching and learning enterprise, as dictated by method based classes. A post method learner, instead, has almost equal value as the other participants (teachers and teacher educators) and is therefore allowed to give his/her opinion and feedback on what to learn and how to learn it. Hence, a post method pedagogy ensures that curriculum designers, teacher educators, and teachers involve all learners in the decision-making.

6. 3. Teachers: Autonomous and Active Professionals

In most method-based pedagogies, the language educational process revolved, in large measure, around the teachers whose sole job was to execute meticulously the instructional duties thrust upon them. They were no more than passive recipients and transmitters of the method-based professional knowledge (theorizers' knowledge) prescribed to them. The personal theories that they generated out of applying the professional knowledge of experts and the experiential knowledge they gained over the years as teachers were callously disregarded and intentionally dismissed as matters of no particular importance. In a post-method pedagogy, however, teachers occupy an instrumental role in the pedagogical activities as well as the decision-making processes. In other words, the post-method teacher is an autonomous teacher par excellence. The post-method teachers are required to engage in ongoing self-exploration, self-reflection, and self-assessment processes in order to foster their autonomy. These

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processes are, no doubt, paramount not only to an effective fulfillment of the teachers' pedagogical responsibilities but also to their active participation in decision-making. As such, the teachers are encouraged to develop their own personal knowledge (their own theories) and then practice it in their language classrooms. In other words, a post method teacher should be encouraged to theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Brown (1997) suggested that the carefully crafted processes of diagnosis, treatment and assessment on the part of teachers are hallmarks of a principled approach to language teaching. In the process of theorizing their practice, teachers can engage in reflective thinking, what Freeman (1998) called *inquiry-oriented teacher research*. He defines it as "a state of being engaged in what is going on in the classroom that drives one to better understand what is happening—and can happen—there" (p. 14). Prabhu (1990), however, referred to it as teachers' *sense of plausibility*. Again, this practice was entirely absent within the scope of post-method pedagogies. Although the old adage that reads: 'teaching is learning' still rings true for most of our teachers nowadays, they are unfortunately unable-or perhaps made unable-to put into practice all the experiential knowledge they have accumulated throughout the years about what constitutes effective teaching and learning. This status quo has long been maintained by the rigidities of the methods, which tend to leave little room, if any, for teachers to apply their personal theories and beliefs in their language classrooms. Matter-of-factly, no one is more cognizant of the ins and outs of language classrooms than the teachers themselves; therefore, it behooves us all to inspire them with confidence and grant them more freedom to theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize.

The dynamic relationship between teachers and teacher educators (in our case: inspectors) is at the core of any educational process. Within the scope of method-based pedagogies, teacher education used to adopt a "top-down" approach whereby teacher educators transmitted a set of prescribed and predetermined body of knowledge (techniques, principles, and strategies) to teachers, novice or otherwise, who had no other choice but to follow them rather slavishly. Teacher educators (inspectors) were therefore entrusted with the tasks of training prospective teachers, acquainting them with the requisite teaching skills, suggesting ways to maximize their teaching potential, and evaluating their teaching practices. Put otherwise, theorizers and teacher educators were perceived as producers of knowledge, teachers as consumers of this knowledge. Such teacher education long-standing restrictive practice has given rise to generations of powerless teachers utterly bereft of any sense of autonomy and active involvement in decision-making, to the detriment of the entire language education process. Post-method pedagogy, nevertheless, seeks to revolutionize the concept of teacher education and consign all those questionable malpractices to the dustbin of history.

The Post-method teacher educator's ultimate goal is to inculcate necessary authority and autonomy in prospective teachers to assist them in engaging in self-

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reflection and self-development-of overriding importance for the success of language education (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Therefore, the interaction between the participants (teacher educators, prospective teachers, and even learners) should be, to use Bakhtin's (1981) terms, 'dialogic', instead of 'monologic'. This dialogic interaction permits each of the participants to have authority and autonomy that allow them to voice their thoughts and share their perspectives. By so doing, channels of communications and interaction, hitherto blocked between those participants, will eventually open up. A post-method pedagogy ensures that inspectors encourage teachers to think critically and share their personal knowledge and assumptions about what constitutes effective language teaching and learning. Teacher education can help transform the role of our teachers from mere consumers of professional knowledge to autonomous professionals and active participants in the decision-making processes.

The features discussed so far represent the essentials of a post-method pedagogy that transcends the limitations of method-based pedagogies. The latter are still overwhelmingly dominating the language education enterprise in many parts of the world, and we are no exception. It has been made crystal clear that this anti-method movement seeks to rid the language education classrooms of the deficiencies inherent in methods. Its mission is not only destructive but also constructive: constructive in the sense that it creates new conditions and assigns new roles to L2/FL participants that are far divorced of those created by method-based pedagogies. It is our contention, though, that the merits of method-based pedagogies pale into insignificance in comparison with those of the post-method pedagogy, of course if properly implemented. Our policymakers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, teachers and teacher educators are therefore called upon to contemplate the adoption of a post-method pedagogy should they aspire to revolutionize our language education classrooms.

7. Conclusion

Language education is an ongoing, ever-evolving, lively field of inquiry. A multitude of relevant theories, studies, books, and articles have proliferated over the years with a view to unravel the mysteries of language learning and teaching, account for their complexities, and put forward innovative ways to improve them. Scholars' efforts have given birth to a considerable number of seemingly conflicting, yet in some measure similar, methods and approaches. Each of which professed, rather pretentiously, to possess the miraculous remediation, the one-size-fits-all solution, to all language classroom predicaments. These methods and approaches went through endless cycles of life, death, and rebirth if only because they were replete with countless limitations and deficiencies. Nonetheless, towards the end of the last millennium, there had been a growing sense of disenchantment on the part of many specialists with this century-old obsession over method-based pedagogies. They unanimously agreed to 'lay to rest' the concept of method and deem it 'dead', and try instead to come out with an utterly new pedagogy that transcends the limitations of

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this very concept-hence the emergence of the post method pedagogy.

The overriding aim of this paper, already stated at the outset, is to advance the implementation of a post-method pedagogy in the Algerian EFL context. With that aim in view, the paper endeavoured to spell out the fundamental shortcomings inherent in the concept and practice of method, and posited that what was otherwise usually perceived as the royal road to successful language learning and teaching turned out to be a complete dead-end. It also argued that our incessant, painstaking search for the 'best method' is doomed to failure and will only breed recycling and repackaging of the same old ideas. Most importantly, in this paper, we tried to explicate the fundamentals and features of a post method pedagogy that seeks to revolutionize language classroom teaching and learning practices by virtue of assigning new roles to all L1/L2 participants (learners and teachers) in a context-specific language education environment.

This paper will, it is hoped, draw the attention of policymakers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, teacher educators, and teachers in our country upon the fundamental importance of contemplating a post-method pedagogy that lends itself well to our specific socio-cultural environment. Failing that, we are likely to keep lagging far behind most of the countries educationally and, by extension, economically. The bottom line then is the following: far from peddling generic advice, should we want our educational system to fare much better, it is time we steer clear of method-based pedagogies and embrace a post-method pedagogy instead.

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