WHY IS THERE NO BEST METHOD?

“Postmethod condition” by Kumaravadivelu (TESOL Quarterly, 1994)

Teachers should be empowered with knowledge, skill and autonomy to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent and relevant alternative to method. This alternative to method is informed by principled pragmatism, which focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal.

Prabhu (TESOL Quarterly, 1990) > a sense of plausibility

⇒ “subjective understanding of the teaching they do. Teachers need to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning” (p. 172).

This subjective understanding may arise from their own experience as learners and teachers, and through professional education and peer consultation. The notion of good or bad is misguided. What should count > whether the teacher’s sense of plausibility (their own personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning) is active, alive or operational enough to create a sense of involvement for both the teacher and the learner.

When a teacher’s sense of plausibility is active, it is necessarily open to change however slowly and imperceptibly > “real” teaching vs. “mechanical” teaching (overrutinisation of teaching activity = frozen sense of plausibility).

Prabhu > the enemy of good teaching is not bad method, but overrutinization (a teacher swears by a method and follows it slavishly)

A method should simply be seen as a highly developed and highly articulated sense of plausibility with a certain power to influence other specialists’ or teachers’ perceptions.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR L2 TEACHING (BY KUMARAVADIVELU)

Components: ten macrostrategies, which are broad guidelines, based on which teachers can generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques.
MACROSTRATEGY 1: MAXIMIZE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Creation of effective learning opportunities entails a willingness on the part of teachers to modify their lesson plans continuously on the basis of feedback.
- This can be done only if teachers treat a predetermined syllabus as a presyllabus that can be modified in order to meet specific learner needs.

MACROSTRATEGY 2: FACILITATE NEGOTIATED INTERACTION

- This macrostrategy refers to meaningful learner-learner, learner-teacher interaction in class.
- Negotiated interaction means that the learner should be actively involved in clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn-taking. It also means that the learner should be given the freedom and encouragement to initiate talk, not just react and respond to it.

MACROSTRATEGY 3: MINIMIZE PERCEPTUAL MISMATCHES

- There can be perceptual matches and mismatches between teacher intention and learner interpretation.
- We can distinguish the following sources of perceptual mismatches: cognitive, linguistic, cultural, evaluative, etc.

MACROSTRATEGY 4: ACTIVATE INTUITIVE HEURISTICS

- Learners should be encouraged to explore, analyze language by themselves. This goal can be achieved by providing them with a rich linguistic environment so that learners can infer certain underlying grammatical rules.
- Empirical studies > self-discovery affects learners’ comprehension more favorably than explicit presentation of underlying structural patterns regardless of the learners’ language ability.

MACROSTRATEGY 5: FOSTER LANGUAGE AWARENESS

- Language Awareness is a concept that combines the notions of consciousness-raising and input enhancement / a person’s sensitivity to and awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life.
- Traditional grammar teaching is teacher-oriented, linear, and hierarchical.
LA-based teaching is learner-oriented, cyclical and holistic.

**MACROSTRATEGY 6: CONTEXTUALIZE LINGUISTIC INPUT**
- It is essential to bring to the learner’s attention the integrated nature of language.
- One way of doing this is to contextualize linguistic input.

**MACROSTRATEGY 7: INTEGRATE LANGUAGE SKILLS**
- Language skills are essentially interrelated and mutually reinforcing.
- Fragmenting them into manageable, atomistic items runs counter to the parallel and interactive nature of language and language behaviour.

**MACROSTRATEGY 8: PROMOTE LEARNER AUTONOMY**
- Language learning is largely an autonomous activity, promoting learner autonomy is vitally important.
- Learners should be advised on how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct their own learning.

**MACROSTRATEGY 9: RAISE CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS**
- Traditionally, it is aimed at creating in the L2 learner an awareness of and empathy towards the culture of the L2 community.
- In cultural awareness raising both the teacher and the learner should be treated as a cultural informant.
- Goal: achieving a synthesis between the learner, the learner’s home country and the target cultural objective.

**MACROSTRATEGY 10: ENSURE SOCIAL RELEVANCE**
- This macrostrategy refers to the need for teachers to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning/teaching takes place.
- L2 learning is not a discrete activity, it is deeply embedded in the larger societal context that has a profound effect on it.