LANGUAGE TEACHING
IN VIEW OF POSTMODERN PARADIGM

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Abstract

The postmodern paradigm has developed very broadly. It has not only become a discussion in the field of philosophy but also influenced almost all fields of science, especially the socio-cultural sciences, including language teaching. This study aims to review how postmodernism affects language teaching and what effects it has on the language teaching and learning process, be it teaching a second or foreign language or teaching a first language. This is an analytic study using a literature review approach from written sources to describe the results and draw research conclusions. The results show that postmodernism has influenced language teaching, especially with the emergence of criticism of existing teaching methods and the raising of the critical question of whether teaching languages should use existing teaching methods or whether language teaching does not need to follow these methods. Criticism then gives birth to an understanding method of pedagogy that is based on communicative language teaching (CLT). Postmodern philosophy suggests that language teaching can be done with a combination of several existing methods or can also add new methods or techniques.

Keywords: language teaching; pedagogic post method; postmodern paradigm

1. Introduction

The development of philosophy always aligns with the development of human culture. It can even be said that philosophy influences socio-cultural science. One of the most influential philosophies in socio-cultural science is postmodernism. Lubis (2014) highlights that the postmodern paradigm is not only a discussion in the field of philosophy, but has also permeated and influenced almost all fields of science, especially socio-cultural science. This is clearly proven by various postmodern terms juxtaposed with other fields of science, such as postmodern art, postmodern architecture, postmodern literature, postmodern management, postmodern psychology, postmodern schools, postmodern political science, postmodern education, and others.

Postmodernism originally only developed in the field of architectural art in the mid-1970s, which was introduced by the art critic Charles Jencks to explain the anti-modernism movement. However, postmodernism then affected all aspects of human life, after Lyotard integrated it into philosophy as a form of distrust of *metanarratives* (Lyotard, 1979/1984: xxiv). This integration led to the emergence of a critical

movement (rereading) at the basis of human life (Sugiharto, 1996: 28–32). In other words, postmodernism is the basis for making paradigm shifts in all fields of science. The term "rereading" is then better known as *the "deconstruction method,"* which in many cases is promoted by Derrida.

As discussed earlier, *postmodernism* has penetrated all areas of life, including the world of education and teaching. The most noticeable thing that has changed in the world of education is the view that education is no longer understood as a knowledge transformation process controlled by schools only (formal education) but as an activity that can be done by anyone, anywhere. Schools are not the only institutions that have the right to education. Illich (2003: 33–34) says that the educational process will benefit from community liberation efforts that tend to deify schools, thus school activities are nothing more than a betrayal of enlightenment efforts.

The postmodern paradigm also affects the teacher-student relationship, moving it from *teacher-centered* to *student-centered.* This paradigm emerged in 1971 through constructivism theory, or cognitive development theory, developed by J. Piaget (Ling & Catling, 2012). The teacher is no longer the only authority in the classroom. Teachers and students share learning authority and control. Even for some learning methods, teachers give full authority and responsibility to students (Panitz, 1999). In other words, the teacher is no longer used as a reference for truth. This is all caused by a paradigm shift caused by the development of the postmodern paradigm and the development of information technology. Lyotard (1979/1984) states that the flexibility of today's school students is that they can learn from a data bank on a computer, which is called *"the encyclopedia of tomorrow."* With this paradigm shift, the knowledge warehouse has shifted and is no longer centered on the teacher, but it could be teachers who learn from their students because teachers and students have the same opportunity to access information technology.

The development of this information technology almost affects the teaching and learning process today. Many teachers and students use virtual-based information technology media in teaching and learning. This virtual concept also affects experts in the world of teaching, one of which is the emergence of a *blended learning perspective. Blended learning* is a term for learning methods that combine traditional learning with web-based learning (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005: 17). Then Sharma (2010: 456) emphasizes that the delivery of material in the online section is always through learning technology, especially including *virtual learning environments (VLE),* such as *blackboard* or *moodle* (online), and consists of the use of synchronous and asynchronous electronic devices, such as *chat* and (online) bulletin boards.

There is a paradigm shift from traditional to a mix of traditional and online; from the teacher having to deal with students to learning anywhere without space limits; from material that is usually in the form of papers (objects) to being online. Teacher and student interactions move from the real world to the virtual world. This is what Jean Baudrillard calls virtual reality (Lubis, 2014). The development of virtual teaching is increasingly entering its peak when the Covid-19 outbreak occurs worldwide, where teachers and students are forced by the pandemic to switch to online learning (Batubara, 2021; Falah & Chairuddin, 2022; Kidd & Murray, 2020). This sudden change made a paradigm shift, presenting a new paradigm in the world of English language teaching, which is included in the study of the postmodern paradigm.

2. Literature Review

The term of *language teaching* is always associated with teaching English as foreign language in Indonesia. English language teaching is also related to other fields, such as psychology and philosophy. As a result, English language teaching can be affected by the development of philosophy, particularly the postmodern paradigm. The main aspect of English language teaching affected includes approaches, methods, and techniques (Asra, Husna, Fadlia, & Bania, 2022). These aspects are changed related to the postmodern principles.

Postmodern is a collection of new thoughts that developed after the modern era. Furthermore, Lubis (2014: 209) and Setiawan (2018) defined *postmodern* as a term used to describe the existence of a new era of thinking after the modern era. Referring to the meaning given by postmodern figures, there is a difference between those who consider *postmodern* apart from *modern* and those who believe *postmodern* as continuation or revision of *modern.* Among these figures are: (1) Lyotard and Geldner: postmodern is a total break from modernism, (2) Derrida, Foucault, and Baudrillard: postmodern is a radical form of modernity that eventually kills itself because it is difficult to uniformly formulate theories. (3) Graffin: postmodernism is a correction of several aspects of modernism. (4) Giddens: "postmodern" is a form of modernization that has become self-aware and wise, and (5) Habermas: "postmodern" is the unfinished stage of modernism (Brann, 1992; Hicks, 2004; Lubis, 2014; Seidman & Alexander, 2008; Turner, 2009).

From all these expert definitions, it can be concluded that postmodern is a period after modern in which modern ideas begin to be criticized, considered no longer good, and require another alternative. In terms of teaching English, this is marked by the criticism on the established teaching methods. Even the existence of the method itself has been criticized with the question: whether we still need the method or not.

3. Research Method

An analytical study method with a literature review or literature study approach (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2013) is used as an instrument to answer the question of how postmodern *language* teaching is. Sugiyono (2012) provides a definition of library research as a theoretical study related to activities to collect information relevant to research topics through books, scientific works, theses, dissertations, encyclopedias, the internet, and other sources. In other words, this study reviews various sources to describe the results and draw conclusions. The results and conclusions are made based on the references read by the author. Furthermore, to clarify what is meant by the post-method perspective of the postmodern paradigm in language teaching, this article will discuss several points: (1) Understanding the post-method perspective in language teaching, (2) Myths in language teaching methods, and (3) Changes in language teaching methods towards a post method perspective.

4. Discussion

The results of this study are presented in three sessions covering the role of *postmodernism* in producing *post method,* myths in language teaching methods, and changes in language teaching methods towards a *post method perspective.*

4.1 The Role of Postmodern in Giving Birth to Post-Method

In the field of language teaching, a paradigm shift has begun to occur in the 1960s to 1990s with many experts, such as Mackey (1965), Kelly (1969), Pennycook (1989), Prabhu (1990), Allwright (1991), and Stern (1983, 1985, 1992) who criticizes and doubts existing language teaching methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2006:161-162).

In 1991, an applied linguistics linguist Dick Allwright gave a conference at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada entitled *'the death of the method'*. He stressed that the existence of language teaching methods had entered the stage of relativity beyond help. He gave six reasons why this could be: (1) existing methods are more concerned with differences while at the same time similarities may be more important to note; (2) there are very complex issues in language classes, such as forcing all students to be the same, even though the differences between each student are important; (3) the existing methods divert time that should be used for more productive things in the classroom because the steps in the existing methods are not balanced with the available time; (4) existing methods are no longer appropriate to the latest issues; (5) all answers to existing methods are actually found in all fields of science; and (6) the existing methods appear to offer teachers 'cheap' solutions, but are actually 'expensive' and in fact they are far from valuable (Allwright, 1991: 1-8).

However, the term *post method condition (post method perspective)* was only used to criticize existing language teaching methods in 1994 by Kumaravadivelu. Kumaravadivelu is a thinker in the field of teaching linguistics (*applied linguistics*), TESOL. He is also a specialist in teaching methods, *post method pedagogy*, teacher education, classroom discourse analysis and cultural teaching. He states that there is no one most appropriate method in teaching language (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 163). His thinking is contrary to the existing paradigm that there is the best method (of teaching languages) out there that needs to be found. Bell (2003: 330) further emphasizes the relationship between *post method* and postmodern paradigms with his statement that *post method pedagogy* is based on the local level of the *communicative language teaching* (CLT) and to a greater extent stems from the notion of a postmodern paradigm.

Kumaravadivelu (2006: 170) defines the *post method condition* as the stage at which we fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education. *Post method* paradigm encourages the world of language teaching to review or in Derrida's language 'reread' the characters and content of language learning in the classroom.

Furthermore, Richards (2013: 18) offers a definition of *post method* in *post method teaching* by explaining that this term sometimes refers to teaching that is not based on prescriptions (instructions) and is not based on the procedures of a particular method or follows syllabus, but is carried out with individual concepts of teachers in language, learning and teaching languages, knowledge and *skills* of teachers acquired and developed from *training* and experience. In other words, the language learning carried out by the teacher in the classroom is based on the experience gained by the teacher, both when he learns the language and the experience when he teaches the language.

4.2 Myths in Language Teaching

In language teaching there are several methods, including *Audiolingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Community Language Learning, Competency-Based Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction, Cooperative Language*

Teaching, Direct Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Natural Approach, Oral and Situational Language Teaching, Lexical Approach, Silent Way, Multiple Intelligences, Neurolinguistic Programming, Suggestopedia (Desuggestopedia), Task-Based Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, Whole Language (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards and Rodger, 2006). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 163) the existing language teaching methods are motivated and shaped by myths that have long been accepted as professional beliefs. This myth has formed a picture of the concept of method as true. The following describes these myths.

Myth 1: there is an excellent method out there ready and waiting to be discovered. For a very long time, scientists in the field of language teaching have been searching for the best method for teaching languages. But until today there is no method that is most suitable for all types of classes and all students. This is because each class has different students, both in terms of motivation, learning methods, intelligence, and so on.

Myth 2: methods represent an organized principle for language teaching. The concept that the method can be the center of all activities in language teaching and learningLanguage teachers treat the method as something that has full power in the learning process. In fact, the method is used as the basis for making curriculum models, syllabus, lesson plans (RPP), instructional strategies, and evaluation techniques. For example, when the new *communicative language teaching* was launched, everything related to learning was changed to *communicative;* books, communicative curriculum*, syllabus *communicative,* student worksheets (LKS) *communicative,* materials*, communicative* tests*, and so on. Even though this assumption did not last for a long time because then new theories and new methods emerged. This happens because the method is not representative of all aspects of language teaching.

Myth 3: methods are considered to have universal and *ahistoric value.* Research in the field of language teaching in search of the best method always leads to a search for a universal, *ahistoric,* that can be used anywhere and under any conditions. Because of this goal, many other important things are forgotten in the language learning process. First, many teachers have never seen the reality of the classroom being taught. They always follow the steps in the research to produce the method. Second, researchers do not realize that there are children in the world who do not need to learn a language because it is their mother tongue. Third, the researchers forgot aspects of local knowledge (culture) in finding teaching methods.

Myth 4: theorists construct knowledge and teachers use or apply that knowledge. In the field of language teaching, there is a very clear dichotomy between theory and practice. The theory was discovered by researchers in the hope that the theory would be applied by the teacher. But the reality is that most teachers never care about what method they use (Bell, 2007: 135). Several studies have been conducted on this issue, yielding four facts that contradict this myth (Kumaravadivelu, 1993; Nunan, 1987; Swaffar, Aren, and Morgan, 1982). First, teachers who claim to apply certain teaching methods, but do not meet the theoretical principles and procedures that must be carried out in the classroom from that method. Second, teachers who claim to apply different methods, but use the same procedures for each method when teaching in the classroom. Third, teachers who claim to apply the same methods, but use different procedures. Fourth, teachers who develop and apply activities that are appropriate to the conditions

of the class without connecting them with certain methods. Here it can be said that the teachers believe that there is no single method that can help them in teaching language in the classroom.

Myth 5: the method is neutral and there is no ideological motivation behind creation. Language and ideology are two things that are always related. This also applies to the presence of a language teaching method. The method always represents the views of the expert who initiated it. Pennycook (1998 589-590) says the method demonstrates how a concept reflects a particular view of the world. Thus, there is no neutral method without ideology.

4.3 Changes in Language Teaching Methods towards a *Post* Method Perspective

Changes in language teaching methods to a *post method perspective* can be seen in the changing point of view of teaching methods towards the focus of language learning. Kumaravadivelu (2006: 90) provides three categories of changing the focus of language teaching (1) *language-centered methods* (focusing on the language being taught or the target language); (2) *learner-centered method* (focus on students as language learners); and (3) *learning-centered method* (focusing on the language learning process itself (how language is acquired naturally).

The three methods can be further divided into two more general categories, namely *the era method* and *post method perspective*. *Language-centered methods* are included into the category *of method era* that still uses the old paradigm, *teacher-centered*. Meanwhile, *the learner-centered method* and *the learning-centered method* fall into the category of *post method perspective*.

Language-centered methods are methods whose teaching focuses on the linguistic form of the target language. These methods (such as the *Audio-lingual*) expect students to be able to master linguistic aspects, such as grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of language. Here the emphasis of learning is still on students, the teacher only transfers the knowledge he has *(teacher-centered)*. The criticism of these methods is the absence of direct practice of the language used in real conversation or real social interaction. So that students are unable to express their ideas to their interlocutors in life outside the classroom. Language learning is only to answer very structuralist exam questions in the classroom.

The methods that are in the second view are the methods created to answer the criticisms of the first view. *Learner-centered methods* focus on students learning the target language. These methods pay close attention to student needs, student desires, student background, student motivation, and conditions in the classroom. These methods (such as the *Communicative Language Teaching*) provide opportunities for students to use language directly in communication. Thus, students understand better in using aspects of the existing language for smooth conversation in real life.

Learning-centered methods are methods whose views are based on the cognitive processes of language learning. In other words, these methods (such as the *Natural Approach*) look for ways to teach language naturally based on the cognitive development process of humans (in this case, students). This is done by creating conditions that are in accordance with the direction of language development. These methods do not focus on language, but focus on using language at the right time and condition.

5. Conclusion

The postmodern paradigm originating in philosophy has made other sciences to reconstruct existing theories, looking back with a more critical eye on all existing problems. As explained above, the science of language teaching is also inseparable from the influence of this paradigm shift. Therefore, *post method pedagogy* as a paradigm in the field of language teaching.

Post method pedagogy can shake language teaching experts to rethink and review existing language teaching methods. Furthermore, *postmodernism* gave birth to *post method,* which is a language teaching method that was born after a critique of the existing methods pioneered by Kumaradivelu, an *applied linguist* who made language teaching method experts review their theories. Although Kumaradivelu's criticism was met with criticism stating that what he proposed was also a teaching method. This criticism was able to build a new paradigm that language teachers do not have to use one method in teaching. Language teachers can use several methods that are considered capable of making learning effective or even language teachers can create and use their own methods or techniques that they find from the results of their teaching experiences in their classrooms (techniques that have not yet been named).

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