



# Engaging with postmethod pedagogy: a framework

**Lucas Manente**

suggests a way of reflecting on our practice.

In a previous issue (*MET* 33.4), Simon and I reflected on the cyclical nature of trends in ELT. We concluded that older approaches or methods often resurface, rebranded in new contexts. Rather than seeing methods as either revolutionary or redundant, we should strive to engage with them critically, drawing from both past and present to make informed decisions in our teaching. But how exactly do we do that in practice – especially in what some might call the ‘postmethod’ era?

In this follow-up piece, I present a framework developed to help teachers engage with postmethod pedagogy in a more principled and reflective way. It is grounded in the work of Kumaravadivelu (1994), who proposes three organising parameters to guide postmethod thinking: particularity, practicality and possibility.

## From prescription to provocation

The first step in engaging with postmethod thinking is to question the grand narratives that often underpin traditional methods. Much of the history of ELT has been shaped by attempts to discover the ‘best’ method – one-size-fits-all solutions that assume classroom contexts are uniform and predictable. Yet, as soon as we step foot in a classroom, it doesn’t take long for us to realise that no method can fully account for the nuanced, dynamic and sometimes contradictory realities we face.

It took me a while to learn that rather than seeing methods as prescriptive tools, we should view them as provocations – catalysts for further reflection. By engaging critically with the assumptions and affordances of various methods, we can use them as springboards for developing more contextualised, responsive approaches to teaching. After all, as Hall (2004) suggests, the history of language learning and teaching is less linear and tidy than one might think and

more a repeated pattern of contrasts. The pendulum continues to swing; what matters is how we position ourselves within its arc.

## From eclecticism to principle

A common question I often hear from teachers is: ‘If I am to combine different methods and techniques, how can I make sure my choices are principled and not just random?’

This is where the framework Simon and I introduced at IATEFL 2025 – Edinburgh comes in. It encourages teachers to ground their decisions in three interrelated practices that form the core of postmethod thinking (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

### 1 Becoming context-sensitive (particularity)

Particularity reminds us that pedagogy is deeply tied to context. This includes not only the linguistic level of our learners, but also their social, cultural and even political realities. For instance, while Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) may work well

in some environments, in others it might make more sense to focus on form or translation. This doesn't mean reverting to grammar-translation or following a synthetic syllabi entirely, but rather acknowledging that context demands flexibility. Postmethod classrooms, then, are not bound to any single doctrine; instead, they are shaped by the specific needs, identities and goals of the learners they serve.

## 2 Theorising from own practice (practicality)

Practicality involves becoming active producers of knowledge, in other words, developing theories of teaching that emerge from our own classroom experiences. This is not about abandoning theory altogether but about shifting our perspectives a little. Instead of relying solely on published models, teachers are encouraged to reflect on action: shape and reshape teaching through self-observation and self-analysis, drawing upon past experiences, professional education and also the knowledge and expertise of our peers through informal conversations. This process is what Kumaravadivelu (1994) calls 'principled pragmatism'.

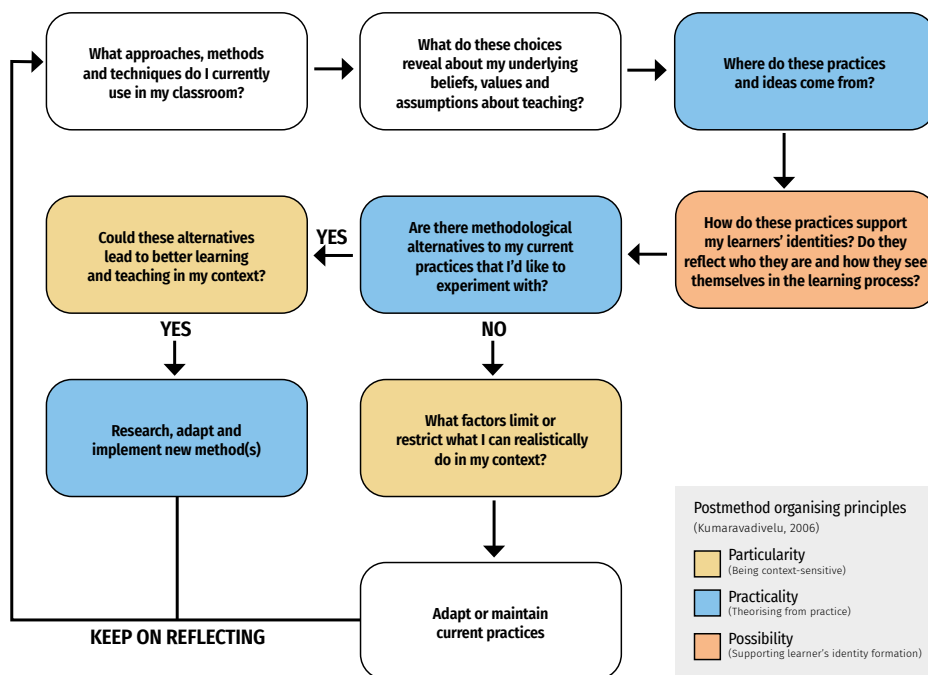
## 3 Supporting identity formation (possibility)

Possibility invites us to consider teaching that is relevant to students' lives within and beyond the classroom. We should consider not only what they know, but also who they are and who they can become. Language learning is never neutral; it is also political and involves questions of identity and agency.

We might ask: are our students allowed to shape their own learning journey or are they bound by the syllabus? Do they prefer a synthetic or analytical approach to language? A more holistic or more incremental path? These are not just pedagogical decisions — they are personal and subjective. Yet, I believe that acknowledging and responding to these subjectivities is at the heart of what it means to teach in a postmethod era.

## A postmethod framework

The final step is to bring these ideas together through a process of reflection. To that end, I've developed a postmethod



(Adapted from Hall, 2024, as cited in Smyth, 1991)

**Figure 1:** A postmodern framework (adapted from Hall, 2024 in Smyth, 1991)

A larger version is available in the Online Resources at [https://pavilionelt.com/wp-content/uploads/MET34.5\\_OnlineResources\\_PostmodernFramework\\_Manente2.pdf](https://pavilionelt.com/wp-content/uploads/MET34.5_OnlineResources_PostmodernFramework_Manente2.pdf)

reflection framework that invites teachers to map out their own pedagogical beliefs, preferences and practices. The goal is not to discover the 'right' method, but to uncover the thinking behind our choices. It can be used individually or collaboratively in training sessions.

By engaging with these questions, teachers can begin to see not just *what* they do, but *why* they do it. I find it helpful to revisit the metaphor of the pendulum: where are we now in the swing between structure and freedom, tradition and innovation? And where might we want to go next?

## Final thoughts

In a world where trends often come and go at the speed of social media, the idea of postmethod pedagogy invites us to slow down, reflect and engage more thoughtfully with our practice. My intention with this article is not to reject the idea of methods. Rather, it is about reframing our relationship with methodology – not as a script to follow, but as a landscape to explore.

My hope is that this framework adapted from Hall's (2024) work offers a practical and principled way to navigate that landscape, and that it'll invite teachers to reflect, adapt and act with intentionality. In doing so, I believe we can move beyond

the waxing and waning of fads, and toward a more sustainable, responsive and empowering pedagogy. One that honours both our histories, our possibilities and – most importantly – our students.

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**Lucas Manente** is a teacher, teacher educator, and Director of Studies at Accademia Britannica – International House Rome. He holds a DELTA and a Master's Degree in Educational Human Resources and is currently pursuing his second master's degree with the University of Chichester in professional development for language education.