

The Post-method Condition

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Abstract

The paper deals with the ambiguities that undermine both the concept and the use of the word “method”, that create problems of interpretation, and the risk of misinterpretation. Research has shown that methods do not play a major role in the practitioners’ thinking, as they never fully adhere to one method. Their interest in methods is rather pragmatic, determined by how far typical strategies or techniques provide options for dealing with particular teaching contexts. This is to say that methods do figure in practice, but also that teachers tend to have eclectic styles. This post-method reality is documented by two studies that provide evidence for the striking similarities in the English teachers’ attitudes towards methods, one conducted in the US in 2007, and one in Romania in 2014. They show that teachers of English as a foreign language build individual eclectic methodologies, generally based on an awareness of the existence of different methods and a willingness to draw from each of them. The specific classroom contexts in which they work determines a reconfiguration of their relationship with theory by the creation of their own teaching alternatives, which do not imply the end of methods but rather an understanding of their limitations and a desire to transcend them. Knowledge of methods remains, therefore, a source of options and a useful basis for developing an informed eclectic methodology.

Keywords: *concept of method, end of method, post-method condition, knowledge of method, eclecticism*