

subsection 'Desires and difficulties' has only three activities but does highlight ways of finding the necessary tension in a story by focusing on what characters want and what stands in their way. The 'Style' subsection also has only three activities, perhaps too few to do justice to the topic. 'Language and formal structure' has six useful activities highlighting the sequencing of ideas, past tense narration, linking of ideas, figures of speech, sound patterning, and extending lexical range.

Chapter 3 offers 11 lesson plans, most of them highly original and stimulating. For example, 3.2 'Modernise it' (ways of bringing a traditional story up to date), 3.3 *Commedia dell'Arte*, 3.4 'Class oral storymaking', 3.9 'Tarot cards', and 3.10 'Booker's plots' (using Booker's [2004] *The Seven Basic Plots* as a basis for story making). Teachers will enjoy trying out these lesson plans and adapting them too.

Chapter 4 includes just three activities for responding to stories; one by the teacher and two for peer response. This is probably rather too few activities, given the importance of response.

The last 40 pages of the book are allocated to an Appendix which contains visual and textual support cross-referenced to the activities in the body of the book. These are all extremely valuable and attractively designed. Without them, the book would be much more difficult to put to use.

The activities in the book have a standard format: Focus (i.e. the aims), Time, Preparation (anything the teacher needs to do before the class), In class (the procedure), Extensions (where relevant), Variations, and Comment. This makes the book pleasingly user friendly.

I would only make three negative comments. As I have already mentioned, some of the sections do not contain enough activities. The suggested timings are often wildly optimistic and unrealistic: most activities would take a lot longer than indicated. Occasionally too, the rubrics in the 'In class' sections are a little too complex and potentially confusing. (See, for example 2.9 and 2.27.)

Overall, however, this book offers a rich and varied collection of practical ideas for teachers who wish to implement creative story writing with their students. They have successfully extended the niche opened up by Spiro (2006) in her *Storybuilding*. The authors are also both established authors and story makers, which will instil confidence in their recommendations. I shall certainly be drawing upon this resource in creative writing workshops and I recommend it with enthusiasm to others.

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Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching

L. Meddings and S. Thornbury

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Many moons ago, a naive young teacher trainer was awaiting dinner in a rather imposing north Italian hotel restaurant. The proprietor approached:

Prop *Buona sera*. What would you like?

NYTT Could I see the menu please?

Prop We don't have a menu. We have a chef. He's got it, he cooks it. Now, what would you like?

Disconcerting or what? But I soon got the hang of it . . . And it was a wondrous experience! It was also, in retrospect, perhaps my first unwitting entrée into the world of Dogme.

Dogme, to the uninitiated, is a film-making technique initiated by a group of Danish directors in 1995. To cut a short story even shorter, Dogme demands that no props are introduced to the authentic film location (should a prop be necessary, then a location must be found that already has it) and the sole use of hand-held camera.

In *Teaching Unplugged*, Meddings and Thornbury seek to apply the principles of Dogme to the ELT classroom. Any attempt to release students and teachers from the shackles of the pre-ordained course is to be applauded. This one is more than worth its salt. Similarly, any attempt to diminish teachers' reliance on dominant and domineering technology (at least in the developed world, where basics such as a constant supply of electricity can be taken for granted) must be considered A Good Thing.

Teaching Unplugged is neatly set out in three distinct sections. Basically, Part A outlines the principles behind Dogme ELT, Part B contains a number of practical classroom ideas and activities, and Part C explores the possibilities for the method in a variety of different teaching situations.

Part A is well-ordered, *relatively* jargon free, and restates in cogent form many of the arguments bandied about in endless 1970s teachers' forums concerned with Students Needs, Student-Centred Classes, the 'Humanistic' and 'Communicative' approaches, and so on. The gems of wisdom in the margins (from a spectrum of gurus from Bill Gates through Earl Stevick to T.S. Eliot) serve as something of a distraction, but I found little to disagree with what is said. Indeed, I would commend it as a handy compendium for nascent and jaded teachers alike. The ability of teachers to 'free themselves from a dependency on materials, aids and technology' (p. 7) is a quality much to be encouraged.

But it is what is *not* said that causes me problems. And what is *not* said includes any reference to Listening beyond students listening to each other and to the teacher and vice versa.

I am of that school that considers Listening the key skill on which oral communication is based. 'I no understand, I no speak.' 'I understand, I can attempt to communicate.'

And to teach listening, I need props. I need a CD player (better, a cassette player, but those days are fast receding). I would even go as far as to say that I *rely* on such a device and, if there is not one in the classroom, I bring my own. And, indeed, for listening, motivational, and all kinds of cultural reasons, I favour a video/DVD player. Do I take it that, if there are no A/V aids in the classroom, the strictures of Dogme require that either I forgo their use or I tramp off with my class to some distant A/V-fertile location?

Of course we should, all of us, be able to cope when such luxuries are unavailable. I iterate there are tens of thousands of teachers in parts of the world where such things truly *are* luxuries. But I would say, if you have got them, take advantage. That is not at all the same as saying 'if you've got them, let them control every classroom minute of your time'.

With Listening, of course, goes Pronunciation. Not just accent, but the way we speak to make things easier and more intelligible for ourselves and others. OK, in Part B (p. 66), there's a *schwa* identification activity. Good. But once again, it is students listening to teacher. Surely the option of audio could at least be mooted?

Now I do not want to be seen to be hard on a teachers' guide that in so many ways I find up-front and to a new generation of teachers possibly uplifting. I fear, though, that Dogme might be veering towards Dogma despite a wee plea to the contrary on page 100, '... it's vital to be flexible when it comes to extending Dogme—in fact to be non-dogmatic!' Can we not use it as *part* of our teaching repertoire, not as a fundamental principle? I remember Caleb Gattegno, a guru capable of considerable bile, who reserved his most rancorous attacks for those who tinkered with his Silent Way. You either accepted it rod, line, and sinker or you did not use it at all. Such a pity since there was so much of the good and sensible in the Silent Way. I do hope that Messrs Meddings and Thornbury are not of this bent.

It is said that the Dogme Director Thomas Vinterberg was vilified by the Dogmetics for the sin of covering up an unnecessary window on location in his film *The Celebration*. Let us, please, not go down this path in Dogme ELT. And, equally please, Luke and Scott—a few more words from you disavowing this type of purism could go a long way towards prevention.

And so to Parts B and C. Great! Part B (the bulk of the book) is packed with brief lesson ideas, a sort of mini *Discussions That Work* (Ur 1981) and, being more compact, probably just as useful. I am not sure how dogmatic they all are since many of them demand the introduction into the classroom of non-native flora and fauna, mainly in the form of imported texts. Even, I note, a mobile phone or portable voice recorder! But that's fine by me.

Part C is in the main pleasantly down to earth, addressing potential problems for non-native teachers, using Dogme ELT techniques with young learners, in one-to-one, exam, specialized English classes, and so on.

I like the idea (p. 101) of 'imaginative timetabling', more or less allowing students to roam from class to class in search of the subject matter that turns them on . . . but would it *work* in the context of, say, a large teenage summer school and other larger establishments? Once again I think that the authors have a responsibility to point out such pragmatic problems. I would also take issue with (same page) the blanket instruction to (*my comments in parentheses*) 'Give up the photocopier. The waste is colossal (*true*), the stress considerable (*does it have to be?*), and the benefit to learners minimal (*come, come—there are so many useful and communicative activities that can be generated from a photocopied text*)'.

Reviewers—be we reviewers of film, music, theatre, or book—largely live safe in ivory towers dispensing our approval or, more often, disapproval on folk who as like as not do what we could not. I address you, Messrs Meddings and Thornbury: I think that *Teaching Unplugged* is a breath of fresh air. It makes so many points that I profoundly agree with but have not myself had the ability to put into print, with or without the framework of Dogme. But with such authority goes responsibility. You need to spell out more succinctly the pitfalls of single-mindedness and the benefits of eclecticism.

And one last thing: If you are going to get rid of the menu, make sure that you have got a damn fine chef.

References

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The reviewer

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The Oxford Guide to Practical Lexicography

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Lexicographers are still largely perceived as 'harmless drudges': the general public tend to picture dictionary-makers as thumbing through dusty card files, examining old copies of books, scribbling down curious words. Here is a book that could do much to change this antiquated stereotype, offering a very attractively packaged, highly readable, and, above all, detailed and accurate account of what modern dictionary-making is really about.

The book is actually designed as a coursebook, and the most obvious target group are lexicographers-in-training; such is also the genesis of the work, as the two authors have been actively involved in the training of lexicographers, most recently as part of the very successful Lexicography Masterclass enterprise.

What is the relevance of all this to English language teaching and, thus, the readership of this *Journal*? Well, dictionaries are amongst the most important instruments in language teaching and learning, and I believe that it is desirable that language teachers, researchers, but perhaps also students can be made aware of what it actually is that a modern dictionary—especially one for language learners—has to offer, what authority and evidence it builds upon, and what legitimate uses it has.

Not only that, but, as it turns out, many of the steps and techniques presented in the book, notably those relating to text corpora, can be fruitfully employed in ventures and activities other than dictionary-making, but intimately related to English language teaching. These include, for example, the design of teaching and testing materials and self-study.

Sadly, all too many dictionaries are produced in ignorance of the basic principles of dictionary-making, not infrequently by linguists, some of whom mistakenly believe that expert linguistic knowledge is