

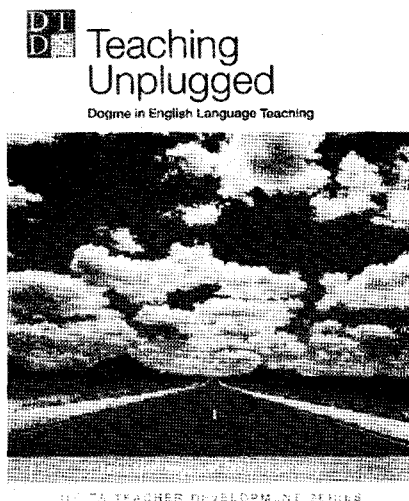
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# REVIEWS

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## TEACHING UNPLUGGED DOGME IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury (2009)  
Delta Publishing (pp.104) ISBN 978-1-905085-19-4



### INTRODUCTION

*Teaching Unplugged* is the first book to deal with a Dogme approach in ELT. The word *Dogme*, which embraces the philosophy of the filmmaking movement Dogme 95, champions a teaching method which is materials-light, conversation-driven and focused on emergent language. In other words, the followers of the Dogme approach state that a successful teaching method fosters communication -both written and spoken-, leaves out the (over)use of materials, and takes into account the specific needs and interests of a particular group of students by using student-generated language as a basis for language work.

### FOREWORD

After a brief introduction by the authors about how they came to engage themselves in a Dogme ELT approach, the book is divided into three different parts:

- *Part A* presents an explanation of the Dogme principles and related bibliography

- *Part B* offers an activity bank divided into five sections. Each of these sections is introduced by a 4-aim list and a top 10 of related teaching tips, together with six teaching-learning roles. Then, there is a variable number of activities (from 4 to 8) dedicated to the fulfillment of the aims in the section. Each activity is first introduced by an invitation to reflect upon the general purpose of the activity, and a list of materials needed (if any). Then, there are instructions to set the activity up, let it run and round it off, and some guidelines to vary the activity or to follow it up

- *Part C* consists of a series of tips which are aimed at helping teachers to employ this method in different teaching contexts.

### CONTENTS

Part A comments on the three adjectives which best describe the Dogme approach, namely: conversation-driven, materials-light, and focused on emergent language.

- **Conversation-driven:** According to the authors, an unplugged teacher fosters interactive talk between the teacher and the students, and between the students themselves, scaffolding the emergent language. Moreover, these conversations deal with the students' specific needs and are about the people in the room.

- **Materials-light:** Such an approach puts into action the idea that coursebooks do not, generally speaking, cater to the learners' specific needs, as their topics might be of very little interest to a particular group of students, and pay too much attention to grammar. The Dogme approach enables students to choose the texts, topics, vocabulary and other linguistic items of study according to their own criteria of what might be useful in their lives. It also suggests that, if using materials, these materials should be locally generated, as they are more likely to meet the students' real expectations.

- **Focused on emergent language:** In a typical Dogme class, the students are presented with a topic and then encouraged to produce free speech on this topic, which means that the language items which might arise are not directly chosen by the teacher, but by the students themselves. As the authors state, one of the main concerns a teacher might have in this respect is the amount of uncertainty as to how the lesson -and the course, in the long run- might develop. Therefore, all through the book there are suggestions on how to cover the course contents and accomplish the objectives, which have been previously agreed on between the teacher and the students. Meddings and Thornbury are positive about the fact that the students' choice of contents and objectives is very likely to meet those in any externally set syllabus.

*Part B* offers a bank of activities dealing with the following issues:

- creating the right conditions to learn;
- managing conversation according to the interests of the people in the room;
- selecting stimulus to share by using minimal materials;
- focusing on form;
- and learning from lesson to lesson.

*Part C* presents a series of tips which are aimed at resolving doubts when following this new method for a whole term, as a non-native speaker, with young learners, in a one-to-one lesson, in an observed lesson, in exam classes, combined with the use of a coursebook, with the study of specialised English, or in a whole school.

**CONCLUSION**  
Meddings and Thornbury both endorse the principle which states that "reading, writing, speaking and listening all develop together". Therefore, the activities proposed in *Teaching Unplugged* are aimed at the development of these four skills, with special emphasis on speaking and writing. Also, the students' creativity and their need to become independent learners are subjects of work.

The Dogme approach draws on some other teaching-learning approaches, such as the communicative approach, where communication -understood as meaningful conversation between people and about themselves- is essential. Also, this new approach is a task-based one, where the students start with a fluency activity, producing "the raw material for subsequent language-focused work." The use of translation in some of the activities comes from Community Language Learning, and there are also references to the Common European Framework, whose "External context of use" grid on pages 48 and 49 can be used in class for students to decide which language contexts they are most interested in.

**CONCLUSION**  
This book offers plenty of highly motivating activities. Some of them, however, seem to have been designed for small numbers of students, and most of them are not suitable for real beginners in a foreign language.

Also, the activities proposed do not necessarily cover a whole academic year, although they can be reused in different ways.

All in all, *Teaching Unplugged* offers a fresh new start to ELT, as it definitely focuses on the students' specific needs and interests, fostering their creativity and ability to become independent learners and users of a foreign language. In addition, it puts special emphasis on conversation from the very beginning, tackling the study of grammar not as an end in itself, but as something which emerges naturally from the conversations in the classroom.

Since Dogme breaks with most current teaching assumptions, it seems reasonable to follow Meddings and Thornbury's advice, which encourages teachers to adopt the Dogme approach to what will be, according to the teachers' own criteria, a comfortable extent: from interspersing their teaching with some "Dogme moments" to "designing their whole course according to Dogme principles".

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### TEACHING CLASSROOM LANGUAGE

Glyn Hughes, Josephine Moate with Tiina Raatikainen (2008)  
Oxford University Press, 2008, 128 pp., £17.99, ISBN 978-0-19-53179-6



information and facilitate interaction in a way that is accurate and easily understood. *Practical Classroom English* focuses on explicit classroom language and procedures. This coursebook, accompanied by an audio CD, serves to help instructors communicate better in English with their students at different stages of a lesson and when they prepare lesson plans. Teachers, novice and experts alike, will grasp how to integrate and devise better ways to give concise instructions simply by selecting and using only those key phrases and specific sentences to express themselves more clearly.

**CONCLUSION**  
Conveying information clearly and concisely to learners in an EFL/ESL classroom setting can be a challenge for many educators. This manual is designed to assist instructors in the process of acquiring, understanding and expanding their use of the functional language commonly found in classroom settings. It is suitable for new teachers who want to acquire authentic classroom language and for those that want to expand the use of English in their lessons. Teachers will become more aware of all the possible language choices that can be used for instructions, directions and procedures when teaching

**OVERVIEW**  
Teachers regularly need to use authentic and idiomatic classroom phrases to give instructions, present