

Dogme ELT: a pedagogy of bare essentials

BRAZ-TESOL : 25 Years Making a Difference in ELT

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BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Think about your own teaching practice (and methodology).

What are its *basic pillars*?

What does it rest on?

DOGME ELT

“A teaching **movement** set up by a group of English teachers who challenge what they consider to be an **over-reliance** on materials and technical wizardry in current language teaching.

The emphasis on the **here-and-now** requires the teacher to focus on the **actual learners** and the content that is **relevant to them.**”

Meddings & Thornbury, 2009:6

THE FLAVOUR OF DOGME

“Education is **communication** and **dialogue**. It is not the transference of knowledge.” (Paulo Freire)

“**Success** depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on **inside and between the people in the classroom**.” (Earl Stevick)

“**A good teacher cannot be fixed in a routine...** During teaching, each moment requires a sensitive mind that is constantly changing and constantly adapting.”
(Bruce Lee)

THE THREE PILLARS OF DOGME

Dogme is about teaching that is *conversation-driven*;

Dogme is about teaching that is *materials-light*;

Dogme is about teaching that focuses on *emergent language*.

Meddings & Thornbury, 2009:7

MYTHS

Anti-coursebooks;

Anti-technology;

For lazy teachers who won't plan lessons;

Nothing but inconsequential chat;

Just a new method.

IMPLEMENTING DOGME ELT

Meddings & Thornbury, 2003. **Dogme Still Able to Divide ELT**. The Guardian Weekly, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2003/apr/17/tefl.lukemeddings>

Talk Dogme

Increase Dogme time. Dogme means taking time off from the coursebook to talk with your learners, making that talk the content of the teaching moment. Use the details of everyday life to engage even the least confident learners. Help your learners as you go along, note language that emerges, and wait for a pause in the conversation to scaffold their language as needed. When the talk runs out, have them write a summary, and then go back to the book.

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Deep Dogme

Try making Dogme time the **basis** of a whole lesson, as you explore language with your learners, rediscovering the "subject" each time you encounter it through their eyes. Rather than pre-plan, post-plan: jointly **record** what has happened during the lesson. The syllabus becomes the **map** of a journey of discovery **recollected** in tranquillity, rather than a blueprint for a forced march through English grammar.

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Full Dogme

Dogme moments, Dogme lessons: the next stage is a Dogme classroom – an **open** one, to which the learners are bringing in their own material because they know they can, and one where **nobody knows precisely what will happen when they walk through the door**. This requires considerable skill on your part, to manage the interaction but to keep one eye on the language. You are talking the talk and walking the walk, as it were.

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Dream Dogme

Set up an **open school**. No levels. No coursebooks. No photocopier. **No profits?** Actually, we doubt it. Language schools, in Britain at least, are so indistinguishable that an **original** idea might pay off. Let learners organise themselves into classes based on their interests and sympathies, make sure the teachers are comfortable with talking with them, and with dealing with language that comes up - which is the language they need.

THE TRUE TEST OF TEACHING PROFICIENCY

It's the beginning of the semester.

Students haven't got their coursebooks.

Photocopies are not available.

The IWBs haven't been installed.

The only teaching aids you've got are a common
whiteboard, paper and pens.

Your lesson starts in 10 minutes.

What will you do?

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