

AN INTRODUCTION TO

DOGME

IN TEACHING LANGUAGES

EDUCATION OUT OF THE BOX

What is Dogme?

Dogme is an approach to the teaching of languages introduced and developed by Scott Thornbury (2000). Also known as **Dogme or Teaching Unplugged**, this approach is intended to liberate teachers from the burden of an over-reliance on the coursebook industry and create in-class **authentic communication**, as well as help bridge the gaps between the language taught at school and the language in real-life conversations.

Nguyen, Phu Hung (2020)

SCOTT THORNBURY

THE FORCE BEHIND THE MOVEMENT

He and his colleagues realised that too many classes were being invaded by lesson plans, textbooks, workbooks, tapes, transparencies, flashcards, Cuisenaire rods, tapes and other such gimmicks that the students themselves were no longer (assuming they once had been) the focus of the lesson. By inventing Dogme they've put the learner back into learning.

Bertrand (n.d.)



Characteristics of the approach

Thornbury (2005)

1

Materials-mediated teaching is the “scenic” route to learning, but the direct route is located in the interactivity between teachers and learners, and between the learners themselves.

2

The content most likely to engage learners and to trigger learning processes is that which is already there, supplied by the “people in the room”.

3

Learning is a social and dialogic process, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than “transmitted” or “imported” from teacher/coursebook to learner.

4

Learning can be mediated through talk, especially talk that is shaped and supported (i.e. scaffolded) by the teacher.

5

Rather than being acquired, language (including grammar) emerges: it is an organic process that occurs given the right conditions.

6

The teacher's primary function, apart from promoting the kind of classroom dynamic which is conducive to a dialogic and emergent pedagogy, is to optimise language learning affordances, by, for example, directing attention to features of the emergent language.

7

Providing space for the learner's voice means accepting that the learner's beliefs, knowledge, experiences, concerns and desires are valid content in the language classroom.

8

Freeing the classroom from third-party, imported materials empowers both teachers and learners.

9

Texts, when used, should have relevance for the learner, in both their learning and using contexts.

10

Teachers and learners need to unpack the ideological baggage associated with EFL materials – to become critical users of such texts.

Although Thornbury does not completely deny the use of textbooks or materials, it gives **light into the possibilities that present us not using these resources**. There is a great deal of activities and dynamics teachers can propose either **online or in a classroom** in which they do not necessarily need that extra support. This could be even interesting for the students, who usually do not feel interested in the content of their books and sitting beside a table during the whole lesson is something they do not enjoy. Dogme makes our students active, it makes them interact and be creative, use the language and make mistakes, learning from their mistakes and negotiating the course of their learning experiences with their teacher.



References

A PAPER ON DOGME

Nguyen, N. Q., & Bui Phu, H. (2020). The Dogme Approach: A Radical Perspective in Second Language Teaching in the Post-Methods Era. *Journal of Language and Education*, 6(3), 173-184. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2020.10563>

A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Bertrand, J. (n.d.). *Dogme: A teacher's view*. British Council: Teaching English. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/dogme-teachers-view>.

THORNBURY'S THEORY

Thornbury, S. (2005). Dogme: Dancing in the Dark? *Folio* 9(2), 3-5. Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <http://nebula.wsimg.com/22eaea86234146ac3105f57698b06b75?AccessKeyId=186A535D1BA4FC995A73&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>.