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**DOGME LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN INDIAN MILIEU: CO-
CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE**

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Abstract:

Language is a primary medium to exchange our views. Despite continuous pressure from nationalists, importance of English cannot be neglected. It is widely used in media, in education, in day to day life and where not. Aim of my research is to highlight the concept that teaching of English language should emerge from communication between learner and the mentor. Learning should be based on development of knowledge inside the classroom which should come out of conversation between student and teacher. In this method of teaching, teacher and students themselves bring the material. Teacher has to work with the material which students bring, So in this way externally prepared material is not forced on students. Old methods of teaching are totally unexpected in this method. Old methods of teachings pressurize the students to clear the exam. The students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. They only cram readymade questions and answers from the notes provided to them or through guides. This practice of cramming unbinds the true essence of learning language. In dogma teaching, Topics selected by the students are given priority. Preselected grammar is forbidden rather grammar should be emerged from the conversation. I have tried this method in the classroom with my students and it was found that language is better learnt through dogme language teaching. Students tend to learn New words quickly & interestingly as compare to learning through old teaching Methods. The crux of this method is use dialogues in the class and these dialogues will generate further dialogues, grammatical exercise and pronunciation drills. This method specially works wonderful in multicultural countries like India. This method takes learning as experimental and holistic. It would change the language learning experience both for the student as well as the teacher (mentor). This method is proved successful on primary level in Barcelona and Spain where English is a second language. The pertinent aspect of dogme teaching is that material is locally generated, because learners themselves choose their topic of study and texts. Dogme is also economically very efficient for educational institutions which lack finance as it adopts material light approach. By foregrounding dialogue and personal narrative of the learners, it has brought change in the process of language learning. Learner becomes co-constructor of learning process which is the most significant aspect.

Keywords: *Dogme Language Teaching, Indian context, Co construction of Knowledge, material light approach, locally generated material, holistic learning, etc.*

“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, Kung Fu Practitioner).



Language is a primary medium to exchange our views. Despite continuous pressure from nationalists, importance of English cannot be neglected. It is widely used in media, in education, in day to day life and where not. But large number of students find themselves unable to express in English. Many reasons can be attributed to this failure of learning one of those is wrong methods of teaching. The existing methods of English teaching like silent way, Natural way and direct method have somehow not found very successful because so much emphasis is put on the text books. Teachers use inappropriate methods for those who study English as a second language.

Text book based education hampers learning process when student is forced to just listen the authoritative voice of a teacher. Moreover students who belong to rural areas face problem because English is a second language for them and they try to understand it with the help of their mother tongue, which is illogical because all the languages are different in structure, in grammar and in composition. Following are the methods adopted by the teachers to teach.

• **The Direct Method:**

In this method the teaching is done entirely in the target language. The learner is not allowed to use his or her mother tongue. Grammar rules are avoided and there is emphasis on good pronunciation.

• **Grammar-Translation Method:**

Learning is largely by translation to and from the target language. Grammar rules are to be memorized and long lists of vocabulary learned by heart. There is little or no emphasis placed on developing oral ability.

• **The Structural Approach:**

This method sees language as a complex of grammatical rules which are to be learned one at a time in a set order. So for example the verb "to be" is introduced and practised before the present continuous tense which uses "to be" as an auxiliary.

• **Total Physical Response (TPR):**

TPR works by having the learner respond to simple commands such as "Stand up", "Close your book", "Go to the window and open it." The method stresses the importance of oral comprehension.

• **Task-Based Language Learning:**

The focus of the teaching is on the completion of a task which in itself is interesting to the learners. Learners use the language they already have to complete the task and there is little correction of errors.

• **Community Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):**

The focus of this method is to enable the learner to communicate effectively and appropriately in the various situations the students would be likely to find themselves in. The content of CLT courses are functions such as inviting, suggesting, complaining or notions such as the expression of time, quantity, location.

Life is catapulting towards faster technology. It is highly imperative to deviate from traditional style of teaching at times and embrace novel methods of teaching that enable to encompass the technology savvy young minds in the classroom. Not that the existing teaching methodologies are wrong but a monotonous teacher centred classes can inhibit the natural curiosity of the students to absorb things in a more proactive way. Dogme Language Teaching is revolutionary step In English teaching and learning process The Dogme teaching approach was first distinguished by Scott



Thornbury – a Curriculum coordinator of the MA TESOL programme and a practicing English language teacher – in his article *A Dogma for EFL* (2000) where Thornbury criticized English language teaching's (ELT) overreliance on published materials in classrooms, which in his view complicates the language learning process. This is one of the recent trends in global TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), particularly the programmes of Dogme and Teaching Unplugged. The alternative for this Thornbury and Meddings see in a materials light approach to language teaching, driven by the students in the room, their lives and their language. They formulated their methodological pillars in the book "Teaching Unplugged" (2009), which can be shortly listed as: Dogme is a teaching movement which was set up by group of English teachers. They challenged over reliance on material in language teaching. They emphasized that the focus of the teacher and the learner should be here and now. The most essential aspect is that content is selected according to learner which is relevant to them. It is found that English teachers find themselves caged in the syllabus books and end up by telling stories to the student rather than forcing on teaching English language.

• **Characteristics of dogme in ELT (English language teaching):**

- Interactivity- teaching becomes a two way communication and interactivity between the learner and teacher and learner and learner is a key point.
- Teacher and learner both can bring content in the class and learning emerges in the classroom. No subscribed books are followed.
- Learning becomes a dialogic process and knowledge is co-constructed and not imported from course books.
- Learning comes out of talk
- Language is not acquired it emerges.
- Learner's voice is given importance.
- The content of learning comes out of learners need, belief knowledge, experience and desires.

So, dogme is a method of teaching English grammar and language which is based on the conversation between the participants. Learning material is very light although not negligible and the focus is on emergence of language. In traditional method of teaching the emphasis is upon mastering the grammar and vocabulary and at the last the knowledge is applied in form of written and oral conversation, it means conversation is given last space. So, traditional language starts with mastering grammatical tools like verb, adverb known etc.

Developing the issue of language learning as an emergent phenomenon it is necessary to outline that firstly Dogme considers language teaching to be a process where the language emerges rather than a process where it is acquired, thus classroom activities lead to collaborative communication amongst the students. Secondly, learners produce language that they were not necessarily taught. The teacher's role, in part, is to facilitate the emergence of language. However, Dogme does not see the teacher's role as merely creating the right conditions for language to emerge. Alternatively the teacher is expected to encourage students to engage with the language learning process in a variety of ways, including rewarding, repeating and reviewing their performance. In the modern era of logic when questioning has become part & parcel of life. Teaching methods should also be changed with the same speed. Dogme is a step taken for this change.

• **Dogme has ten key principles:**

1. Interactivity: the direct route to learning is to be found in the interactivity between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves. Teacher and learner go on discussing the decided



topic in English language. Some stories or situations which relate to the target learners are picked up and discussion continues in two way communication.

2. Engagement: students are most engaged by content they have created themselves. The students do not become only mute listeners they interact with the mentor. They ask questions and enthusiastically participate in the debate and in the activities that go in the class.
3. Dialogic processes: learning is social and dialogic, where knowledge is co-constructed. In the old teaching methods it is clearly noticed that learning is one way process where teacher speaks and the learner listens whatever the teacher vomits out. But in dogme teaching, teacher and learner continuously exchange dialogues, which make this process very live.
4. Scaffolded conversations: learning takes place through conversations, where the learner and teacher co construct the knowledge and skills. Teacher comes in the classroom in alert motion because learning emerges out from the conversation.
5. Emergence: language and grammar emerge from the learning process. This is seen as distinct from the acquisition of language. As it is seen that in grammar translation method learner is forced to remember the grammatical structure and in this way the learner tries to formulate the sentences. This practice makes language mechanical rather spontaneous. The answer to avoid overload of the text books is to allow and encourage students to generate their own content from personal narratives and from records of the language which they learned in the class.
6. Affordances: the teacher's role is to optimize language learning affordances through directing attention to emergent language. Dogme has its roots in communicative language teaching (in fact Dogme sees itself as an attempt to restore the communicative aspect to communicative approaches). Dogme has been noted for its compatibility with reflective teaching and for its intention to humanize the classroom through a radical pedagogy of dialogue. It also shares many qualities with task-based language learning and only differs with task-based learning in terms of methodology rather than philosophy. Research evidence for Dogme is limited but Thornbury argues that the similarities with task-based learning suggest that Dogme likely leads to similar results. An example is the findings that learners tend to interact, produce language and collaboratively co-construct their learning when engaged in communicative tasks.
7. Voice: the learner's voice is given recognition along with the learner's beliefs and knowledge. The learner is open to put forward his point of view in front of the class and the teacher without hesitation. The learner does not sit like a mute spectator. The teacher can do this in a variety of ways, including rewarding, repeating and reviewing it. As language emerges rather than is acquired, and there is no need to follow a syllabus that is externally set. Indeed, the content of the syllabus is covered throughout the learning process.
8. Empowerment: students and teachers are empowered by freeing the classroom of published materials and textbooks. The teacher and learners don't remain slaves of the books. This practice makes the area of learning wider.
9. Relevance: materials (e.g. texts, audios and videos) should have relevance for the learners and this material is brought both by students and teacher as decided prior the class.
10. Critical use: teachers and students should use published materials and textbooks in a critical way that recognizes their cultural and ideological biases. Based on these principles, three ideologies which can be termed as the cornerstone of Dogme ELT are evolved. Although Thornbury notes that Dogme is not inherently seeking social change and therefore does not fulfil generally held criteria for a critical pedagogy, Dogme can be seen as critical in terms of its anti-establishment approach to language teaching.



Core tenant of dogme approach is that when learners are communicating, communication first and foremost should be about them. Dogme advocates conversation over communication. It is found that classroom talk that replicates the interactional features of natural conversation is likely to be more effective than traditional class room talk. It does not mean to make teaching informal chat. It should be instructional conversation. To most truly teach one must converse, to truly converse is to teach.

• **An Example of conversation:**

Teacher: So, Ritesh, why you did not come to college yesterday.

Ritesh: Well sir, it was raining so I could not step out of the house.

Teacher: Really, but it was not raining here.

Class now turn to page 11

So, socialization is an important part to promote conversation. Bonny Norton Peirce researched on immigrant women in Canada and found out that the women who became members of social groups and were given public space to speak English language; they became fluent learner of English. The research concludes that learner should be given space to talk out of classroom as well. The core point is to make classroom the discourse community, where every learner has a right to speak.

So, conversation is not what we want to achieve through language learning rather it is a tool to learn second language. I experimented in the institution where I am presently working it is situated in rural area of Punjab and student comes from traditional Punjabi families. English is core subject for them. Per Week six periods of 45 minutes are attributed to learning English. To calculate further they learn English eighteen hour in a month, which is not even equal to a full day. It is a known fact that during the period of forty five minutes emphasis is upon completing the syllabus rather than learning English language. So it is found that in the class of English language, students listen to some story, poetry or drama and end up by cramming about main character and theme of the story. I also found that most of the stories are written by foreign authors, and due to culture difference many at time it is difficult for the students to understand the soul of the story.

Dogme is not anti book but it emphasizes upon vanishing unnecessary material. Material which does not cater to the need of the learner should be ignored. To learn English language the requirement is only of a room with a few chairs, a blackboard, teacher and learners and learning is constructed out of talk. It is found that course books which are referred for learning English are embedded with cultural and educational value that has little to do with the need of the student of English language.

Because of the global spread of English, ELT has become a global industry with high economic stake and text book production has become one of the engines that drive the industry. It is highly surprising that the world market is flooded with textbooks, which are not grounded in local socio-cultural milieu. So, English language is used to spread certain form of culture and knowledge. Kumaravadivelu, recommends asking learners to discuss how topic could be dealt with the point of view of their own linguistic and cultural perspective. A second approach is to go local and use only locally produced material. Or at the very least, produce version of course books tailored for specific contexts. Ask the students what they want to know about and it would generate the content of the class. John Wade, a volunteer teacher in 1960 framed out syllabus by asking students what they wanted to know and Wade came out with textbook free pedagogy. It not only empowers the learner but also makes the teacher's job in the classroom a lot more fun and much easier.

The experiments have proved that students tend to learn English language quickly and easily from texts, which are meaningful and are related to their experiences and culture. Now the question



arises how a dogme teacher can get the text which is suitable to the students. The answer is internet, which is a useful medium to develop homegrown course material. Book should be a backup in the process of learning English language.

It can be concluded that language learning has nothing to do with covering of syllabus. If learners are supplied with optimal condition for language use, and are motivated to take advantage of opportunities, their inherent learning capacities will be activated and language rather than being acquired will emerge. It is found that learners of English language are taught random items of grammar and vocabulary, with no communicative aim in sight. So, best way to learn how to communicate is by communicating. It is argued that naturally occurring talk is a sufficiently fertile context for language development. Dogme focuses upon development of learner centered curriculum. Learner's needs are identified in advance and programmes are designed accordingly. Text books if used should be according to linguistic and cultural perspective of the learner and preference should be on locally produced material.

Dogme considers language learning to be a process where language emerges rather than one where it is acquired. Dogme shares this belief with other approaches to language education, such as task-based learning. Language is considered to emerge in two ways. Firstly classroom activities lead to collaborative communication amongst the students. Secondly, learners produce language that they were not necessarily taught. As such, the teacher's role, in part, is to facilitate the emergence of language. However, Dogme does not see the teacher's role as merely to create the right conditions for language to emerge. As discussed earlier the teacher must also encourage learners to engage with this new language to ensure learning takes place. The teacher can do this in a variety of ways, including rewarding, repeating and reviewing it. As language emerges rather than is acquired, there is no need to follow a syllabus that is externally set. Indeed, the content of the syllabus is covered or uncovered throughout the learning process.

• **Scott has Mentioned Some Activities in his Book:**

Students will be given a situation to imagine that everyone has become famous and there will be a press conference where they will answer the questions which will be asked by the fellow learners. The teacher will help them by hinting towards area of questions. Role of the teacher here will be like to set the time limit, to note down effective and less effective sentences. Write down some phrases which students could have used. The homework assigned can be to make sentences on the basis of words written on the board. In another activity teacher can write:

Topic on the board as follow:

- About my Room.
- About my Home.
- About my Town.
- About my Region
- About my Country
- About my World.

The participant will roll the dice to determine their topic and they will make brief notes about the topic they want to speak on. Teacher's role here again will be to help them with the language and manage time. As home assignments students can be asked to select the six topics for the next lesson.

When a teacher focuses on learner's life the language that emerges is relevant to them. Here teachers need to focus on the form. It helps the learner to improve accuracy and developing fluency.



The teacher can ask the students to rephrase their ideas in more sophisticated language. The teacher has to focus on refining than correcting.

No course book is going to be just right for the learners, in their social context. Course book writers and their publishers cannot produce texts that will match the huge range of variables in any one learning situation. A Dogme approach respects and is nourished by this diversity. Attempting to control the variables by using a course book is rather like opting for package tourism: convenient but impersonal.

• **Scott in his book gives some indications to the teachers to apply Dogme practically:**

- In class, use short text representatives of particular genre or style
- Establish a system by which individuals take turns to present to the class a set of words that is relevant to the class's special subject-these could come from texts that they have found on the internet.
- Invite the learners to take turns giving presentations.
- Tell the learner to bring to class texts they have found, along with questions about them.
- Role-play situations that are relevant to learners' specialization can be implemented.
- Teacher should give short lectures/presentations for note making and summarizing purpose. When available, invite colleagues, friends or local expert to do the same.
- Teach English through activities such as song or drama
- Use English both as a medium of expression and as the language of classroom negotiation.
- Treat the second language as a natural and unproblematic alternative to the learners' mother tongue.
- Make a one page summary of your notes before the next lesson and distribute it among learners. This summary can include regular task like asking them to write three sentences using words that are new to them.
- Work on role-play derived from real life challenges. Provide students phrases that can help them.
- Encourage the learners to keep language diary.
- Encourage the learner to ask the teacher questions.
- Encourage learners to look for topic-related texts themselves, and to bring these to class to share with the classmates.
- Draw attention to any grammar areas that emerge naturally and reference these to the coursebook syllabus.
- Start well in advance of the exam, for example by making a connection between speaking activity and the procedures of an oral exam.
- Highlight how the activity you normally undertake in class is relevant to specific paper
- Identify task type test in the exam and find ways to practice these tasks using real life context.
- Help the class to generate their own exercises –using the exam format as a model.
- Look at exams in the context of people's lives.

To conclude, I found that by following this practice of teaching English, students were not able to even understand basis sentences. I did an experiment in my class to see the effect of Dogme teaching method. I started asking them questions related to their routine and so, initially they were hesitant but as the conversation went on they started responding enthusiastically. Although, the language they used was not rich but after a month the difference comes out. We as social beings witness many things daily and we want to share it with others may it be any incident related to our life



or any scene we have witnessed. We often have an idea with whom to share our views with father, mother, husband or wife. If we think of our class in the same way, the things may interest the students. These events can become the study material. The study material grows from environment and lessons grow naturally. A Dogme approach is based on activity rather than grammar and on the learner's emergent need rather than on the assumptions of absentee course book writer. If the learners are engaged in a range of life like tasks and using or producing a genuine text, they will be covering all the grammar they need. There is still much left to be explored about its implications in Indian context. Now, only empirical evidences, after a practical application of Dogme teaching, can provide further indications of its success in Indian context. However, on theoretical level, two big challenges, which this approach may face, can be foreseen. Firstly, the disapproval of parents as well as learners, Indian pedagogical practices are deeply entrenched into culture (Clarke, 2001) and any attempt at novelty is seen as an outrage against traditions. Common masses would be very sceptical about any pedagogy that brings teacher and learners on one plane, reducing the teacher's role from controller to facilitator. Teachers have occupied a place of honour and worship in India since the days of yore. It will take some sincere effort and lots of patience to bring about such a radical pragmatic shift in popular opinions. Another challenge is to find and train teachers who can use this pedagogy effectively. Questions have also been raised about the appropriateness of Dogme in low resource contexts and where students are preparing for examinations that have specific syllabi. As Dogme is a state of mind, a stance deeply entrenched in consciousness; mere content knowledge of English language won't be a qualification for being an unplugged teacher. The Dogme ELT teachers would also need to make this paradigm shift, from viewing their role as a bestower of knowledge to that of a mentor. He or she would need to be properly trained to exploit the situations in classrooms for creating more knowledge and also to be ever understanding of the learners' needs. Unfortunately, the teacher education is a much neglected field in academics in India. As Dogme ELT can be locally adapted, it would need much brainstorming and discussion to develop suitable practices for various Indian contexts. Again it would need a lot of hard work but the prospects are promising because India boasts of a youth population that is ready to welcome a change. Indeed, there is no denying that Dogme teaching method holds great potential for turning around the ELT classroom situations. It would create zones of proximal developments that would radically change the language learning experience. Hopefully it would establish a dialogic pedagogy that would mark the beginning of a change in Indian education scenario on a broader level. It would be interesting to try Dogme teaching method with other subjects on an experimental basis.

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