

## Defending Dogme: Key Ideas Behind their Philosophy of Teaching

- “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
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### Ten Key Principles of Dogme

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 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 (ie **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 optimize 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, important 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 English Language Teaching materials - to become **critical** users of such texts.
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### Three Core Precepts 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*.
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## Dogme is Materials-Light

- “Since its inception, Dogme has had the reputation of being a movement whose goal it is, if not actually to *burn* coursebooks, at least to banish them from the classroom, along with any other materials and technological aids that teachers now take for granted. Dogme proponents have been labelled as luddites, iconoclasts, and ELT ‘Amish folk’. This reputation is not entirely unfounded, of course.”
- “...a Dogme approach is not anti-materials nor anti-technology *per se*. What it rejects are those kinds of materials and aids that don’t conform with the kinds of principles outlined earlier. Materials that might just conform to these principles would be those that support the establishment of a local discourse community, and which foster the joining construction of knowledge, mainly through mediated talk.”
- “Unfortunately, ELT materials do not, generally speaking, support these ends. For a start, the sheer amount of published material available threatens to stifle the opportunities for conversation that (as we have argued) are so important for language development. By reducing the amount of material that is imported into the classroom, the teacher frees the learning space for the kind of interactive, talk-mediated learning opportunities that are so crucial for language development.”

## References

Meddings, L. & Thornbury, S. (2009). *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching*. Delta Publishing.