



CAT: A Framework for Dogme

Introduction to Dogme

Dogme (Danish for “dogma”) 95 was the name of a movement started in 1995 by Danish film directors, Lars von Trier (*Dancer in the Dark*) and Thomas Vinterberg (*Celebration*). The movement was a reaction to the excesses of modern filmmaking, particularly with Hollywood films. The two Danes issued a challenge to other film directors which they referred to as the “Vow of Chastity”. The idea was to encourage the production of films without all the special effects and other such embellishments and to take filmmaking back to the essentials, which the Dogme movement saw as “story, acting and theme”. The Vow of Chastity stated the following restrictions:

1. Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. If a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found.
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. Music must not be used unless it occurs within the scene being filmed, i.e., diegetic.
3. The camera must be a hand-held camera. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. The film must not take place where the camera is standing; filming must take place where the action takes place.
4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable (if there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action (murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden (that is to say that the film takes place here and now).
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
10. The director must not be credited.

Utterson, Andrew *Technology and Culture, the Film Reader* Routledge

Dogme became associated with English Language Teaching in 2000 when writer Scott Thornbury adapted the philosophy of the film movement to English Language teaching. He presented his ideas in an article entitled “A Dogma for EFL” and a global discussion began about the approach and its principles. In the same way that the film movement reacted to the excesses of modern filmmaking, ELT Dogme reacted to what was seen as excesses in the classroom. Technology has certainly played a large role in transforming films as well as English language teaching but there are other aspects of teaching that Thornbury reacted to.

Where is real communication? More often as not, it is buried under an avalanche of photocopies, visual aids, transparencies, MTV clips and cuisenaire rods. (Thornbury, 2000, p. 2)

As Dogme 95 wanted film to return to its essence, the story and the characters, Dogme for EFL asked for teaching to return to its essence: the communication between teachers and students. And as Dogme 95 issued a challenge to filmmakers, Thornbury issued his own challenge to language teachers. Like Von Trier and Vinterberg, he urged teachers to take a “Vow of Chastity”. The following excerpts from his article illuminate this and pay homage to the film movement.

Shooting should be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where the prop is to be found)
Translated into classroom terms this might read:

Teaching should be done using only the resources that teachers and students bring to the classroom - i.e. themselves - and whatever happens to be in the classroom. (Thornbury, 2000, p. 2)

Dogme also proscribes music being played that is not actually occurring where the scene is being shot. Nor is artificial lighting allowed. Nor optical work or filters. Nor tripods. In teaching terms, this rigorous rejection of the non-authentic might mean, for example, that...no recorded listening material should be introduced into the classroom: the source of all "listening" activities should be the students and teacher themselves. The only recorded material that is used should be that made in the classroom itself, e.g. recording students in pair or group work for later re-play and analysis. (Thornbury, 2000, p. 2)

Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now).

Learning, too, takes place in the here-and-now. What is learned is what matters. Teaching - like talk - should centre on the local and relevant concerns of the people in the room, not on the remote world of coursebook characters, nor the contrived world of grammatical structures. (Thornbury, 2000, p. 2)

In 2009 Thornbury and Luke Meddings further clarified the Dogme approach in the DELTA publication entitled *Teaching Unplugged*. The book is largely a collection of Dogme classroom activities but they are preceded by an excellent outline of the approach itself. That section begins with ten key principles of Dogme teaching. From those, three core principles are highlighted as the fundamentals of the approach: classes should be conversation-driven, teaching should be "materials-light", and the instruction should focus on emergent language. These three principles are clarified further:

Because Dogme is about teaching that is **conversation-driven**, this implies:

- establishing a classroom that is conducive to interactive talk;
- setting up conversations between and about 'the people in the room';
- taking advantage of conversation as it occurs incidentally;
- providing the necessary scaffolding to support talk in a second language;
- being a participant oneself in the classroom talk

Because Dogme is about teaching that is **materials-light**, this means:

- orienting lessons to the learners' needs and interests;
- foregrounding the learners' topics and texts;
- making the most of minimal means;
- if using materials, using ones that are locally generated;
- challenging the assumptions inherent in imported materials.

Because Dogme is about teaching that is **focused on emergent language**, this means:

- setting up activities that are language productive;
- using learner language to inform lesson and course planning;
- viewing learners' errors as learning opportunities;
- retrieving instances of learner language and analysing them;
- recording, reviewing and recycling instances of learner language.

(Thornbury & Meddings, 2009, p.21)



Introduction to CAT

Conversation Activated Teaching is a step-by-step method that implements the main features of Dogme. It is a totally student-centred way of teaching that begins with the students choosing their own conversation topic for that lesson. That task is done as a group brainstorm of possible speaking topics and then a final topic is chosen from the list. From then on, the lesson framework is fairly simple. Students talk about the topic in pairs and then one student is called to the front to have a similar conversation with the teacher. It is from that conversation that language emerges to be reformulated into something that is more native-speaker like. Then students go back into pairs and repeat the conversation task, this time using some of the reformulated language, if they'd like. Then another student is called to the front and the whole process repeats itself. Below is a complete description of each stage.

Warmer

The lesson warmer is a group brainstorm where participants in each group come up with ideas of what they could talk about in that lesson. It is best done as a collaborative and competitive task where each group of students tries to come up with the longest list. When the activity is stopped, ask each group how many topics they thought of and then write the complete list from the winners on the board. Other groups are then asked for any additional topics and then they are added to the list. Once the complete list is on the board, tell the students that you will start at the beginning of the list and call each topic out in turn. For each topic, if they would like to speak about it, they are to raise their hands. They may raise their hands as many times as they wish. Call out the first topic, count the hands and write the number of votes it got on the board beside the topic. Continue with the rest and once all have been voted on, select the one with the most votes as the topic for that class. If there is a tie, then vote again with only the topics that got the same score. This time, the students are only allowed to raise their hands for one topic.

Pair Conversations

After choosing the topic, put the students in pairs. Explain to the class that one student in each pair will be asking the other questions to find out what they have to say on the topic. You can model a few possible questions to help them, if you'd like. Explain to them that they will switch roles after a few minutes so that the asking student will have a chance to answer and vice versa. You could also explain that asking questions of someone to find out something about them or their ideas is an invaluable conversation strategy, that, unfortunately, many native speakers are not good at. If they can do it well in the real world, they are bound to impress.

If you have an uneven number of students, you can have a group of three do this task. In this case, you would instruct them to have one person asking questions of the other two, or two students asking questions of the one. It all depends on what you feel the students would be most comfortable with. Of course, when the pairs switch roles, the group of three would also. Make sure you get a rough idea of how much time each conversation lasts before switching roles as you will be repeating this stage later in the lesson and it's a good idea to have the speaking turns roughly the same length.

Conversation with Teacher

In this stage, you have a conversation with one student at the front of the class. It will be from this conversation that you will get the reformulated language that the students can use afterwards



when talking about the topic. To begin, you need to get a student up to the front, which you can do by asking for a volunteer or by selecting a student. Next, you need to explain to that student exactly what will transpire. Tell them that the two of you will have a conversation much like the one the student just finished. You will be making notes about what the student says but emphasize to that student that you will not be writing down their mistakes. This is important as students are sometimes reluctant to speak to their teacher in front of the class as they are worried that the teacher will call attention to all their mistakes. Once you've said that, that's probably enough explanation for the student you are going to converse with. Now, you'll need to explain to the rest of the class that their job will be to listen to your questions because they will get examples of questions that they could use when talking about this topic. This will be useful not only in real life, but also later in the class when they will be asking questions with a new partner. Explain to the class that they should listen closely to your questions and write them down. Then you can start the conversation with the one student and just for their answers, make some brief notes. You are basically only looking for content - all you need are the basic ideas so that you can reiterate back to the student what he/she had said, but, of course, in your language rather than the student's. However, if the student produces particular language (e.g., a phrase or structure), which is accurate and worth sharing with the class, write that down as is.

Once you've drawn the conversation with the student to a close, you need to reiterate what the student said to you but, in your own words. But before you do that, you should let that student and the rest of the class know what is about to happen. Explain to the class that when you reiterate what the student had said to you, each student in the class should write down any expressions that they hear in your answers. They should pay special attention to expressions that they think they could use to talk about the topic. If your students have not done this before, you will probably need to explain to them exactly what you mean by "expressions".

I usually define expressions as groups of words that go together. This distinguishes them from collocations, which are two main words that go together (not counting those functional words like articles, prepositions, etc. that may appear in collocations). The important thing about expressions is that certain words within the group can often be changed, meaning the basic structure can often be used in a multitude of different ways or for different purposes. Consider, for example, the beginning of the preceding sentence: "The important thing about expressions is...". Below is an example of how that expression could be used in different ways.

The important thing about school is learning how to learn.
The important thing about history is the lessons it teaches us.
The important thing about exercise is that it helps you stay healthy.
The important thing about English is it is the language of business and travel.
The important thing about listening is that it can help you learn new expressions.

Your students, particularly lower level ones, will have problems at first knowing exactly what to write down from your reiteration. The best thing to do is give them some guidance when you do your reiteration. For example, if you hear yourself say an expression that you think the students should notice and write down, draw attention to it. You can do this by repeating it (e.g., "The important thing is..."), stressing it when you say it the first time or by making a writing gesture with your hand when you say it. Of course, for lower level students, the expressions will be a lot simpler, e.g., "I work as a teacher."

You should also emphasize to your students how important listening for expressions is. By doing so, they will be picking up structures that will enable them to speak more accurately and with a greater range of structures for different situations and topics. There's a great way to drive this point home for students who are intermediate level and above. You can let them know that 90% of



native-speaker speech is made up of the 2000 most common words of English. As intermediate students, they will know all, or virtually all, of those words. Once they understand that, tell them that the difference between you and them is that you know how to put the words together and the only way they can acquire that knowledge is by noticing structures (collocations and expressions) when they listen or read.

Once you've explained to the class what their task will be, you should let your partner know what they will be doing during your reiteration. Explain that you will simply be repeating the information that they told you but you will be doing it the way that a native-speaker would. After each thing you say, they are to confirm that that was indeed what they had said. So, for example, if you say, "You said you work as a doctor", the student should confirm that. There are two ways of doing that, with a short answer, e.g., "Yes" or by repeating the structure, e.g., "I work as a doctor." Explain that you will leave it up to them which method they choose but tell them that noticing and repeating a structure is a good way to learn it so if they hear you say something that they think is important to learn, they should try to repeat it as you said it.

Now you are ready to do the reiteration. Using your notes, reiterate each utterance the student had said, although, if you think something is unimportant or irrelevant, you can certainly skip it. Note that for lower level learners, you can reiterate with direct speech, e.g., "You said, 'I work as a doctor.'" You should also repeat any structures that you wrote down verbatim from what the student had said. You can even give some brief praise to the student for producing useful and accurate language. After each reiteration, the student confirms that that was what they had said but, if they confirm something with a short answer that you think is worth drawing attention to, both for the student as the rest of the class, ask the student to repeat the whole thing.

If you find that your students are reluctant to write down the expressions you use, there is a way to encourage them to do it. Before you have your conversation with a student at the front, put the entire class into teams of roughly the same size, between three and six students each. Then tell the teams that they are going to be competing to see who writes down the most expressions. After each teacher-student conversation, you will ask them to total up the questions and expressions written down by each member of their team. Specify that it's just a total and the questions and expressions do not have to be different from those their partners wrote down. If, for example, everyone in the group wrote down one certain expression, they still get one point for each time it was written down. This will encourage students to write down the expressions as individual students will not want to be personally responsible for their team getting a low score. You can even let them know that there will be prizes for the winner, but then you'll need to come up with something to give them. So, after the initial teacher-student conversation, get the totals from each team and write them on the board. Praise the team that got the highest number and do the opposite for the team that got the lowest but encourage them, and other low-scoring teams, to try to write down more the next time. Then after the second student-teacher conversation, get the team totals again and add them to the score on the board, praising and shaming, as need be. Continue with this for the rest of the lesson but note that because students will be finding new partners for each student-student conversation, the teams will have to reassemble before the student-teacher conversations.

Language Focus

Once you've got the total number of questions and expressions written down by each group, it is time to get some of them up on the board. First, start with the questions. You'll need to reserve a smaller space on the board for questions as you will be using most of it for the expressions. It would be even better if you had a large sheet of paper (e.g. flip chart paper), that you could write

them on and put them up next to the board. Either way, you can start to elicit some of the questions you had asked. As students repeat them to you, write them up on the board and explain grammar or vocabulary as needed. If there is any benefit in clarifying pronunciation, do that also. Make sure the students understand the meaning of the questions, e.g., if the question was “What is your favourite movie?” and the students are low-level, you may need to clarify that it means the movie that you like the best. Also, if there is any benefit in showing possible variations of the structure, you should do that. For example, with the preceding question, you could explain how “movie” could be replaced by “television show”, “song”, etc. Also make sure you draw attention to questions that students could use in the next round of conversations.

After clarifying the questions, you’ll need to do the same with the expressions. Elicit them one at a time from students and get them on the board. You may want to change from second person to first, e.g., “You had a good time” to “I had a good time”. After writing up each one, clarify the meaning, form and, if necessary, pronunciation. Then you should show how the expressions can be varied. Draw attention to the variable part of the structure and try to elicit some other variations. For example, with the structure that was mentioned before, you could repeat “The important thing about...” and then start the elicitation with the words in bold (see below). Then you would supply “is” and try to get some ideas how the structure could be finished. You can also point out, depending on the level, that the structure is completed with a noun/gerund or “that” + clause. Of course, with lower level students, your explanations of how structures are completed will be simpler. With the aforementioned, “I work as a...”, you would only need to point out that it is completed with the name of a job.

The important thing about **school** is learning how to learn.
history is the lessons it teaches us.
exercise is that it helps you stay healthy.
weekends is that it gives you a chance to unwind.
listening is that it can help you learn new expressions.

Once you’ve got some expressions on the board, draw particular attention to those that could be used by students once they resume conversations on the topic. Below are some expressions and variations that were obtained from an actual class where the speaking topic was future plans. They are preceded by the actual utterances by the student. Note that number 3 was taken as is from the students as it is accurate and a very useful structure.

Student utterance

1. I will continue learn English.
2. For me the best work is flight attendant.
3. I want to move to the city.
4. I want to move the job.
5. I want to move from the home of my parents.

Teacher notes

1. continue learn Eng
2. ideal job flight attend.
3. want to move to the city
4. change jobs
5. move out – parent’s

Teacher reformulation and expansion

1. You are going to continue *learning English*. (studying at university/working at.../etc.)
2. Ideally, you would like to be *a flight attendant*. (a teacher/happy/rich)
3. You want to move to *the city*. (the country/Madrid/a new place)
4. You are planning to *change jobs*. (get married/go to university/move to.../etc.)
5. You want to move out of your *parents’* place. (mother’s/father’s/sister’s/friend’s)



Pair Conversations 2

After dealing with the expressions on the board, get students to find a different partner than the one they had for the last conversation. They are to do the task the same way they did it before, with one student asking the other one questions about the topic. Of course, this time there are some questions written on the board which they can use, if they would like to. The students should not feel obligated to use them as these conversations are meant to be as natural as possible and are not meant to be controlled practice stages. The same goes for the use of the expressions by the student who is answering. They are free to use anything from the board but they are not obligated to. However, students will most likely use some of the language from the board as, in some cases, it will make asking and answering easier and also they will naturally be motivated to be more accurate and native-speaker like. Again, as you did before, stop the students and have them switch roles so the one asking questions becomes the one answering.

After this pair conversation phase is finished, it's time to have another conversation between the teacher and another student. If you had students working in groups to write down the most questions and expressions, put them back in those groups. Then carry out the student-teacher conversation the same way as before. You can repeat some or all of the questions that you used last time or, if it seems appropriate, you can use some new questions. After the reiteration phase, augment the language on the board, particularly the expressions.

Ending the Lesson

For the remainder of the lesson, you will just be repeating the cycle: *Pair Conversation*, *Student-Teacher Conversation* and *Language Focus*. You can end the lesson at the end of any of those stages. Note that the stage lengths are variable. If you feel students need a lot of speaking practice, you can have longer pair conversations. If you feel, the students need more expressions, you can make the conversation with the teacher longer. Of course, the students' level will have some influence. For example, if you don't want to overwhelm low-level students with new language, you can keep the student-teacher conversations quite short. Another advantage of doing this is that the reformulation will happen sooner after the original utterance.

Unless your classes are very small or your lessons very long, it is unlikely that each student will have a chance to speak with the teacher. This is not a problem as the goal of this method is not to correct student errors but to give them ways of saying things that are more accurate and more like the way native speakers would say them. But you should make note of students who didn't have a chance to speak with you and make sure you call them up first the next time you do a lesson with this method.

Bibliography

Thornbury, Scott *A Dogma for EFL* IATEFL Issues, 153:2 2000

Meddings, Luke; Thornbury, Scott *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching* DELTA 2009

Sample Board from Lesson on Travel

Questions	Expressions
What countries have you been <u>to</u> ? <i>visited</i>	I visited <u>Jeju Island</u> / <u>Park</u> / <u>Montreal</u> I spent <u>four days</u> there / <u>two weeks</u> <i>open-minded</i> <i>narrow-minded</i> <i>closed-minded</i>
What did you like about your trip?	I went <u>there</u> by <u>plane</u> / <u>bus</u> / <u>car</u> / <u>bicycle</u> / <u>train</u> / <u>taxi</u> / <u>boat</u> <i>to Quebec</i>
How long did you <u>spend</u> there?	I went for a <u>bicycle ride</u> with my friend along the beach. <i>drive</i> <i>walk</i>
How many <u>days</u> did you spend there? <i>weeks</i>	It is famous for <u>seafood</u> / <u>wine</u> / <u>maple syrup</u> / <u>ice hockey</u> / <u>oil</u>
How was the <u>weather</u> ? <i>wave</i> <i>food</i> <i>people</i>	It was <u>windy</u> there. <u>Sunny</u> / <u>rainy</u> / <u>cloudy</u> / <u>snowy</u> / <u>cold</u> / <u>hot</u>
What was the <u>weather</u> like? <i>wave</i> <i>food</i> <i>people</i>	I like <u>Canada</u> because the people are <u>open-minded</u> . <i>beautiful</i> <i>calm</i> <i>fashionable</i> <i>polite</i> <i>friendly</i> <i>interesting</i> <i>warm</i>
How was <u>Jeju Island</u> ? / <u>Spain</u> <i>wave</i> <i>food</i> <i>people</i>	There is a <u>lake</u> in the mountains <u>village</u> on the mountain.
What is your favourite <u>country</u> ? / <u>city</u>	I walked around and <u>took photos</u>
What is your second favourite <u>country</u> / <u>city</u>	I liked to see the leaves change colour. The architecture was beautiful.
Did you visit any interesting <u>historical</u> sites? <i>traditional</i> <i>natural</i>	I had a <u>busy schedule</u> .
How did you get <u>to Quebec</u> ? <i>there</i>	I <u>had</u> a <u>bagel</u> / <u>sandwich</u> / <u>pizza</u>
What was your favourite thing about <u>Quebec</u> ?	
What did you do <u>there</u> ?	

CAT Framework

Stage and Aims	Interaction Pattern	Procedure	Time
1. Warmer -relax students, encourage speaking, choose topic for class	S-S-S	-Put Ss in groups and they compete to brainstorm the most conversation topics for the class. -Elicit the longest list and write it on the board. -For each topic, ask for a show of hands if Ss would like to talk about it. -If necessary, vote again for ties and announce chosen topic.	10-15 minutes
2. Pair Conversation -fluency	S-S	-Put Ss in pairs. Sa asks Sb questions to find out their ideas on topic. -Pairs switch roles. Sb asks Sa questions.	5-10 minutes
3. Conversation with Teacher -listening for question forms -listening for topic-related expressions	T-S T-Ss T-S T-Ss	-Call a student to the front and explain the task. -T asks S1 questions to find out their ideas on the topic. T takes brief notes. -Ss listen for questions and write them down. -T reiterates what S1 said. S1 confirms with short answer or repetition. -Ss listen for expressions in reiteration and write them down	5-15 minutes
4. Language Focus -focus on meaning, form, and usage of expressions	T-Ss	-T elicits questions he/she had asked and writes them on small section of board. Clarify where needed. -T elicits expressions he/she had used in reiteration and writes them on the board. Clarify where needed including expanding semi-fixed expressions.	10-20 minutes
5. Pair Conversation 2 -use of question forms and expressions -fluency -using target language	S-S	-Put Ss in new pairs and repeat previous pair conversation stage except encourage Ss to use language from board.	5-10 minutes
6. Conversation with Teacher 2		-as above	5-15 minutes
7. Language Focus 2		-as above	10-20 minutes
		-Continue to repeat stages 2, 3 and 4. End at end of any of those stages.	