International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies

Teaching Unplugged: Applications of Dogme ELT in India

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Abstract

The socio-political changes across the world indicate that it is, increasingly, becoming a questioning world. It is simple common sense that this change must also be reflected in the education system. A critical pedagogy that foregrounds dialogue and encourages questioning is therefore more relevant in the present times. The top-down approach of teaching only hampers the development of learners by silencing their voice and agency. In this respect, this paper focuses on the Dogme, or unplugged teaching, approach in English language teaching (ELT) in Indian context. The paper explores theoretical reasons, based upon the views of Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, and Charles Taylor, in support of adopting Dogme in ELT for radically changing the face of prevalent second language teaching scenario in India. An analysis of existing literature and empirical evidences strongly suggest that implementing this approach would be appropriate for multiple reasons. Being a dialogue based approach, it gives the learner, as well as the teacher, a chance to grow and learn together. It creates a zone of proximal development which helps learners to recognize their own voice and leads to self-discovery. Dogme in ELT can be motivating and empowering. As it is a pedagogy, of bare essentials, it is pro-poor and can be used even in under-equipped classrooms. Moreover, as it is grounded in the personal experience of the learner, it can fit well into a multicultural context. Therefore, it is implied and assumed that this approach would work very well in Indian context which is multicultural and economically diverse.

Keywords: Dogme, English language teaching, Critical pedagogy, Dialogue based Approach, ELT in India.

1 Introduction

If all curriculums are stories then we need a pedagogy that encourages us to narrate and listen to them (Grumet, 1981). This holds even truer for a language class as language is the primary means through which we express our thoughts and ideas, share our visions, and tell our stories. Learning a language is of vital importance and, as with all things important, it's not easy to acquire. Mastering the nuances of one's first language takes a lifetime, more so in the case of a second or third language. In India, the popular medium of instruction in higher education, is primarily English except for specific language courses. English is a second language for most Indian students, although in some cases it is the third language for learners. English language learners represent a rapidly growing, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse student population in India. But there is great disparity between the qualities of English learning experiences being offered to students from different economic and cultural backgrounds. The quality of English language teaching is far from satisfactory in most government sponsored or supported schools. The condition is not better in low-budget, privately funded ones. Only the up-scale private school students get a chance to have a better language learning experience. While students belonging to affluent upper class can afford to attend foreign schools, or costly public/private schools in India, the students belonging to underprivileged and economically weak community have to attend schools where the classes are not well-equipped with technical equipments such as audio-visual devices or computers as they cannot pay large sums for fees. In most of these schools English may not be the medium of instruction for other subjects. As a result, the students often have a poor experience of learning English as a Second language. A student, who has knowledge of content in mathematics, science, or history, is not likely to demonstrate that knowledge effectively if he/she cannot interpret the vocabulary and linguistic structures of the content. This causes the learners to have lower self-esteem and hence a low motivation to go on learning the language. Moreover, English is not the medium of communication at home for the students coming from an underprivileged and economically weak background. In most cases, none of the learners' parents speak English. Such students, seldom, get a chance to interact in English outside the classroom. These students have nowhere to go to practice their second language other than various private establishments, popularly termed as *coaching* which claim to teach 'spoken English'. This causes the learners to invest extra sum into learning a language which they should rightfully learn in the classroom itself. This is the socio-economic side of the picture.

Moving on to the pedagogical side, we find that English Language Teaching has a rich history of developing and employing different methods that facilitate learning English as a foreign or second language – the Silent Way, the Natural Approach, the Direct method, the Bilingual method, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) – to name just a few. In India, all of these have been practiced over the last few decades. It is a matter of grave concern that still many learners complain about the difficulty they face in an English class, including those studying in technically well-equipped schools. Many are not at ease while speaking or writing essays or articles on their own despite possessing good grammatical skills and a sound vocabulary bank. So where does the problem lie? Why are not the learners able to find their own voice? Teachers in India have employed various English language teaching methods and though these practices may result in some language being learnt, more often than not, it is quite a disengaged and mechanical process. It is clear that the existing methods and pedagogies fail to engage the learners, fire up their imaginations, and give them something really useful to take back at the end of the day. What we need is not just another method but a critical pedagogy that allows learners' voice to emerge in an ELT class and connects language learning to real-life experiences of the learner. Teaching unplugged or

Dogme in ELT is a critical pedagogical approach that has not been put to use in Indian schools for teaching English language. Therefore, hypothesis of this study is that introducing the practice of Dogme in ELT classes will not only facilitate language learning among Indian ESL students but also help establish a critical pedagogy that would establish the culture of engaged learning. Being light on material resources, it will also bridge the wide disparity between the qualities of English learning experience being offered to students from different economic backgrounds.

Teaching unplugged, if applied properly, can be very fruitful in Indian context due to multiple reasons. In this paper attempt has been done to explore the theoretical reasons which support the proposition that Dogme approach should be adopted in English Language Teaching classes in India. In order to support the claim, the paper draws on ideas of three different educator-theorists Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, and Charles Taylor. Also empirical evidences have been employed, as shared by teachers and educators on Dogme ELT website to support the present argument. Making a connection, among Dogme ELT approach and the current situation of the resources available in an average government school in India as well as the prevailing pedagogical practices, gives a clear indication of the need to adopt a new approach for teaching English in Indian schools.

2. A Dogme for ELT
2.1 Historical Background

Thornbury (2010) along with Luke Meddings (2013) was at the helm of developing unplugged approach to teaching English, which promotes a '*pedagogy of bare essentials*' (Thornbury, 2010, para. 1). In 2000, Scott Thornbury published an article in *IATEFL* (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, *Issues* 153) titled '*A Dogma for EFL*' which brought this approach out into focus and triggered the debate that caused many teachers to adopt it. It captured the imagination of educators and writers so much so that a Dogme ELT discussion group was formed on the web and teachers from all over the world contributed to the debate surrounding it. Thornbury was very much concerned about the way the wealth of material resources, related to ELT has drowned out the real task – conversations that focus on our own stories. After all, we all learn languages to communicate. But real plot of this story keeps lying buried beneath the avalanche of resources – textbooks, workbooks, vocabulary-building books, grammar books, phrasal verb dictionaries, expanded editions of dictionaries and lexicons, photocopiable resources, charts, flash cards, posters, teacher's guide, audio CDs for classroom and home study, videos, websites and whatnot. Moreover, there is internet, from where a load of authentic material can be accessed and downloaded. There are web-sites offering practicing lessons in various skills – from grammar and vocabulary to pronunciation and phonetics. There are more and more English teaching establishments opening up each day. The emphasis is so much on the material and methods that the learner's needs and personal experience is pushed to the margin.

Dogme ELT promotes a pedagogy that is unburdened by an excess of material and independent of the use of technology. Instead, it is grounded in the local and relevant concerns of the people in the classroom. The Dogme ELT discussion group on web introduces itself in these words:

> "We are a mix of teachers, trainers and writers working in a wide range of contexts, who are committed to a belief that language learning is both socially motivated and socially constructed, and to this end we are seeking alternatives to models of instruction that are mediated primarily through materials and whose objective is the delivery of "grammar mcnuggets". We are looking for ways of exploiting the learning opportunities offered by the raw material of

the classroom, that is the language that emerges from the needs, interests, concerns and desires of the people in the room."

(Retrieved from http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/dogme/info)

2.2 The Dogme 95 and the Dogme ELT

The concept of Dogme in ELT was inspired by a group of Danish filmmakers known as 'Dogme 95'. These filmmakers rejected the artificiality of the cinema that has been the hallmark of Hollywood. Led by Lars Von Trier, they signed 'a vow of chastity' which became the manifesto of the Dogme 95 film-making. They did away with all special effects, even sound and light effects that were external to the setting of the scene being shot. Instead, the focus was on the inner life of the characters and the narrative itself was fore-grounded.

In fact, there were *ten commandments* that Dogme 95 filmmakers have to follow. Similarly Scott Thornbury, Luke Meddings and other early practitioners of *unplugged teaching* proposed to follow ten rules. There are clear parallels between the ten commandments of both these groups as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Parallels between the Dogme 95 and the Dogme ELT

Dogme 95	Dogme ELT
1. Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in	1. 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. If a particular piece of material is necessary for the lesson, a location must be chosen where that material is to be found (e.g. library, resource centre, bar, students' club…)
2. Music must not be used unless it occurs within the scene being filmed	2. 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.
3. The camera must be hand-held; filming must take place where the action takes place	3. The teacher must sit down at all times that the students are seated, except when monitoring group or pair work (and even then it may be best to pull up a chair). In small classes, teaching should take place around a single table.
4. The film must be in colour. No special lighting	4. All the teacher's questions must be "real" questions (such as "Do you like oysters?" Or "What did you do on Saturday?"), not "display" questions (such as "What's the past of the verb to go?" or "Is there a clock on the wall?")
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden	5. Slavish adherence to a method (such as audiolingualism, Silent Way, TPR, task-based learning, suggestopedia) is unacceptable.
6. No superficial action (No murders, weapons,etc.)	6. A pre-planned syllabus of pre-selected and graded grammar items is forbidden. Any grammar that is the focus of instruction should emerge from the lesson content, not dictate it.
7. No temporal or geographical alienation.	7. Topics that are generated by the students themselves must be given priority over any other input.
8. No genre movies	8. Grading of students into different levels is

	disallowed: students should be free to join the class that they feel most comfortable in, whether for social reasons, or for reasons of mutual intelligibility, or both.
9. The aspect ratio must be 4:3, not widescreen.	9. The criteria and administration of any testing procedures must be negotiated with the learners.
10. The director must not be credited.	10. Teachers themselves will be evaluated according to only one criterion: that they are not boring.

(Sources: Retrieved from - http://www.moviemail.com/film-shop/collection/509-A-Beginner-s-Guide-to-Dogme-95/, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XusBw9_LeUE and http://www.thornburyscott.com/tu/Its%20magazine.htm)

These are the parallels between Dogme 95 and Dogme ELT but this is where the similarities end. For later was inspired by the former but not grounded into it. A critical pedagogy constantly questions itself, above all, and hence keeps evolving. So, while Dogme 95 became a redundant filmmaking movement, Dogme ELT is still flourishing. Furthermore, it has evolved to accommodate the changing needs of *connected* classes.

Another effective way to understand Dogme ELT is to know what it is *not*. Dogme ELT is not just another fancy method in ELT nor is it a rigid dogma. Rather, it can be better described as a *state of mind* that becomes an integral part of a teacher's classroom practice. It must be very adaptable to local conditions, even function compatibly with course-books and in hi-tech connected classes. The prescribed *commandments* are only facilitative and not prescriptive, as Lars von Trier has explained in an interview- "That's the whole point of these rules - they are a tool to be used freely" (as cited in Thornbury, 2001, para. 3). So what remains of the main principle? The central part is to remain true to the foregrounding of the *inner life* of the learner and also the teacher and to maintain the belief in dialogue and empowerment.

3. How Language Gets Lost

The way in which teachers think and act, differs across the world. A variety of factors, related to economic, political and demographic context, result in this difference, but teacher thinking, and action, is also a cultural construct. Pedagogical practices in Indian classrooms are largely based upon four cultural constructs (Clarke, 2001). The first construct is a shared holistic worldview that supports the acceptance of regulation. In holism, since individuals are not autonomous but linked together in an interdependent system, context and social relationships drive the individual. Secondly, intertwined with the acceptance of regulation is the conception of instruction as duty. Duty-based cultures enshrine some blueprint for how people should live and what they must do, regardless of what they feel like doing. The third cultural construct, related to teacher thinking and teaching, is a social framework that is defined by structural and qualitative hierarchy (Roland, 1988). Structural hierarchy is based on the caste structure, and the organizational structure operating within families, and the qualitative hierarchy is based on the qualities possessed by the individual who holds a higher position. The fourth cultural construct is knowledge as collectively accumulated, attested and transferred. An individual's decisions and choices made are often constructed by the choices made by the community rather than by individual experience and perception. In this process, an individual constructing his or her knowledge becomes less significant. As a result of culturally constructed pedagogy, teaching practices are integrated within social structure and highly resistant to change.

Both of the above types of hierarchy apply to the teachers in Indian classroom context-structural hierarchy, in terms of the establishment of authority in the organization of the classroom, and qualitative hierarchy, in terms of the teacher being more knowledgeable than the student. Duty-based culture leaves no choice for the students but to obey the instructions

of the teacher. They are told what they must do or must not do regardless of what they feel like doing. In this process, the learner becomes less significant as the choices he/she makes are often constructed by the teacher. The Indian education system, on primary, secondary, or even higher level, is curriculum-based and teacher-centered. The teachers and the education boards (comprising of those educators who are not even in touch with the actual learners) control what is to be learnt, how much is to be learnt, in what order it is to be learnt, and how the overall learning is to be evaluated. This is true for all the subjects including languages. It is believed that such a system may look very neat from the outside but creates a lot of mess in the learners' lives. In order to avoid diverging into wider implications of this problem, therefore, attempt is done to focus here on the effects of such a top-down approach on learning English as a second language.

Here, it is described how a particular English language class works in a typical Indian high school, where English may or may not be the primary medium of instructions. This description is based on personal narratives of former students. A class of learner strength 50, or even more, is taught by a single teacher according to the guidelines provided by the school management, which in turn follows the rules of the education board with which the school happens to be affiliated. Typically there is a main text-book supplemented with its pair of work-book. There is one additional reader-text for the sake of increasing fluent reading. If the administration is very particular about good language learning, there can be an additional grammar work-book. According to the Central Board of Secondary Education, a 6-day working week should include 240 minutes of second language teaching (40 minutes per session). The teacher is expected to *cover* it all by the end of the academic year. Now, it is a well known fact that the course book texts are not so much as texts as *pre-texts* of introducing pre-selected grammar syllabus. No matter how colorful the book is or how differently the lessons are designed, the goal is only to provide what Dogme ELT educators call "grammar McNuggets" (Pulverness, as cited in Thornbury, 2002, para. 7). This can be easily perceived by anyone who has ever had a chance at teaching English or had been involved in course book production. Typically the main text-book has 12 chapters and similar is the case with the work-book. Being controlled by external forces, this allows little freedom to experiment with language teaching; even a very learned teacher would find himself/herself confined while juggling between three or more books. Where is then any time left to focus on the *inner life* of the learners? Who cares to allow the voices to *emerge*? More often, than not, learners are not actually engaged with the language and learning process. Same is the case with the teacher. The pressure to *cover* the entire syllabus is so much on the teacher that if they try to do something creatively radical, then, the prescribed course work won't be completed. This might result in ugly scenes with the parents as well as administration and the teacher may have to lose his/her job.

4. How Language can be Claimed Back

This, rather detailed description, gives a good idea of how flawed the language teaching pedagogy is and how it fails at multiple levels. The prevailing Indian educational scenario is clearly what Freire (1970) calls the 'banking concept of education' (P. 72). The widely held belief is that a better teacher is one who fills the learners more completely and good learners are those who allow themselves to be filled. Such a language learning process is merely one of re-producing and devoid of any actual production of language in the class. In other words, co-creation of knowledge does not take place at all. Nothing can be a matter of more grave concern, if classrooms are supposed to create a zone of proximal development (Lake, 2012, p. 39). In such learning environments learners are totally detached from their immediate reality as the topics are completed alien to their own existential experience (Freire, 1970, p. 71).

On the contrary, the Dogme approach in ELT establishes the whole learning experience on what the learners bring into the class – their own knowledge of language – no matter however limited. For the new generation of ESL learners, English is simply there in various forms in the world around them. What they need is to engage with it. The Dogme approach in ELT grounds the language learning experience in the real and relevant world of the learner. The teacher begins to work with the English that the learners bring to the class, not pushing externally prepared material on them. The whole lesson is built around dialogue and the subsequent language that emerges. The prompts given are often in the forms of questions that cannot be answered in monosyllabic words, learners have to come forward and take part in the conversation. The questions are also not about some imaginary situations. Rather they are often about the learners' personal experiences such as – *Where are you planning to go this summer?* Or *what did you do on this weekend*? In advanced learner levels, the teacher even leaves the choice of the topic to the students as they are more likely to come up with something which can be more of their interest. The focus is kept on three things – knowledge, experience, and feelings of the learners. The 'emergent' language from this initial dialogue forms the basis of further dialogues, grammar exercises, or pronunciation drills. The teacher allows the learners to choose where they want to go next; however he/she still steers the conversation towards areas which may need more attention. But there are never any prescribed grammar content or vocabulary lists that must be mastered at the end of each class. Also photocopies and pre-recorded CDs or cassettes are banned. Real talk forms the lesson core.

This sort of teaching is clearly driven by a student-centered pedagogy that connects the whole learning process to the real life experiences. Learning a second language is not a linear process, which is the way we are expected to learn from a course work designed for the whole academic year. The whole course work is actually a linear grammar syllabus disguised as a series of thematic units supposed to be completed one after the other in a serialised order. Is it really how we learn things in our day to day life? The real life is messy, not a series of graded experiences. We learn a lot of things in various ways and later reconnect them to make sense. Similarly, the process of language learning is a kind of a *bricolage* where we try to connect what we already know to what we are experiencing now (Meddings, 2012). In a Dogme ELT class the learners are expected to put together all the bits of language that they already possessed or have been recently exposed to or experienced (Meddings, 2013). As Thornbury (2000) explains,

> "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. …No methodological structures should interfere with, nor inhibit, the free flow of participant-driven input, output and feedback." (Para. 12).

One might wonder whether it is not too haphazard and risky. If there is a danger that next to nothing is learnt due to lack of prescribed course content? There are two reasons that put any such negative speculations to rest. Firstly, at this point, one must consider the immense and complex role that learner engagement, autonomy, and motivation has to play in the overall learning process. Ellis (as cited in Thornbury, 2002) argues that "giving learners control of the discourse is one way of making the classroom acquisition-rich" (para. 3). This is also consistent with Slimani's (as cited in Thornbury, 2002, para. 3) claim, that topics initiated by learners are more readily recalled than topics initiated by the teacher. Relevant to this, self-determination theory states that the freedom to choose is a necessary prerequisite for motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Van Lier cites evidence that "intrinsic motivation is

closely related to the perception of being able to choose and of being somehow in control of one's actions. Actions that are perceived as being externally controlled (on the other hand) have a tendency to reduce intrinsic motivation." (as cited in Thornbury, 2002, para. 3). Gardner and Lambert (1959) showed, in their pioneering study, that language achievement is not only strongly related to language aptitude, but to motivation as well. Therefore, it can be concluded that topics that are "externally controlled" will have a de-motivating tendency.

Secondly, Dogme ELT approach is neither haphazard nor unprofessional. Though it does not tell the teachers what they should do, it surely suggests what they might like to do. The teachers must go in the class with a clear idea of the needs of the class, which they may learn through formal or informal means. Though the Dogme approach is dialogue based, the teacher needs to be well prepared about where it will be going and how to check if it's getting too much off the track. In other words, the teacher's task is to provide scaffolding to the learners (Lang, 2012, p. 53). This means providing help as and when required by the learner, making lessons flexible, and always willing to change the plans for the sake of increased learner engagement. According to Vygotsky, this is how a zone of proximal development is established where the teacher and the student co-construct knowledge (Lake, 2012, p. 39).

It is true that in Indian educational scenario, it is an intimidating prospect for a teacher to relinquish even partial control of the class to the learner. But allowing learners, some say in deciding the topic agenda, does not mean that teachers must relinquish their authority. Their role is still very important as it is the teacher who helps the learners reach their full potential by skillfully using the opportunities that arise during the course of a lesson. As a mentor, the teacher helps the students notice what they might not see on their own (Lake, 2012, p. 63). It is not about being professional or unprofessional; it is all about sharing and co-constructing knowledge.

5. Teaching Unplugged: A Critical Pedagogy

The Dogme in ELT was started as a critique of a weak form of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in 2000. From then on Scott Thornbury and Luke Meddings have tried to keep its critical essence intact with the support of Dogme ELT professionals from around the world. Dogme ELT is not just about materials-light and pared to minimum approach to ELT; rather, it really seeks to bring about a change in the condition of its learners. Thornbury (2001) declares that it is *a state of mind* that becomes part of a teacher's pedagogy forever. It is a sort of critical stance that permeates the consciousness of the teacher-learner. By foregrounding dialogue and personal narratives of the learners, it has brought about a radical change in the process of language learning. The teacher is not allowed to talk 'to' or talk 'about' the learners; rather, they are required to talk 'with' each other, engaging in a meaningful dialogue. This is what Freire (1970) calls *authentic education*:

"Authentic education is not carried on by "A" *for* "B" or by "A" *about* "B,"
but rather by "A" *with* "B," mediated by the world – a world which impresses
and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it." (p. 93).

At the same time, materials, especially course books, can also come between the teacher and the students, preventing them from any meaningful discussion suffused with the vitality of their own learning experience. Instead of becoming the facilitator of critical learning, the teacher may get reduced to a 'materials operator', separated from the learners by a screen of 'things to do'. Here the inherent problem is that the course book is written by someone else, somewhere else; who has never met the learners and the students, and hence, does not know their backgrounds or their learning styles. How can the author(s) or publisher(s) be allowed to impose the materials of their choice on others? Giving voice to every teacher's concerns, Adrian Underhill (n.d.) has rightly asked:

"These absentee authors write the material which is then imposed on my students who have to work through it. Is that the only way of working? Why should the total process be split in two, only half of which happens in the classroom? From where comes the assumption that students should do only half of the total task? Why impose material from somewhere else if they can make their own using their own resources as well as mine?" (Underhill, n.d., para. 7)

Dogme ELT rejects any such unauthentic materials that are not connected with the learners' own experience. Instead, learners are encouraged to design their own texts, taking control of their learning materials. This is really an empowering step. If it sounds too radical to be true then it must be noted that students have developed their own books in a variety of scenarios. Kulchytska (as cited by Thornbury, 2002) describes how an advanced class of hers in Ukraine designed and wrote what they called their "Alternative Textbook". They chose their own themes and texts. One of the students described it as an opportunity that gives them the freedom to select what is more relevant and meaningful to them. It also makes them read a lot of other authentic texts. Nerina Conte (2013) also describes her own initiative in an elementary children's class in Barcelona, in which the children produced their own portfolios of work, complete with drawings and photos. Through such activities and initiatives, the language, in fact, becomes the means of communication and activity itself becomes meaningful. The students of different intelligence types can also find their position within a group and have the feeling of being important and significant which helps in contributing to their intrinsic motivation which later reflects in their attitudes towards language learning (Cimermanová, 2013, P.182). This is how education actually empowers the learners by putting them into responsible roles, changing them from receptacles to co-constructors of knowledge.

This exercise in creating one's own book is also significant on another level. It allows learners' personal agency to function freely, thereby radically changing their perceptions of themselves. A Dogme lesson in ELT does not use English for display, but for meaningful exchange. The learners are motivated not by the need to pass a test, but by the commonly felt need to express their membership of a small and interdependent culture. Here the teacher is simply another member of the group – a more knowledgeable other – who significantly shapes the learners' identities as his/her own is shaped in return. The relationship that emerges between the teacher and the learner eventually leads to self-discovery and self-affirmation (Taylor, 1994). Dogme ELT, as a critical pedagogy, upholds the notion that everyone has their own way of being who they are. So none can decide what or how others should learn. Others can only act as facilitators and mentors.

6. Giving the Poor Their Due

The Dogme approach's goal is to restore teaching to its pre-method "state of grace" - when all there was just a room with some furniture, a blackboard, a teacher and some students, and where learning was jointly constructed out of the talk that evolved in that simplest of situations (Thornbury, 2000). That's why Thornbury calls it '*a pedagogy of bare essentials*' (Thornbury, 2010, para. 1). In India, there is a surprisingly great disparity between the pedagogy adopted for teaching English to the children of rich and the children of poor, marginalized people. Poor quality education is more common among disadvantaged segments of societies, with education being poorly adapted to the cultural and linguistic contexts of particular groups. The poor, who depend on the state-run schools, mostly have a very dismal experience of English language learning. Dogme ELT is economically efficient as it adopts a 'materials light' approach. This would make it possible to be used in government schools most of which are poorly equipped in technical equipments such as audio-visual devices or

computers. Clearly, by adopting Dogme in ELT the disparity between the quality of English language teaching available to upper income group students and lower income group students can be reduced. It is important from a socio-economic perspective because poor quality education risks reinforcing inequalities and sustaining inter-generational poverty and marginalization. By using Dogme ELT, learners could be taught English keeping their backgrounds into consideration and imposing no extra financial burden. This would increase the employment opportunities of the young learners from marginalized communities as well as the resultant earnings and improved quality of life. Ultimately, it would contribute towards building a more equal and fair society.

7. A Matter of Multicultural Identity

Exporting a methodology, which developed in a particular region of the world, to other regions has not always met with success. What works wonder in one scenario goes dud into another. The Dogme in ELT is fortunately one of those ideas that work all over the world despite the amazing cultural disparity on global level. It's been successfully employed on primary level in Barcelona, Spain; worked well in Peruvian Schools where English was the second language of the teachers too; and was implemented successfully in Hungry for adult learners (Thornbury, 2011). There is enough evidence to show that it is because of the adaptability of the approach which is grounded in real and local experience. Dogme ELT acknowledges what Holliday suggests that language classes are "small cultures", locally constituted, with local needs and local concerns (as cited in Thornbury, 2002, para. 9). Hence, the texts, and the discourses which they require, should also be locally generated. In practice, this might mean that the learners themselves choose their topics and texts. Dogme ELT has a high potential of success in India where the cultural variety is mindboggling. Two different scenarios can be considered for better understanding of this approach. Take the first example – a dalit girl from a little town of Bihar should not need to go through a long story, describing how the ghosts of Christmas the past, Christmas the present, and Christmas the future forced Old Mr. Scrooge to do some acts of kindness, in order to learn some new vocabulary or grammatical structure. She cannot relate to the concept of charity being associated with Christmas as it is too alien to her own experience and culture. Forcing stories, which come from a strictly British context, on learners from a very different culture results in alienation rather than engagement. It can even have distorting effect on the learners' perception of self-recognition (Taylor, 1994). Instead, that girl, and her fellow learners, can relate with the tales of kindness of some local hero/heroine retold in English. A Dogme approach will even encourage them to discover some more local legends. Take another totally different scenario – A multicultural urban school in India where students of various cultural and religious backgrounds study together. Everyone is forced to study about some religious or cultural topic which may not be relevant to all. It may be even contrary to what some of the learners believe and they can never accept the text as 'facts'. Such a text is again an example of academic violence that helpless learners have to endure. By adopting a Dogme approach, the focus can be kept on language learning, instead of promotion of the beliefs of a particular community. A Dogme approach in ELT won't force a boy from Kashmir to study stories from Kerala or vice versa; yet an overall similarity in the level of language learning can be managed on national level. Dogme approach would work very well in multicultural scenarios because learners are not restricted by a single textbook or any other pre-designed learning material. The 'emergent language' in classroom dialogue would reflect the different backgrounds of learners. Instead of holding up one culture as the model to learners from other cultures, this approach may bring different cultures to the fore by encouraging people to tell their own story. Applying these reasons make it clear that this approach would work very well in a culturally diverse context in India.

8. Conclusion

These are far from the final words about Dogme ELT. There is still much left to be explored about its implications in Indian context. Now, only empirical evidences, after a practical application of unplugged 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. First, 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 skeptical 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. 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 unplugged teaching 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 unplugged teaching with other subjects on an experimental basis.

This was just our side of the story. Who, then, will join us and continue the dialogue?

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