

Title of Session: EuroLang - Unplugged Teaching: Dogme ELT

Moderator: Bee Dieu and Phil Benz

Guest Speaker: Scott Thornbury

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BeeD: so...Boa noite, bonsoir, good evening to you all!

AlainKr: How do you detach the chat window ,

BeeD: Welcome back to the Euro Language Forum!

AlainKr: Hello everyone

SusanneN: there's a drop down menu called Actions...

AlainKr: Please set me free, it's crammed down the screen

PhilB: To make a larger area for viewing the discussion click on "detach" under the "actions" pull down menu just above and to the right of the text display area.

SusanneN: from there, you can detach, paste to a pasteboard (to freeze the text) and get larger types

BeeD: Before we start, I'd like a round of applause for Phil Benz, the man at the origin of this forum! Welcome back, Phil, and thank you for the opportunity you gave me to lead some of the sessions while you were away.

MariaJ: Hi Phil!

SusanneN claps her hands in appreciation for Phil's great work

SylfGst5: hear hear

VickyM: Thank you BeeD for the reminder!

PhilB: And for Bee, who has kept the place alive since mid-March when I stepped out for a breath of air and got run over on the side of the I-way.

BeeD smiles

BeeD: For our premiere this term we are pleased to welcome Scott Thornbury as our guest speaker and the session title is: Teaching Unplugged

SusanneN: Bee, we don't know what would have become of this without your great and timely support!

PhilB: Bee will be moderating tonight, and her special guest is Scott from the "Dogme" group. (did I get that right?)

ScottT: you did, Phil, thanks

BeeD: First we usually introduce ourselves. So let's do so now and then Scott will present some of the concepts of Dogme which are based on the "poor pedagogy" or "pedagogy of possibility" and comment on the reactions they provoked.

SusanneN: Welcome, Scott, unplugged teaching sounds very exciting

PhilB teaches English and does teacher training in EdTech integration in southern France.

AlainKr: My name's Alain Krizic, I teach English as a foreign language to 15-18 year-olds, in Orleans, France.

BeeD: Barbara Dieu is an EFL teacher at the Lycee Pasteur, Sao Paulo, Brazil

PhilB: ***** Introductions, please! *****

SylfGst5: Poland, teaching all ages

VickyM: My names Vicky Madaule and teach 15-18 year-olds, in Montpellier, France.

SusanneN: About me; I'm Susanne Nyrop, an occasional helpdesk here, occasionally, and also doing a masters study of education about online community building, from the Danish University of education.

MariaJ: Spain, teaching adults, and writing my thesis

ScottT: I work in Barcelona, where I've taught adults and trained teachers

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania, US

ScottT: Ok shall I kick off?

BeeD: The floor is yours

ScottT: Let me start by just giving a quick intro to the idea of Teaching Unplugged (aka dogme ELT)

ScottT: I'll also direct you to some web pages

ScottT: (and please forgive somewhat dyslexic typing)

ScottT: In March 2000 I wrote an article called "A Dogma for EFL"

ScottT: you can find it at <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/dogmaarticle.html>

ScottT: in which I questioned the value of materials-driven teaching, and in which I invited language teachers, trainers and writers to adopt a "poor" pedagogy, that is, a pedagogy unburdened by a surfeit of materials and technology, a pedagogy grounded instead in the local and relevant concerns of the people in the room.

BeeD nods

ScottT: By analogy, I invoked the principles (and name) of the Dogme 95 film collective, whose intention is to rid film-making of an obsessive concern for technique and to rehabilitate a cinema which foregrounds the story, and the inner life of the characters. To this end, the Dogme film-makers drew up a vow of chastity.

ScottT: I argued that a similar leanness and rigour might usefully inform current language teaching practice.

BeeD: It must have been the vow of chastity that made people wild

AlainKr: LOL

ScottT: Exactly. But my argument was not that materials and technology are intrinsically bad, but that they are largely redundant and because they may have blinded us to ?the story? ? that is, the necessary conditions for language learning.

ScottT: Materials, it seemed, to me, were getting in the way.

BeeD . o O (in the same way family and wives with priests)

ScottT: They are a barrier. They inhibit dialogue.

ScottT: Anyway, my article struck a chord. A number of teachers, working in contexts as far removed as the UK, Poland, and South Korea, responded - some enthusiastically, others more skeptically.

ScottT: With the active support of Luke Meddings and David French, I set up what became a busy email discussion group. You'll find it at

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dogme/>

ScottT: Since then teachers, trainers and materials writers have used this forum to explore the possibilities of teaching in the spirit of Dogme - not a method, let alone a dogma - more a state of mind, another way of being a language teacher.

BeeD listens attentively

ScottT: Later I drew up a (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) list of vows, again reflecting the

vows of the Dogme 95 film makers.

AlainKr: I had a quick look at it. I liked the term "grammar McNuggets" or sthg

ScottT: You can see them at the end of the article on

ScottT: <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/itsmagazine.html>

ScottT: You might want to take a quick look at the vows now

ScottT: But as I say, this was meant to be deliberately provocative

BeeD: o O (to make people think and reflect on what they are doing)

PhilB: You certainly succeed there, Scott! <g>

ScottT: Yes, it DID provoke a fairly polarized set of responses

ScottT: But I want to stress that I/we are not ANTI-materials per se

ScottT: or anti-course books

ScottT: but PRO-learner-driven content

ScottT: in the language classroom

BeeD: o O (after all you have published quite a number of books and articles on it)

ScottT: yes, and you can see some of those on the teaching unplugged website

MariaJ: I couldn't be more agree with you...

ScottT: at <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/>

SusanneN: Scott, I do like your comparison with the film dogme rules, to reach a more authentic learning situation we do need a more personal engagement from both sides, teacher and students alike

VickyM: One of the problems is the difference between adults wanting to learn the language and those who [are] required to learn it.

PhilB: Scott, whenever you're ready I'd like to play devil's advocate.

ScottT: go for it Phil

PhilB: My gut reaction here is that this is a teaching method eminently suited to small groups of adults who already have at least a pre-intermediate level, and preferably higher, and very poorly suited to secondary teaching where student motivation is at a low ebb, proficiency levels often scrape rock-bottom and taking students outside the classroom is anathema.

ScottT steels himself

BeeD listens in expectation

ScottT: Yes, let me take these points one at a time

ScottT: it's true that the initial dogme "hard core" as it were, were mainly teachers working with small groups of adults

ScottT: in places like Spain, UL, Poland etc

ScottT: but since then we've extended our reach

BeeD: o O (Paulo Freire is adult education)

ScottT: and in fact one of the articles I co-wrote with Nerina Conte

ScottT: is about how dogme principles work so well with young kids

ScottT: when you chuck the coursebook and have the kids prepare their OWN coursebook

ScottT: out of the things they bring to, and write, in class

BeeD: See Copabacana District

BeeD: sorry...thinking out loud

ScottT: We've also started to attract a number of teachers working in state schools in places like Brazil, Poland, and Mexico

SylfGst5: Excuse me, Scott - is the article you've mentioned on the Net? any URL?

ScottT: who are starting to realize that the lack of motivation in their students

ScottT: is due to the boring coursebooks that they have to use, and the incremental grammar syllabuses they are tied to

SusanneN: Syl, I just read the short article here : <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/dogmaarticle.html>

ScottT: hang on. I'll check

ScottT: try this <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/nerina.html>

PhilB: Yes, fostering motivation is one of our primary tasks as secondary teachers. And Scott, I do want to hand it to you that the dogme approach is a much-needed correction to the fixation on textbooks, grammar and translation that still grips a lot of teaching institutions.

MariaJ: you have reason, that was one of my main problems this year... I had to prepare most of the classes for pre-intermediate on my own... Low levels seem so artificial...

SylfGst5: Yep, thanx

VickyM: This sounds miles from what the French system tries to do, but in general often what I end up doing a couple of months into my class.

ScottT: Curiously, one teacher who works in Romania, told us that the best time of the school year...

ScottT: was the first two months before the coursebooks had arrived

VickyM: *lol*

ScottT: when she could do more or less what she and the kids wanted

PhilB: Another stumbling block, IMHO: providing models for language production.

PhilB: You say: "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."

PhilB: This kind of shoots the non-native speaker in the foot, since he often counts on outside resources to supplement his faulty model of language production.

AlainKr: Unfortunately, being a rich enough country, all the students have their books during the first week

ScottT: I don't actually hold with this idea of that the non-native teachers model is faulty

ScottT: it's ALWAYS better than the students'

SylfGst5: what's a faulty model if we now have English as a lingua franca?

BeeD: and yet...when I opted not to use the coursebook...students complained...and so did parents

ScottT: and what's more, when learners listen to their teachers it's (a) more motivating and

VickyM: Especially in English as there are more non-native speakers than natives

PhilB: Yes, Bee, overcoming deep-seated habits is hard.

ScottT: (b) they can interact - resolve problems etc

ScottT: which they can't do with a cassette

ScottT: and besides, who really believes that coursebook cassettes (usually stilted and very RP) are the models that their students really need?

ScottT: give me a live teacher any day - however "faulty" his or her English

SylfGst5: they are more often than not naff - pre-recorded texts I mean, not non-native

teachers

VickyM: I agree.

SusanneN: I see what you're pointing at Scott, regarding the dogme rules you set up, but still an engaged teacher could stimulate authentic discussion situation around sound or video material

AlainKr: You've got a point, Susanne

SylfGst5: providing the material is relevant to the students. How often is it?

BeeD: I believe Scott ...nowadays we need all the models we can get hold of

MaryFraGst4: Focalizing attention is helpful

VickyM: The problem so often is the lack of comprehension of those same materials

ScottT: Yes, but so often the sound and video BECOMES the lesson, squeezing out any real opportunities for the learners to speak

AlainKr: It can help them remember of infer vocab and structure they'll have to use to express an opinion

PhilB: Well, Scott, we don't want to put you *completely* on the defensive here. Dogme has been going on for a while now - what results can you see, how do you think students are reacting to several years of the Dogme approach?

ScottT: Why not set up a discussion based on their own immediate needs, interests, and experiences?

ScottT: Thanks Phil....

SusanneN: Of course, in that case Scott, the recorded material becomes a substitute for real interaction in the classroom

ScottT: Well, I've just come back from a conference in London...

BeeD listens

ScottT: in which the theme was Interaction in the classroom...

ScottT: and what was very interesting for me was the fact that there is a growing realization...

ScottT: after years of pair and group work...

ScottT: that there is a primary and fundamental role for teacher-learner interaction...

BeeD: absolutely

ScottT: that is teachers talking to learners, and vice versa...

ScottT: even in big classes, where, if the students aren't always speaking...

ScottT: they are listening ... lurking, really

VickyM: That's nice to hear.

ScottT: and the other thing that I was pleased to discover...

ScottT: is that the dogme discussion list is constantly cited as a model

ScottT: of how teachers themselves can talk to each other and share classroom ideas

ScottT: not unlike this one :)

BeeD: and there are quite a number of posts everyday...it's a very dynamic list

ScottT: I came back from London to find over 70 new postings!

VickyM: Sounds like our eteach...

ScottT: which I still haven't read

ScottT: and a LOT of them are very practical - how to kick off the new school year with dogme-style activities, for example

BeeD: However...some people have branded Dogme as being hostile

BeeD: How would you explain this Scott?

PhilB: Yes, sounds like just the sort of thing that really charges our batteries as teachers.

ScottT: yes, there was very ugly series of postings on her Guardian ELT website

ScottT: recently, in response to a piece Luke and I wrote in the Guardian weekly

ScottT: very hostile

VickyM: why?

ScottT: which I think is an encouraging sign

BeeD laughs in delight

ScottT: Oh, people think it's some kind of METHOD

VickyM: *lol*

PhilB: Challenging deep-seated paradigms about teaching and learning is bound to bring out hostility on those unable to question them.

ScottT: and it's true: the name Dogme is a bit unfortunate

ScottT: sounds like we're dogmatic

BeeD agrees entirely

SylfGst5: for some people the very thought of coming into a classroom without stacks of materials is frightening - like being caught naked; thus the fear, I reckon, and the hostility

ScottT: what - me dogmatic? ;)

SusanneN: We do need a change in education and your view is stimulating - just keep up the steam, despite all the test and effectiveness madness going on

PhilB: Well you are, in a sense.

ScottT blushes

SusanneN: Oh great - the Naked Teacher

MariaJ: sorry, but do its letters stand for anything? is it some kind of acronym?

PhilB: But in a good way. <g>

ScottT: Yes, that's where it started actually...

SusanneN: lol

ScottT: on the Diploma courses we run in IH Barcelona...

BeeD nudges Phil

ScottT: we found that these experienced teachers were terrified of going into a class without a TON of photocopies

ScottT: and yet, their classes had no SPARK to them

ScottT: no interaction, no REAL communication

BeeD: after all the brainwashing you get from BC this is just understandable

ScottT: so we started saying NO: you can't

ScottT: you can't go in with all those materials

ScottT: just see what it feels like to go in naked, so to speak

ScottT: and they say, but what if I run out of stuff?

PhilB: Yes, the materials become a shield that the insecure teacher can hide behind, to avoid interacting with students.

ScottT: and we'd say, well, just TALK to them!

ScottT: and they'd say, what TALK to the students, you must be kidding!

MariaJ: does the way of teaching at Ih have to do anything with dogme? Because I have seen some of the things you are telling in some of their teachers

ScottT: And we'd say, is this a language class, or what?

SusanneN likes this talk

ScottT: well, Maria, we place a high value of real communication, I think

BeeD: I think that it is very difficult to evaluate a class...

BeeD: or how students learn

ScottT: especially in places where students have few opportunities outside the classroom to USE their English

BeeD: because this takes time

AlainKr: I can talk to them. The thing is they can't always talk back, for lack of fluency; Hence the props...

BeeD: and each situation is different

PhilB: Got another question for you...

PhilB: OK, a question now. Where would Dogme stand on activities like role-play? For me, role-playing is a key method in freeing students from their self-centered anxieties (not wanting to show their *own* opinions), but from what I've seen of Dogme so far, this would be "inauthentic".

ScottT: Ah ha, Alan, and this is where the dogme teacher needs to learn how to "scaffold" student talk

ScottT: sorry Phil

AlainKr: Yes, tell us more

PhilB: . o O (Role-play being one of my chief techniques for scaffolding student expression.)

MariaJ: I hated role-playing when I was a student..

SusanneN: this is what a good chat may bring to education if used properly: fluent, instant and authentic communication - in role-play as well?

BeeD: I am sorry Phil...as a person I HATE role-play myself...would never do it

ScottT: "scaffolding" is what you do when you draw out even a beginner student so that they can "say" what they are trying to communicate...

ScottT: even if it means going into L1

SusanneN: maybe we should think of a definition of role-play

ScottT: Let me come back to the issue of role-play

ScottT: I have to problem with role-play at all...

VickyM: maybe def of "scaffolding"?

ScottT: in fact some of my own favorite lessons are based round role-plays...

ScottT: but preferably role plays that are drawn from the learners' own worlds, their own experience...

MariaJ: I cannot see any relation bt Scaffolding and role-playing...

SusanneN: scaffolding means that the teacher may build a kind of supportive frame for the students to reach their next level of comfort

PhilB: agrees that some of the things that pass a role-play are more akin to Cardinal Richelieu's boys in the red capes who had such a unique way of asking questions.

ScottT: and which don't require a whole lot of reading before hand - I dislike role cards, as it happens

SusanneN: the Zone of Proximal Development, this is called I think

VickyM: Can you give an example?

ScottT: we've got two themes running at cross-purposes I fear

PhilB: hands Susanne her Krashen medal for the night.

ScottT: Scaffolding....

SusanneN: blushes

ScottT: Listen...

ScottT: Teacher says to student: Did you have nice weekend?

ScottT: Student (understands weekend and says) Beach

ScottT: Teacher: Ahh you went to the beach. Was it crowded?

SusanneN: other student says; beer!

ScottT: Student (understands crowded and says) No very

SusanneN is just kidding

BeeD . o O (Sus!)

ScottT: Teacher. It wasn't very crowded. Who did you go with?

ScottT: Student (understands Who) Friend.

ScottT: Teacher. Ah, so you went to the each with your friend. Girl or boy? etc etc

ScottT: That's scaffolding

BeeD: Language is power...and when the student cannot communicate what he wants in the language he feels deficient...or diminished...so our role is to empower them

ScottT: exactly Bee, well put

BeeD: I never felt it so hard as in the French system...lol

SylfGst5: of course the next reservation would be since it's all talking where's the reading and writing?

VickyM: I see...our "inspectors" want our students to speak without any questions and I feel that is not the way we communicate.

ScottT: Student s write summaries of what they've been talking about, for other students to read. For example.

ScottT: One technique I use a lot is to get the groups to write a report of their conversation for the Student Who is Absent Today.

ScottT: Or get students to bring things from the Internet for other students to read and discuss.

ScottT: OK, so it's material - but it's the Students' material.

ScottT: Not the f....g coursebook

SusanneN: Or you create a chatlog and read it to learn more about what was said, and look for typos (maybe even generated by the teacher). I think that chat used that way would qualify for being authentic in the light of your dogme rules (and' of course, especially important in a distance learning situation)

ScottT: Or they can read a postcard or email someone sent YOU

PhilB agrees somewhat with Vicky - inspectors often criticize teachers for monopolizing the "speaking time" and giving students such a small portion of the 50-minute period to say anything.

JeffC joined the room.

ScottT: Yes, Susanne, great idea!

BeeD: Scott...you stress the communicative part...there is also the academic part one must take care of...fluency, proficiency, competency...and pleasing our customers...is dogme an answer to it?

JeffC: Dogme=personal dogma?

SusanneN says hello to Jeff, we're discussing the dogme rules for EFL

BeeD: Welcome Jeff!

ScottT: Well, let me give you an example: we have one very productive member of the group, based in Italy, who teaches her Cambridge FCE class....

JeffC: Thanks

ScottT: WITHOUT coursebooks

ScottT: and for the 2nd year in a row, she has got all her class through the exam

SusanneN asks Jeff to take a look here <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/description.html>

PhilB: ***** We've just got a few minutes left of our hour - any final questions or comments for Scott? *****

MariaJ: I think Mario Rinvolutri thinks more or less in the way of dogma...

BeeD: Thanks for reminding us Phil

ScottT reaches for the corkscrew

SusanneN . o O (those who like to stay and discuss are very welcome to do so)

BeeD: I was so engrossed in the conversation that I let it go

VickyM: Thanks Scott, can we visit you group at Yahoo?

ScottT: Yes, Mario is very sympathetic to Dogme, and we to him

ScottT: in fact, in the next issue of HLTM (his webzine) you'll find an article by Luke and me on the humanistic side of dogme.

MariaJ: I was thinking now about that...

SusanneN: Scott, do you know of any teacher education schools taking up the idea of dogme teaching?

BeeD passes around a tray with sparkling champagne

MariaJ: thank you very much, Scott

PhilB: What we have heard about Dogme tonight is at the very least a much-needed correction to the all-too-often textbook, grammar and translation-centric classroom that persists despite so many efforts to squash it.

SylfGst5: thanks Scott

ScottT: Just to answer Susanne's' question...

SusanneN takes a glass with pleasure, waiting for a toast

ScottT: check out this article on our website...

BeeD: and a reminder we have always to question and reflect...a toast to Scott

MaryFraGst4: Yes, a breath of fresh air. cheers

JeffC: Thanks for the info (in a nutshell). I'm adding it to my ESL folder at <http://www.mybookmarks.com/public>

ScottT: <http://www.teaching-unplugged.com/mcewan.html>

ScottT: it's by a woman working in a BC school, in Bolivia, I think...

ScottT: who managed to change the whole approach in her school

ScottT: thanks Bee.

ScottT raises his glass

BeeD: Merci...obrigada...thanks for sharing with us your experience, ideas and ideals

SusanneN: thanks a lot, Scott, this session was enlightening. I'll have another look

ScottT invites all present to check out the dogme list

MariaJ: I will leave you to have something for dinner

BeeD: lol

PhilB: Scott, We'd love to have you back again as a guest speaker in a couple months - perhaps you could bring in some other cohorts from the Dogme camp.

ScottT: interesting idea

ScottT: we have over 200 members now

ScottT: and I'm sure there are plenty who would love to participate

SylfGst5: or let's bring some of those who opposed so vitriolically at the Guardian chatboard

ScottT snarls

BeeD: This would be fun!

PhilB: It would be even better if we could find one of your detractors to present counter-arguments. <evil grin>

SusanneN: I think this could be subject to several further discussions here in this forum

ScottT: try webheads!

VickyM: Goodnight to all, when is the next discussion?

PhilB: Vance's group - do you participate there?

BeeD: Next Sunday...Back to School

SylfGst5: but they can do that and volubly, only without listening to the opponent in the discussion so in the end it gets sort of boring...

ScottT: thanks to you all

SylfGst5: thanks and good night

AlainKr: I have to go now, thanks Scott, that was very interesting. I'll go and see the posts on your list, in fact I quite agree with your approach.

ScottT: hope to meet in the flesh one day

VickyM: ok. Bye.

AlainKr: Cheers

BeeD claps and hugs Scott

PhilB: I am remiss - I should announce that next week at this same time we will be discussing "Back to School projects" - perhaps with less philosophy, but no less vigor.

AlainKr: Goodbye everyone, see you soon

MaryFraGst4: Bye

BeeD: Thank you all for coming and hope to see you next Sunday

ScottT takes a delighted bow

PhilB: Ciao, y'all! A bientot!