



RELEVANCE OF SCOTT THORNBURY IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR LEGAL PURPOSES

Dr. D. VISHWA PRASAD

Assistant Professor of Education, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

Abstract

In the realm of language teaching, Scott Thornbury suggests Dogme as a viable alternative to other approaches and methods. The concept revolves around uncomplicated principles that prioritize conversation-driven instruction, learner independence, materials created by the students themselves, and the emergence of language. This article delves into these facets of Dogme, as well as other pertinent topics to teach English for legal purposes.

Keywords: Dogme, Communication, Learner-Constructed Materials, Emergent Language

INTRODUCTION

Scott Thornbury is a renowned teacher, teacher trainer, and writer in the field of English Language Education. He has authored several books and articles on the subject and is considered to be a leading figure in English language teaching.

Thornbury's approach to teaching English for legal purposes is not tied to any specific language teaching method or approach. Instead, he suggests a set of principles that can be applied to any method or approach. These principles include interactivity, engagement, dialogic processes, emergence, affordance, learner autonomy, empowerment, relevance, and critical use. The emphasis is on engagement, learner autonomy, relevance of materials, and conversations.

Thornbury stresses the importance of interaction in learning English or any other language and its role in the dialogic processes. These principles cover all the essential aspects of a curriculum and can be seen as a practical alternative to other approaches and methods.

Ten Principles of Scott Thornbury's Dogme

1. Interactivity

The best way to develop communication skills in a target language is the interaction between teachers and students and among the students themselves. There cannot be an immediate better option than this. Interaction with peers is both socialization and acquiring the target language. Students come with their culture, language, identity and a host of other elements which have a direct impact on the students and their learning. In addition, interaction with teachers gives them necessary language inputs and suggestions and even corrects their target language implicitly.

The more the interaction, the faster the students learn the language because the interaction is done in real-world language, avoiding imposed artificial textbook English. Therefore, interactivity is important while learning English as a foreign language.

2. Engagement

Dogme considers that student-produced material is better than published materials. This is a significant point to consider. Students must be thoroughly engaged in producing materials of their own. This principle of Dogme emphasizes the point that students have to be engaged by the content they have created themselves. There cannot be a better textbook writer than the students themselves. Students produce content keeping in view their daily language needs. It is important to consider that interest is generated in students when they deal with materials they have produced.

There is a notion that Dogme is anti-textbook or anti-technology but it is not. Meddings and Thornbury feel as long as materials focus on real-world language and do not concentrate more on grammar than on communicative competency and avoid cultural bias found in textbooks. In addition, Dogme solves the problems of availability and affordability of materials in the non-English speaking world. Finally, to clear the air, the followers of Dogme are in line with learner-centred instruction and critical pedagogy.



3. Dialogic processes

Learning is social and dialogic and knowledge is co-constructed. It is a general truth that learning and knowledge generation occur in partnership. Nothing happens in isolation. It is the social group or society which makes a learner ready to face any language difficulties and overcome them while conversing and acquiring knowledge from others. Therefore, meaning/knowledge is co-constructed in a social group. The implied meaning in the words of a speaker and the interpreted meaning of a listener is a part of dialogic processes. Without these processes language learning or acquisition in formal or informal contexts is not feasible.

4. Scaffolded conversations

Learning takes place through conversations and the rate of learning increases with the teacher's scaffolding. In any foreign language learning context teacher's support is inevitable for conversation. Conversation is central to language learning in Dogme as it is the fundamental and universal form of language and it is actual language at work. Real-world language and conversation are more interactional than transactional. Hence, it encourages social interaction at the discourse level to guide learners in real-life communication - more meaningful than analyzing specific utterances. Furthermore, the learner and the teacher co-construct knowledge and skills.

It is right that teaching is a conversation between two parties and Dogme reflects Tharp's view that to most truly teach, one must converse; to truly converse is to teach.

5. Emergence of language

Language and grammar emerge from the learning process. This is seen as distinct from the 'acquisition' of language. Language learning is a process where language emerges. It shares this belief with task-based learning.

Language emerges in two ways. Firstly, classroom activities pave the way for collaborative communication among peers. These activities help in a big way than any other. Secondly, learners produce language that they were not necessarily taught. Language may emerge from a student as he experiences the world daily. Finally, language emerges, not learned. Therefore, the need for a syllabus does not arise. Indeed, the content of the syllabus is covered (or 'uncovered') throughout the learning process.

6. Affordances

The teacher facilitates language learning affordances by directing the attention of students towards emergent language. A teacher optimizes the emergence of language encouraging them to engage with the emergent language to make sure learning takes place through rewarding, repeating and reviewing. This is a significant role that has to be played by a teacher.

7. Learner autonomy

The learner's voice is given recognition along with the learner's beliefs and knowledge. David Little rightly points out the fact that autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning.

No one knows a learner's ability to learn a language better than the learner himself. Often classroom practitioners force upon our learners as to what to learn and how to learn, whether they like it or not. Very few teachers bother with these problems. If the learner him/herself decides his/her level of language proficiency and sets his educational objectives. follows his/her materials and learns them in the way he likes, what could be better than this? In any kind of teaching-learning process learner is at the center. Therefore, Dogme offers autonomy to learners to fulfil the learning objectives.

8. Empowerment

Students and teachers are given relative importance in a curriculum (though not specified). They are empowered to free the classroom from published materials and textbooks. Dogme is against these materials as they stress more on grammar and structures than on emergent conversation.

In other words, students and teachers are better judges to decide what is helpful to them and what is not. Both of them, in a certain sense, are lords of their teaching-learning activities.



9. Relevance

Whatever materials (e.g. texts, audio and videos) are produced should have relevance for the learners. It is a waste of time to dwell upon irrelevant materials. Across India, this is the problem. Irrelevance of materials - not used as per the level of the students or the content is not as per their needs. Thus, Dogme invariably places importance on learner-relevant materials

10. Critical use

Teachers and students should be critical in deciding the materials to be discussed and both of them must recognize the cultural and ideological biases in the materials and remove them to make them liberal and democratic.

Feeding wrong notions into the minds of young learners will hinder the process of making this world an equitable and just society.

CONCLUSION

Thornbury's language teaching principles to teach English for legal purposes is an ambitious pedagogical framework placing learners at the centre of the teaching-learning process. If language teachers, equipped with content and pedagogical knowledge, use this; I can say without a hint or a shadow of a doubt that any language learner can become proficient in English with concerted efforts.

These principles emphasized discourse-driven teaching, learner autonomy, learner-produced materials and emergent language. All these four form the fulcrum for this instructive approach. It is indeed a viable alternative to teach English for legal purposes.

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