

Luke Meddings - Teaching Unplugged

The how, when and why of Dogme teaching

Who is this course for?

This is a course for English teachers who want to teach more responsively, focus on language at the point of need, and collaborate with their students on content creation.

What will you achieve?

Led by **Luke Meddings**, award-winning author, international speaker and co-founder of Dogme ELT. Luke co-wrote *Teaching Unplugged* with Scott Thornbury (2009), and has trained extensively on the approach since then. *Dogme in Practice*, another collaboration with Scott Thornbury, appeared in 2025.

Together we'll trace the trajectory of ELT methodology over the past 50 years, including the role of Dogme and other 'experimental' approaches; consider how learning needs have evolved; and explore the benefits and the challenges of unplugging in our own teaching contexts.

We'll discuss our experience of responsive teaching at different times, in different schools and in different classes; we'll consider where the space for unplugged is in our own practice, and how to make the most of it.

We'll do some classic unplugged tasks together and work on the emergent language; we'll see how meaningful, motivating classroom content can be derived from everyday life; you'll work on your own unplugged tasks and lesson design, and have the chance to try them out with your peers; and we'll explore how unplugged practice can co-exist and flourish in the wider teaching context.

Bio

Luke Meddings was born in London in 1965, and grew up in East Sussex, England. He graduated from Oxford University in 1987 and trained as an ELT teacher at International House, Piccadilly, before working at Frances King School of English.

After a two-year spell as Deputy Editor of the EL Gazette he co-founded Lilian Bishop School of English, an experimental language school in London where he was able to put ideas derived from his teaching and journalism into practice - in particular the realisation that most people were now coming to the UK not 'for' English, to learn it from scratch, but 'with' English, to use and improve it.

Luke has trained extensively giving talks and short courses in Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the UK.

In 2000 he co-founded the **Dogme in ELT** movement with Scott Thornbury, and contributed a column and blog on the subject for the Guardian news.

Luke and Scott published **Teaching Unplugged** with Delta in 2009, and the book won a British Council ELTon Award for Innovation in 2010.

Dogme in Practice, another collaboration with Scott Thornbury compiling teacher narratives from around the world, was published by iTDi in 2025.



Sample Timetable Luke Meddings - Teaching Unplugged

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Why • What trends shape our expectations of effective teaching across time? • What role do 'experimental' approaches such as TBL and Dogme play in this - and why are they still seen as experimental? • What 'gaps' are left in learning and the student experience by linear, delivery-style teaching? • How is Dogme different, where does it fit in, and how can it help? <u>Learning outcomes:</u> • Reflect on the broader trends and contextual factors, from publishing and methodology to tech, that shape our teaching practice • Compare perceptions of Dogme with peers • Identify the foundational thinking behind Dogme - and the tradition it belongs to • Co-create a top-level rationale for using Dogme as a learner-focused	How (1) • How do we teach Dogme - moving from principles to practice? • What is the thinking behind the three practical 'pillars' (conversation-driven, materials-light and focused on emergent language) - and how do they combine in practice? • How does it feel to <i>be taught</i> in Dogme mode? <u>Learning outcomes:</u> • Examine the three 'pillars' of Dogme (conversation-driven, materials-light and focused on emergent language) • Recognise how they relate to each other in effective task design • Experience trainer-led Dogme tasks as a group • Reflect on what it means to use the students as a primary resource	How (2) • How do we respond proactively to Dogme 'moments'? • How do we work effectively with emergent language? • How do we shape Dogme tasks, so we aren't reliant on 'moments'? • How does it feel to <i>teach</i> in Dogme mode? We'll workshop ideas and try them out together <u>Learning outcomes:</u> • Identify opportunities to work spontaneously • Assess how best to respond - including capturing emergent language • Recognise and evaluate Dogme triggers • Design Dogme tasks with peers, and teach them to the group • Reflect on best practice and optimisation strategies • Build confidence and resourcefulness for more	How (3) • How do we create momentum beyond 'moments' and tasks? • How can we work with emergent themes to link one lesson to another? • How can we make emergent language the 'glue' that connects Dogme activity from lesson to lesson, week to week? • How can we use both themes and emergent language as a bridge to the syllabus? <u>Learning outcomes:</u> • Explore Dogme as an intentional approach, not just an ad hoc solution • Derive follow-up material from yesterday's task-share, focusing on themes and emergent language • Lead the group in follow-up activities and share feedback • Plot possible development paths for the material that has emerged so far	When • When in our careers have we taught with more or less freedom - and why? • When is Dogme best applied in our current context? • When do stakeholder concerns come into play, and how can we address them? • How do we work in tandem with the curriculum? • What does it mean to 'mode-switch' in class? <u>Learning outcomes:</u> • Use the Quadrant Map to visualise participant teaching experience to date • Define 'delivery' and 'response' teaching modes for effective mode-switching • Deliberate how Dogme can flourish alongside the curriculum - including coursebook use and exams • Co-create a decision tree for intentional Dogme practice



approach		responsive teaching	• Identify ways to establish and reinforce links to the syllabus	in different contexts
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