

MAT @ 50

France Menk

MAT 48

Using *Dogme* in TESOL

My classes finished in May of this year and I have been writing my portfolio, which I plan to submit for consideration this August. In that sense, I am not yet an alum. However, as my professors well know, I am always ready to spout ideas and I am grateful for this opportunity.

The Danish film movement of 1995 - *Dogme* - was developed as a counterpoint to the heavily proscribed method of filmmaking that had been developing from 1895, the beginning of the film industry. The movement was possible because of the new, small and portable camcorders. Dogme's "manifesto" removed the director's role as the prime creator. No longer did it accept film as being solely illusionary. The director was to be anonymous and the production was held to strict rules of minimalism. Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, two Danish film makers, designed the method and wrote their "Vow of Chastity." This was to counteract the superficial action and predictability of film of the time.

An example of the Dogme philosophy: "The Celebration," by Thomas Vinterberg, 1998.
<http://faymovie.us/play.php?movie=tt0154420>

...and a description of his process:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2002/oct/26/theatre.artsfeatures>

The film production illustrates my visceral correlation between deductive and inductive learning and language teaching. It is within this revelatory discipline of the Dogme films, that I found my own awakening to a language teaching approach. It is meat to Friere's, "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning."

THE VOW OF CHASTITY

I swear to submit to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by [DOGMA 95](#):

- Shooting 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).
- The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)
- The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted.
- The film must be in color. 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.)
- Optical work and filters are forbidden.
- The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
- Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
- Genre movies are not acceptable.
- The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
- The director must not be credited.
- Furthermore I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a “work”, as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations.

Thus I make my VOW OF CHASTITY.

Copenhagen, Monday 13 March 1995

On behalf of DOGMA 95

Lars von Trier Thomas Vinterberg

And so, I see my teaching as learning my students. I see my need to understand how they need to learn; not how I think to teach. I am not the director as prime substantiator. My “self” is

anonymous. It is my students who direct the learning process, and it is my job to guide them to their learning without imposing my own way of learning. I need to know what they already know, why they want to learn, and what they bring to their learning.

To clear the classroom of proscribed material; to have students produce their own material for, of, and by learning is one example of the correlation of Dogme to language learning.

Scott Thornbury has a dogme group in yahoo. His tenet is: “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 mc nuggets”. 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.”

This is the journey I am on. From my past experience as a primarily proscriptive teacher, to the anonymous enabler of learning for my students, wherever they are from, whatever and however they need to learn.

New Hampshire, July, 2017

PS I have attached a pdf of a Dogme lesson approach I prepared at SIT.

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