

TEACHING UNPLUGGED: THE REVITALIZATION OF ELT?

by

Jason Parry

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Preface

*Hey David, Richard, Luke – I did it! We now have our own discussion group!
Let me know if you have any trouble getting in. Invite other members on board.*

Cheers,

*Scott Thornbury
For a pedagogy of bare essentials (Thornbury, 2000d)*

On March 9th, 2000, the above message appeared on a newly formed Yahoo discussion board. As the content of the message suggests, the discussion board was created by Scott Thornbury, to create space for a handful of like-minded individuals to share their thoughts and to develop an idea. Although humble in its tone and brief in length, this post marks the beginnings of a movement in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT); a movement which *could* one day inspire a paradigm shift in ELT.

A month earlier, an article which had been penned by Thornbury had appeared in the latest volume of IATEFL issues. In it, he had described a Danish filmmaking style called Dogme 95, which urged filmmakers to reject the superficiality of Hollywood films, to shoot on location without props, superficial lighting, or any other film trickery, and to “foreground the story and inner life of the characters” (2000a, p. 2). Creating a parallel between this and the language classroom, he advocated for a Dogme style of teaching. His article admonished the direction that approaches to ELT had been taking, accusing teachers of hi-jacking lessons with an excess of teaching materials, technological gimmicks, and what was described as ‘Obsessive Grammar Syndrome’. It also criticised English lessons for being restricted by their method, claiming that adhering to any method in its entirety stands in the way of “the free flow of participant-

driven input, output and feedback” (2000a, p. 2). The article called for reform, asking teachers to “take a vow of EFL chastity” (p. 2). The hope was to “restore teaching to a pre-method ‘state of grace’ – the classroom as simply a room with a few chairs, a blackboard, a teacher and some learners, and where learning is jointly constructed out of the talk that evolves in that simplest, and most prototypical of situations” (p. 2).

The article attracted the attention of his colleagues and Thornbury was quickly persuaded to create the aforementioned discussion board to continue the conversation he had started. The discussion list masterhead read as follows:

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. (Thornbury, 2000b)

Ten years later, the discussion board had amassed over 15,000 posts from several hundreds of members, and its sentiment had entered the minds of ELT professionals all over the world (Thornbury, 2010a).

Along with Luke Meddings (one of the original members of his discussion board), Thornbury published a book titled *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching* (2009). In it, the two authors distilled their findings from the previous decade, advocating for a slight shift away from current approaches to language teaching. This is summarized by ten principles, which are further reduced to three core precepts:

The Ten Key Principles of Dogme:

1. Materials-mediated teaching is the “scenic” route to learning, but the direct route is located in the *interactivity* between teachers and learners, and between the learners themselves.
2. The content most likely to *engage* learners and to trigger learning processes is that which is already there, supplied by the “people in the room.”
3. Learning is a social and *dialogic* process, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than “transmitted” or “imported” from teacher/coursebook to learner.
4. Learning can be mediated through *talk*, especially talk that is shaped and supported (i.e. *scaffolded*) by the teacher.
5. Rather than being acquired, language (including grammar) *emerges*: it is an organic process that occurs given the right conditions.
6. The teacher’s primary function, apart from promoting the kind of classroom *dynamic* which is conducive to a dialogic and emergent pedagogy, is to optimise language learning *affordances*, by, for example, directing attention to features of the emergent language.
7. Providing space for the learner’s *voice* means accepting that the learner’s beliefs, knowledge, experiences, concerns and desires are valid content in the language classroom.
8. Freeing the classroom from third-party, imported materials *empowers* both teachers and learners.
9. Texts, when used, should have *relevance* for the learner, in both their learning and using contexts.
10. Teachers and learners need to unpack the ideological baggage associated with EFL materials – to become *critical* users of such texts. (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 7-8, italics in original)

The Three Core Precepts of Dogme:

1. Dogme is about teaching that is *conversation-driven*.
2. Dogme is about teaching that is *materials-light*.
3. Dogme is about teaching that *focuses on emergent language*. (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 8, italics in original)

The authors support their key principles with a convincing review of the relevant literature, and offer up some ‘crucial’ strategies which can be used to apply them to one’s own teaching.

To conclude their literature review, the authors make a bold claim: That Dogme ELT, “is *all* that is required to ensure successful – and enjoyable – language learning” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). From this quote, it seems that what was once just an informal discussion about materials light teaching, has since evolved to become a panacea for the short-falls of modern approaches to ELT. The purpose of this paper is to assess how valid this claim is, by evaluating Dogme ELT from several angles.

In the first chapter, we will attempt to situate Dogme ELT within the history of language teaching. We will demonstrate that although Dogme ELT represents a shift from current practices in language teaching, its principles do not represent new ideas to the field. In actuality, we will see that Dogme ELT is a form of pedagogical eclecticism, which can be connected to a variety of past and current approaches to language teaching.

In the second chapter, we will address current trends in language teaching. Given the prominence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the field of ELT, we will begin by evaluating its strengths and highlighting its limitations. These limitations will then be contrasted with recent attempts to improve upon the approach, such as postmethod pedagogies, van Lier’s AAA curriculum, and the ecological approach.

In the final chapter we return to Dogme ELT, taking a closer look at the three core precepts, as well as their theoretical underpinning. Finally, we will conclude by addressing our three research questions:

Research Questions

1. How does Dogme ELT fit into the milieu of current practices in English Language Teaching, and what connection does Dogme ELT have with language teaching history?
2.
 - a. What are the strengths of current approaches to ELT, and in what contexts are these approaches unable to provide learners with the most optimal route to improved language proficiency?
 - b. Does Dogme ELT share the same strengths as these approaches, and if so, is it also more suitable where these approaches falter?
3. What universal strategies could be useful to teachers attempting to adopt Dogme ELT into their teaching practice?

A note on the name 'Dogme ELT'

Despite several early attempts to rebrand 'Dogme ELT' as 'Teaching Unplugged', Thornbury has not yet been able to shake the enthusiasm and momentum that is associated with the original title of his movement. In a reply to a blog post berating Thornbury for choosing such a ridiculous name, Thornbury writes:

I agree, Jason -- dogme has nasty associations, and at a very early stage we tried to reinvent the movement as "Teaching Unplugged", but the dogme moniker had already stuck, and when a name sticks, it really sticks. In our defence, dogme ELT was never meant to be a movement as such; it was simply an analogy, but, like Frankenstein's monster, it took on a life of its own, including the daft name. It was only when we came to write the book, and were able to stamp "teaching unplugged" all over it, that "teaching unplugged" started to get the number of mentions that it now does -- thanks to the good offices of people like yourself. (Hmm, I think I feel a blog post coming on: M is for Meme!) (Thornbury, 2010c).

In this, for the remainder of this paper the moniker 'Teaching Unplugged' has been chosen over the more popular title, 'Dogme ELT.' References to the book published under the same title will appear in italics.

Chapter One: The Hunt for a Perfect Method in Language Teaching

This chapter examines the history of language teaching, with the intent to shed some light on the principles and precepts found in *Teaching Unplugged*. First, however, a note on Approach, Method, and Technique.

Approach, Method, and Technique

For the purpose of clarity, some distinction needs to be made between the terms Approach, Method, and Technique. This paper will adopt Edward Anthony's definitions (1963), which put the terms in a hierarchy. While approach is defined as "a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning and teaching," method is the "overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selected approach" (as cited in Brown, 2010, p. 9). Techniques on the other hand, are tools which can be used in the classroom, when subscribing to a method or approach (Brown, 2010).

The Swing of the Pendulum

Although *Teaching Unplugged* is significant to the current ELT milieu, Thornbury and Medding's story and ideas are not unique to the realm of language teaching. As we will see, *Teaching Unplugged* is deeply entrenched in a much larger story. For centuries, language teaching professionals have been striving to make their lessons more effective, and transforming their craft – and many of them have arrived at conclusions similar to those presented in *Teaching Unplugged*.

It is easy to fall into the trap of taking a "not too precise glance at assumptions, approaches, methods, courses, syllabuses, [and] examinations of previous times, followed by pious astonishment that their perpetrators could be so obtuse, out-of-touch, ill-informed, or

downright foolish” (Rowlinson, 1994, p. 7). This is in part due to the nature of current teacher training programs, which present the history of language teaching in a linear fashion. New insights in science and improvements in technology are praised for bringing teaching approaches forever closer to a state of perfection (Thornbury, 2010d), while in actuality the history of language teaching is not progressive at all. Often described as the swing of the pendulum, the ‘best practice’ in language teaching has been redefining itself for centuries. In the process, the same ideas have resurfaced time and time again (Swan, 2006).

This is well illustrated by the professional career of a famous Latin teacher and language teaching methodologist named John Comenius. His story began in 1654, when he had just released the first edition of his ground-breaking book, the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*; the first children’s picture dictionary ever to be developed. The pictures were presented in black and white with the hopes that they would be coloured by the students (Rowlinson, 1994, p. 8), and below them short paragraphs presented new vocabulary.

The book was translated into many languages, and the following is from the English edition (note the publication date, over 100 years after the first edition). A picture of a painter at an easel is featured; with a caption that reads (numbers correspond with the objects in the illustration):

Pictures 1. *delight the Eyes, and adorn Rooms. The Painter 2., painteth an Image with a Pencil, 3. in a Table, 4. upon a Café-frame, 5. holding his Pallet, 6. in his left hand, on which are the Paints which were ground by the Boy, 7. on a Marble. The Carver and Statuary carve Statues, 8. of Wood and Stone. The Graver and the Cutter grave Shapes, 10. and Characters, with a Graving Chissel, 9. In Wood, Brass, and other Metals.* (Comenius , 1777, p. 99 – 100).

Apart from the use of visuals, what is striking about this workbook is that the vocabulary entries are presented in chunks of language. Instead of simply listing the vocabulary, the items

are presented in a context where they would naturally appear. Comenius describes these chunks of language as, “the explications of the parts of the Picture, so expressed by their own proper terms, as that same figure which is added to every piece of the picture, and the term of it, always sheweth what things belong one to another” (Comenius, 1777, p. b2).

Explaining how the picture dictionary should be used in the classroom, Comenius also states that “the exemplar should always come first, the precept should always follow, and imitation should always be insisted upon” (Comenius, as cited in Rowlinson, 1994, p. 8). By exemplar, he is referring to a model or ideal representation of a language item, by precept he is referring to the rules or structures that govern the correct use of the language item, and by imitation he is referring to practice using the new language item. In his *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, exposure to language in use was essential, and attention to grammar and form was secondary.

Given his attitude to language teaching, it seems that Comenius would have been in good company with many of today’s popular Applied Linguists. Noted linguist, Michael Lewis for example, posits that “language is grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar” (Lewis, 1993, p. vi), meaning that lexis is essential for creating meaning, whereas grammar plays a minor role. He further claims that word choice, not grammar choice, is what dictates the structure of a sentence because language is spoken and learned in ‘chunks’ (Lewis, 1993). Lewis, like Comenius would contend that an exemplar of language should precede the precept.

Comenius’ views are also in line with a Focus on Form approach (see chapter two), which states that teachers can successfully teach language by engaging their learners in meaning-centred communicative activities first, only focusing on forms arising out of that context as they appear (Ellis, 1994, as cited in Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 20). The same notions are also present in *Teaching Unplugged*. In it, Meddings and Thornbury plead for “an alternative to a

positivist, discrete-item, grammar McNugget view of language learning” (2009, p. 14). Despite being separated by over 350 years of language teaching history, one can imagine that Comenius’ and modern day classrooms would be very similar.

It should be noted that near the end of his career Comenius found himself on the periphery of a brand new era of thinking – the Age of Reason. Unlike in the previous Renaissance period, the man of the Age of Reason was analytical and his view of language was prescriptive. People were expected to speak adhering to the preordained grammar of a language, and were looked down upon when they were not able to. The manipulation of the structures of a language was thought to cultivate the mind, and the centrality of this as an approach to language learning rested well with the era’s romanticism of logic. There was little place for Comenius’ approach to language teaching, and ultimately he recanted his previous methods in exchange for a method which focused primarily on pre-learned rules and translation (Rowlinson, 1994).

This method from the Age of Reason is now referred to as the Grammar-Translation Method. Originally it emerged as a way give scholars access to literature which only existed in Latin and Greek, but as the study of modern languages gained in popularity, the method was used for them as well. Today, there is little support for the Grammar-Translation Method, and it is criticised because there is “no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory” (Richards & Rodgers, 1999, p. 5).

Although Comenius’ initial outlook on language teaching appeared to be in line with current thinking, he later realigned himself with a method that contemporary thinking views as outdated and useless. His story very clearly demonstrates the impact that the external environment has on the approaches taken to language teaching. Of course, from Comenius’

perspective, the new Grammar-Translation Method must have seemed superior to his previous method. Inherent to the notion of ‘method,’ is the indication that it will provide students with the most efficient route to language proficiency (Prabhu, 1990, p. 168).

There were relatively few challengers to the Grammar-Translation Method for a very long time. It wasn’t until late in the 19th century that discontent and rejection of the method began to surface. Increased interaction among Europeans created a need for spoken language proficiency that Grammar-Translation couldn’t offer, and a new approach was necessary. To address this, scholars such as Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Vietor and Paul Passy began seriously considering language teaching, giving rise to the field of Applied Linguistics. Simultaneously, language teachers began exploring other options for teaching, drawing the pendulum once again away from grammar focused teaching (Howatt, 1984).

Of these teachers, the insights gained by the Frenchman Francis Gouin are notable. Keen on learning German, he had decided to move to Hamburg, Germany for a year of study. Being a Latin teacher back home, he attempted the methods common to the time; memorizing a German grammar book and a table of 248 irregular German verbs. After 10 days of this, he joined a lecture at the University to test his comprehension. Much to his shock and dismay he could not understand a single word. Later he wrote,

But alas! in vain did I strain my ears; in vain my eye strove to interpret the slightest movements of the lips of the professor; in vain I passed from the first class room to a second; not a word, not a single word would penetrate my understanding. Nay, more than this, I did not even distinguish a single one of the grammatical forms so newly studied; I did not recognise even a single one of the irregular verbs just freshly learnt, though they must certainly have fallen in crowds from the lips of the speaker. (Gouin, 1892, p. 11)

Not discouraged, he made several additional attempts to learn German over the next year. He memorized German roots and books, translated Goethe and Schiller, and memorized a 30,000

word German dictionary by rote. Nonetheless, despite his mental anguish and motivation, he could not learn German this way. Ultimately, having discredited the usefulness of his method, he returned home a failure (Brown, 2007, p. 49). To put the final nail in the coffin, Gouin discovered that while he had been studying German to no avail, back home his three year old nephew had become quite proficient in French. With this, he stumbled upon an insight which echoed the early views of Comenius:

Alas! I can say it now; it all depended upon a very small error. I had simply mistaken the organ. The organ of language – ask the little child – is not the eye; it is the ear. The eye is made for colours, and not for sounds and words. [...] I had studied by the eye, and I wished to understand by my ears. I had set myself to represent printed characters instead of representing real facts and living ideas. I had wearied my arms to strengthen my legs. (Gouin, 1892, p. 33)

Out of this realization, came Gouin’s methodology book, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages* (1892). Unknowingly resurfacing many of the ideas found in Comenius’ work, Gouin outlined his Series Method, a method where learners tackled the target language (TL) without the aid of their first language (L1), and without the use of grammatical rules or explanations. Using his method, learners were to study whole sentences which depicted a ‘series’ of interconnected events that were easy for the mind to imagine. Mimicking the natural way in which children learn their first language, Gouin paved the way for the more popular and long standing Direct Method.

Like the Series Method, the aim of Maximilian Berlitz’s Direct Method was for learners to acquire the second language (L2) in a similar fashion to the way in which they had learned their L1; through “lots of active oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules”

(Brown, 2007, p. 50). Like Comenius, Gouin and Berlitz developed an approach to language teaching that was appropriate for the needs of the learners at the time.

The hunt for the perfect method, however, was far from over. The Direct Method enjoyed moderate success until the 1920s, when the pendulum again began to favor Grammar-Translation. In the 1950s behaviourism and the Audio-Lingual Method entered the stage, enjoying over twenty years in the spotlight before being rejected. In the void that this created, the 70s brought on a flurry of new methods such as the Silent Way, the Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response. Some serenity has since been found under the umbrella of the Communicative Approach, however, several attempts have been made since the early 90s to knock it from the limelight as well (see chapter two) (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

The Plea for a Historical Perspective in ELT

By now it is clear that ELT practices have not been improved upon over time, but have been adapted to suit different needs at different points in history. Given the variety of contexts under which ELT can be found today, perhaps it is not surprising that there is still very little consensus on what the best approach to language teaching is:

Despite all the work that has been done on first – and second-language acquisition, we know surprisingly little about how languages are learnt, and even less about how they can best be taught. Theories come and go, assertions are plentiful, facts are in short supply. [...] Research on methodology is inconclusive, and has not shown detectable and lasting effects, for instance, for implicit or explicit instruction, for inductive verses explicit instruction, or for separated-out-study of structure verses incidental focus on form during communicative activity. (Swan, 2006)

Although rather bleak, an important point is realized here. Seeing that methods have fluctuated so frequently in the history of ELT, and since there is no conclusive evidence in

support of a certain approach to language teaching, the burden rests (at least partially) outside the realm of science to make the best of the situation.

Unlike Comenius and Gouin, however, people like Thornbury have the advantage of a greater variety of tools to choose from when developing their theory of practice. As Brown (2002) articulates, “we have emerged well beyond the dark ages of language teaching when a handful of prepackaged elixirs filled up a small shelf of options” (p. 17). Today, pedagogical decisions can be made based on an understanding of a variety of options with a sound knowledge of how those options have unfolded in the past.

Stern (1983) points out that language teachers and language theorists have all had their own personal learning experiences, which have shaped their beliefs and assumptions about teaching. Likewise, he asserts that the pedagogical assumptions and beliefs of the profession as a whole are deeply engrained in its history. Since language teachers, theorists, and their profession have been constructed over time, they are intricately linked to their past. Unfortunately, “language teaching theory has a short memory. Perhaps because of our involvement in current problems and polemics, we have tended to ignore the past or to distort its lessons, and to re-enact old battles over and over again” (1983, p. 76-77). By connecting with these beliefs and assumptions, Stern believes that we can come to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding the pedagogical decisions which need to be made. Stern strongly urges us to closely examine the history of language teaching so that we can learn from our blunders and successes, and have a better understanding of the pedagogical options that are available.

There is ample evidence to suggest that in creating *Teaching Unplugged*, Thornbury and Meddings have heeded this advice. In a recent talk, Thornbury spoke about the history of ELT methods, and how they factor into an Unplugged Teaching paradigm. Thornbury stated that

irrespective of previous methods, good teaching has always existed and has always been based on good principles at that time. In respect to the notion of method itself, Thornbury aligns himself with Pennycook (1989) in suggesting that it is actually irrelevant:

What we have experienced is a kind of disaffection with the term method. It sounds too scientist. The notion that there's a one size fits all method for all particular contexts simply does not wash with the diversity of contexts in which English or any language is taught or experienced. (Thornbury, 2010d).

Opposed to a view of ELT's history as a succession of methods, Thornbury suggests that the changes which have occurred in ELT are actually just "different configurations of the same basic options" (Pennycook, 1989, as cited in Thornbury, 2010d). Thornbury suggests that these configurations – or parameters as he calls them – are as follows:

Form	↔	Function
Analytic	↔	Experiential
Accuracy	↔	Communication
System	↔	Skills
Segregated	↔	Integrated
Cognitive	↔	Affective
Transmissive	↔	Dialogic
Deductive	↔	Inductive
Monolingual	↔	Bilingual

(Thornbury, 2010d)

Rather than applying a methodological label, Thornbury contends that past methods can be mapped onto these nine spectra. Grammar-Translation, for example, would fall on the left end of these nine spectra, whereas Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (see chapter two) would

fall to the right. Thornbury suggests that it would be ideal if in the future language teachers were able to continuously recalibrate their approach to match the needs of their learners.

According to Thornbury, *Teaching Unplugged* emerged in this way, in response to feedback from professionals in the field of ELT. Thornbury claims that the ideas presented in *Teaching Unplugged* “have been retrieved from the collective wisdom of methodologists over the last 100 years [that] are still with us and still worth hanging on to” (Thornbury, 2010d). He asserts that there is nothing new in *Teaching Unplugged*, but claims that it “articulates principles that have been around for a very long time” (Thornbury, 2010d).

As it turns out, many of the principles in *Teaching Unplugged* can be found in dated English teaching course books and methodology books. Throughout his career as a language teacher and trainer, Thornbury has been collecting these materials from all over the world. He does this because he sees it as an opportunity to develop a deeper knowledge of the roots of his profession, and as a way to unearth good ideas from before his time. The following quotes were all unearthed in these dated materials and their sentiments are present in *Teaching Unplugged* (Thornbury, 2010d):

1910s

Find your point of contact in the daily experience of the foreigner, and lead him as speedily as possible into touch with the language of daily life...”

- Roberts, P. 1918. *English for Coming Americans: Teachers Manual*. p. 19

1940s

“Learn by Speaking. – Do not merely think the words ... say them as if they were real; act them; language is not a set of words; it is a form of behaviour.”

- West, M. 1948. *Improve Your English*. p. 11.

“They should feel that each lesson is their lesson, not the teacher’s.... In an English class which is well run, the teacher is only a guide.”

- French, F. 1949. *The Teaching of English Abroad: Part II The Junior Course*. p.31.

1950s

“We teach grammar through conversation and not, as some school teachers attempt, conversation through grammar.”

- Halbrich, J.O. 1953. *Toil and Chat: English for Beginners*, p. 93.

“A command of structure is more easily acquired by reading, speaking and writing the language than by hearing and studying explanations.”

- Gurrey, P. 1955. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. p. 80.

“Every teacher of languages should devise ways and methods of getting the new language used as it in real life, that is, language that performs some useful purpose”.

- Gurrey, P. 1955. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. p. 51.

“Language is not a sterile subject to be confined to the classroom. One of two things must be done: either life must be brought to the classroom or the class must be taken to life.”

- Stevens, P. *Spoken Language*. 1956, p. 69

1960s

“The teacher must really be himself and give himself, talking to real people about real things and then training his pupils to talk to one another about real things.”

- Billows, L. 1961. *The Techniques of Language Teaching*. p. 56.

“The language must not be allowed to stay imprisoned between the pages of a book.”

- Billows, L. 1961. *The Techniques of Language Teaching*. p. 71.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a brief history of language teaching, and closely examined the notion of method through the eyes of Scott Thornbury. The notion of a ‘best method’ for language teaching has been called into question, as has the claim that approaches to language teaching are evolving with time. Instead, it has been suggested that a close look at ELT’s methodological history will reveal more than a mere succession of methods – such as the continuous recalibration of a finite set of principles, with several useful insights which can still be put into practice today.

Thornbury appeals for what Prabhu has coined as “eclecticism in language pedagogy – not an argument that different contexts should use different methods, but an argument that the

same context should use a number of different methods” (1990, p. 166). This approach is well demonstrated by a sample Unplugged lesson which was posted by Thornbury on his discussion board (see Thornbury, 2001). In this post, Thornbury replies to a message asking how to respond to emergent language that arises in the classroom.

To accomplish this he creates a scenario where a student answers the question, “What are your plans for next month?” with “Next month, I plan go to San Francisco for sightseeing.” Thornbury writes that at this point there are a variety of choices available to the teacher. The teacher can ignore the error and focus on the content, or focus on the error in a variety of ways. The teacher can correct the student, elicit “a self-correction or a peer-correction” or the teacher can focus on “both meaning and form together, by asking for clarification.” Of course, the teacher can also correct the error through a recast.

Thornbury suggests first making a mental note of the error, or recording it on a piece of paper and waiting until “more errors of a similar type [...] have emerged.” Once this has occurred, Thornbury suggests several techniques for dealing with the error.

To start, he suggests “boarding” the errors and eliciting the corrections from the students, encouraging them to make connections between their errors and the rules. Once the corrections have been made, he recommends putting the students into small groups, having them write as many substitutions for the content words as possible in a set amount of time, and then drilling them for “fluid pronunciation.” Then to consolidate what has been learned, he suggests asking the students to “translate the corrected sentences into their L1,” and then back into the English.

In the remainder of Thornbury’s sample lesson, students are asked to recall when the target phrases were spoken, and to re-enact the conversation – first in writing, then in a role-play.

The students are then instructed to create new conversations using the target language, and to design a test which can be exchanged and evaluated. Following this, are several suggestions for freer practice, such as role plays and summative writings.

To summarize his sample lesson, Thornbury writes,

The important thing, I think, is to capture text, whether sentences, bits of talk or whole conversations, and then put it to work, improving it, rehear[rs]ing it, performing it, re-formulating it in another mode (speech to writing, writing to speech) or register (formal, public or informal, private). And there must be some focused attention on the language - but not just the weaknesses, also the strengths. And there must be some kind of summarising activity, for the record. (Thornbury, 2001)

In this sample lesson, many of the flavours of ELT's history can be found. The incidental focus on the emergent language begins the lesson by taking a Focus on Form approach, which soon shifts into an Audio-Lingual, and Grammar-Translation lesson when the target phrases are drilled and translated into the students' L1s. As the lesson moves towards freer practice of the target forms, a Communicative Approach is taken (see chapter two). Thornbury has not subscribed to any particular method, but instead has recalibrated his approach at different points in the lesson to accommodate the needs of the students.

In the next chapter:

In the upcoming chapter we move away from the history of language teaching and turn to current practices in language teaching. We begin with an exploration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where we will identify the strengths of the approach, and highlight its weaknesses. These limitations will then be contrasted with recent attempts to improve upon CLT, and ultimately with Teaching Unplugged (see chapter three), in hopes of identifying the optimal route to language proficiency.

Chapter Two: Current Approaches to English Language Teaching

As we learned in the previous chapter, *Teaching Unplugged* is deeply rooted in language teaching history. It is evident from the previous chapter's sample lesson that it is also very much a product of the current tapestry of ELT. Thornbury has noted that it was never his intent to develop a new methodology or approach to ELT, and has attributed the prevalence of Teaching Unplugged to the enthusiasm of other language teachers. Teaching Unplugged has its own momentum which is fueled by the collective desire of its advocates to overcome the shortcomings of current approaches to language teaching (Thornbury, 2009c, 2011e).

Thornbury has also attributed Teaching Unplugged to an incongruity between the principles set forth by the Communicative Approach and how they are actualized in today's language classrooms. He has claimed that the ideology embodied by Teaching Unplugged attempts to "restore" these principles (Akca, 2012; Delta ELT Publishing Ltd., 2009). In other words, Teaching Unplugged is an attempt to eliminate the disparity between how language lessons are actualized in today's classrooms and the principles behind the Communicative Approach.

In this chapter, we begin by defining and exploring the history of CLT, then attempt to uncover its strengths and weaknesses as it exists in today's language classrooms. In the final section of this chapter we will discuss several recent efforts to improve upon the Communicative Approach, which are similar to Teaching Unplugged.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT was born out of a void created by dissatisfaction for the Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual Method, and it is undeniable that it dominates the current sphere of ELT. Although the previous methods were proficient in providing their students with the ability to produce accurate models of English, they were unable to assist them in generating fluent, spontaneous, native-like speech (Hall, 2011, p. 93). The purpose of the Communicative Approach was to give students the opportunity to focus on authentic language in use, and to provide them with the ability to produce ‘real’ language. Richards describes this shift as a movement away from “grammatical competence [...] to the knowledge and skills needed to use grammar and other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purposes” (Richards, 2006, p. 9).

The foundations of the Communicative Approach seem to have been influenced by a variety of factors, including Dell Hymes’ definition of communicative competence, Stephen Krashen’s Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, and Michael Long’s Interaction Hypothesis.

Communicative Competence

The term ‘communicative competence’ was initially coined by Dell Hymes in 1979 (Hymes, 1979). Criticising Chomsky for the narrow definition that he had given to linguistic competence in his book, *Syntactic Structure*, Hymes claimed that true mastery of a language required much more (1957, as cited in Hymes, 1979, p. 2). According to Hymes (1979), Chomsky had defined linguistic competence as the “tacit knowledge of language structure, that is, knowledge that is commonly not conscious or available for spontaneous report, but necessarily implicit in what the (ideal) listener can say” (Hymes, 1979, p. 7). Hymes on the other hand, stated that what language teachers should strive for is communicative competence;

knowledge of the language structure as well as social knowledge regarding these structures, and the ability to use the language appropriately in a variety of contexts (Hymes, 1979). According to Canale and Swain, communicative competence describes four discrete skills; grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983).

This can be illuminated by the example question, “*Do you drink?*” (Thornbury & Slade, 2006). A Chomskian understanding of this phrase would interpret it as a present simple question about a fact, whereas a Hymean understanding could also interpret it as an offer in some contexts. The concept of communicative competence foregrounds the importance of this type of knowledge in conjunction with Chomsky’s linguistic competence.

The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

Much like Gouin’s Series Method from the turn of the century, Stephen Krashen’s Comprehensible Input Hypothesis was based upon what he observed to be similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition. He proposed that by creating an environment that was similar to that of children learning their first language, language lessons would be more successful. Presented as five hypotheses - the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1977, as cited in Krashen, 1981) – Krashen stated that languages could be acquired simply by exposing learners to “meaningful and motivating input that is just slightly beyond their current level of linguistic competence but sufficiently comprehensible for the learner to understand” (Spada, 2007, p. 274). Krashen’s claims have since been widely criticised since they cannot be substantiated through empirical testing, however, the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis is often intuitively accepted by

language teachers (Spada, 2007). It has undoubtedly had a strong influence on current practices in language teaching.

The Interaction Hypothesis

Following in Krashen's footsteps, Michael Long investigated interaction between native and non-native speakers, and between non-native speakers and other non-native speakers in the classroom. His goal was to determine the viability of interaction in the classroom as a form of comprehensible input. Based on his research and several other related studies, Long hypothesized that the process of negotiating meaning alone may be sufficient in acquiring a TL. Long also found that these effects were expedited by interaction which required all of its participants to receive information from each other (Long & Porter, 1985, p. 222).

Like Hymes' definition of communicative competence, and Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis emphasized a focus on meaning over a focus on grammatical forms in the classroom. In combination with the 70s' thirst for a new approach to language teaching, these ideas seem to have pushed the pendulum towards a preference for meaning-focused instruction. Although it is difficult to directly link these theories to the Communicative Approach, their sentiments are definitely evident in today's communicative language classrooms (Spada, 2007).

Defining the Communicative Approach

According to Howatt, two versions of CLT exist; a strong form and a weak form (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In its weak form, language structures are presented within the context of a specific "function", 'notion' or 'topic'" (Holliday, 1994, p. 170), which are thereafter practiced during a 'communicative' activity. Although the four skills are present, emphasis is placed on speaking,

maximizing student talking time and interaction. On the other hand, in the strong version of CLT the word ‘communication’ is used to describe interaction between the learners and the target language. This is accomplished through input, and by prompting the students to accomplish tasks in the target language (Holliday, 1994, p. 171-172). To put this simply, in a weak approach to CLT, students are “learning to use English,” whereas in a strong approach to CLT they are “using English to learn it” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

While the strong version of CLT can still be found in some contexts (Task Based Language Teaching, Content Based Instruction), “it is the weak form that generally dominated, and perhaps still dominates, thinking within Western ELT” (Hall, 2011, p. 94). Without doubt, this is because the weak form of CLT is more practical and applicable to teaching materials than the strong form is. In the weak version of CLT, communicative materials can be built around a backbone of language focused aims, with language-focused activities surrounding “‘real’ and meaningful communication” (ibid).

Regardless of the version of CLT, Nunan has famously summarized CLT as being characterized by the following features:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom. (Nunan, 1991 p. 279)

According to Lightbrown and Spada (1995), in a communicative environment:

1. There is a limited amount of error correction, and meaning is emphasized over form.
2. Input is simplified and made comprehensible by the use of contextual cues, props, and gestures, rather than through structural grading.
3. Learners usually have only limited time for learning. Sometimes, however, subject-matter courses taught through the second language can add time for language learning.
4. Contact with proficient or native speakers of the language is limited. As with traditional instruction, it is often only the teacher who is a proficient speaker. Learners have considerable exposure to the interlanguage of other learners. This naturally contains errors which would not be heard in an environment where the interlocutors are native speakers.
5. A variety of discourse types are introduced through stories, role playing, the use of 'real-life' materials such as newspapers and television broadcasts, and field trips.
6. There is little pressure to perform at high levels of accuracy, and there is often a greater emphasis on comprehension than on production, especially in the early stages of learning.
7. Modified input is a defining feature of this approach to instruction. The teacher in these classes makes every effort to speak to students at a level of language they can understand. In addition, other students speak a simplified language. (p.95, as cited in Senior 2006, p. 249)

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a method which emerged as a natural extension of the strong version of CLT. Unlike in the weak version of CLT, a Task-Based syllabus is governed by a series of meaning-focused tasks – without any premeditated attention to specific language points. Rather than focusing on how to speak, the focus of TBLT is on what is to be said. Tasks become the vehicles of language development (Hall, 2011, p. 95-96).

Over the years, there has been some variation as to what exactly a definition of task should encompass (Breen, 1987; Ellis, 2003; Ellis, 2009; Littlewood, 2004; Williams and Burden, 1997). Skehan (1998), for example, proposed that a task is “an activity in which meaning is primary, there is a communication problem to solve, and the task is closely related to real-world activities” (Skehan, 1998, as cited in Belgar and Hunt, 2002, p. 100). Ellis (2001), on the other hand, provides a more comprehensive definition:

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes (p. 16).

According to Willis (1996), tasks are organized into three stages:

- Pre-task: introduction to the topic.
- Task cycle: learners carry out the task, plan their report back to the whole group and make their reports.
- Language focus: learners analyse and practice the language that was used. (as cited in Hall, 2011, p. 96)

Beglar and Hunt (2002) write that pre-task activities are “essential for providing adequate support to the learners in their attempts to deal with a series of complex, challenging tasks” (p. 101). It is at this point that the teacher can introduce new vocabulary, grammar points, or knowledge that is pertinent to completing the task effectively. Pre-tasks can help students interpret tasks in a more fluent, complex, and accurate way (Beglar and Hunt, 2002).

In the context of Teaching Unplugged, TBLT is very important. According to Thornbury, the core principles of TBLT are closely related to Teaching Unplugged. In fact, the only point that Teaching Unplugged and TBLT seem to differ on is that the latter is a method and the former is not. In their book, Thornbury and Meddings (2009) write, “where a Dogme approach parts company with a task-based approach is not in the philosophy but in the methodology” (p. 17) (see chapter two).

The Benefits to Adopting a Communicative Approach

According to the literature, adopting a Communicative Approach has several benefits. The most obvious feature of CLT and perhaps the most beneficial is the fact that “everything is done with a communicative intent” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 129). According to Morrow (as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000), this is realized because genuinely communicative activities contain an information gap, choice, and feedback.

For Morrow, information gap occurs when two language learners communicate information that the other does not have. During this process, the learners have the freedom to choose how they wish to articulate themselves, and are able to evaluate the success of their language use depending upon the feedback that they receive from each other. According to Morrow, language development cannot take place without these elements (Morrow, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 129). Proponents of the Communicative Approach also assert that language which is meaningful to the learner promotes learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Rather than developing a research agenda, advocates of CLT generally “see their mission as to convince teachers of the correctness of the theory” (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 6). In part this is probably due to the nature of the approach. Unlike methods, the principles of CLT are open to interpretation, making it likely to manifest itself differently depending on the context. This is well evidenced by individual language teacher’s interpretations of CLT. When asked, teacher responses are typically different from their peers, and from the literature (Senior, 2006, p. 250). Since the Communicative Approach has not been standardized it would be nearly impossible to produce findings that can be generalized through scientific research. In this, empirical findings that directly support the approach are sparse. Nonetheless, early empirical findings from Allwright, Prabhu, and Swain and Lapkin do support CLT.

Allwright's findings come from a remedial English course which was taught at the University of Essex in 1974. Despite popular opinion at the time, Allwright had made sweeping changes to the course by adopting a Communicative Approach. Rather than building the course around a structural syllabus, the course was governed by classroom activities that were relevant to the learners, and provided opportunities for spontaneous language production (Allwright, 1979). According to Allwright, the course was extremely successful, and subsequent reports of the account paved the way for future communicative course books (Allwright, 2005, p. 12).

A similar project was carried out in Bangalore, India. Led by Prabhu, the project is notably the first attempt to deliver a language course based solely on a Task-Based syllabus. According to Prabhu, students enjoyed the course thoroughly, while also advancing their language ability at a rate similar to or better than peers learning by more traditional means (Howatt, 1984, p. 346-349).

At the same time in Canada, Swain and Lapkin (1982) were busy synthesizing ten years of research on French immersion programs in Ontario schools. They found that delivering a school curriculum to English speaking students in French progressed students to advanced levels of the language. These findings however, were later partially disputed by Harley and Swain (1985). Although the learners were able to demonstrate proficiency in their receptive ability, their production skills were less than native-like.

The Limitations of Adopting a Communicative Approach

Despite the said benefits of adopting a communicative approach, CLT has not gone without criticism. Very early on the Communicative Approach was eloquently attacked by

Michael Swan (1985a, and 1985b) for being too prescriptive, and for focusing exclusively on meaning to the detriment of form. Since, the Communicative Approach has been questioned for a variety of reasons. Seeing that many of the principles of CLT are in line with Teaching Unplugged, many of these criticisms can be levelled at Thornbury as well.

Criticism of Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

With regards to the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, Skehan (1998) contends that Krashen oversimplifies the connection between comprehension, the development of the interlanguage and production. Skehan claims that when individuals hear language, a variety of strategies are used to interpret the information. Content words for example are given priority over less informative words in an utterance. He argues that language is not parsed word for word, as this would be too exhaustive during communication (especially in the L2). Instead, meaning is often found by combining language input, context and schematic knowledge. In this, “the comprehension process can be partly detached from the underlying syntactic system and from production” (Skehan, 1998, p. 15). In other words, it may be possible for a learner to understand utterances in the L2 without any attention to the language’s grammar. Learners have already developed their ability to derive meaning from contextual cues and schematic knowledge, as they do this in their L1 as well. It seems likely therefore that when learners are confronted with input in the L2, they are more likely to search for meaning through contextual and schematic knowledge than through their structural knowledge of the target language. This would explain why Swain and Lapkin’s (1982) French immersion students were capable of native-like French comprehension but unable to produce the language accurately.

Criticism of Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Skehan also questioned CLT's stance on the role of output and interaction in the classroom. While he agrees that output is paramount to language development, he is skeptical about whether language structures can be acquired through this alone. According to its advocates (Gass and Varonis, 1994 and Pica, 1994, as cited in Skehan, 1998), the negotiation of meaning between learners will create difficulties in producing language which will motivate them to modify their output to avoid conversation breakdown. This in turn is thought to illuminate limitations in the learners' language ability, allowing them to improve upon gaps in their language ability precisely when they are having difficulty.

Skehan maintains however that extensive negotiation of meaning can be frustrating for learners and is unlikely to occur in natural communication. He asserts that the cognitive faculty required for negotiating meaning may overload students, making it unlikely that they will consolidate their accomplishments. Language development would require learners to communicate utterances in their L2, while simultaneously comprehending input, objectively monitoring what has been said, and committing it to memory (Skehan, 1998).

The Shift towards Form Focused Instruction

The limitations of exclusively focusing on meaning in CLT have been addressed by a shift in how CLT is taught. Although CLT is often criticised for giving all of its attention to developing learner fluency to the detriment of learner accuracy, this is not in line with the view of most applied linguists and TBLT. Contrary to popular criticism the goal of the Communicative Approach is to include communication, not to exclude form (Spada, 2007 p. 275-276). These misconceptions are perhaps the result of CLT's theoretical foundation, and early

CLT programs which focused primarily on meaning (see above). Most applied linguists today, however, tend to agree that “the inclusion of form-focused instruction leads to improvement in students’ knowledge and their ability to use that knowledge” (Norris and Ortega, 2000 & Spada, 1997, as cited in Spada, 2007, p. 276).

In CLT, form-focused instruction is usually accomplished with a Focus on Form, rather than a Focus on Forms approach. While a Focus on Forms approach addresses form from a pre-determined sequence of grammar points, a Focus on Form approach contends that these points can emerge at any time during a lesson “as a consequence of the learners’ engagement in meaningful communication” (Hall, 2011, p. 70). Summarizing the argument for a Focus on Form, Harmer (2007) writes,

Students acquire language best when they have focused on it either because they need it, or have come across it in a meaning-focused communicative task, or because in some other way they have noticed language which is relevant to them at a particular time. (p. 54, as cited in Hall, 2011, p. 70)

Simply put, Focus on Form can be defined as “any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners’ attention to form either implicitly or explicitly . . . within meaning-based approaches to L2 instruction [and] in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways” (Spada, 1997, p. 73, as cited in Spada, 2011, p. 226). In the classroom, Focus on Form can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including recasts (“repeating the learner’s incorrect utterance, but reformulating it into a correct form, phrase or sentence” (Hall, 2011, p. 250)), elicitation, corrective feedback, drilling, putting language to use in new contexts, high frequency exposure to a particular language feature, drawing a learners attention to a particular language feature by enhancing it in text, and even overt board work (Spada, 2011; Thornbury, 2011a, 2011b). According to Spada (2011), however, explicit attention

to form is more effective than implicit attention to form, meaning that Focus on Form works best when teachers provide “overt instruction and corrective feedback, including the use of meta-language and clear signals to the learners that there was a right and a wrong way to say/write something” (Spada, 2011, p. 227).

Like TBLT, and many of the principles of CLT, the principles of Teaching Unplugged are in line with a Focus on Form approach. Speaking on the subject, Meddings and Thornbury (2009) contend that it “is an approach that is entirely consistent with the Dogme view – that the grammar syllabus (and also the lexical one, for that matter) should emerge, not as an attempt to anticipate the learners’ communicative needs, but in response to them” (p. 20, also, see Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 60-61; Thornbury, 2011a, 2011b). This point will be revisited in chapter 3. While the shift to Focus on Form has definitely enhanced the pedagogical efficiency of CLT, questions have still been raised in regards to the authenticity of ‘communicative’ tasks, as well as the cultural appropriateness of the approach.

Criticism towards the Notion of Authenticity in CLT

Although there has been some turbulence in defining authentic language (Gilmore, 2007), there seems to be agreement that authentic language is created by proficient speakers of a target language, with a social purpose which exists outside the classroom. Incorporating such materials in the classroom is thought to increase learner motivation, as they give learners the opportunity to interact with the target language as it exists in the real world (Guariento and Morley, 2011).

Although there is a general consensus in language teaching that authenticity in texts and tasks is imperative to language development, CLT has been accused of being inauthentic on both fronts. Widdowson (1998) contends that despite the appeal of authenticity in the classroom, it is

actually impossible to accomplish. He suggests that any real world task that is emulated in the classroom lacks authenticity because it has been removed from its natural context and placed into a context of learning. Likewise, Widdowson maintains that texts which are removed from their natural social context and intended for learning are equally as artificial (Widdowson, 1998). What others would define as an authentic text, Widdowson refers to as a “textual trace” (p. 712). He upholds that textual traces are not authentic, because they cannot interact with their intended “contextual conditions to realise discourse” (p. 712). Widdowson states that the only way in which a text can “be made pragmatically real as discourse is if it is reconnected up with context of some kind” (p. 712), however, “one obviously cannot reinstate the original contexts from which it came” (ibid.). This is especially true in EFL, where any interaction with the target language is likely to occur within the classroom. Since the ‘textual trace’ of texts used for instruction originated in another country (perhaps on the other side of the world), there is a massive disconnect between their intended context and how they are being used in the classroom. Widdowson states that if the communicative approach really aims to deliver authentic learning experiences, it must find a way to localise exemplars of the target language so that the learners “can engage with it as discourse” (ibid). Since CLT has not found a way to do this, it can be argued that any interaction with the language in the language classroom is pretend, and may be too far removed from authentic exemplars of the language to be useful.

Although not the dominant position, it has also been suggested that authenticity may not be the best path to language development (Cook, 1997; Widdowson, 1998). Cook (1997) asserts that the authentic speech of native speaking adults is a poor model for learners to imitate, as they are unlikely to ever reach such levels of authenticity themselves. Especially for English learners,

he suggests that since English is a language of international communication, native-like speech may actually hamper a learner's ability to communicate (Cook, 1997).

Questioning the cultural appropriateness CLT

Despite near global acceptance for the Communicative Approach, a disparity still exists between policy and practice (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003). All over the world, studies have demonstrated that teachers still opt for traditional approaches to language instruction, even when they are expected to instruct their classes using CLT (Chowdhry, 2010; Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003). This is as a result of three factors: the ideology of these teachers and their society (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998), large class sizes and low proficiency students (Li, 1998; Yu, 2001), and students who are preparing for exams (Li, 1998; Yu, 2001).

It seems however, that even when the Communicative Approach is accepted by an institution, the principles behind the approach are still not guaranteed. Looking at transcripts from communicative classrooms, Nunan (1989) concluded that interaction was anything but communicative. This observation was echoed by Thornbury (1996), based on his observations as a teacher trainer in Barcelona. Citing Legutke and Thomas (1991), he writes:

In spite of trendy jargon in textbooks and teachers' manuals, very little is actually communicated in the L2 classroom. The way it is structured does not seem to stimulate the wish of learners to say something, nor does it tap what they might have to say [...] Learners do not find room to speak as themselves, to use language in communicative encounters, to create text, to stimulate responses from fellow learners, or to find solutions to relevant problems. (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 8-9, as cited in Thornbury, 1996, p. 279)

Transformation in CLT: Towards a Postmethod Pedagogy

Despite the fact that CLT has been in vogue for several decades, it is evident that the reach of the approach is limited. Although it is well supported by linguistic theory, many of its

principles have been questioned, and it has been resisted in several parts of the world. Perhaps it is as a result of this that the approach has undergone many transformations throughout its lifespan (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 2006a; Spada, 2007). While early strong versions of CLT were exclusively meaning focused, later weak versions have returned balance to the approach with Focus on Form. By recognizing the importance of attention to meaning *and* form, today's communicative classrooms are able to develop their students' fluency and accuracy simultaneously. This is realized by "increased recognition of and attention to language form within exclusively or primarily meaning-oriented CLT approaches to second language (L2) instruction (Spada, 2007).

Despite this, discontent towards the Communicative Approach has been mounting for quite some time. Kumaravadivelu (2006a) for example, observed that the foundations of CLT have been endlessly reinterpreted since their inception, and because terms like 'communicative' and 'task' have been shamelessly brandished throughout the ELT industry in the pursuit of monetary gain, the approach has become too ambiguous to be useful. More generally, it has been argued for quite some time that the pursuit of any best practice in language teaching is no longer of value to L2 educators (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1997). As early as 1989, Pennycook criticised the concept of method for its narrow-minded and weakening impact on our understanding of language teaching (Pennycook, 1989, p. 597). At this time, Prabhu also suggested that teachers should focus on how their teaching is impacting their learners; not on how methods should govern their teaching (1990). Allwright also proclaimed the death of the method in 1991 (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, p. 168); a sentiment which was echoed by Brown in 2002 (p. 10). Focusing specifically on CLT, Bax called for a dethroning of the approach in 2003.

Expanding upon this, Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2003, 2006a, 2006b) has claimed that “the language teaching profession appears to have exhausted the kind of psychological, linguistic, and pedagogic underpinnings it has depended on for constructing alternative methods” (2006b p. 161). He believes that these underpinnings are unlikely to provide teachers with an innovative new approach to language teaching in the near future, and that moving forwards the only option is to reject the concept of method altogether, venturing onwards into what he describes as the postmethod condition (1994, 2001, 2006a, 2006b).

In light of the postmethod condition, Kumaravadivelu (1994) suggested that teachers are empowered with the “knowledge, skill, and autonomy” (p. 27) necessary to independently formulate a principled and pragmatic alternative to any prescribed ‘best method’ for language teaching. He suggested that rather than “swearing by a succession of fashionable language teaching methods and dangling them before a bewildered flock of believers” (p. 27), theorists should be searching for an alternative solution for language teachers. Kumaravadivelu petitioned theorists to “search for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights that will enable teachers to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize” (p.27). By developing a set of strategies that are neutral to methods, yet are still able to “provide a coherent enough framework for teachers” (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1997, p. 149), Kumaravadivelu maintains that a prescribed method (including CLT) can be eliminated from the process altogether (Bell, 2003; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1997).

Unlike in a method-based pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu (2006b) puts teacher autonomy at the heart of postmethod pedagogy. He recognizes that the tacit knowledge that teachers have about teaching, their ability to apply their knowledge within the constraints of their teaching

environment, and their ability to initiate, develop, reflect upon, analyze, and evaluate change in their classroom is central to a postmethod pedagogy (p. 178).

Kumaravadivelu has also offered a set of parameters which must be adhered to when developing a framework for postmethod pedagogy: particularity, practicality and possibility (2001, 2006a, 2006b). Kumaravadivelu (2006b) writes, “postmethod pedagogy must be sensitive to a *particular* group of teachers teaching a *particular* group of learners pursuing a *particular* set of goals within a *particular* institutional context embedded in a *particular* sociocultural milieu” (p. 171, italics added). *Practicality* claims that postmethod pedagogy should focus “on teachers’ reflections and action, which are also based on their insights and intuition. Through prior and ongoing experience with learning and teaching, teachers gather an unexplained and sometimes unexplainable awareness of what constitutes good teaching (Kumaravidelu, 2006b, p. 173). Finally, through *possibility* Kumaravidelu points out that postmethod pedagogies should consider how the social, political, economic, and cultural environment has shaped the consciousness of the students in the classroom.

- Particularity: Concerned with the *practices* that teachers submit to in their particular teaching context.
- Practicality: Concerned with the *empowerment* of the teachers in their particular teaching context.
- Possibility: Concerned with the *empowerment* of the students in their particular learning context.

Based on these parameters - in what can be interpreted as an attempt to usurp the Communicate Approach (or any other competing method) from its place in the limelight (Bell, 2003) - Kumaravadivelu (1994) and many others have put forth a set of strategies for “navigating the uncharted waters of the postmethod condition” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a, p. 67). As we will further explore at the end of this chapter and in chapter three, despite their intent to break free of

previous approaches to language teaching, these postmethod pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), are still suspiciously similar to CLT (Bell, 2003, p. 332), and Teaching Unplugged (Thornbury, 2002).

Navigating the Uncharted Waters of the Postmethod Condition

Kumaravadivelu has highlighted three attempts which have recently been made to lay the foundation for the construction of pedagogies that can be considered postmethod in their orientation – Stern’s three-dimensional framework, Allwright’s exploratory practice framework, and his own macrostrategic framework (2006a; 2006b). Kumaravadivelu (2006b) states that each of these “(a) make a clear and consequential break with the concept of method, (b) provide a coherent and comprehensible framework to the extent allowed by the current state of knowledge, and (c) offer a well-defined and well-explained set of ideas that may guide important aspects of L2 classroom activity” (p. 185). Keeping this definition in mind, we several similar movements in the field of language teaching also come to light (Also, see chapter three for the relationship between these prerequisites and Teaching Unplugged).

Since it is impossible to prepare a teacher for every situation that arises in the classroom, these frameworks are meant to be implemented at the policy level with hopes of motivating the decisions to be made and the techniques to be employed at the procedural level.

Stern’s Three Dimensional Framework

Published posthumously in 1992, Stern’s second book (titled *Issues and Options in Language Teaching*) is likely the first attempt that was made to create a postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b). Nearly a decade before this, however, Stern had already laid the tracks for his Three Dimensional Framework. In chapter 21 of his previous work, (*Fundamental*

Concepts of Language Teaching), Stern (1983) outlined his concerns with the concept of method, stating that methods are inflexible and rigid, and exaggerate the significance of a single idea in language teaching. In the following chapter he provided his readers with a short description of a multidimensional framework, which could assist them in transcending language teaching methods (Stern, 1983). In his later book (1992), the more refined Three Dimensional Framework is presented. Stern outlines three “dimensions” of language learning: the L1-L2 connection, which refers to the use of or exclusion of the first language; the code-communication dilemma, which addresses meaning focused, or language focused instruction; and the explicit-implicit option, which focuses on the question of learning vs. acquisition. Although each of these dimensions are areas of heated debate in the field of language teaching, Stern argues that exclusively choosing one extreme over the other will inhibit language development. Instead, he promotes a combination of six strategies, each of which represents the polarities of the three dimensions of his framework (Stern, 1992).

Allwright's Exploratory Practice (EP) Framework

Practitioner research is an investigation which can be undertaken by practitioners in their field or specialization. It is “a systematic form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry” (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990, p. 148). This form of research varies from traditional forms of research, because it addresses a problem by encompassing knowledge generated at the local level (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990). In language teaching, practitioner research is conducted by a teacher, in a classroom where action needs to be taken to address a specific situation (for example, problems with group work or inappropriate use of the L1) (Allwright, 2003).

Allwright proposed that although practitioner research is imperative to language teaching, it is flawed because it operates on three false premises:

First, we have been seduced by the prevailing ‘wisdom’ that participant research must essentially aim to improve the efficiency of classroom teaching, typically by isolating practical problems and solving them one by one. Secondly, we have largely accepted that such ‘improvement’ will best be achieved by the practitioners involved (the teachers) addressing their classroom problems as mainly technical ones, to be solved by the development of ‘better’ teaching techniques. Thirdly, this implies that we accept that language teaching and learning can therefore be reduced to a relatively unproblematic, *asocial*, matter of cause and effect relationships. (Allwright, 2003, p. 113-114)

Allwright, like Stern and Kumaravidelu, rejected the notion of method as a cure-all for the problems in the language classroom. Rather than attempting to develop better teaching methods, he suggested prioritizing the social aspect of language teaching. This is summarized by three tenets:

1. We should, above our concern for instructional efficiency, prioritize the *quality of life* in the language classroom.
2. Instead of trying to develop ever ‘improved’ teaching techniques, we should try to develop our *understandings* of the quality of language classroom life.
3. We should expect working helpfully for understanding to be a fundamentally *social* matter, not an *asocial* one. Simple causal relationships are most unlikely to apply, but all practitioners, learners as well as teachers, can expect to gain, to ‘develop’, from this mutual process of working for understanding. (Allwright, 2003, p. 114, italics in original)

“Confident that they were solidly grounded in extensive local practice and thought” (Allwright, 2003, p. 128), seven principles, and a series of flexible and adaptable steps were also derived from these three tenets. These tenets, principles and steps are what constitute Allwright’s Exploratory Practice EP Framework (Allwright, 2003). By publishing his EP framework in 2003, Allwright hoped to inspire his readers to consider how “participant research can contribute to language teacher, and learner, development” (p. 137). It was never meant to be the final word on practitioner research in the language classroom, but rather an invitation to join

in the “process of development” (p. 137). Allwright proposed that through the joint construction of language practitioners, his EP framework could evolve – improving language teaching in the process.

Kumaravadivelu’s Macrostrategic Framework

Kumaravadivelu’s Macrostrategic Framework also attempts to break free from the notion of method. The framework consists of ten macrostrategies, which are to be used as guiding principles in the classroom. Using these guiding principles, teachers are expected to develop their own techniques depending on the situational needs of their students. Like the other frameworks, the macrostrategies are not intended to be prescriptive. Instead, they are meant to “assist L2 teachers as they begin to construct their own theory of practice” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 38). Kumaravadivelu’s ten macrostrategies are as follows:

- Maximize learning opportunities
- Facilitate negotiated interaction
- Minimize perceptual mismatches
- Activate intuitive heuristics
- Foster language awareness
- Contextualize linguistic input
- Integrate language skills
- Promote learner autonomy
- Ensure social relevance
- Raise cultural consciousness (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2003, 2006a, 2006b).

Brown’s 12 Principles

In Kumaravadivelu fashion, Brown (2002) also claims that the most viable current approaches to language teaching are “‘principled,’ in that there is perhaps a finite number of general research-based principles on which classroom practice is grounded” (p. 12). Using what he claims to be the most widely accepted theoretical assumptions about second language acquisition, he developed an ‘inexhaustive’ set of 12 principles by which language teachers are

encouraged to shape their teaching practice. The theoretical themes covered by these principles are:

1. Automaticity
2. Meaningful Language
3. The Anticipation of Reward
4. Intrinsic Motivation
5. Strategic Investment
6. Language Ego
7. Self-Confidence
8. Risk Taking
9. The Language-Culture Connection
10. The Native Language Effect
11. Interlanguage
12. Communicative Competence (Brown, 2002, p. 12-13)

Van Lier's AAA Curriculum

Defining 'curriculum' as a "theory of practice" (van Lier, 1996, ch. 2), van Lier developed the 'AAA curriculum' to guide language teachers in their teaching. According to van Lier, three main principles should govern a teacher's theory of practice; *awareness*, *autonomy* and *authenticity*. These three principles will be explained in further detail below.

The first principle, *awareness*, states that the process of language learning necessitates drawing connections between new information and that which is already known. It claims that in order for this to occur, teachers need to cultivate an *awareness* of the language in their learners. However, for the AAA curriculum the term *awareness* "implies a lot more than metalinguistic awareness" (van Lier, 1996, p. 96). It also denotes social knowledge, and knowledge of which learning strategies are best suited to learning the target language. The first principle of the AAA curriculum thus advocates an awareness of various aspects of the target language as well as an understanding of *how* to learn the language (van Lier, 1996, ch. 4).

The second principle, *autonomy*, suggests that teachers cannot ‘teach’ a language. Instead it is the learner’s motivation that controls learning. Van Lier, however, feels that current attempts to promote motivation among students are unproductive and must be reassessed. He writes that “many of the things done in the name of ‘motivating the students’ do nothing but sidestep the issue of true motivation. Education, in other words, is heavily polluted with surrogate motivation” (van Lier, 1996, p. 121). Van Lier’s second principle therefore suggests that teachers must genuinely motivate their learners, if they wish to influence learner autonomy.

Contrary to contemporary thinking, van Lier (1996) suggests that this is best realised by targeting a learner’s intrinsic motivation: “personal achievement, in terms of knowledge, skills, and rewarding social relationships, is tied to intrinsic motivation through the person’s self-determination and autonomy” (p. 121). Rather than through external future rewards, van Lier suggests that learner motivation can be generated by cultivating a sense of curiosity and personal achievement during classroom activities.

According to van Lier, it may be possible to achieve this environment by subscribing to ‘flow theory’. Coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1985), ‘flow’ is a special experience where the mind is peaked, and “attention can be both relaxed and intensely focused on [a] task, in which intrinsic motivation emerges and flourishes, and learning becomes an organic experience (van Lier, 1996, p. 35). In the classroom, during ‘flow’ experiences “time seems to be suspended, everything happens just the right way, and [every]one is totally absorbed in the activity” (van Lier, 1996, p. 106). Van Lier explains that the prerequisites for ‘flow’ are striking a balance between skills and challenges. When the challenge is too difficult or the skill level is too high for classroom activities, then learner anxiety or boredom sets in. Instead, intrinsic motivation and learner development peak when skills and challenges are balanced (van Lier, p. 106).

Concerning the final principle, *authenticity*, it seems that like Widdowson (1998), van Lier also questions traditional definitions of the term (see p. 28-29, this paper). In addition to presenting materials and tasks which emulate real life, he advocates the “consideration of the social context and purposes of interactions, asserting that the process of authentication involves understanding who the participants are in the learning context (i.e., teacher and learners) and what their roles are” (Hancin-Bhatt, 1998, p. 102-103).

Van Lier’s three principles are meant to be interpreted holistically, meaning that not one of them can exist without the others. Without *autonomous* learners, language *awareness* cannot occur, and without language *awareness*, *authenticity* cannot exist (van Lier, 1996, p. 3). Van Lier (1996) states that building and strengthening the connections between the three principles, and advancing the “AAA curriculum in its totality” (p. 145) is fundamental to the success of his framework.

Similar to Allwright’s EP framework, van Lier (1996) also puts practitioner research at the heart of his AAA curriculum. Instead of mastery over teaching methods and techniques, van Lier defines professionalism in the field of language teaching by classroom research (van Lier, 1996, p. 28). Involving teachers in the research process, van Lier suggests that they can be more efficient, pragmatic and decisive in the unique context of their classrooms, allowing them to transcend the need for “authority-based” cure-all methods to language teaching (van Lier, 1996, p. 28). He encourages teachers and academics to work together in advancing the AAA curriculum, by striking a balance between research, theory, and practice (p. 30).

When teachers work in this way they cannot work in isolation, but need to communicate with one another, exchange ideas, and report their work. Teacher organizations, interest groups, and networks, are thus essential to a teaching profession which is developing a theory of practice, especially since such work cannot be limited to a one teacher-one classroom research context. (van Lier, 1996, p.29)

Like the other postmethod frameworks, the AAA curriculum is not meant to be a prescription for how to teach language. Van Lier states that since the AAA principles are universally acceptable, they act as a “liberating force, encouraging every teacher to create his or her own theory of practice” (p. 9).

The Ecological Approach

Along with input from several academics (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman 2006; Kramsch 2002; Kramsch & Steffensen 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 1997, 2002, 2003; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008; Leather & van Dam 2002), Van Lier (2004) has also contributed to a movement in which language, language learning and language use are viewed from an ecological perspective (as cited in Kramsch, 2008, p. 389).

While traditional approaches have been criticised for viewing language learning as a process of input, output, and feedback, the ecological perspective sees language learning as the *product of* and *contributor to* its social and cultural contexts. “Just as organisms adapt to their environments, and in so doing shape their environments, so to do speakers use language both to integrate into, and to influence, their discourse communities. Through this reciprocal process of interaction and mutual adaptation, the linguistic system (both the individual’s and the community’s) evolves” (Thornbury, 2010b).

With obvious connections to his AAA curriculum (and Teaching Unplugged), Van Lier outlines four ‘basic constructs’ in ecological linguistics:

1. Language *emerges* from semiotic activity.
2. Language does not emerge from input that is processed, but from *affordances* that are brought forth by active engagement, and which enable further action and interaction.
3. Language is not transmitted from person to person by way of monolog or dialog, but arises from indicational processes occurring in *triadic interaction*,
4. Linguistic activity in particular contexts can be analyzed in terms of *quality*. (van Lier, 2002, p. 145)

The term *emergence* implies that language learning is not a gradual, linear process. In an ecological approach, language emerges “when relatively simple elements combine together to form a higher-order system” (van Lier, 2004, p. 5), a system in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In a classroom, an ecological approach suggests that student interlanguage is formed not directly by input, but in conjunction with gestures, semiotics, the physical surroundings, and the interlocutors, and in the context of actions intended to produce meaning. “In other words, language emerges as an embodied and situated activity” (van Lier, 2002, p. 146).

Extending this line of thought, input becomes *affordance*: “that which is offered by the linguistic environment and perceived by the learner” (van Lier, 1996, p. 12). The context of the language classroom is ripe with potential for finding meaning, yet it cannot be merely transmitted to the learner. Instead, from an ecological perspective the learner must actively participate in finding “increasingly effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings” (van Lier, 2000, p. 246). From an ecological perspective, when learners interact with each other there is always a third element present; that which is being spoken about. Classroom activities therefore provide opportunities for *affordances* in what van Lier describes as *triadic interaction*; interaction between two individuals and the third element (Mantero, 2007, p. 8).

Finally, an ecological perspective contends that although the quantity of language learning that is done is important in some contexts, in some contexts the *quality* of education should also be considered (van Lier, 2002, p. 148). This relates to the AAA curriculum’s principle of *authenticity*. While the quantity of language known can be helpful on tests, the true fruit of a learner’s efforts are actually realized by meaning-driven discourse which occurs outside the classroom. It can be very frustrating for students who have an extensive knowledge of a TL

yet find it difficult to produce the language effectively in ‘authentic triadic settings’. To improve the *quality* of this discourse, an ecological perspective would contend that we must improve the *quality* of language education. In the classroom, this would entail providing “opportunities for students to engage in interaction that will help new language emerge as activity is realized through semiotic activity not linguistic construction in artificial environments” (Mantero, 2007, p. 9).

We can deduce from these four constructs that from an ecological perspective, “competence is not applying mental rules to situations, but aligning one’s resources with situational demands and shaping the environment to match the language resources one brings” (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 933). Rather than through “mastery of knowledge, cognition, or form” (ibid.), language acquisition is achieved by social practice.

Criticism of Postmethod Pedagogies

Although the aforementioned movements operate on the assumption that ELT has transcended methods and moved into the “postmethod condition” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), others argue that the notion of method is in actuality still alive and well (Bell, 2003 & 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2005a, 2005b; Liu, 1995; Hashemi, 2011). To illustrate this, Bell compiled data from teacher interviews, blog discussions, and language learning and teaching autobiographies. Surprisingly the results found several inconsistencies between teaching theory and teaching practice. Unlike the strict definitions that are created for the term ‘method’ in theory (see chapter one), in practice teachers tended to view methods as tools or techniques which could be applied in response to varying learner needs. Teachers claimed to use ‘methods’ eclectically, combining and piecing them together as they saw fit (Bell, 2007, p. 136).

In opposition to this approach, Stern (1992) has argued that the “weakness of the eclectic position is that it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which is the best theory, nor does it provide any principles by which to include or exclude features which form part of existing theories or practices. The choice is left to the individual’s intuitive judgement and is, therefore, too broad and too vague” (p. 11). It seems, however, that this is not what ‘eclectic’ teachers are doing. Seeing methods as techniques, teachers appear to be doing exactly what Stern advocates for with his three dimensional framework. Instead of adopting his three dimensional framework, however, they have adopted their own set of principles, perhaps based upon the theories behind the methods that they are choosing between. Teachers are not using methods in their entirety, but instead only taking the most suitable ideas from each. In this light, methods perform a valuable role in today’s ELT classrooms. Teachers have recognized their usefulness, as well as their limitations, and as a result have used them to construct a method of their own (Bell, 2007; Hashemi, 2011).

Larsen-Freeman (2005a, 2005b) also maintains that methods are still present in ELT. She argues that in current practice methods are less absolute, adapted and actualized differently as they are applied to different contexts. Rather than “throw out the concept of method” (2005a, p. 22), Larsen-Freeman asserts that teachers need to be given guidance as to how they can use methods appropriately. Research has also demonstrated that even dated methods, such as the flurry of designer methods that appeared in the 70s, can be useful to today’s language teachers. Closely studying these designer methods, Stevick (1998) found that many of their core principles could be found in contemporary teaching practice. He suggests that although these methods are no longer in common use their core principles are still very much alive in CLT.

Although we have seen that methods are not necessarily as counterproductive as postmethodologists would have us believe, the concept of the postmethod condition also does not necessarily guarantee teachers their freedom. While the concept of postmethod may liberate language teachers from prescriptive methods, it can be argued that these shackles are just as quickly replaced by the constraints of a ‘postmethod’ pedagogy (Hashemi, 2011). Like methods, the core principles of postmethod pedagogies are published in notable journals and by large multi-national publishing houses, with passive teachers at the bottom who are “usually so impressed by the theory that they would not think of any type of extending or personalizing” (Hashemi, 2011, p. 143). While postmethodologists encourage teachers to develop their own context-driven classroom strategies, these strategies are still influenced by a set of principles which have been imposed on them.

Furthermore, a closer inspection reveals many similarities between the postmethod and CLT, despite the fact that Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2006a) lumps it in with other prescriptive methods that predated it (see chapter one). Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2006a) rejects all of them because of their inflexibility, but given the widespread use and acceptance of CLT it would be ridiculous to assume that by the traditional definition of method, CLT is universally realised in the same way. Unlike postmethodologists, Richards and Rodgers (1999) claim that “CLT is best considered an approach rather than a method” (p. 83). As we will remember from chapter one, Anthony (1963) defines an approach “as a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning and teaching” (Brown, 2010, p. 9). In this sense, CLT, like a postmethod pedagogy, has a core set of principles in which teachers themselves are responsible to develop their method for.

It seems that when Kumaravadivelu is rejecting methods, he is not rejecting traditional definitions for the term, but a definition which he has created himself. Far from Anthony's (1963) "overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selected approach" (Brown, 2010, p. 9), Kumaravadivelu (2006b) construes method as "a construct; [...] an expert's notion derived from an understanding of the theories of language, of language learning, and of language teaching" (p. 162). This latter definition easily encompasses CLT, allowing Kumaravadivelu to level criticism at it and traditional methods simultaneously. Of course, with CLT out of the way, this leaves ample space for the postmethod, postmethod pedagogies, and a slew of new teacher handbooks and course materials.

Bell (2003) on the other hand, believes that CLT is still the prevailing paradigm in ELT, but claims that it has undergone a shift since its inception. Marked by themes such as "learner autonomy, cooperative learning, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners" (p. 332), early CLT classrooms would have little in common with the CLT classrooms of today. Bell claims that the principles produced by postmethod pedagogies are in fact attempts to represent the principles that have emerged during this paradigm shift. This perspective is in line with Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1997), who agree that CLT can co-exist with the postmethod condition:

This need for guiding principles [in CLT] is, in fact, not inconsistent with the postmethod perspective: Kumaravadivelu (1994) specifies "principled pragmatism" as a major feature of the postmethod condition, and Brown (1994) talks about the need for an "informed approach." Therefore, the concept of CLT construed as a general approach rather than a specific teaching method might be useful in providing language practitioners with some important, guidelines even at the time of the postmethod condition. (p. 149)

For Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001), on the other hand, CLT and the postmethod condition are one and the same: "communicative language teaching was explicitly a post-method approach to language teaching [...] in which principles underlying the use of different classroom procedures were of paramount importance, rather than a package of teaching materials" (p. 2). Perhaps it would then be more logical to position Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod condition as a description of the underlying principles of various methods which have recently been synthesized and redefined under the umbrella of CLT (Bell, 2003, p. 332). Realigning postmethod pedagogies as a set of guiding principles for CLT, the similarities between them become strikingly obvious: negotiated interaction, integrated language skills, learner autonomy, and the remainder of Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, for example, are "remarkably like CLT" (Bell, 2003, p. 332).

In positioning the postmethod under the umbrella of CLT, several positive assumptions can be made. This helps to reduce the negative connotation associated with ELT history by strengthening the connection between today's practice and great minds from the past. Rather than doing away with methods altogether, we can assess them for their strengths and limitations, and give credit to those which have helped to shape the paradigm shift to CLT. As Bell (2003) summarizes, "the current paradigm should not be understood as maturation but rather as a construction of the prevailing socioeconomic, cultural, and ideological forces. As those forces shift, so will methods" (p. 334).

Critical Applied Linguistics

One final area of ELT that has been in development since the arrival of CLT is the field of Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL). It was originally proposed by Pennycook (1990) via an entry in the new journal, *Issues in Applied Linguistics*. Pennycook was concerned with several

discriminatory practices that he had encountered while teaching English in Japan, Quebec and China, such as “frequent assumptions of privilege, authority, and superiority, from native speakers of English and the English language itself to particular approaches to teaching, cultural forms, or forms of social organization; and the constant denigration of other languages, other language speakers, and teachers and students from different backgrounds” (Pennycook, 2001, p. xiii).

Generally speaking, critical applied linguistics is a critical approach to applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001, p. 1), which in terms of language teaching is concerned “with relationships between language learning and social change” (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1). From this perspective, language is thought to be more than just a medium for communication. It is thought of as a tool which creates (and is created by) their learners’ identities, their environment, their pasts and their futures. Language is both the *medium for* and the *product of* their reality, their dreams, their fears, their troubles, and their understanding (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Critical pedagogy in second language teaching is motivated by influential theorists in the field of education, such as Freire (1968, 1970), Giroux (1992), Luke (1988), Luke and Gore (1992), McLaren (1989), and Simon (1992) (as cited in Norton & Toohey, 2004). Among these, Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* “is a foundational text” (Thornbury, 2009b) for Applied Linguists interested in critical pedagogy. Summarizing his experiences working with illiterate adults in Brazil, Freire (1970) developed an educational theory which involved its students in ‘dialogic’ pedagogy. Instead of viewing his students’ minds as a *tabula rasa*, he believed that they could transform themselves by participating in their own education. In this model, students become mediators of their own education, dissolving the boundaries between teacher and

student. Through ‘dialogic’ pedagogy, the student-teacher was responsible for informing the teacher-student, and vice-versa (1970, ch. 2).

Summarizing recent literature surrounding the topic of critical pedagogy in language teaching, Thornbury (2009b) states that a critical pedagogy:

1. is transformative, and seeks social change
2. foregrounds social inquiry and critique
3. challenges the status quo and problematizes ‘givens’
4. devolves agency to the learner
5. is participatory and collaborative
6. is dialogic
7. is locally-situated, and socially-mediated
8. is non-essentialist, i.e. it doesn’t reduce learners to stereotypes, but rather legitimizes individual identities
9. is self-reflexive (Pennycook, 1999; 2001; Norton and Toohey, 2004, as cited in Thornbury, 2009a)

Postmethod pedagogies such as those illustrated in this chapter have been strongly influenced by the field of Critical Applied Linguistics (Thornbury, 2009b). We will return to this theme in Chapter Three.

In the next chapter:

In chapter three we return to Teaching Unplugged, taking a close look at its three core precepts. Following this, we will address our research questions by situating Teaching Unplugged into the milieu of current and past ELT practice and theory, and evaluating it as a viable replacement for current approaches to ELT. Thereafter, we turn to the future of Teaching Unplugged, with some suggestions for practical applications for the teaching philosophy in today’s classrooms.

Chapter Three: Teaching Unplugged

In this chapter we focus our attention back on Teaching Unplugged, by discussing its three core precepts in detail, illustrating what an *Unplugged* lesson should look like, and exploring what criticism the approach has amassed over the years. To follow, we will address our three research questions with a look at where Teaching Unplugged fits in the field of English language teaching today, and where it is headed in the future.

Three Core Precepts

Conversation-Driven

The most prominent feature of Teaching Unplugged is that it puts conversation at the heart of language learning. According to *Teaching Unplugged*, this is because “conversation is language at work, conversation is discourse, conversation is interactive, dialogic and communicative, conversation scaffolds learning, and conversation promotes socialisation” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 8).

Language at work assumes that conversation is both the process and the product of language learning. This statement infers that fluency precedes accuracy, and not vice versa. While conventional language teaching might assume that learners need to master language structures and lexical items before they can apply them to fluency activities, Teaching Unplugged assumes that accuracy is the result of fluency practice. According to Meddings and Thornbury (2009), evidence suggests that a “‘fluency first’ approach [...] works well” (p. 9), regardless of whether it is in learning the first language, the second language in a natural (non-classroom) setting, or through TBLT.

Teaching Unplugged also supports conversation because it promotes *discourse*. Throughout a conversation speakers must work together to create coherent, connected sentences which build upon what has already been said, and construct meaning that is relevant to the topic. Unlike grammar exercises, which encourage learners to create isolated sentences that practice a specific structure, through *discourse* learners practice creating language in a way that has currency in real life. Similarly, Teaching Unplugged assumes that through conversation learners can *interact* in a way that is meaningful. Creating a distinction between ‘conversation’ and ‘communication,’ Meddings and Thornbury claim that while communicative tasks can promote interaction, the interaction produced may be too artificial to develop communicative competence (see p. 16-17, this paper). Conversation, on the other hand, is defined as the “exchange of interpersonal meanings” (p. 10) which are predominantly about the learners themselves. Drawing on Bruner’s concept of *scaffolding*, Teaching Unplugged assumes that conversation “provides the *interactional* support within which learners can feel safe enough to take risks and extend their present competence” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 10). Through conversation, the learners’ communicative competence is extended as they reform, recast, and refine their language to produce meaning.

Finally, through the process of conversation learners practice interpersonal skills which are at the heart of the discourse community that they are attempting to enter. From a Teaching Unplugged perspective, conversation helps learners learn how to socialize, ultimately empowering them with the skills that they need to speak in the target language outside the classroom (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 11).

The first precept of Teaching Unplugged therefore makes several assumptions about the nature of language learning:

1. A conversation-first approach to language teaching assumes that fluency practice paves the way to accuracy, not vice-versa.
2. Producing extensive runs of discourse is superior to short, isolated and accurate sentences.
3. While ‘communicative’ activities promote interaction, conversation develops communicative confidence through meaningful, scaffolded interaction.
4. Conversation as a mode of language learning helps learners enter the discourse community, which, as a result further develops their language proficiency.

Materials Light

The second core precept, materials-light, is in harmony with the first. Naturally, a teaching philosophy that is conversation-driven must by default curtail the use of materials. Since Teaching Unplugged advocates the use of content that emerges from conversation, the purpose of materials can only be to provide a background for language learning. Although Thornbury (2000a) originally stated that language learning needn’t involve any more than “a few chairs, a blackboard, a teacher and some learners” (p. 2), Teaching Unplugged does support the use of *some* materials, as long as they indulge the personal interests of the learners. Materials provided by, or created by the learners themselves are especially encouraged.

Teaching Unplugged criticises ELT materials for targeting a mass audience rather than the needs of individual learners, for “frog marching” (Thornbury, 2000c) learners along a predetermined, but not necessarily relevant grammar syllabus, for creating inauthentic opportunities for interaction (Thornbury & Meddings, 2009, p. 10), and at times for blocking interaction altogether (Thornbury & Meddings, 2009, Thornbury, 2000a, Thornbury, 2005).

Elsewhere, textbooks have been criticised for creating teachers who are too dependent upon them to make principled decisions in the classroom (Swan, 1992), viewing the teacher’s book as their teaching method (Thornbury, 2010d), and coursebook content as being superior to their own teaching ability (Hall, 2011, p. 214). Teachers who rely too heavily on course

materials may find themselves out of touch with their students, or unable to “think critically and work independently in the L2 classroom” (Hall, 2011, p. 214). It has also been noted that the images and lifestyle that is presented in ELT materials are a poor reflection of the lives of many L2 learners (ibid.). The world according to most ELT materials is one brimming with well-off native speakers, who have ample time for leisure activities and never encounter any of the troubles present in the real world. So while ELT materials are created with the intent of teaching English, they are also a form of cultural imperialism (Bisong, 1995; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996).

Focus on Emergent Language

The final precept also complements the holistic nature of the Teaching Unplugged philosophy. Given the fact that Teaching Unplugged suggests a materials-light, conversational approach to language development, the language that is the fruit of this dialogue is all that can be focused on. Since the direction any lesson takes is contingent upon the agency of the learners and the path that the content they produce sends them down, teachers are unable to adhere to a preordained lesson plan. Rather they are espoused to draw their learners’ attention to the language that has emerged in the course of the lesson, build upon it, refine it, and gently nudge it towards the native model (Meddings, 2011). Through the process of scaffolding, students are able to improve upon their emergent language until they are able to produce it without the support of the teacher. This process is repeated continuously, moving continuously closer to language proficiency (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 16-20).

By focusing on emergent language, teachers are able to expedite the learning process. While the L1 is learned in the absence of a focus on emergent language, the mind of an L2 learner is different from that of a child. Issues such as L1 interference, the inability to discriminate between sounds in the L2, and reduced opportunities for language input and practice

make learning through emergence alone impractical. Moreover, the phonological reduction of vital grammatical items but not of content words, can lead learners to rely on content words exclusively for constructing meaning from input (see chapter two). By overtly focusing the learners' attention on form as it emerges from conversation, a teacher can "redress the weaknesses in the second language learner's innate capacity to notice, tally and abstract patterns from the input and re-use these abstracted patterns as output" (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 20).

Each of these precepts both influences and is influenced by the others, developing a comprehensive philosophy for language teaching. The three core precepts alone however, do not do Teaching Unplugged full justice. In addition to providing language teachers with a holistic framework to develop their practice upon, the three core precepts are also embedded in a solid-bedrock of well-respected educational theory. Although empirical research is sparse, antecedents in CLT, emergent systems theory, humanist and sociocultural theory (Akca, 2012; Harmer, 2010; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Thornbury, 2012a), van Lier's AAA curriculum (Sketchley, 2011a), and scaffolding theory (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009) are argued to validate the legitimacy of Teaching Unplugged (Akca, 2012).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Teaching Unplugged

As we can see from the above description, a conversation-driven pedagogy is in line with the theories embodied by CLT and TBLT. As in CLT and TBLT, a conversation-driven approach to language learning assumes that language development is realised best through meaningful and authentic communication, and that communicative competence is superior to linguistic competence (see p. 16-17, this paper). Meddings and Thornbury, however, part ways with CLT and TBLT in their belief that communicative competence can be achieved in the absence of

communicative tasks, and as the result of conversation instead (Thornbury, 2000a, Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

With conversation as a main pillar in the Teaching Unplugged philosophy, the authority of the teacher is devolved to the learners. As conversation progresses throughout a lesson, the learners have just as much responsibility for the direction that the lesson takes as the teacher does. According to Thornbury (2009b), this is inspired by Freire's "foundational text," *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Through the 'dialogic' nature of an Unplugged lesson, the content which emerges is the result of the uniqueness of its participants, reflecting their character, their culture, and their own language needs. Seeing that the content of the lesson is 'real' to the learners (or at least reflects who they are as individuals), and since they are responsible for their own learning, they are intrinsically motivated to learn the language (Akca, 2012).

Through the 'dialogic' nature of Teaching Unplugged, agency is transferred to the learners. Simultaneously, however, the teacher is still responsible for providing support and guidance to improve their learners' proficiency. In Teaching Unplugged, this is delivered primarily through *scaffolding*. According to Meddings and Thornbury (2009), "the metaphor of conversation as a supportive, but temporary, *scaffold* for language development" (p. 10) is essential to the success of Teaching Unplugged. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) were the first to use this term in its educational sense, describing scaffolding as a "process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90, as cited by Clark & Graves, 2005, p. 571). Specifically in regards to second language acquisition this has also been defined by Ellis (1997) as "the process by which learners utilize discourse to help them construct structures that lie outside their competence" (p. 143). Scaffolding therefore describes the process by which teachers help students to develop

language that they normally would not be able to produce through the process of interaction. Through this process, the learner is eventually able to produce the more complex language without the assistance of the teacher. At this point, the help of the teacher becomes redundant and unnecessary. In the Teaching Unplugged classroom, where the content to be learned in any given lesson is not dictated by the teachers, scaffolding allows them to co-construct the content which does emerge. Through this, learners are able to participate in creating native like models of the ideas that they wish to articulate in the TL (Thornbury & Slade, 2006).

Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory for learning, this approach operates on the assumption that all learning processes are the result of interaction with a more knowledgeable participant, and that learning is a social process (1978, as cited in Clark & Graves, 2005). The process of learning whereby a learner moves from requiring mediation to produce language, to doing so independently, is thought to be most optimal when it occurs in what Vygotsky has termed 'the zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Simply put, this involves engaging learners in tasks that they are only able to achieve with the help of a "better other" (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 207), but not in tasks that cannot be achieved even with the help of the 'better other' (Thornbury & Slade, 2006).

The scaffolding metaphor and the ZPD are well suited to the philosophy of Teaching Unplugged. Through conversation-driven learning, learners are able to attempt to produce output which is just beyond their ability and in the ZPD. At this point, the teacher is able to provide the support necessary to develop their proficiency without disrupting the dialogic, organic nature of the lesson. As the learners appropriate these models into their own speaking, the teacher can move on to co-construct other, even more complex language (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

The work of van Lier (1996, 2002, 2004) is widely cited by Thornbury (see Thornbury & Slade, 2006; Thornbury, 2006, 2012b) and *Teaching Unplugged* (2009) is no exception. Comparing the AAA Curriculum with Teaching Unplugged, the two teaching philosophies look strikingly similar. When questioned about these similarities, Thornbury admitted that “van Lier’s book [*The AAA Curriculum*] was an important influence, [...] especially the notion of ‘instructional conversation’” (as cited in Sketchley, 2011a, p. 52). Where Teaching Unplugged espouses *conversation-driven, materials light* lessons which *focus on emergent language*, the AAA curriculum suggests *autonomy, authenticity* and *awareness* (respectively). These similarities are illustrated by quotes from each publication in Table 1 (see opposite).

In each philosophy the three pillars are meant to be used holistically. Van Lier (1996) notes “the essential interconnectedness” (p. 95) of the AAA curriculum and Meddings and Thornbury (2009) claim that their three core precepts represent “an attitude shift, a state of mind, a different way of being a teacher” (p. 21). It also seems that what van Lier reported as a ‘flow’ experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985, as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 106) in an AAA curriculum, is described in Teaching Unplugged as a ‘Dogme’ moment (Harrison, 2012; Meddings and Thornbury, 2009, p. 21). According to Sketchley (2011a) “Meddings & Thornbury (2009) have developed van Lier’s (1996) assertion of an AAA curriculum with the development of ‘Teaching Unplugged’ and various ideas for lessons [...] in an ‘easy to digest’ format for English language teachers” (p. 51-52).

Resultantly, the ‘basic constructs’ of the Ecological Approach are also manifest in Teaching Unplugged (see van Lier, 2002, p. 145). Like in the Ecological Approach, Teaching Unplugged also subscribes to emergent systems theory (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 18)

Table 1: Similarities between the AAA Curriculum (van Lier, 1996) and Teaching Unplugged (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

The AAA Curriculum	Related comments from <i>Interaction in the Language Curriculum</i> (1996)	Related comments from <i>Teaching Unplugged</i> (2009)	Teaching Unplugged
Autonomy	<p>- The student must be offered meaningful choices, and be held responsible for those choices (p. 95).</p> <p>- Language education is enhanced by such things as engagement, intrinsic motivation, and self-determination, and that these conditions are promoted by certain kinds of social interaction (p. 193).</p> <p>- The focus of the scaffold activity is on an understanding of, indeed a continuous scrutinizing of, what is difficult and what is easy for the students. It allows the teacher to keep in mind, at all times, a long-term sense of direction and continuity, a local plan of action, and a moment-to-moment interactional decision making (p. 199).</p>	<p>- Conversation, in the real world at least, is not so much transactional as interactional. That is to say, when we chat with a friend [...] it is not normally the exchange of information that is the main purpose. Rather, it is the establishing and maintaining of a 'good vibe': ie harmonious social relations. [...] We saw earlier how Bruner's <i>scaffolding</i> metaphor foregrounds interaction and participation: in order to learn new skills, the learner participates in activity with a 'better other' and the new skills are jointly constructed. But learning involves participation in another, broader sense: <i>socialisation</i> (p. 9-10).</p>	Conversation-driven
Authenticity	<p>- The raw material for awareness-raising is to be found all around the student, in the real world, rather than between the covers of a textbook (p. 95).</p> <p>- Textbooks tend to severely hamper your ability to engage in innovative, exploratory teaching (p. 208).</p>	<p>- Materials-mediated teaching is the 'scenic' route to learning, but the direct route is located in the interactivity between teachers, and learners, and between the learners themselves (Thornbury, 2005, as cited by Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 16).</p> <p>- By reducing the amount of material that is imported into the classroom, the teacher frees the learning space for the kind of interactive, talk-mediated learning opportunities that are so crucial for language development (p. 12).</p>	Materials-light
Awareness	<p>- Consciousness, as the organizing, controlling, and evaluating of experience, as the agency that allows us to override physical and biological tendencies, and as the integration of intellect and affect, is a <i>sine qua non</i> for all learning [...] (p. 96).</p> <p>- Learning a language is a very different process from learning a first [...] and the desire to learn can therefore not be taken for granted in the same way (p. 96).</p>	<p>- If learners are having trouble identifying and abstracting patterns, their attention can be purposefully directed at them. [...] This requires of the teacher much more than simply providing the conditions for language emergence. The language that emerges must be worked upon. It must be scrutinised, manipulated, personalised and practiced (p. 19).</p> <p>- Sadly, the processes that make first language acquisition so easy, [...] function far less successfully for second language acquisition (p. 19).</p>	Focus on Emergent Language

As discussed above, this implies that simple interactions in the classroom expose learners to the underlying structure of the TL, ultimately resulting in unique and complex language which was never explicitly taught (van Lier, 2004).

An Unplugged Lesson

Since Teaching Unplugged is not meant to be a fixed “one-size-fits-all” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009) method for the classroom, teachers are left to develop their theory of practice themselves. However, the thought of relinquishing the course book in exchange for the content provided by spontaneous conversation can be quite intimidating, even for an experienced teacher. To make up for this, there are several resources available for a teacher who wishes to *unplug* the classroom. Described as “a process of exploration” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 23), the authors provide several strategies for successful unplugged teaching in their book (p. 20), as well as nearly one hundred discrete activities which could be used in an unplugged classroom (p. 26-82). The authors remind language teachers that Teaching Unplugged is not meant to be interpreted as an “all or nothing” (p. 25) movement. Teachers are encouraged to *unplug* portions of their teaching when they are comfortable, keeping in mind that “there are false starts and wrong turns along the way and, in fact, progress as a [teacher] is impossible without them” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 23). Beyond *Teaching Unplugged*, support is also plentiful online (Meddings, 2012c; Thornbury, 2012b) and through teacher training seminars, some of which are even available on the Internet (Harmer, 2012; Meddings, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; van Olst, 2010; Thornbury, 2010d). Practicing teachers have also begun posting accounts of their unplugged lessons on blogs, to which other “dogmaticians” offer suggestions for improvement (For example, see Chong, 2012).

Using the three core precepts of Teaching Unplugged as a guide, several classroom practices will presumably be present. A class will likely begin with a stimulus of some sort which engages the students in a conversation. This could be a photo, a set of questions, or even building upon the small talk that is already in progress at the start of the lesson. As we read in chapter one, once the students are engaged in conversation, the teacher's task is to pragmatically facilitate language development and navigate the lesson as teachable opportunities arise. According to Thornbury (2001), there are two ways to deal with emergent language. Teachers can immediately focus on the language, recasting, reformulating or co-construct the learners' output through scaffolding, or they can make a note of their language for later on in the lesson (see p. 12-13, this paper).

Although a teacher can save some time at the photocopier before a lesson (Meddings, 2012a), this energy is reallocated to the classroom. Teachers must be able to draw on their wealth of knowledge from past teaching and learning experience, be flexible and spontaneous, and able to capture the *spirit* of the lesson and put it to work. Throughout the lesson, "the teacher must ensure that features or patterns of emergent language are noticed, repeated, refined, recorded, reworked, recycled, reviewed and gradually assimilated by the learners" (Akca, 2012, p. 1749). Without materials or a syllabus to rely on, the responsibility for establishing a learning environment rests on the teacher and the students. Beyond being a good teacher, success in an Unplugged classroom also hinges on the interpersonal skills of everyone in the room, as well as their ability to remain friendly, interested, encouraging, and above all supportive participant[s] in the dialogue which occurs" (Akca, 2012, p. 1749). Echoing the three tenets of Allwright's EP framework, the teacher must view learning as a social process, prioritizing and working towards an understanding of the quality of the language classroom life (Allwright, 2003, p. 114).

Developing a Method for Teaching Unplugged

Perhaps to reduce some of the hurdles for teachers attempting to adopt the Teaching Unplugged philosophy, Ken Lackman (2012) has developed a method for Teaching Unplugged, which he has named Conversation Activated Teaching (CAT). According to this method, an Unplugged lesson can be delivered in three steps. In the first step, teachers give the learners a few minutes to discuss and record topics that they would like to focus their lesson around. The learners then report their topics, and vote as a class on which topic to pursue for the remainder of the lesson. Once the topic has been chosen, the learners are put in pairs and ask each other questions about the topic. In the second step, the teacher is directed to model a conversation about the topic with a learner in front of the class by asking questions and having the volunteer learner answer them. As the language emerges, it is recast by the teacher. The audience is asked to write what they hear.

In the final step, the students compare their notes, and the language from the conversation is recorded by the teacher on the whiteboard to focus on meaning, form and “usage of expressions” (Lackman, 2012, p. 10). Once some language focus has been done, the learners are directed to re-perform their conversations from the start of the lesson, using the phrases from the teacher’s model conversation and from the language focus. Lackman (2012) notes that these three steps (a pair conversation, a conversation with a teacher, language focus) can be repeated as many times as time will allow, and that teachers can end their lesson at any step.

It is interesting that despite Thornbury and Meddings’ efforts to debunk claims that Teaching Unplugged is a method (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Thornbury, 2000a, 2002, 2009b, 2010a, 2010d, 2012a), a method has been created for the philosophy anyway. Although CAT is in paradox to Teaching Unplugged, the steps presented by Lackman do fall in line with a

pedagogy that is conversation-driven, materials light, and focused on emergent language. Since, however, Lackman's CAT method will inevitably constrain the teacher's ability to react to the organic nature of a lesson (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Thornbury, 2000a) it cannot be considered to be a true representation of Unplugged teaching.

The Unplugged Controversy

Sparked by Thornbury's original one page article (2000a), there has been an endless backlash to Teaching Unplugged. As the approach was born in the digital era, the greater part of this debate has taken place online (Akca, 2012, Wade, 2012), but can also be found at ELT conferences (Harmer, 2012; Meddings, 2012a), and certainly in language school break rooms as well.

Migrating from the discussion board that Thornbury originally created on Yahoo, more than twenty blogs have been dedicated to discussing Teaching Unplugged (see Akca, 2012, or Meddings, 2012c for a full list) which are full of vigour and lively examination of the Unplugged philosophy. Unplugged lessons have been posted online (Meddings, 2012b; Sketchley, 2011b;), and some teachers have even engaged in practitioner research to evaluate the legitimacy of the approach (Sketchley, 2011a, Chong, 2012). It has also been given attention in language teaching journals (Akca, 2012; Gill, 2003; McCabe, 2005; Meddings & Thornbury, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a; Thornbury, 2000a, 2005; Xerri, 2012), and had a brief mention in a teaching methodology book as well (Hall, 2011).

Initial negative reactions to Teaching Unplugged were in response to the extreme position taken on materials, especially since the 'dogme' metaphor is so similar to 'dogma.' As a result, proponents of the philosophy were dismissed as extremist idealists. In response to Thornbury's

initial call for volunteers to join him in a “vow of chastity” (2000a, p. 2), Gill (2003) stated that the “approach takes on an air of narrow Luddite prescriptivism.” (Gill, 2003). Several prominent course book writers also stepped forward (Clandfield, 2010; Dellar, 2012; Harmer, 2000, 2010, 2012; Renshaw, 2010) in defence of ELT materials. While they do not necessarily disagree with *Teaching Unplugged* in its entirety, they assert that not all materials are grammar driven (Renshaw, 2010), and that they provide learners with a structured, motivating, and comprehensive syllabus to work with (Clandfield, 2010). They caution that by throwing materials out altogether, Thornbury is in a sense ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’ (Clandfield, 2010; Dellar, 2012; Harmer, 2000, 2010, 2012; Renshaw, 2010). Gill (2003) and McCabe (2005) also pointed out that in many parts of the world teachers are not anywhere near as stifled by materials as Thornbury (2000a) has made it seem, and that these teachers would be fortunate just having materials to reject.

Perhaps this reaction is in part the reason why Meddings and Thornbury (2009) have retreated to a “materials-light” philosophy in their book. In fact, there is an entire section in *Teaching Unplugged* dedicated to teachers who wish to teach Unplugged while using a course book (2009, p. 86-87).

It is also thought that by discrediting the use of materials, teachers will end up just “winging” (as cited in Meddings & Thornbury, 2003b) their lessons, with the laissez-faire attitude that any conversation in the classroom contributes to language development. Those in support of the approach have countered that *Teaching Unplugged* requires much more energy than using materials, as creating an environment that is optimal for learning requires a great deal of consideration before, during and after the lesson (Meddings, 2011, 2012a; Wade, 2012). Further, they claim that while an Unplugged classroom may look as if it is merely involved in an

ordinary conversation, the teacher is still involved in “one-to-one teaching, error correction, peer correction, peer-to-peer correction, vocabulary input, scaffolding, building and checking meaning of vocabulary” (Wade, 2012).

The validity of Teaching Unplugged has also been questioned in regard to new teachers and pre-service teachers in training. It is thought that especially for these teachers, they are unlikely to have the wherewithal to intuitively navigate the current of an Unplugged lesson in a way which is effective for the learners. Without having a syllabus to fall back on, the anxiety that these teachers experience may be in itself enough to impede language development (Dellar, 2012). Likewise, it has been noted that Teaching Unplugged is a Euro-centric philosophy, which may not be feasible for non-native teachers in other parts of the world.

Further questions have been raised about the use of Teaching Unplugged with beginners, in monolingual classes, with young-learners, and in exam and specialised English classes. In each of these situations, Meddings and Thornbury recommend a pragmatic approach, admitting that in some situations Teaching Unplugged may need to be blended with other approaches (Akca, 2012; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, ch. 3).

Thornbury has noted that despite the aforementioned criticism, Teaching Unplugged is well grounded in theory, and that its roots in CLT and TBLT contribute to its validity (Akca, 2012). He further asserts that teachers all over the world have reported using Teaching Unplugged in a variety of contexts and claim that it has worked (Thornbury, 2011e). Of course, anecdotal evidence alone is far from ideal, and Thornbury (2011c) has recognized the need for a research agenda in Teaching Unplugged. Thornbury recently announced that such an agenda is well underway, and that a collection of research into Teaching Unplugged is due to be published

in 2014 (Thornbury, 2011c). Regardless, Teaching Unplugged has already done a great service to teachers all over the world. Teachers have claimed that the philosophy has revolutionised the way that they think about language teaching, and that the philosophy has given strength to practices that they had already been doing for years but were feeling uneasy about (Thornbury, 2011e).

Bringing it all together: Examining our Three Research Questions

Research Question One

Over the last three chapters nearly 25 decades of language teaching history has been reviewed, with a focus on developments which have taken place in the last 40 years. We have demonstrated that the field of ELT is in constant flux, and that although the ideas that arise may not be as novel as they appear, these age old principles still have merit in the context of today's language classrooms. With these lessons in mind, we are now ready to examine our first research question:

How does Teaching Unplugged fit into the milieu of current practices in English Language Teaching, and what connection does Teaching Unplugged have with language teaching history?

Since its inception, Teaching Unplugged has worn many hats. At one moment it attempts to return language teaching to a “pre-method ‘state of grace’” (2000a, p. 2), then in another it is found trying to restore the principles of CLT (Delta ELT Publishing Ltd., 2009). Thornbury has stated that it is closely related to TBLT (Thornbury & Meddings, 2009, p. 17), yet also claims to have found a great deal of inspiration in historical course books and methodology books (Thornbury, 2010d).

In an online journal, Thornbury and Meddings have described it as “a moveable feast: difficult to pin down; endlessly adaptive” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2003, as cited in Sketchley, 2011a, p. 52), whereas in their book it is defined as a “state of mind” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 21). In a recent methodology book it is “a way of teaching and an overt attitude to teaching” (Hall, 2011, p. 40), whereas in online encyclopaedias it is labelled as a methodology (Teflpedia, 2012) as well as a movement and an approach (Wikipedia, 2012). On the other hand, Thornbury has aggressively argued that Teaching Unplugged is not a method, describing it instead as “a reconfiguration of the same principles” (Thornbury, 2010d) that have surfaced in language teaching history, “with a slight tweak in that it suggests that these principles do not necessitate a great deal of materials or technology to be realized” (ibid.). Meanwhile, in the blogosphere a heated debate has ensued for more than decade to no avail (Thornbury, 2012a).

A close examination of a selection of recent texts and talks from Thornbury (Thornbury, 2002, 2009b, 2010d, 2012a), however, can finally put this debate to rest. We have already learned that Thornbury believes that speaking in terms of method is irrelevant. He claims that regardless of time, good language teaching decisions are based upon the recalibration of nine parameters (see chapter one) according to the context of the classroom, and that historical ELT principles can be retrieved and incorporated into our own methodology. Whether something is labelled as a method, approach, or postmethod pedagogy, the underlying principles are what is valuable to a language teacher. It is for this reason that Thornbury has simply stated that Teaching Unplugged “articulates principles that have been around for a very long time” (Thornbury, 2010d).

Thornbury arrives at a similar conclusion after considering Richard and Rodgers definition of approach; “approach refers to theories about the nature of language and language

learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 20, as cited in Thornbury, 2012a). He states that Teaching Unplugged encapsulates many of these requirements, as it is based upon theories about the nature of language and language learning, and because these principles serve as a source for principles in language teaching. On the other hand, he points out that none of the principles in Teaching Unplugged are novel, and that at present its theories are too vague to serve as the source of practices in language teaching. Concluding his exploration of the question, he writes:

I believe that there *is* a common core of Dogme practices, but I also suspect that it is still somewhat in flux. This fuzziness (that many deplore) is both a strength and a weakness. A strength because it invites continuous experimentation; a weakness because it discourages widespread adoption. But the more that Dogme praxis is described, debated, and even debunked, the more likely it is that its soft centre will coalesce, amalgamate, stabilise and – however diverse its outward appearance – solidify into an approach. (Thornbury, 2012a)

So while Thornbury does not see Teaching Unplugged as an approach, he is willing to accept that perhaps one day it will become one¹. In the meantime Teaching Unplugged still resists being categorized.

One possible solution is to amalgamate Teaching Unplugged with Kumaravadivelu and his camp's postmethod pedagogies. Even Thornbury himself has suggested on his Yahoo discussion board that Teaching Unplugged might be a postmethod pedagogy (Thornbury, 2002). According to Kumaravadivelu's three prerequisites for a postmethod pedagogy (see p. 33, this paper) as well, this seems to be the case.

In the three precepts of Teaching Unplugged, Kumaravadivelu's parameters for a successful postmethod framework are also present. Considering the first parameter, *particularity*,

¹ It should be noted, however, that Teaching Unplugged is often referred to as an approach (even in this paper), and that even in Meddings and Thornbury's own book on Teaching Unplugged it referred to as an *approach* several times (2009, p. 7, 10, 12, 15, 16, etc.).

Teaching Unplugged is unquestionably “sensitive to a *particular* group of teachers teaching a *particular* group of learners pursuing a *particular* set of goals within a *particular* institutional context embedded in a *particular* sociocultural milieu” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, p. 171). The first tenet for example, puts the students before any other agenda. Unlike in many present communicative tasks, the first tenet stresses that “when learners are communicating, communication should, first and foremost, be ‘about themselves’” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 10). The second tenet criticizes the heavy use of materials for the same reason, as they “do not support the establishment of a local discourse community [or ...] foster the joint construction of knowledge, mainly through mediated talk” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 12). The third tenet is also concerned with *particularity*, in that it claims that rather than being imposed upon them, a course syllabus should emerge from the students themselves (ibid., p. 16). Summing up Teaching Unplugged, the authors proclaim, “because it prioritises the local over the global, and the particular over the general, the individual over the crowd, a Dogme approach will vary according its context” (ibid., p. 21).

In terms of *practicality*, Teaching Unplugged is very much in support of what Meddings has coined as “post-planning” (Meddings, 2012a). Speaking about lesson planning in Teaching Unplugged, Meddings states:

[It is not] a series of one-off experiences [but] a process that involves constantly drawing on the language and the experiences of the people in the room; considering as a teacher both on the spot in the room and between that class and the next. [It is] how one can best support what’s happened [and] how one can move a thematic subject that’s come up into another area - how one can vary task types and how one can give people some pretty basic practice. So if something has emerged on one day there’s nothing in our framework approach to suggest that we can’t do some grammar practice the next. (Meddings, 2012a)

In Kumaravadivelu's words, Meddings is suggesting that teachers should "theorize from practice and practice what they theorize" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 27). Evidence of Kumaravadivelu's final parameter, *possibility*, is also abundant. Certainly a teaching philosophy which encourages content that is derived from its own students, considers how the social, political, economic and cultural environment has shaped their consciousness. This is definitely present in Teaching Unplugged. As Thornbury notes, "the notion of incorporating learners' contributions into the fabric of the lesson – not merely as personalization, but as the core content - is a mainstay of the Dogme philosophy" (Thornbury, 2011d).

Seeing that all of Kumaravadivelu's prerequisites and parameters are present in Teaching Unplugged, it seems perfectly reasonable to define it as postmethod pedagogy. However, Teaching Unplugged's orientation towards CLT differs slightly from Kumaravadivelu's postmethod condition. While Teaching Unplugged is comfortable with its roots in CLT (Delta ELT Publishing Ltd., 2009), the goal of the postmethod condition is to supersede it (Bell, 2003, 2007; Hashemi, 2011). Therefore, only in repositioning the postmethod condition under the larger umbrella of CLT (see Bell, 2003, 2007; Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell, 1997; Hashemi, 2011) could Teaching Unplugged become a postmethod pedagogy.

In one final article Thornbury poses the question as to whether Teaching Unplugged is a critical pedagogy (Thornbury, 2009b). Using a set of criteria compiled from recent literature on critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 1999; 2001; Norton and Toohy, 2004) Thornbury concluded that while Teaching Unplugged is critical in many ways (it challenges the status quo and problematizes 'givens', devolves agency to the learner, is participatory and collaborative, dialogic, and locally-situated, and socially-mediated), it is not truly critical since it is not

transformative and does not seek social change beyond the walls of the classroom (Thornbury, 2009b). In a lengthy discussion which ensued on two different web logs (see Hannam, 2010; Thornbury, 2009b) Thornbury conceded that although Teaching Unplugged was inspired by the humanist ideas of Paulo Freire, they are used in a “decaffeinated sense” (Thornbury, 2009b), in hopes of “maintaining a clear vision of the practicalities of the classroom” (Hannam, 2010). While Freire was a great inspiration, Teaching Unplugged does not share in the transformative agenda of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970).

So then the question remains; *how does Teaching Unplugged fit into the milieu of current practices in English Language Teaching, and what connection does Teaching Unplugged have with language teaching history?* Perhaps to summarize the above issues, Teaching Unplugged can be defined in the following way:

Teaching Unplugged has roots grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and shares many qualities with a strong version of CLT and TBLT. It is the reconfiguration of the ‘best bits’ of past and contemporary approaches to language teaching, into a holistic set of principles for today’s language teacher – “with a slight tweak in that it suggests that these principles do not necessitate a great deal of materials or technology to be realized” (Thornbury, 2010d). It is an attitude towards language teaching motivated by “a rich tradition of alternative, progressive, critical and humanist educational theory” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 7). The underlying principles of Teaching Unplugged are similar to those in postmethod pedagogies in that by drawing on a rich background of language teaching theory they attempt to improve upon current practices in language teaching, yet differ in their orientation towards CLT. While Teaching Unplugged is not critical, it does share in many of the sentiments of Critical Applied Linguistics as well (Hannam, 2010; Thornbury, 2009b).

Research Question Two

Having defined Teaching Unplugged, we now turn to our second research question:

- a. What are the strengths of current approaches to ELT, and in what contexts are these approaches unable to provide learners with the most optimal route to improved language proficiency?*
- b. Does Dogme ELT share the same strengths as these approaches, and if so, is it also more suitable where these approaches falter?*

As we will remember, the first part of this question has been explored at length in chapter one and two, and the latter has been addressed in this chapter. Perhaps a brief summary of these points will shed some light on the answers to these two questions.

Current approaches to ELT have been described in many ways; as a weak version of CLT, as an eclectic pedagogy, and as a postmethod pedagogy. Although the notion of method has officially been resigned by several scholars (Bax, 2003; Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Pennycook), others contend that it is still very much a part of the field (Bell, 2003, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2005a, 2005b; Liu, 1995; Hashemi, 2011). While Kumaravidelu (1994, 2001, 2003, 2006a, 2006b) has argued that previous methods including CLT are too prescriptive, postmethod pedagogies have also been dismissed for the same reason (Bell, 2003; Liu, 1995; Hashemi, 2011). It has been claimed that any ideas which originate in published materials and journals will invariably inhibit teacher autonomy (Bell, 2003; Liu, 1995; Hashemi, 2011) and it has also been noted that many teachers who claim to be free of method or eclectic, have actually just reallocated the authority that methods once had to their ELT course books (Thornbury, 2010d, 2011e).

Nonetheless, despite all the words that have been used to split hairs over semantics and label what is happening, and what should be happening in the classroom, good teaching seems to have always existed (Thornbury, 2010d; for example, see Comenius, 1777; Gouin, 1892). Long

before postmethod pedagogies came about with their ‘principled’ recommendations for the classroom, dedicated teachers like Comenius (1777) and Gouin (1892) were determining what worked best for their learners, and people were benefitting from their language lessons. Whether what goes on in today’s language classroom is labelled as a prescribed method, a strong or weak version of the communicative approach, an eclectic pedagogy, a postmethod condition, or any other terms that creative minds might invent, what should be of interest are the practices that achieve the best results for language learners (Thornbury, 2010d).

Given the infinite number of teaching contexts and circumstances around the world, it is dangerous to make sweeping remarks about what practices are a part of current approaches to language teaching, however, it is necessary to make some generalisations if we wish to weigh current approaches against Teaching Unplugged.

Appearing as a result of dissatisfaction for traditional language teaching methods (Hall, 2011, p. 93), contemporary approaches to ELT have some predictable characteristics. Perhaps as an overcorrection, early communicative classrooms primarily stressed fluency and oral competence, possibly to the detriment of other areas of language proficiency (Richards, 2006, p. 9). This is undoubtedly what led to the state of today’s ELT classroom, where space has been created for attention to form in meaning focused contexts (Holliday, 1994, p. 170; Howatt, 1984, p. 279; Spada, 2011). Through Focus on Form approaches to grammar study the pendulum remains in motion. Language learners and language teachers have also experienced a shift in their role in the learning process. Rather than flowing from the top down, authority is in part transferred to the teacher, who in turn is urged to involve the learners themselves in taking responsibility for their own learning (Bax, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006a; Thornbury & Slade, 2006; van Lier, 1996).

As mentioned in chapter two, learners who participate in today's language classrooms benefit from working towards communicative competence over linguistic competence (Hymes, 1979), enabling effective communication in the TL outside the classroom. By shifting their focus away from the underlying system of the language, learners are able to train for a variety of situations which can arise in the real world (Canale & Swaine, 1980; Swain, 1983). In essence, the product of current approaches to language teaching is the ability to participate in genuine communication (Hall, 2011, p. 94). The empowered teacher and learner are also better suited to deal with the local needs of their learning context, leading to a more tailored learning environment and increased intrinsic motivation (Bax, 2003; van Lier, 1996). In making principled decisions regarding the needs of their learners, teachers are able to benefit them in any teaching context (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006a).

Along with communicative competence and autonomy, learners today benefit from Focus on Form, which allows them to attend to meaning and structure simultaneously, developing their communicative competence as well as their accuracy in tandem. Unlike in acquiring the L1, today's L2 learners can use their universal knowledge of language and advanced cognitive abilities to scrutinize the finer nuances of the TL and expedite the learning process (Hall, 2011; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Spada, 2007, 2011).

That said, no approach to language teaching is perfect and current approaches have also seen some criticism. It has been argued that despite Focus on Form, today's language classrooms still emphasise fluency to the detriment of accuracy (Hall, 2011, p. 95). This can lead to the assumption that *any* communicative activity in the classroom will lead to learning (Cook, 2008), ignoring the fact that empirical evidence has demonstrated the benefit of an overt Focus on Form (Spada, 2011). Critics have also questioned the effectiveness of communicative tasks and

authentic texts in the classroom, claiming that no matter how well intentioned they are, whatever occurs within the four walls of the classroom will be inevitably artificial (Widdowson, 1998). Finally, in reaction to reports from around the world that current trends in ELT do not blend with all learning environments, their cultural appropriateness has also been called into question (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003).

Several principled frameworks have been developed to address these issues, and have been discussed at length in this paper (Allwright, 2003; Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Stern, 1992; van Lier, 1996; also see *The Ecological Approach*, p. 46). These efforts however, should not be considered innovative or novel, as we have learned that what is often presented as such has in actuality surfaced in part or in entirety again and again over the history of ELT (Thornbury, 2010d). Having captured and organized the zeitgeist of contemporary thought in language teaching into memorable and user friendly descriptions of what ‘good teaching’ might entail, it might appear that through these frameworks the field of ELT is progressing towards a state of perfection. In truth these are just age old ideas that have been repackaged and regurgitated much to the monetary gain of their advocates.

Furthermore, according to Akbari (2008) postmethod pedagogies are out of touch with the reality of the classroom. Although they are well intentioned, they present an idealistic set of principles which are difficult to realize in real language teaching contexts. They suppose that language teachers are well off, have ample time and desire to develop their theory of practice, and are able to act freely without administrative constraints, a coursebook to contend with, or a test to teach to.

Akbari asserts that in reality, for a postmethod pedagogy to be successful it must also seek to overcome the limitations imposed on language teachers in the workplace, and “become

more practical in adopting the language of practice, not academic discourse, as its point of departure (Akbari, 2008, p. 650). He further states that if the postmethod is “really a bottom-up movement, then it must stop abstract speculations and base its claims on empirical data gathered from teachers themselves and their world of practice” (p. 648). Rather than in academic theory and philosophy, the inspiration for postmethod pedagogies must originate in the classrooms themselves, and only afterwards be defined and integrated into a set of principles. By truly moving from the bottom-up, postmethod pedagogies can “help teachers theorize their practices by including their voices in its tenets, not speaking on their behalf from a purely theoretical perspective” (p. 650).

The story of Teaching Unplugged fully represents what Akbari (2008) has envisioned. Unlike Kumaravadivelu’s ten macrostrategies (2001), or van Lier’s AAA curriculum (1996), Teaching Unplugged was not sparked by academic discourse or theory. It was born out of a metaphor that captured the opinions of real teachers (Thornbury, 2000a), and was given life by the enthusiasm and contributions of those teachers (Thornbury, 2010a). Nearly a decade of these contributions were collected before Meddings and Thornbury decided to crystallise them and publish their book (2009). In effect, Teaching Unplugged is the voice of like-minded teachers around the world *first* and the voice of theory *second*. Teaching Unplugged is unique in this way because it has managed to draw contemporary issues surrounding ELT out of academic journals and into the public domain. It has managed to bridge the gap between theory, research, and practice, and as a result is the best candidate for improving upon the current state of language teaching.

However, since Teaching Unplugged is at present too young to have benefited from rigorous empirical research (Akca, 2012; Thornbury, 2011c), it is difficult to make definitive

claims about the reach of the approach. Nevertheless, one can imagine that since CLT, TBLT and Teaching Unplugged are very similar, Thornbury's principles would also be met with considerable resistance in countries that are used to more traditional and formal modes of learning (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003). As Akbari (2008) has noted, it is also unlikely that teachers will have the authority to *free* their classes of restrictive materials in exchange for a conversation-driven syllabus. Still, institutions where the administration, teachers, and students have all subscribed to a communicative philosophy may benefit from the principles of Teaching Unplugged. While they may not be able to do away with materials or evaluations altogether, they may be able to overcome the limitations of inauthentic communicative tasks by sprinkling Unplugged Teaching into their lessons as they see fit. At times this might consume the greater part of the lesson and at others it might only be possible to have a quick "Dogme moment" (Harrison, 2012; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 21). Although this *Unplugged-light* approach may not be as effective, Thornbury and Meddings have no qualms about teachers adopting their principles as a part of a course-book oriented communicative classroom (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 86-87). Aside from increasing the intrinsic motivation of the learners, this will develop their emergent language, give them more autonomy, and make them more confident of their own communicative competence both *in* and *outside* of the classroom. Likewise, teachers who adopt a Teaching Unplugged approach will also benefit from their lessons. Seeing that these teachers – in tandem with their learners – have more responsibility during the lesson, they are bound to benefit from a sense of satisfaction and achievement when their learners arrive at new levels of language proficiency. In making spontaneous but principled decisions, teachers will gain confidence and increase their inventory of tools for the classroom.

Research Question Three

If we are to accept the validity of Teaching Unplugged within the context of current approaches to language teaching such as CLT, the next question that arises is the future of the philosophy, and *what universal strategies could be useful to teachers attempting to adopt Dogme ELT into their theory of practice?* When asked the former question in 2010, Thornbury predicted that in the next ten years Teaching Unplugged will have “morphed into something more appropriate” (Thornbury, 2010d). He believes that as a result of advances in technology, and because “of the fact that we live in a completely digitised age and [since] there’s a whole generation of so called digital natives coming who will resist any kind of education which doesn’t take that into account” (ibid.), Teaching Unplugged will need to adapt itself to create principled learning opportunities through the medium of technology. Thornbury (2009) states that there has been an “emergence of the concept of Dogme 2.0, i.e. the fusion of Dogme principles with the kind of technologies that simply weren’t around ten years ago” (Thornbury, 2009a). According to an online website dedicated to blending language learning with technology, there are many benefits that Teaching Unplugged can experience by integrating technology into its philosophy. The Internet for example “now has an enormous range of content (audio, video, images, text and applications) and is also becoming increasingly interactive and social. Under the general title of ‘web 2.0’, the new internet allows us to do more and more tasks online and engage with others in the process” (Vickers, 2009). Vickers (2009) believes that by combining Unplugged principles with internet technology, learners can benefit from more interactive communication. Through the Internet, the co-constructive, dialogic process of conversation can occur between many more people, and materials can be created, and re-edited by the students themselves. Through online collaborative software, materials can become organic – a reflection

of the voice of the learners. Wikipedia for example, allows for editing of texts, and blogs allow for commenting. Wikispaces and Google docs also allow for the collaborative creation of texts. Texts for learning need not merely be consumed, but can also be produced (Vickers, 2009).

There have been some very grassroots attempts to integrate technology into the Teaching Unplugged philosophy. In support of an ELT conference in Barcelona, a wikispace was created as a platform for a website dedicated to Dogme 2.0 (Evogaming, 2009). Elsewhere, tools and techniques which can be used in harmony with the principles of Teaching Unplugged have been suggested (Sylvester, 2010).

Away from the Internet and in the classroom, several other uses for technology are possible that incorporate the Teaching Unplugged philosophy. Smartphones, for example, are an excellent source of media which can act as a stimulus for conversation. Music, videos, photos, and content from the internet, can all be chosen by the learners and act as content for a lesson. Smartphones connect learners to the real discourse community that learners are attempting to become a part of. Since the Internet exists online beyond the confines of geographical space, it can act as a solution to Widdowson's (1998) criticism of authenticity in CLT. Since the location of the Internet is ubiquitous, authentic texts can be brought into the classroom via Smartphones, and still exist in their original context. Learners can become a part of, and a contributor to, the discourse community that they are training to enter without leaving the classroom. Social media platforms can also be used to create "discourse communities" (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009) with the members of a class.

Likewise, smartphones can capture emergent language, which can be played back for language focus later in a lesson. Recordings or videos can be intentionally produced by learners

for other learners, and can be accompanied by comprehension questions also created by the learners. These videos and recordings can also be posted online, and used to continue themes that arise in the classroom for the duration between lessons. Texts can also be posted online, commented on, and improved upon collaboratively by the members of the class.

As the technological capacity of hand-held devices improves, these items will become more and more adaptable to the learning process – and as Teaching Unplugged continues to evolve, it too will find new ways to adapt to technology. Together, the two are bound to transform the field of ELT.

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