University Teachers' Perspectives on the Usage of Dogme Approach in Teaching English in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study addresses a notable gap in the literature by investigating the implementation of the Dogme approach in English language teaching, particularly within the Saudi Arabian educational framework. Through a mixed-methods research design, the study explores the perceptions of English language educators regarding the utilization of the Dogme approach in their instructional practices. Quantitative data from a structured questionnaire administered to 118 teachers and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers reveal a predominant inclination towards adopting the Dogme approach, alongside a nuanced understanding of its advantages and drawbacks. The implications of these findings extend to students, educators, and policymakers, offering valuable insights to inform pedagogical strategies and curriculum development efforts aimed at enhancing English language instruction within Saudi Arabia.

تصورات أعضاء هيئة التدريس الجامعيين حول استخدام المنهج الدغماتي (التدريس بدون كتاب) في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

ملخص البحث باللغة العربية

تعتبر الدراسات المتعلقة بالمنهج الدغماتي(التدريس بدون كتاب) من الدراسات النادرة عموما، وقد تزيد ندرتها بشكل خاص في الدراسات التي اجريت في المملكة العربية السعودية. لذا فقد هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى تسليط الضوء على هذا المدخل ومحاولة استكشاف تصورات أعضاء هيئة التدريس الجامعيين حول استخدام المنهج الدغماتي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. واستند البحث من اجل تحقيق اهدافه للمنهج الوصفي التحليلي (كماً وكيفاً). وعليه فقد تم اعداد استبانة بحثية تم توزيعها على عينة قوامها (١١٨) عضو هيئة تدريس. كما قام الباحث باجراء مقابلات مع (١٢) عضو من أعضاء هيئة التدريس. وقد خلص البحث في نتائجه الكمية إلى أن معظم أعضاء هيئة التدريس لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه استخدام المنهج الدغماتي في العملية التعليمية واستخدامها في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية في فصولهم. كما وضح البحث ايضا في نتائجه النوعية العديد من الجوانب الايجابية أو السلبية لاستخدام هذا المدخل الى جانب طرحه لبعض من الآثار المترتبة على استخدامه سواء للطلاب أو للمعلمين أو لصانعي السياسات التعليمية.

Introduction

Since English is unprecedentedly considered a global language, it plays a crucial role in human communication in almost every sphere of life, including business, education, and entertainment (Ilyosovna, 2020). Due to the significant importance of languages in general and English language, several teaching methods were developed and used for centuries. These methods include grammar translation method (GTM), audio-lingual method (ALM), direct method (DM), task-based language teaching (TBLT), etc. Nguyen and Phu (2020) affirmed that due to continuous research on these methods, academics and educationists come up with innovations, novel approaches, and techniques to make the process of second language learning smoother and more efficient. Nguyen and Phu (2020) advocate for the 'post-methods era.' They believe that language teachers should have the autonomy to combine different methods or invent a new method of language teaching based on the needs of their learners.

Numerous methods and approaches emerged in the 'post-methods era', including flipped-method, mindfulness-based instruction, emotioncy based instruction, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), etc. Researchers paid ample attention to these methods. However, limited research was conducted on a comparatively novel approach named Dogme. The term 'Dogme approach' was first coined by an educationist named Scott Thornbury in 2000. According to Thornbury (2000), this approach involves activities and tasks based on teacher-student and student-student communication. A typical Dogme ELT lesson comprises activities based on the learners' needs, beliefs, interests, and background knowledge (Thornbury, 2005). In 2009, Thornbury added some new dimensions to this approach. He claimed that the Dogme approach should be student-centered, mainly in which the teacher should play the role of a facilitator and provide limited scaffolding to the language learners (Thornbury, 2009). He also added that textbooks should not be used or used to a limited extent in the classroom. Therefore, a Dogme-based lesson is the least stressful for the learners as they do not have to follow a preset syllabus or a textbook. Meddings and Thornbury (2009) believe that the Dogme approach is different from other contemporary teaching approaches and methods as it does not rely wholly on technology and preset syllabus. It instead focuses on

raw and authentic materials based on the desires and needs of the learners. They further presented three pillars of the Dogme approach. These are 1) conversation-based, 2) less reliant on preset materials, and 3) focused on emergent language.

The past literature has mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of the Dogme approach in language learning. Sarani and Malmir (2019) found that the Dogme approach significantly improved the speaking skills of advanced learners. However, it was not effective for intermediate learners. Another recent study collected quantitative data from Saudi EFL instructors and found that the Dogme approach improves the students' oral skills (Abdalgane et al., 2023). Rushton (2020) found that Japanese university EFL learners have a positive attitude toward the Dogme approach and believe it improves their speaking skills. In addition, Marashi and Rahimpanah (2019) found that the students taught using the Dogme approach outperformed those taught using a traditional method.

In Saudi Arabian EFL context, plethora of studies were conducted on numerous teaching methods including computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Aljameel, 2022; Hakim, 2020), the Eclectic Method (Sarifa, 2020), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021), the grammar translation method (GTM) (Eisa, 2020), etc. The present study adds to the previous literature as limited studies conducted in the Saudi EFL context considered English language instructors' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the Dogme approach in learning the four skills of the English language. Thus, considering this literature gap, the present study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1) To explore English language teachers' attitudes regarding using the Dogme approach.

2) To explore the English language teachers' perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of using the Dogme approach.

Literature Review

The term' Dogme approach' was first coined by Thornbury in 2000. Later on, Meddings and Thornbury (2009) presented a synonymous term for this method, i.e., 'teaching unplugged.' This method's primary focus is freeing teachers from the shackles of course books and predetermined syllabi. Moreover, it emphasizes using authentic material in the classroom so that students can practice the target language in situations similar to real life. Unlike traditional approaches, the Dogme approach gives teachers enough room and autonomy to implement their ideas (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

Theoretical Grounding of Dogme Approach

The Dogme approach is based on several theories, i.e., language-related and educational theories. First, it is based on a dialogic model (Thornbury, 2009). This model focuses on the importance of communication and dialogue in education. According to Stevick (1981), for successful language learning, teachers should rely on communication-based activities instead of over-reliance on predetermined syllabi and textbooks. In addition, the Dogme approach provides a solution to the problem of inequality in the classroom (Mercer, 1995; Thornbury, 2009). In a traditional classroom, a teacher is considered an authoritative figure who controls the class. However, Dogme provides freedom to the students by fostering a communication-based approach.

In the context of second language teaching, Dogme is based on socio-constructivist theory. This theory affirms that effective language development occurs through authentic communication. Thornbury (2009) asserts that the Dogme approach centers on the learners' here-and-now needs instead of following the directions of the course book. The teacher conducts a needs analysis based on the notes made during the students' discussions, and in the following classes, the teacher focuses on their weaknesses. McMullen and Hickendorff (2018) establish that needs analysis allows teachers to understand the difference between learners' learning and individual needs to foster learners' language learning engagement.

Disapproval towards Dogme Approach

The Dogme approach is often criticized as educationists and researchers failed to reach common ground regarding its effectiveness (McMeniman, 1992). Due to its flexible principles, teachers who employ Dogme are considered sluggish and uncaring (McCabe, 2005). Luke and Thornbury (2009) state that novice teachers could face challenges in implementing this approach in their classrooms as it requires spontaneity to focus on the students' needs. Moreover, Harmer (2012) believes that even if novice teachers incorporate interaction-based activities in their classrooms, they might struggle to note the students' weaknesses in real time.

There is another major problem associated with the Dogme approach. Since it requires the learners to communicate with their peers and the teacher, it could lead to frustration and embarrassment among less proficient learners (Nguyen & Phu, 2020). Moreover, questions were raised regarding its applicability in contexts where students' target language competence is extremely low (McCabe, 2005).

In addition, teachers might struggle to adopt this approach in exam-oriented classes (Nguyen & Phu, 2020). Most of the time, educational institutions force the teachers to focus on the prescribed syllabus and teach the students the target language to prepare them for the exams. This puts extra pressure on the teachers, who might use traditional teaching methods instead of the Dogme approach (Li, 1998; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). In many countries, including Turkey and Vietnam, exams are based on multiple-choice questions (MCQs). Thus, teachers feel reluctant to employ the Dogme approach.

Studies on Dogme Approach

Nguyen and Phu (2020) believe that research on the Dogme approach is still in its infancy. Despite that, many studies tried to determine the effectiveness of the Dogme approach in language learning. Most of the studies focused on the effect of Dogme on the speaking or oral skills of the learners. For instance, Janfeshan et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study on 100 Iranian English language teachers. It was found that most teachers are unaware of the principles of the Dogme approach. Teachers with some know-how of this approach hold positive attitudes towards its

effectiveness. Likewise, Sarani and Malmir (2019) studied Iranian EFL learners. They found that a group taught using the Dogme approach outperformed those taught via communicative language teaching (CLT) in speaking skills and willingness to communicate scores. Also, Abdalgane et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study to explore the attitudes of English language teachers toward the Dogme approach. Results indicated that most teachers had a positive attitude towards using the Dogme approach in teaching English at the university level. They also stated that it not only fosters communication skills but also rapport-building. Tolba (2014) collected data from 32 English language instructors teaching at 4 Algerian universities to determine the effectiveness of Dogme in building communicative competence among students. Findings indicated that the teachers held positive attitudes towards Dogme, and they believe that it can effectively develop communication skills among their students. Moreover, Rushton (2020) found that Japanese university EFL students held a positive attitude toward the Dogme approach and believed it improved their oral skills. Worth (2012) conducted a study exploring learners' viewpoints about the Dogme approach. Learners believed there should be a combination of the Dogme approach and textbook approach in their language classroom. More particularly, they appreciated using the Dogme approach in speaking skills, whereas they thought that textbooks are more helpful in learning grammar. Bulut and Babajanova (2021) found the impact of the Dogme approach on the willingness to communicate (WTC) of English language learners in online classes. The findings revealed that their WTC improved. Hence, this finding revealed that the Dogme approach is equally effective in online learning and can be used by teachers in the future.

The studies above found the effectiveness of Dogme in speaking skills. Unfortunately, limited studies determined its effect on other language skills. Marashi and Rahimpanah (2019) determined the Dogme approach's effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. They found that the experimental group (n=30), which was taught by the Dogme approach, outperformed the control group (n=30) regarding reading comprehension scores. Moreover, Amjad et al. (2020) conducted an experimental study on 20 Pakistani ESL learners and found that their academic writing skills improved significantly after being taught using the

Dogme approach. Coşkun (2017) conducted a qualitative study in the Turkish EFL context and found that the Dogme approach has had a positive impact on the grammar test scores of the students.

Methodology

Research Design

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the mixed-methods research design was used. A questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data. In addition, interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data. Past literature confirms several benefits of employing a mixed-methods design instead of only quantitative or qualitative design (Creswell, 2003). Firstly, mixed-methods design allows for answering questions that cannot be answered solely by qualitative or quantitative designs. Secondly, the data can be strengthened using a mixed-methods design, and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative methods can be compensated for (Creswell, 2003).

In the present study, quantitative data were collected first, which provided the general trend of the teachers' attitudes towards Dogme approach usage via numbers. Afterward, for more in-depth analysis, interviews were conducted to learn the positives and negatives of the Dogme approach from the teachers' lens.

Research Procedures

Before collecting the data, the deans of respective departments were contacted to seek permission to conduct research on their faculty. Then, I contacted the HR department of the three universities to get a list containing the names and email addresses of the faculty members. Afterward, emails were sent to the faculty members to seek their permission to collect the data. Upon their acceptance, a link containing a questionnaire was sent to them via email. Later, in order to collect the qualitative data, we contacted 12 teachers and interviewed them via Zoom conference call.

Sampling

Quantitative Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Different sampling techniques were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique

was used to collect the quantitative data. It allows a researcher to collect data from different strata based on their population (Creswell, 2003). The present study gathered data from three universities (i.e., Universities A, B, and C). Since the population of University A was the highest (i.e., 73) compared to other universities, more data was gathered from it (i.e., 51 questionnaires) than from other universities (refer to Table 1). A sampling determination table presented by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to determine the sample size. This table suggested that for a population of 170, the appropriate sample should be 118. Thus, questionnaire data was gathered from 118 English language teachers from three universities as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Statistics of Sample

No.	Name of University	Population	Percentage	Questionnaires Distributed
1	University A	73	42.94%	51
2	University B	54	31.76%	37
3	University C	43	25.29%	30
	Total	**170**	**100%**	**118**

Qualitative Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A purposive sampling technique was employed in order to select the interviewees. In this sampling technique, the target interviewees are selected based on some preset characteristics set by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). For the present study, the researcher set the following two characteristics: 1) the teacher should be teaching at the university level, and 2) he/she should be teaching the English language. In order to select the sample size of the study, saturation point criteria were employed. Creswell (2003) affirmed that a researcher should continue conducting interviews until the same themes or data keeps on repeating. For the present study, interviews were conducted with 12 teachers only as the saturation point was reached.

Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from teachers via interviews. It was analyzed using a four-step approach (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The first step includes reading the transcripts repeatedly and identifying the important data. Second, important data must be changed into simple language. The data containing simple language is named as 'condensed meaning units' (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Third, these condensed units should be assigned codes (Thomas, 2003). Lastly, the gathered codes are classified into themes and subthemes (Thomas, 2003). It is worth mentioning that the interview transcripts were provided to three researchers to ensure inter-coder reliability. They evaluated them thoroughly and assigned codes and major and minor themes to the qualitative data. Afterward, they shared their codes and themes, debated on including the most relevant themes, and made sure to merge themes that overlap. Eventually, consensus was reached regarding incorporating relevant themes (i.e., advantages and disadvantages) in the Findings Section.

For the quantitative data, respondents' responses were converted and classified into percentages in the following five categories: "strongly agree," "agree," "undecided," "disagree," and "strongly disagree."

Instruments

For the quantitative part, a questionnaire was adapted from Janfeshan et al. (2023). The main aim of administering this instrument is to explore English language teachers' attitudes regarding using the Dogme approach. It is a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', and contains 22 statements. In order to meet the face validity, the questionnaire was sent to three field experts. They recommended deleting 12 items as they were either irrelevant or redundant. Moreover, they recommended rephrasing some items to make them appropriate for the Saudi EFL context. Thus, based on the experts' recommendations, only ten items were adapted for the current study. Moreover, the reliability of the instrument was determined via Cronbach's Aplha benchmark by conducting a pilot study on 30 teachers. According to George and Mallery (2001), the instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's value is greater than 0.7. The pilot study's findings revealed that Cronbach's Aplha value of this

questionnaire was 0.86. Therefore, it is considered reliable. The sample items are as follows: "I employ novel techniques through Dogme approach.", "Dogme approach is a waste of energy and time for the language learners."

For the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed to meet the research objective. It was designed based on the recommendation of Kajornboon (2005). It requires a researcher to develop the major questions beforehand, and due to its flexible nature, minor or probing questions could be asked during the interview session (Kajornboon, 2005). Thus, five major questions were developed for the current study.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

The respondents' attitude regarding the use of the Dogme approach in English language classrooms is depicted in Table 2. The general trend shows that English language teachers at Saudi universities hold a positive attitude regarding the Dogme approach.

Table 2

Teachers' Attitudes regarding the Dogme Approach

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Dogme approach fosters language learning in Saudi EFL context.	67%	24%	3	6%	0%
2. I employ novel techniques through Dogme approach.	41%	27%	12%	14%	6%
3. I focus on student-centered learning as opposed to teacher-centered one.	48%	31%	9%	3%	9%

4. Dogme approach is a waste of energy and time for the language learners.	10%	4%	7%	40%	39%
5. I appreciate group discussion in my language class.	70%	23%	0%	7%	0%
6. I ask my students to give their input in designing activities.	30%	44%	1%	20%	5%
7. I provide scaffolding to the students when needed.	29%	53%	5%	9%	4%
8. I allow my students to engage in speaking activities without the use of textbook activities.	58%	22%	0%	12%	8%
9. Sometimes I avoid using Dogme approach because of the constant pressure of finishing the prescribed syllabus.	15%	45%	3%	21%	16%
10. I use materials that are relevant to the students' needs.	23%	40%	10%	17%	10%

The statistics regarding Item#1 show that most teachers (i.e., 67%) believe that the Dogme approach effectively nurtures English language

learning among Saudi EFL learners. In contrast, only 6% of respondents disagreed with it.

Moreover, in answering Item#2, 41% of teachers strongly agreed, and 27% agreed that they use the latest techniques through the Dogme approach while teaching the English language in their classrooms. Whereas only 14% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed with it. These findings show that teachers favor using the Dogme approach in their classrooms.

The findings related to Item#3 depict that teachers who believe in student-centered learning outperformed those who believe in teacher-centered learning. More particularly, 48% of teachers strongly agreed, and 31% agreed that they focus on student-centered learning. Whereas only 3% disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed with it.

The statistics regarding Item#4 show that most teachers believe the Dogme approach is a good use of time. At the same time, only a few respondents believe it wastes time (i.e., 10% strongly agreed and 4 % agreed).

Item#5 is related to the group discussion in the language classroom. A large majority of the teachers are in favor of it. For instance, 70% strongly agreed, whereas only 7% disagreed.

In answering Item #6, 30% strongly agreed, and 44% agreed they asked their students to provide their input in designing activities. Interestingly, 20% of teachers disagreed with this idea.

Moreover, the results related to Item#7 show that most teachers favor providing scaffolding to their language learners (i.e., 29% strongly agreed and 53% agreed).

Likewise, the findings of Item#8 show that a vast majority of the teachers (i.e., 58 strongly agree and 22% agree) allow their students to participate in speaking activities without using the textbooks.

The statistics related to Item#9 are the most interesting. The statistics show that even though teachers like incorporating the Dogme approach in their lessons, they sometimes avoid it due to time constraints. For instance,

15% strongly agreed, and 45% agreed that they sometimes avoid using the Dogme approach due to the pressure of finishing the syllabus on time.

Lastly, most of the teachers are of the view that they use those materials in the classroom that are in line with the specific needs of the students (i.e., 23% strongly agreed and 40% agreed to it). Whereas, 17% disagreed with it.

Qualitative Findings

The interviewees shared their viewpoints regarding the effectiveness of the Dogme approach in English language learning. Teachers' views include a mixture of positive and negative points regarding this approach. Figure 1 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the Dogme approach according to the interviewees of the present study.

Figure 1

Advantages and Disadvantages of Dogme Approach

Advantages of Dogme

1. Increases learners' interest

2. Reduces boredom

3. Develops verbal fluency

4. Improves students' grades

Disadvantages of Dogme

1. Develops non-serious attitude among some students

2. Non-feasibility of its application due to syllabus and time constraints

3. Unsuitable for lower-level students

4. Unsuitable for reading and writing skills

For instance, three teachers (T1, T6, and T9) shared that the Dogme approach is beneficial for the learners because this approach takes into account the learners' interests. T6 shared his experience as follows:

> *Dogme approach is desirable to use in EFL as well as ESL classrooms because it enhances learners' interest. One day, I went to the class without a textbook and started*

communicating with my students about the topic of their interest. We talked about 'evolution of football in Saudi Arabia'. All of the students participated with keen interest as it was their favourite topic.

In addition, a few teachers (i.e., T3 and T8) believed that the Dogme approach is desirable in language classrooms as it diminishes student boredom. T8 shared his thoughts as follows:

Usually I employ a variety of methods in my classroom based on the needs of the learners. One of the groups that I teach doesn't take interest in learning English usually. Instead of studying, they use mobile phones, and chat with each other. However, when I employed Dogme approach, they started enjoying my classes.

Moreover, T5 shared that this approach helps in developing verbal fluency among English language learners.

Since Dogme approach focuses on communication to a large extent, I have seen huge improvement in oral fluency in my students. Earlier they took a lot of time to gather thoughts and put those thoughts into words and sentences. However, with the introduction of this approach, they get a lot of time to practice their speaking skill by talking to their peers about a variety of topics.

Additionally, numerous teachers (T1, T6, T7, T10, and T12) agreed that the Dogme approach improved the students' grades in exams.

I along with other teachers decided to conduct an experiment with our students. We taught the students using direct method which is a teacher-centered method for the first 7 weeks of the semester and then recorded their English skills marks in mid-term exams. Afterwards, we taught them using Dogme approach till the final term exams. There was a significant improvement in most of the students' grades.

Some interviewees mentioned a few drawbacks of using the Dogme approach in EFL language classrooms. For instance, interviewees (T7 and T12) mentioned that some students become non-serious in the activities at some point. T12 shared his experience as follows:

> *When I started teaching my students using Dogme, everything worked well. They started taking interest, they liked the topics, their speaking proficiency started to improve, they learned new words from each other and used them in their conversations. However, after a few weeks, some of the students misused their autonomy and became non-serious. For instance, they started talking about irrelevant things and created unnecessary nuisance in the classroom (i.e., talking to their classmates or using mobile phones.*

One of the teachers (i.e., T9) mentioned that using the Dogme approach entirely is impossible due to syllabus and time constraints.

> *It is practically impossible to implement Dogme approach all the time in my language classroom. I am supposed to follow a preset syllabus, and need to use a textbook. However, during the semester, sometimes students get tired of the syllabus and want something different. At that time, I use Dogme approach to make things interesting for the students.*

Another primary concern shared by the teachers regarding the effectiveness of the Dogme approach is its unsuitability for lower-level students. T3, T9, and T2 shared that Dogme is ineffective for pre-intermediate students due to their lack of communicative abilities. T3 shared his views as follows:

> *In Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at Saudi universities, the level of English language proficiency of first semester students is significantly low as they come directly from schools. Thus, I believe Dogme approach doesn't work well for them because Dogme approach is based on communication.*

Some teachers (i.e., T2, T9, T10) believed that the Dogme approach lacks effectiveness in improving English language skills other than speaking and listening skills. T10 shared his views as follows:

> *One of the things I observed about this approach is that it undoubtedly improves the speaking and listening skills as it is based on communication. However, I believe the teachers shouldn't use it all of the time as I don't see its effectiveness in improving reading and writing skills.*

Discussion of the Findings

Since the present study has employed a mix-methods design, and gathered and reported quantitative and qualitative data separately, their discussion will also be presented separately in the following sections.

Discussion of the Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings revealed that, in general, the respondents (i.e., English language teachers) of the present study hold positive attitudes towards using the Dogme approach. For instance, most teachers think the Dogme approach fosters language skills among students. This finding was supported by several past studies (Abdalgane et al., 2023; Janfeshan et al., 2023). Janfeshan et al. (2023) found that Iranian EFL teachers hold a positive attitude toward the Dogme approach. However, many teachers in their study were unaware of this approach. Therefore, educational stakeholders should emphasize it and make it popular among English language teachers. Likewise, Abdalgane et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods research on English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. Findings revealed that English language teachers are satisfied with this approach, and they also believe that it helps in rapport-building between the teacher and students and also between students.

Moreover, most of the respondents in the present study think that the Dogme approach is not a waste of time and energy. Instead, it is fruitful for the students due to its focus on communication. Thornbury (2009) affirmed that this approach is based on a dialogic model, which emphasizes the role of communication in language learning. Language learning occurs best in real-life and discussion-based scenarios (Stevick, 1981).

Findings also revealed that 70% of the respondents strongly agreed that they appreciate discussion-based activities in their language classrooms. This finding is in line with socio-constructivist theory which affirms that for the language to develop effectively, authentic communication should be provided to the learners. Discussion based on real-life topics provides authentic communication to the learners (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

In addition, it was found that a large proportion of the respondents agreed that they designed their classroom activities based on the students' recommendations. This finding aligns with one of the core principles of the Dogme approach. The Dogme approach puts students' beliefs at the heart of its core. Zhang (2023) explains that students suggest activities based on their needs and weaknesses, and the teacher wholeheartedly welcomes their suggestions and tries his best to incorporate them into the upcoming lessons.

Moreover, when the respondents were asked whether they sometimes avoid using the Dogme approach because of the constant pressure of finishing the syllabus, a fair amount of them (i.e., 45%) agreed with this statement. This finding shows that English courses at Saudi universities are syllabus-oriented. Solimani et al. (2019) explained that language classes should not be wholly dependent on the syllabus as it kills creativity among teachers and students. They further explained that the Dogme approach provides opportunities for both teachers and students to become autonomous and creative. It also makes them least dependent on the preset syllabus.

Discussion of the Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data findings were divided into two major themes (i.e., advantages and disadvantages of the Dogme approach). First of all, findings regarding the advantages will be discussed. Firstly, the interviewees shared that the Dogme approach was beneficial for their learners because it significantly enhanced their interest in English language learning and reduced boredom. This finding aligns with numerous studies published in the past. For instance, Dörnyei (2001) explained that sometimes the syllabus contains content that is not relevant to the students' background and culture. As a consequence, the students take little interest in the language lesson. Moreover, Rushton (2020) conducted a study regarding the effectiveness of

the Dogme approach on Japanese EFL students and found that culture-specific discussion topics enhance the interest of his students. Rion et al. (2018) also recommend that novice teachers should incorporate local context in classroom discussions so that students' interest and motivation to learn the target language can be enhanced.

Another major finding reported by the interviewees is that the Dogme approach develops verbal fluency among students. This finding can be supported by the pillars of the Dogme approach presented by Thornbury (2009). He affirmed that Dogme is based on three pillars (i.e., material-light, conversational-driven, and emergent language). Since it is based on conversation, the students get several opportunities to practice their verbal skills (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). As explained earlier, it also provides autonomy to the students to give their input regarding the type of activities to be included in the lesson. Moreover, the students can talk about the topics of their interest (Nguyen & Phu, 2020). Because of these advantages, the students enthusiastically participate in the group discussions, and the teachers provide them with limited scaffolding so that they can successfully convert their thoughts into words.

The interviewees also shared that their students' performance in the language exams has improved because of the application of the Dogme approach. The previous studies partially support this finding. Most of the studies reported its significant effectiveness in enhancing the students' speaking skills (Abdalgane et al., 2023; Janfeshan et al., 2023; Sarani & Malmir, 2019). However, only limited studies reported its effectiveness in reading and writing skills (Amjad et al., 2020; Marashi & Rahimpanah, 2019).

Apart from the advantages, the teachers also shared some of the disadvantages of the Dogme approach. For instance, they reported that some of the students become non-serious during discussions. They also said that the students misuse their autonomy and indulge in non-academic activities in the classroom. Harmer (2012) reported that novice teachers usually struggle to adopt the Dogme approach because they are not well-trained to manage the activities and the students appropriately.

Another disadvantage reported by the teachers was the unfeasibility of the applicability of the Dogme approach due to syllabus and time constraints. They were of the view that sometimes it becomes practically impossible for them to use the Dogme approach in all of their classes because they are usually asked by the authorities to follow the preset syllabus and prepare the students for exams. The previous literature also agrees with this point that the Dogme approach might not be the best approach to follow in exam-oriented classes (Li, 1998; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). Nguyen and Phu (2020) affirmed that in non-English speaking countries, e.g., Vietnam, the Dogme approach is not usually appreciated as it does not prepare the students for formal exams. In the majority of Saudi universities, the students are usually prepared for a formal exam that is conducted at the end of the semester. Thus, teachers usually feel reluctant to experiment with new teaching approaches, including Dogme. Xerri (2012) recommended that it is a good idea to incorporate limited use of the Dogme approach in exam-oriented classes as it counterbalances the pressure of passing the exam. Also, Coşkun (2017) conducted a qualitative study on EFL teachers and students in Turkey in exam-oriented classes. It was found that the students significantly improved their scores in the grammar exam.

In addition, another drawback reported by the interviewees is the unsuitability of this approach for lower-level students. This finding is supported by the findings of Sarani and Malmir (2019), who reported that the Dogme approach worked well for advanced learners; however, intermediate and upper-intermediate students showed little interest in discussions. This finding could also be attributed to the possibility that the present study's teachers were teaching lower-intermediate students who usually struggled to use the target language. Eventually, they lost interest and motivation.

Lastly, the teachers shared that this approach might not work well with reading and writing skills. Past studies that found the positive effect of the Dogme approach on oral skills are in abundance (Abdalgane et al., 2023; Janfeshan et al., 2023). However, there are limited studies that show that this approach works well with other language skills. Therefore, future

studies should conduct more studies to know the degree of its effectiveness in other skills (i.e., reading, writing, and listening).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research achieved the following two objectives: 1) to determine the attitudes of English language teachers towards the Dogme approach and 2) to explore the English language teachers' perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of using the Dogme approach. The findings regarding the first objective revealed that English language teachers hold positive attitudes regarding the usage of the Dogme approach. The findings regarding the second objective indicated several advantages (i.e., increase in learners' interest, reduction in boredom, development of verbal fluency, and improvement in students' grades) as well as disadvantages (i.e., non-serious attitude among some students, non-feasibility due to syllabus and time constraints, unsuitability for lower-level students, and unsuitability for reading and writing skills).

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several implications and recommendations are suggested for educational stakeholders, including teachers, language learners, and policymakers. First, English language teachers should develop a positive attitude towards the Dogme approach to bring creativity and freedom to their teaching repertoire. Novice teachers could develop a positive attitude by including a few Dogme-based activities in their lesson plans to get an idea of it. Later on, considering the learners' interests, they can include more activities.

Secondly, policymakers and educational institutions should provide autonomy to the teachers to deviate from the prescribed syllabus to some extent. This would create a sense of ownership among teachers, and they would be able to conduct needs analysis of their students confidently and include such activities in their lessons, which would benefit the target students.

Thirdly, educational institutions should conduct workshops on the Dogme approach so novice language teachers can learn the art of successfully incorporating communication-based activities in their

classrooms. Moreover, it would also be helpful for senior faculty members to incorporate Dogme-based activities in their language teaching skills.

Lastly, the Dogme approach should be incorporated in listening and speaking skills classes as both skills are fostered by communicating in the target language. Limited studies exist regarding the effect of the Dogme approach on other skills (i.e., reading and writing). Therefore, caution should be taken while using it for these skills.

Limitations of the Study

Despite using mixed-methods design, this study has a few limitations:

1. The data was collected from three public sector universities. Future studies should consider collecting data from private universities and conducting a comparative analysis between private and government universities.

2. The present study collected data only from university teachers. Future studies might consider collecting data from English language teachers teaching in schools and colleges.

3. This study considered only English language teachers. The upcoming studies should consider exploring teachers' perceptions in other domains, e.g., engineering, medicine, economics, etc.

4. The current study collected cross-sectional data. Other studies should conduct longitudinal data so that they can see changes in data over a period of time.

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