



## “Teaching Unplugged”: An approach for designing an EFL teacher education at disadvantaged schools in Indonesia

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### Abstract

A range of language teaching methods and approaches including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have been widely researched and used in English education. In the early 2000s, Scott Thornbury and Luke Meddings introduced “Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching,” challenging the effectiveness of the other language teaching methods that are heavily reliant on textbooks and technology. They argued that the overreliance on such facilities hinders the creation of a truly communicative learning environment. This approach offers an innovative perspective on language education to ensure more student-centered learning and communicative language learning experiences, particularly in schools lacking adequate infrastructure and technology. Inspired by the approach, the theoretical research introduces and provides a conceptual design of teacher training relevant to novice Indonesian EFL teachers, especially those working at schools in Indonesia's most remote and disadvantaged areas. The training is designed based on the theoretical framework of the approach and critical reviews of 10 (ten) related empirical studies by investigating the relevance of the approach to the context of English education at the most disadvantaged schools in Indonesia. Upon the program completion, the prospective participants especially novice EFL teachers are expected to be able to improve their language and pedagogical skills needed in their school contexts despite the insufficient facilities they have in a class by implementing the principles of the Teaching Unplugged approach for a more student-centered, engaging, and communicative language class, which is also in line with the goals of the recent curriculum, the Merdeka curriculum.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article is intended to describe a short teacher education program designed as an alternative course to help novice Indonesian EFL teachers particularly those working at disadvantaged schools located in the most remote areas of Indonesia so that they can reconstruct their professional identity and develop their teaching competence that fits their context. One of the main concerns of this research is the challenges that these teachers deal with in their workplace and environment. While other teachers living in urban areas of the country are provided with more than enough facilities for their work, these teachers have to experience a range of complex problems such as the lack of access to adequate teaching resources, standard infrastructures, and facilities, and unequal distribution of qualified teachers as investigated by many different studies (Anwar, et al., 2020; Endriyati, et al., 2019; Febriana, et al., 2018; Heyward, et al., 2017; Pramesty, et al., 2022; Rahmadi & Istiqamah, 2016). Many schools in such areas are therefore not ready for both online and blended learning (Bahri, et al., 2021; Tatang, et al., 2022). In fact, most students in such areas also do not have a strong motivation to learn, and only a few parents support the quality of education for their children (Febriana, et al., 2018; Pramesty, 2022).

Before initiating and planning this program, the researchers interviewed some of their teaching colleagues working in several remote places about this teaching approach, and all of them said that they had never heard about it before. The researchers believe that the Teaching Unplugged or Dogme in English Language Teaching approach might be appropriate to be introduced and practiced in a teacher training program for novice teachers as it would also probably fit their needs and their future career endeavors. The approach was introduced by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury, and its main aim is to reduce reliance on published materials and any supporting technology in English language teaching, paying more attention to the students' learning needs, and providing relevant content (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). Several recent studies indicate that Dogme has contributed significantly to ELT practices in different countries including helping students improve their skills in both academic and non-academic writing (Amjad, et al., 2019; Amjad, et al., 2020), their oral communication skills and enhancing their motivation in learning (Nguyen & Bui Phu, 2020). Some other studies also prove how the Dogme approach can develop students' oral performance as it allows the opportunity for them to practice speaking in authentic settings and a natural way (Abdalgane, 2022; Solimani, et al., 2019; Yanti, 2018; Jeyaraj, 2017; Coskun, 2016), although, to some extent, it only applies particularly to those who are medium and high-level English learners (Zhang, 2023).

A number of related studies on this approach can be traced and found in journals and books, but based on the researchers' searches and observations across different sources, research on Teaching Unplugged, especially in the field of ELT in Indonesia, remains scarce. A study by Yanti (2018) is the only one found, although it only discusses the possibility of implementing the approach in Indonesian higher education. This approach seems to be uncommon in Indonesian education in spite of some benefits it can offer as stated by Yanti (2018). Many other prominent researchers including Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury believe that the approach can be used to promote and facilitate student-centered learning, which is actually emphasized and mandated by the Indonesian new Merdeka curriculum recently released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) (MoECRT, 2022).

For the rationales discussed, this program is expected to fill the gap and offer valuable new perspectives on an alternative teaching approach that can be relevantly applied in Indonesia. Upon the program completion, it is hoped that the participants can apply the Teaching Unplugged approach with its concept and all principles in the classroom they teach in. Through this program, novice teachers especially those working in remote and underserved areas of the country can also develop their pedagogical knowledge and skills. It is also desired that this project can provoke further discussions among ELT scholars in Indonesia so that more investigations and examinations on the approach can be carried out to improve the quality of Indonesian education. To reach all these goals, it is therefore essential to address two research questions: 1) How is the Teaching Unplugged approach relevant and feasible to be implemented in Indonesia today? 2) How can the Teaching Unplugged approach be relevant and feasible to be taught in a teacher training program, particularly for teachers working at disadvantaged schools in Indonesia?

## METHODS

In reviewing literature regarding the concept of Teaching Unplugged, the study employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) approach, ensuring rigor and systematization in the review process. This involved defining specific research questions, establishing guidelines for article search and selection, employing methods to minimize biases, ensuring methodological transparency, and conducting a thorough and systematic examination of the research

(Evans & Benefield, 2001). The review process focuses on the most recent empirical works that researched and discussed the Teaching Unplugged approach. The published works were selected based on their date of publication (in 6 recent years) and were searched using the key phrase 'Teaching Unplugged in ELT on Google Scholar, Google Search Engine, and some important journals that published articles about the approach. Given that the current research on the topic remains relatively scarce, particularly in EFL contexts, the initial search yielded 30 empirical studies focusing on the implementation of the Teaching Unplugged approach. Having screened for their relevance and significance, only 10 out of all 30 downloaded articles were chosen for further investigation. Selecting only a subset of articles for further investigation also allowed the researchers to deeply focus on the most relevant and informative sources for the study.

Table 1. Selected empirical research on the teaching unplugged approach in different countries

No	Author(s) & Year	Title	Context
1	Lal, CA (2018)	Emergent Language and the Exigency of Teaching English Unplugged	India
2	Nguyen & Hung (2020)	The Dogme Approach: A radical perspective in second language teaching in the post-methods era	Vietnam
3	Nureldeen (2020)	EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Language Teaching and Learning: Implications for Teaching Unplugged	Egypt
4	Amjad, et al (2019)	Practicing dogme ELT to enhance L2 academic essay writing skills	Pakistan
5	Amjad, et al (2020)	Practicing Dogme ELT techniques to improve academic essay writing: An evaluative study of learners' perception	Pakistan
6	Mohamed (2019)	Using Dogme in ELT to develop student teachers' Speaking skills and their self-efficacy	Egypt
7	Abdalgane, et al (2023)	Utilizing Dogme approach to promote EFL learners' oral skills at the Tertiary Level	Saudi Arabia
8	Daguiani & Chelli (2020)	Dogme ELT: Oral Expression Teachers' Perceptions	Algeria
9	Marashi & Rahimpanah (2019)	Using Dogme ELT in Reading Classes	Iran
10	Yanti (2018)	Dogme ELT: The Possibility to Use the Approach to Students in Higher Education	Indonesia

First of all, the theoretical framework of Teaching Unplugged is presented in reference to the books and articles published by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury followed by the analysis report of 8 selected journal articles of empirical studies. These findings are then discussed for the purpose of designing a teacher training program for teachers at disadvantaged schools in Indonesia along with its detailed materials and activities.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The conceptual framework of teaching unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Teaching unplugged is an ELT methodology and movement introduced and developed by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury, and this idea lies in teaching English with less reliance upon published materials, resources, and technology by stimulating conversational and interactional activities between students and teachers in class, and concentrates more on the students' learning needs (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). The major aim of Dogme in ELT is to bring students to the center of their learning process in the classroom in which they are actively engaged and have the autonomy to produce language without grammar teaching (Meddings & Thornbury, 2003; Meddings, 2015). In this regard, Meddings and Thornbury highlight ten principles and three major rules of Teaching Unplugged in their book entitled *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching*:

1. Effective language learning occurs through conversations between a teacher and students and among the students themselves.
2. The learning content is created by the students who are also engaged in it.
3. Learning is dialogic and social so that knowledge is co-constructed.
4. Learning occurs through talk that is co-constructed and is supported or scaffolded by the teacher.
5. Language including grammar emerge in the classroom.
6. Teachers are in charge of attracting the learners' attention to the language emergence.
7. Learners need to be given respect for what they bring in class as learning content.
8. Learners focus on what they bring to class and keep away any published materials.
9. Texts should be relevant to the learners.

10. Teachers and students need to use materials critically.

From the ten principles above, drawn three underpinning precepts as follows:

Dogme is about teaching that is conversation-driven, materials-light, and focuses on emergent language (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 7–8; Meddings, 2015).

***Precept 1: Conversation-driven***

The main feature that characterizes Teaching Unplugged is that conversation becomes the core of learning a language. Conversation plays a very important role in constructing the learning content since it is "language at work, discourse, interactive, dialogic, communicative, and it scaffolds learning and promotes socialization" (Meddings and Thornbury, 2009, p. 8). In this method, learners learn the language through interactions that lead to their fluency. Fluency is the first goal of the interaction whether they are learning English as the first, second, or foreign language.

***Precept 2: Materials-light***

Teaching unplugged does not need to include "any more than a few chairs, blackboard, a teacher and some learners (Thornbury, 2005, p. 2; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 12). However, this approach is "not anti-materials nor anti-technology" and support the use of some materials that indulge the learners' personal interests. In fact, it also encourages the materials created or provided by the learners themselves (ibid, 2009, p. 12). In fact, Teaching Unplugged criticizes the dependency on using ELT materials and textbooks, particularly those that do not support its ten principles (ibid, 2009).

***Precept 3: Focus on emergent language***

Since the lesson focuses on conversations, the language or dialogues that learners produce can be used as material content. The teacher's role is to draw the learners' attention to the content of the language that they have produced, refine it, and develop it to reach nearly like the native model (Meddings, 2015). With support from the teacher through scaffolding, the learners are trying to improve their language skills, repeat and drill what they have learned until they are able to do it by themselves (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 16-20).

**Empirical studies on teaching unplugged approach in different countries**

The first journal article reviewed in the research is authored by Lal (2018) who conducted the research in the context of India. The study suggests that while technology is beneficial where available, the absence of technological support systems should not overly concern language teaching. Effective language instruction can occur with a well-prepared teacher, a classroom, and willing students. The focus, particularly in Dogme ELT terms, should be on ensuring emergent language even in materials-light environments. This resonates with a study by Nguyen and Hung (2020) revealing that the approach is relevant in English language teaching in the post-methods era. However, the research conclusion highlights some gaps and provides pedagogical recommendations for English language teachers and learners when implementing the approach in class. In terms of teacher attitudes toward the approach, Nuraldeen's research (2020) shows that there is no significant relationship between teachers' beliefs about Dogme (an approach advocating material-free English language teaching) and variables such as gender, years of experience, and age group they teach. This implies that, in the context of the study, these demographic factors do not appear to strongly influence teachers' attitudes towards Dogme in ELT.

In relation to the efficacy of Teaching Unplugged, Amjad, et al (2019), in their study, investigate that the Dogme ELT approach is effective in enhancing English academic writing skills through Classroom Action Research in the Pakistani context. The results indicate that Dogme ELT is successful in improving language competence in this area. In a similar area of writing, Amjad, et al (2020) also did action research exploring intermediate-level learners' feedback on Dogme ELT for enhancing essay writing skills. By employing mixed-methods analysis, the study reveals that Dogme techniques are highly effective in improving motivation, participation, and performance in class. Participants express a preference for this approach, indicating improved learning outcomes in academic essay writing. The approach is also evidenced to help teachers improve their students' speaking skills and self-efficacy as found in Mohamed's study (2019) at an Egyptian university. The findings indicate a positive impact of Dogme ELT on the enhancement of students' speaking abilities and their confidence in speaking. This study is in line with recent research conducted by Abdalgane, et al (2023) revealing that the Dogme approach in EFL classes is highly significant for improving communication in various ways, including enhancing rapport between instructors and students, promoting interaction, improving communication skills, and encouraging open-ended questions. Nevertheless, despite its efficacy in enhancing students's

oral communication skills, many teachers reject the idea of reducing reliance on materials like textbooks and technology, viewing them as essential in language teaching (Daguiani & Chelli, 2020).

In another different context, the Dogme ELT can also significantly help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension compared to traditional teaching methods as presented in a study by Marashi and Rahimpanah (2019). The study findings also support the promotion and application of Dogme ELT in reading classes in the Iranian context. In this sense, Yanti (2018) tries to bring the Dogma ELT approach to the Indonesian context by investigating the characteristics of the approach and education policies in Indonesia. The study suggests that Dogme ELT enhances motivation and engagement, fostering active learner participation, especially in higher education. However, challenges include potential conflicts with grammar-based exams and students' low English proficiency. Despite challenges, Dogme ELT creators offer varied activities for teachers. The approach's feasibility in the Indonesian context is indicated, with the need for further research to confirm this initial conclusion. However, as the study recommends the approach be applied at the higher education level, it appears that any related studies at the Indonesian school level remain absent.

## Discussions

In this article, the discussion begins with a theoretical framework underpinning the program by describing several empirical issues on novice teachers and In-service Teacher Training (INSET), particularly in disadvantaged schools as well as the concept of Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in ELT itself. This discussion then continues on the rationales of the program, gives a brief overview of English education in Indonesia, and explores the identity of the prospective participants along with the conditions of their school environments. Next, this paper describes the aims of the program before turning to the program details and finally discusses how the program meets the aims in relation to its process and content.

### *In-service Teacher Training (INSET) for novice EFL teachers*

Many important studies reveal that the first years of teaching are generally the most difficult phase for teachers in their career paths (Marshall, et al., 1990; Colbert and Wolfe, 1992; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Colbert and Wolfe (1992) for example, found that beginning teachers tend to feel like failures when experiencing difficult situations, and only those who are determined and strong can succeed. Some common issues considered to be the most challenging for novice teachers have to do with dealing with their task areas regarding classroom management, time constraints and heavy workloads, diverse individual students, discipline, students with special needs, lack of resources, assessment process, and relations with parents (Brighton, 1999; Jokhio, et al., 2020; Veenman, 1984, 1987). Recently, one of the common challenges encountered by novice teachers is adapting to the use of the latest technology in teaching, which requires them to keep learning and exploring something new (Alhamad, 2018). For those issues, many teachers especially novice teachers can feel anxious and depressed, which can negatively impact their quality of teaching (Limeranto & Kusmandono, 2023; Liu & Yan, 2020; Yazıcı & Altun, 2013). Unfortunately, given their status and position, many of them lack support from both the schools they work in and the government when dealing with such problems (Salehi & Farajnezhad, 2020).

Other common areas of teaching considered to be very difficult for novice teachers include lesson planning, curriculum expectation, amount of salary, and sustaining a healthy mind (Veenman, 1984; Britt, 1997; Ganser, 1999; Mandel, 2006). These issues can potentially affect the teachers' decision whether to retain or leave their profession (Walker, 2022). The working atmosphere and environment in regard to their relationship with school leaders, other colleagues, and students in school also influence their decision (Department for Education, 2018). Fantilli and McDougalls (2009), in their study of novice teachers, discover that improved training and mentorship, as well as support from the district and school leaders, are the two necessary components to help novice teachers cope with their difficulties and challenges in schools and grow in their teaching profession. From this rationale, in-service teacher training (INSET) becomes a major part of professional development that teachers should take into account throughout their teaching careers.

According to Lamb (1995, p. 72-73), follow-up courses in in-service teacher training (INSET) play a very important role in sustaining the motivation and competence of teachers, because the inputs given in the initial training could not probably have any impact on their teaching practices due to the problems they find when trying to apply what they have learned within "the existing parameters, syllabus, examinations, materials, official curriculum expectations, class size, and other practical constraints". Lamb (1995), in his study which took place in Indonesia, revealed that some of the inputs provided to the student teachers during INSET might be lost or reinterpreted to fit their beliefs and concerns about which parts of the inputs are feasible and relevant to their class. He concluded that

giving top-down input to the participants of INSET is not enough, and the instructors need to facilitate the student teachers to share their ideas and knowledge gained from their teaching practices and experience in class. Therefore, in conducting in-service training for teachers, the “received knowledge” of the student teachers needs to be taken into account (Freeman, 1991, p. 1-4), and the program should also focus more on encouraging them to construct their own teaching versions as addressed by many other recently related studies (Orland-Barack & Wang, 2022; Resch & Schritteser, 2021; Kim, et al., 2019). All the literature discussed relates to the concept of Teaching Unplugged, which is also relevant to be employed in a teacher training as evidenced by both empirical studies and theoretical research.

### *The relevance of teaching unplugged for INSET in Indonesia*

Drawing on the framework of Teaching Unplugged or Dogme in ELT and research findings, it can be implied that the approach concept seems to be in line with today’s ELT. The implementation of the approach also resonates with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) where any tasks in class should be seen to be relevant to the learners’ needs, not only for those who need functional language skills for academics, jobs, or social purposes (Long, 1985), so that the class activities become more learner-centered than strongly driven by the teacher as the main language resource (Swan, 2005, 2005). This notion also aligns with other recent and prominent studies on contemporary ELT, highlighting the significance of meaningful tasks to facilitate student-centered learning and learning engagement for the success of students learning in today’s era and the future (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Renandya & Jacobs, 2021). Meaningful tasks are tasks that are authentic and relate to the students’ needs and contexts so that they can actively be engaged in the learning process (Ellis, 2003; 2021). In this sense, Teaching Unplugged is therefore relevant to the context of ELT today and even in the future as it supports the concept of TBLT developed by some significant scholars in ELT.

From their fluency in speaking, learners learn speech patterns from simple to complex forms. All the reviewed articles in this research also conclude that the approach is effective in helping learners improve their speaking or oral communication skills (Abdalgane, et al., 2023; Daguiani & Chelli, 2020; Mohamed, 2019). Besides being supported by researchers, the approach is again in line with the concept of TBLT, especially for learners who have many opportunities in interactional practice that fit their natural language learning process (Ellis, 2003; 2021). Conversations also promote discourse in the sense that learners construct sentence patterns with coherence and cohesion to make meaning that is relevant to the topic (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 9). Drawing on the concept of Scaffolding by Bruner, conversations also scaffold learning in a way that through interaction between learner and teacher, the learner feels safe to take any risks so that he/ she can develop and co-construct his/ her communicative competence (ibid, p. 10). Hence, the learners eventually attain and improve interpersonal skills which is also one of the most recent Indonesian national curriculum goals, the Merdeka Curriculum (MoECRT, 2022).

The approach is not anti-materials nor anti-technology and supports the use of some materials that indulge the learners’ personal interests. In fact, it also encourages the materials created or provided by the learners themselves as indicated by the reviewed studies in this article (Daguiani & Chelli, 2020; Lal, 2018). This resonates with Hall’s view (2011) that over-reliance on textbooks will hinder teachers from being more creative, and they also find it difficult to better understand what learners need in language learning. According to Richards (2000), textbooks also lack the foundation for a comprehensive language course, and educators ought to guide their students in acquiring language instead of merely following the textbook’s prescribed exercises. In fact, practical knowledge related to language use in real-life situations is also not adequately covered in the majority of textbooks (Ren & Han, 2016). With the availability of a broad range of online materials, students today and in the future can even get exposed to various authentic content about real-life conversations and discourses in the target language through different multimodal channels. In this sense, textbooks need to be modified and designed to be more personally interactive and attractive following the current situation in ELT (Torkar, et al., 2022). This literature relates to a study by Daguiani and Chelli (2020) as discussed in the findings in which teachers should not reduce their use of textbooks when applying the Dogme ELT, but the books are required to be adjusted to their students’ learning needs in class.

Two empirical studies reviewed in this article also show how the Teaching Unplugged approach has been evidenced to significantly help learners improve their both casual and academic writing skills and reading competence as long as the class is well-planned and organized (Amjad, et al., 2019; 2020; Marashi & Rahimpanah, 2019)). This finding echoes other studies and theories about scaffolding in ELT to effectively achieve students’ learning goals and outcomes. In sociolinguistics and sociocultural theory, Wood, et al. (1976) define scaffolding as the process that helps a child or a novice learner to

solve his/ her problems, carry out tasks, and finally reach a goal without any more assistance. In terms of second language acquisition, it is defined as the process by which learners learn to construct structures that lie outside their ability (Ellis, 1997). Scaffolding through social interactions, both between teachers and students and among students, also enhances students' communication skills (Kayi-Aydar, 2013; Storch, 2002; Febrianto (2019). It can help improve learners' writing skills as well (Nguyen, 2013). Hence, Gibbons (2015) posits that scaffolding is a purposeful and strategic learning framework tailored to fulfill students' educational needs.

Nevertheless, Teaching Unplugged, despite its popularity, has also received many criticisms and negative reactions among teachers and researchers for various reasons as Thornbury describes in his paper, especially in terms of the effectiveness of the approach implementation (Thornbury, 1997). A prominent scholar in ELT, Penny Ur, for example, has criticized Teaching Unplugged for potentially neglecting the use of coursebooks and materials, and this can lead to an inconsistent and incomplete curriculum. She emphasizes the value of systematic language teaching, especially for learners who need structure and guidance. She believes that a combination of teacher-led instruction and learner-centered activities is more effective in addressing the diverse needs of language learners (Ur, 2015). Another influential figure, Jeremy Harmer also criticizes the approach that while it is important to focus on communication and interaction, structured learning and systematic grammar instruction remain necessary. He suggests that a balance between unplugged teaching and more traditional methods can provide a more well-rounded language learning experience for students (Harmer, 2012).

It is obvious that this method requires many more recent empirical studies from different perspectives to show how it really works in real practice, particularly in local EFL contexts like Indonesia. 10 empirical studies investigated in the article have examined the approach and revealed how it can benefit both teachers and students especially when it comes to improving students' skills of speaking, writing, and reading at high levels of English. Considering the purpose of this project, it is expected that there should be further research to explore and investigate the efficacy of the approach at the school level, which eventually offers new directions for its effective use.

### ***Program rationale***

#### *English education in Indonesia*

According to the most recent national constitution on language and nationality (Undang-undang [UU] No. 24, 2009), English has a special status as the first foreign language among other foreign languages to be learned in Indonesia (MoECRI, 2016). In regard to this special status, English according to Peraturan Pemerintah [PP] No. 32, 2013, is then made a compulsory subject taught in all secondary and tertiary educations (Ministry of Law and Human Rights (MoLHR), 2013). Nevertheless, in terms of language learning, Indonesia still faces a broad range of challenges. The first challenge is the fact that the majority of people lack competence in English (Lauder, 2008). This research is validated by the latest report of the EF English Proficiency Index revealing that the overall competence of Indonesian people in English is low ranking 74th out of 100 countries in 2020 (EF English Proficiency Index [EF EPI], 2020).

The unequal distribution of teachers has also become another big issue. Indonesia is a large archipelagic country consisting of more than 16,000 islands populated by 270, 20 people in 2020 with 56.10% of them living in places close to urban areas (Java Island) and 50.21% of them living in rural areas (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 2021). From this statistic, it can be inferred that the majority of teachers in the country work at schools located in the urban places where most students live and most learning activities with adequate facilities take place. This situation then results in a teacher shortage in rural areas and a surplus in urban places, which has actually been investigated by the government and many other researchers (MoECRI, 2016; Heyward, et al., 2017, Werang, et al., 2017; McKenzie, et al., 2014, Chang, et al., 2014).

The other education issue that Indonesia faces is the lack of competent teachers, especially in terms of both the teaching subject and pedagogy as reported by a number of studies (Anwar, et al., 2020, McKenzie, et al., 2014, Chang, et al., 2014). The government has actually been working very hard to try to solve this problem by implementing several strategic approaches. For instance, to arrange the standard qualifications for all teachers, the Indonesian government established a board of national standards for education known as Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP) and other related regulations. Despite the standard qualifications that teachers must fulfill, the education law (UU Guru dan Dosen No. 14, 2005) also strongly mandates them to improve their pedagogical skills to sustain their professional development through any kind of training and education relevant to their teaching context and needs (MoECRI, 2020). These efforts reflect Richards' definition of teachers' qualifications

in a way that they should be recognized by local authorities or international organizations, and the mandate is also given by such bodies (Richards, 2000).

In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT), launched the most recent curriculum named the Merdeka curriculum as the revised form of the previous national curriculum, the Kurikulum 2013. This Merdeka curriculum has been designed based on the notion that every individual has their own way and pace of developing themselves, and it is important that national education acknowledges and pays attention to their different learning needs and interests (MoECRT, 2022). According to the MoECRT official website, ELT in the Merdeka curriculum should be carried out by focusing on student-centered learning, which means that the learning process must be based on efforts to change students' behavior (from unable to capable), in using English by mastering six language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary) in various types of texts (MoECRT, 2022). This means that the process of teaching and learning English should be designed to help students transform their language skills and abilities. In other words, students should progress from a state of not being able to use English effectively to becoming capable and proficient in using English across six language skills and in various types of texts (such as written, spoken, or multimedia materials). The focus of the learning then lies on empowering students to actively engage with the English language and become competent users of it.

Drawing upon the literature, related studies, and regulations discussed above, it goes without saying that all teachers in Indonesia, have to consider the needs and contextual backgrounds of their students as their fundamental principle when preparing the materials and methods for teaching their students in class. This resonates with the idea of implementing a critical pedagogy approach, which is believed to be relevant in the Indonesian ELT context (Larson, 2014). In his paper, he insists on the need to ensure that the curriculum and the teaching method used can be meaningful and locally relevant to Indonesian learners with diverse life and cultural backgrounds. Larson (2014) also argues that education in Indonesia should be based on a “transformative approach” in which students are the main sources of material development instead of merely adopting material from the government or even other international bodies, which is actually the fundamental idea of the Teaching Unplugged as well (p. 135). This notion clearly supports Yanti's work (2018) indicating that Teaching Unplugged would be relevant and work well in the Indonesian education context since teachers can use it to simulate their students' active participation and engagement in class. This also echoes other current research relating to the use of textbooks and online resources that the learners need in today's era as discussed earlier in this article (Ren & Han, 2016; Torkar, et al., 2022).

#### *The common profile of novice english teachers in the Indonesian most disadvantaged areas*

As described earlier in this paper, the most common challenges faced by teachers working in the most remote and disadvantaged areas of Indonesia have to do with inadequate provision of the requisite infrastructure, teaching resources, and qualified teachers. However, these are not the only issues when it comes to teaching at schools located in different geographical and cultural settings as found in Indonesia. Febriana, et al. (2018) for example, found that teachers in this context also deal with problems related to student competence and both different student and parent mindsets in life. Particularly in English language teaching, these kinds of teachers have to realize the fact that their students mostly lack motivation and proficiency in learning the target language (Saiful & Triyono, 2018). Another study also reveals that the teachers, in fact, experience dilemmas in implementing the new national curriculum due to their lack of knowledge of the curriculum and the different contexts that they need to adjust to (Anwar, et al., 2020). All these study reports show how the teachers in such particular contexts really need support, and teacher training fitting their context and needs is one of the appropriate supports to offer for their survival in their professions and identity development.

The 3T areas have constantly been discussed in many programs and agendas of the Indonesian government, but the definitions and characteristics of the areas vary depending on the contexts where they are used (Purwanda, et al., 2023). According to the National Development Planning Agency (NDPA) known as BAPPENAS, the locations that all the teachers work in as discussed earlier are categorized into the areas of Terdepan, Terluar, Tertinggal (3T). In Indonesia, 3T areas are generally characterized by their weak public economy, low human resources, lack of standard infrastructure, people's low financial income, lack of access to information and technology, disaster-prone, and potential conflict (NDPA, 2016). In the sector of education, inequalities and disparities in the 3T areas are clearly evident, as seen through the unequal access to quality education. For instance, many schools in such areas lack qualified teachers and adequate infrastructure, such as updated textbooks, electricity, computer equipment, and stable internet connection (Riyadi & Guzhini, 2022). Furthermore, teachers



in these places have to face the fact that many of their students have very little motivation to learn, and their parents are also not aware of their important role in encouraging their children in education (Febriana, et al., 2018). Of the overall number of English teachers teaching in the 3T areas, many of them are civil servants who teach at secondary schools located in schools with relatively low student participation (NDPA, 2016; Heyward, 2017). Due to the civil servant status that the teachers have, it is certain that they have “sponsored professionalism,” (Leung, 2009: 49).

### *Course program*

The teacher training offered in this article can have certain purposes: 1) To introduce Teaching Unplugged as an alternative teaching method; 2) To encourage the teachers to reflect on their own teaching and evaluate their own beliefs regarding any decisions relevant to their teaching contexts; 3) To apply ten principles and three core precepts of Teaching Unplugged in class aligned with the curriculum goals; 4) To encourage the teachers to better understand their learners' needs and promote student-centered learning. To reach these goals, it is important to make sure that the program can run well by setting up the schedule, the process, and the content.

### *The schedule*

The targeted participants will be novice English teachers working at public schools. Considering their busy time and their regular schedule of work at school, conducting any extra program for them might not be possible. This program is expected to be conducted during their term break from teaching. As the students have holidays for a week, these teachers stay at school. This program consists of four sessions, and each of them will be held in a day. Therefore, this program will need four days to cover all sufficient materials and activities.

### *The process*

Considering the importance of received knowledge of the student teachers and their interactions for their professional development as described in the study of in-service training (INSET) (Freeman, 1991; Lamb, 1995), this program focuses on learning through structured discussions among the participants guided by the instructor since the participants would be more encouraged to personally reflect, examine and evaluate what they have done in teaching (Guskey, 2000). In this program, the participants are given opportunities to discuss the new ideas of Teaching Unplugged and to reflect on and evaluate their own beliefs in teaching.

Drawing upon sociocultural theory and the concept of community of practice, through sharing problems and challenges in guided activities, the participants would get an opportunity to gain input that helps them understand their roles better (Vygotsky, 1980; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Besides, their identity as EFL teachers can be socially constructed through interactions during the program (Johnson, 2001; Danielewicz, 2001). According to Singh and Richards (2006), in adopting sociocultural perspectives, teacher learning and education program as “situated social practice” includes social interactions, the course room, and the constructions of identity (p. 154). Due to the special settings and context of teaching that the prospective participants live in, they are then considered to have special characteristics that represent a specific identity. Singh and Richards (2006) posit that teacher education programs should play a role in facilitating them to be able to appropriate and resist skills and knowledge that reshape and reconstruct their identity. This can be effectively done through dialogic interactions and discussions as the core of teachers' main work (Alexander, 2018).

In this program, the participants are also assigned to read empirical studies and analyze the English curriculum followed by a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to examine the feasibility of Teaching Unplugged in Indonesian mainstream classes. The purpose of the FGD is to get a wide range of thoughts and views about particular issues and to provide an atmosphere so that the participants feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and experiences (Hennink, 2014). All individual interactions in the FGD would finally lead to personal reflection (Guskey, 2000). Reflection has become one of the most important components in teacher learning processes (Burton, 2009). Reflection has also been evidenced to encourage teachers to evaluate their approaches, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their practices to better align with their students' needs for adapting to future challenges (Kim, et al., 2019).

After learning new teaching concepts and ideas about Teaching Unplugged and having discussions about any relevant issues along with reflections, the participants are then led to join the workshop and create a lesson plan followed by a presentation and feedback for evaluation. Some research findings show that lesson planning is an integral part of teacher education and become a commonly used tool to assess a teacher's ability in planning meaningful English classroom learning

(Newman & Hanauer, 2005; Thibeault, et al., 2010). In addition, according to Wilson, et al. (1987), novice teachers' knowledge about their subject matter is enriched and developed during teaching preparation. A lesson plan as the outcome of the teaching preparation is then used to show the teachers' readiness in teaching, and it also reflects their competence in integrating theory and practice (Pang, 2016). To examine how the theory and concept of Teaching Unplugged work in class, the participants apply the lesson plan in peer teaching followed by supportive feedback from both peers and instructors. As Amobi (2005) points out, microteaching or peer teaching along with constructive feedback gives the student teachers experience to practice effective teaching skills and experiment with a new teaching technique.

#### *The content*

The materials used in the program cover theories and concepts of Teaching Unplugged, three empirical studies on its implementation as well as techniques for applying it in real teaching practice. The materials selected are taken from relevant topics in the core book "Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in ELT", related papers by the book authors and other researchers, videos of presentations, and other supporting excerpts from online resources. As seen from the content of the resources, these materials present interactive activities, and they are easy to access as well. Another consideration in relation to the teachers' status is also addressed. The prospective participants are teachers at public schools who teach content designated in the national curriculum. Hence, the program materials are therefore selectively chosen by considering the position of the participants.

The first meeting consists of activities on exploring Teaching Unplugged. These activities aim to introduce and explore the theories, concepts, principles, and rules of Teaching Unplugged. In the first session, the participants are given a chance to read some relevant topics in the core book, "Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in ELT" and the author's papers about it. The core book (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009) consists of detailed descriptions of Teaching Unplugged and various examples of teaching techniques. First of all, the participants read the history of the method, the main concepts, the ten principles, and the three basic rules underpinning it (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 7-22). Then, they read the next topic about the roles of non-native speakers when applying the method to rebuild their beliefs as EFL teachers (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 84). This kind of belief is very important, especially for non-native teachers in response to the recent notion about the native and non-native teacher dichotomy that might impact them (Pavlenko, 2003). The participants also read the paper "Dogme: Dancing in the Dark" which provides a more detailed analysis of the Dogme principles and the features of the coursebooks that would support the method (Thornbury, 2000). To provide more visualized descriptions of the reading materials, a video of "Dogme" teaching is presented in the second session (IHWO, 2012) followed by a discussion about it.

The second meeting focuses on curriculum development and professional identity. In the first session, the participants read three empirical studies to see to what extent Teaching Unplugged works in different settings. The first study is Sketchley's research (2011) on the attitudes of 15 teachers and 15 students toward Dogme in ELT. This research shows the participants' skeptical view on the three major rules of the approach, although some of them thought they were very useful. After that, the participants are asked to read and review another similar empirical article about teachers' attitudes toward the approach in India by Nuraldeen (2020). In another study, Worth (2012) reports on how the coursebook created during the Dogme lesson helps the students prepare for their exams. They said that Dogme teaching should also be incorporated with the coursebook-based lesson. Finally, Bryndal (2014) found that all of her students felt satisfied with the Dogme approach although she suggested that it might not be appropriate for lower-level students.

In this second meeting, the participants are also asked to read more recent research on the implementation of Teaching Unplugged. The first one is a study conducted by Amjad, et al., (2019; 2020) which demonstrates that the approach was successful in facilitating Pakistani students' improvement in academic writing. The next reading is research by Nguyen and Bui Phu (2020) revealing that despite some imperfect impact that the approach can bring about, teachers can use it to fill the gaps between theories in ELT and teaching practices in class enabling them to focus on students' needs and interests. In addition, the participants also read the most recent study by Abdalgane, et al. (2023), which indicates that the approach has been evidenced to promote an interactive and communicative learning environment in class. To make the participants relate to the context of Indonesia, a research article authored by Yanti (2018) is included in the reading list of the training. This article shows how the approach can only be conducted effectively in certain circumstances and contexts by considering the levels of students' language proficiency, motivation, and curriculum goals. The

participants are expected to see the possibility of implementing the approach in Indonesia through this research.

According to the study results above, it is obvious that the Teaching Unplugged method or Dogme approach does not always successfully work effectively as Littlewood (2007) found in his study of CLT and TBLT that “there is no any single method that fits all teachers and learners in all contexts” (p. 248). Thus, in this program, the participants anticipate any similar failures by investigating their class and analyzing the national English curriculum followed by FGD to examine the feasibility of the approach. For example, interpersonal communication skill is also one of the curriculum goals (MoECRT, 2022), but it requires certain investigation prior to the lesson.

The third and fourth meetings offer a different structure of activities which puts its emphasis on practical planning and teaching. In the beginning, the participants learn the first techniques introduced in the core book and practice to create “the right conditions” for learning without using resources prepared in advance as they are already present during the lesson (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 24). To succeed in this, Meddings (2015) mentions 20 steps of applying Teaching Unplugged, and Thornbury (1999) also provides a sample of lesson planning the participants can try through videos and social networking sites. Therefore, they eventually get an idea of how to plan their lesson and use it in their teaching practice for the following meeting. Each meeting ends with a conclusion, evaluation, and reflection as parts of the participants’ ongoing professional development.

## CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework and principles of Teaching Unplugged or Dogme in ELT presented in this article are likely to be in accordance with how EFL students are to learn today as they relate to the teaching methods and techniques discussed by many prominent scholars and recent studies in ELT such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), student-centered learning, and autonomous learning. This finding is also supported by some evidence-based research including the 10 empirical studies investigated and discussed in the article, and all of them indicate a positive correlation to the approach. In this regard, the approach can also be relevant to the education context of Indonesia and should be included in the content of teacher training for Indonesian teachers, especially those working in disadvantaged areas. Given the status and characteristics of the prospective participants with their disadvantaged work environment as well as inadequate teaching resources and facilities, the teacher training program offered in this paper seems to logically provide an alternative relevant method for the participants’ contextual needs apart from its weaknesses and the criticisms that it receives. To address the gaps found in the approach application, activities such as discussions, curriculum alignment, lesson planning, teaching practicum, and reflections are provided in the design of teacher training to negate any related issues. Teaching unplugged may be considered to be useful in the sense that it tries to bridge the gap between the latest national curriculum goals (the Merdeka curriculum) which emphasizes the significance of student-centered learning and students’ real learning needs, particularly in the most remote and disadvantaged contexts and settings. To examine whether or not this offered program can be feasible and effective in the contexts of the prospective participants, explorations and evaluations on the most recent and relevant empirical studies are carried out in this research. However, it does not mean that successful applications of the approach in some contexts can be generalized in other different places for various factors. Therefore, further experiments and empirical research on the program implementation, particularly in the Indonesian context, have to be done as a follow-up to this paper. Finally, this program cannot solve all the teachers’ problems, but at least initially show them where to find solutions.

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