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ARTICLE

The Plausibility of Applying Dogme Language Teaching Approach in Iranian EFL Classes from Teachers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Over-dependency on manufactured materials and fixed syllabuses in language classrooms hamper both teachers and students from achieving communicative ability. In the Dogme language teaching approach or unplugged teaching, teachers do not rely on these predetermined procedures and they have the freedom to choose the class activities based on the situation of the classroom. This study was an attempt to investigate Iranian English language teachers' perspectives on the possibility of the application of the Dogme approach as an unplugged teaching methodology in Iranian high school English classes. 100 Iranian EFL teachers took part in the study. The teachers were given a questionnaire aiming to reveal their opinions about the general principles of the Dogme language teaching approach. Then, a semi-structured oral interview was conducted. The analysis of their responses led to the conclusion that the Dogme approach was generally unknown by many Iranian teachers. Only a few teachers applied this approach in their classes. Therefore, it is suggested that the Dogme approach should be introduced and integrated into mainstream English as a foreign language program in Iranian contexts through workshops and in-service classes.

1. Introduction

Dogme English Language Teaching (Dogme ELT) is a new concept in teaching methodology. Different scholars tried to define it differently. For instance, Richards & Rodgers (2014) called it a recent innovative approach or a methodology. The Dogme ELT movement (Meddings, 2004) was a result of an article and subsequent online discussion group, originating from

language education author Scott Thornbury (2000, 2005, 2009, 2012, and 2013). It is believed that Dogme ELT takes its inspiration from the Danish film-making movement Dogme 95. Thornbury (2000) stated that Dogme ELT was a communicative approach for second language teaching that relied on different kinds of person-to-person interaction between teacher and students and among learners in the classroom. Thornbury (2005) described a Dogme ELT lesson as a lesson that is based on the experiences, beliefs, needs, and knowledge of the

learners in the class. Later on Thornbury (2009) presented the principles of Dogme ELT as interactivity, learner engagement and empowerment, authentic interaction, scaffolded conversation, and seldom use of material. Accordingly, the purpose of Dogme ELT is to focus language teaching on the desires, needs, and interests of language learners. Thus, Dogme ELT presents a series of authentic interactions in a stress-free classroom that does not follow any preset lesson plan or materials that may demotivate the learners. The students should eagerly express their concerns about their particular given topic and interact more with their classmates. Thornbury (2005) believed that the students did not have to study the course books where they had no active role in preparing and designing the syllabus and its educational contents. According to Meddings & Thornbury (2009), Dogme ELT rejects the over-reliance on materials and technology in the contemporary classroom in favor of a focus on the 'raw materials that are in the room.' They stated that the Dogme ELT approach included three 'core precepts' which include teaching that is: conversation-driven, materials-light, and focuses on emergent language (Meddings & Thornbury 2009, p. 8). Although Thornbury strongly believed that his creative Dogme ELT could significantly improve second language communicative competence, he did not support his claims based on any empirical study.

To gain a clear picture of the features of Dogme ELT language teachers held many national and international ELT conferences. Hall (2011) stated that the basic principles of the concept of Dogme ELT have started to be introduced in language teaching methodology books. For example, Meddings and Thornbury (2009) published the first book devoted completely to the principles and practice of Dogme ELT under the title of *Teaching Unplugged*. For this reason, the phrase "teaching unplugged" has become another alternative name while applying the Dogme approach to ELT. They argued that Dogme ELT is an approach "free from materials, aids and technology" (Thornbury, 2001, 2006; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 7). Consequently, Dogme ELT or teaching unplugged began to be adopted by teachers in many classrooms all over the world. On the other hand, some controversy among ELT professionals has arisen. For instance, Harmer (2001) criticized the lack of a comprehensive theoretical basis in Dogme ELT. On the contrary, the advocates of unplugged teaching have considered it within a "rich tradition of alternative, progressive, critical and humanist educational theory" (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 19). They added that the language that is used in normal conversation about topics of interest to the participants provides enough opportunity for language development. Moreover, proponents of the Dogme ELT compared it to some extent with earlier concepts in ELT, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL). In this regard, Parahoo (2014) asserted the idea that Dogme ELT should be conversation-driven is completely in agreement with the

theories that lead to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its derivative Task-Based Learning (TBL).

Nowadays, A few experimental studies investigated the application of Dogme ELT in foreign language classes. Although Dogme literature concentrates on its origins, its principles, the arguments for and against it, and so on, very little research investigated the practicality of this approach in Iranian English classes. Even few research studies are devoted to EFL teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward the application of the Dogme ELT approach, especially in the Iranian educational context. This study is the first to investigate EFL teachers' perception of the Dogme approach in Iranian classes. To put it in other words, the chief objective behind the present study was the plausibility of the application of the Dogme teaching approach from Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives. To fill this research gap, the study aimed at finding an answer to the following research questions:

- (1) What are Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives on the application of Dogme Teaching in English classes?
- (2) On what bases and criteria do Iranian EFL teachers prefer or reject the Dogme Teaching method?

2. Literature Review

Dogme language teaching or Dogme ELT was founded by Thornbury (2000) as an approach. Five years later Christensen (2005) called Dogme ELT a "method". Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (2014) gave the name of "a perspective" to Dogme ELT. The rationale behind Dogme ELT is teaching without course books. Dogme ELT focuses on conversational communication among learners under the supervision of the teacher. Thornbury (2005) believed that English language teaching was so much accumulated with a large variety of resources that there was no time and space left for real communication.

Similarly, Griffin (2006) asserted that in English language classes all over the world, the students are presented with different published teaching materials and resources along with DVDs, CDs, and websites. Griffin argued that printed and digital materials may divert the attention of the teachers and learners and they cannot practice authentic communication and social interaction. Dogme ELT in this regard has the merit of generating the necessary language in the classroom and helping the teacher to respond to learners' needs. It is not the teacher, or the course book that determines which language should be taught but the learners themselves. In this regard, Thornbury (2009) argues that real conversations in the Dogme ELT approach give the learners a chance to analyze and acquire the language by focusing more on classroom teaching. In this way, the teachers do not depend on printed materials. It is claimed that the Dogme teaching approach gives this opportunity for the learners to be active participants within the classroom. They will interact with one another not only within the classroom but also outside the classroom to try to exchange and acquire new knowledge and communicate with the target

language and with the teacher to negotiate meaning to understand (Thornbury, 2013, p 45).

Along the same line of thought, Richards and Rodgers (2014) indicated that “Dogme ELT is based on the idea that instead of basing teaching on a preplanned syllabus, as a set of objectives and published materials, teaching is built around conversational interaction between teacher and the students themselves” (p. 371). Thus, it can be said that the learners use the language rather than studying it in the Dogme teaching classroom; therefore, they find opportunities to practice English more. In this regard, Savignon (2001) stated that the learner takes the role of negotiator between the self and the learning process. In doing so the learners are responsible for practicing language as much as possible

According to Smith (2004), Dogme ELT is a “textbook-free zone” (p. 3). He said that in this approach more attention is given to the learner who has been overlooked by textbooks and digital materials. Dogme ELT intends to create a more pleasant language learning environment and free the learner from printed materials. In this way, the Dogme ELT approach reduces the learners' cognitive load and increases their affective, social, and emotional dimensions (Thornbury & Meddings, 2001).

Refuting the printed material and current technologies has been considered a significant favorable point of Dogme ELT advocates (Meddings & Thornbury, 2003, 2009; Thornbury, 2005, 2009, 2013). For example, proponents such as (Meddings and Thornbury, 2003) consider Dogme ELT more humanistic because it provides a situation for learners to experience both language and learning humanly.. On the other hand, this rejection of published materials has received a lot of criticism from other scholars (e.g. Christensen, 2005; Gill, 2000; Smith, 2004). For instance, the first main criticism is overlooking textbooks and printed materials and rejecting preplanned syllabuses. This ignorance makes the responsibility of the teachers greater because they have to manage the language classes merely by introducing motivational topics for student interaction (Smith, 2004). The opponents of Dogme ELT argued that the process of topic selection for students' conversation for each session seems to be difficult for many teachers. The teachers have to present a topic interesting to all students and encourage their involvement. Definitely, students have different interests in a class, and they may not welcome the topics that the teacher introduces for negotiation. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2012) strongly stressed the use of published materials, well-organized syllabi, and up-to-date educational technology in English classes as a second or foreign language. Similarly, Riazi (2003) asserted that the second most important factor in EFL classrooms is textbooks, with teachers being the first. Therefore, in some countries in Asia and Africa with traditional concepts about the role of printed materials and teachers, Dogme ELT was not easily accepted and welcomed (Christensen, 2005; McIver, 2009).

Although a few experimental types of research for the Dogme approach have been done, Thornbury (2009) believed that the similarities with task-based learning suggest that the Dogme approach produces very similar results. Some studies have been conducted to investigate teachers' and students' views or students' performance in utilizing the Dogme ELT approach in English classes (e.g., Jin-Guo, 2002; Sarani & Malmir, 2019; Sketchley, 2011; Worth, 2012; Xerri, 2012). The findings of these studies indicated that the Dogme ELT approach promotes students' participation while practicing communicative tasks and activities rather than when they are dictated to follow. Similarly, teachers were satisfied to apply different materials besides the course books.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed method which consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis in order to investigate teachers' perspectives on the plausibility of applying the Dogme teaching approach in Iranian EFL classes. A Questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data. According to Mackey & Gass (2005), questionnaires allow researchers to collect data that participants report about themselves such as their interests and attitudes. For the qualitative part of the study, on the other hand, the data were collected through semi-structured oral interviews to find out the teachers' perspectives more clearly. All the interviews were in Persian language. The interviews were recorded after getting permission, transcribed, translated, and coded for later analysis.

of the present study targeted teachers' perspectives on the plausibility of the application of the Dogme teaching approach in Iranian English classes. Thus, the aim of the interview was to clarify some concepts in the questionnaire. These oral interviews, taking approximately 15 minutes each, were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The researcher translated the Persian responses into the English language. Permission from all interviewees to record the conversations on a digital recorder was given. The interview consisted of six open questions related to three themes: (teachers' familiarity with the Dogme approach, application of the Dogme approach, advantages and disadvantages of this approach, and their desire to continue their English language teaching using Dogme ELT. A general interview guide Patton (2002) was used to keep 'the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge' (p.334). According to Patton (2002), it is crucial to have information-rich cases within purposive sampling in order to be statistically representative. Flexible semi-structured interviews usually have information-rich outcomes, which is the reason for choosing this type of data collection.

Table 1. Iranian EFL teachers' perspective on Dogme EFL Approach in connection with its application in classes.

Item	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
New teaching approaches like Dogme ELT facilitate language learning in Iranian classes.	20	13	0	45	22
The time devoted to teaching English at high schools is very limited and no communicative practices are done.	90	7	0	2	1
Using innovative teaching practices through Dogme ELT.	25	10	20	30	15
Enjoying learner-centered classes other than teacher-centered ones.	10	20	20	35	15
Attending collaboratively construct learning.	10	37	10	13	30
Dogme language teaching only wastes students time and energy.	45	18	10	22	5
Teachers pay close attention to group discussion.	50	20	20	10	0
Ask students to help plan classroom activities or topics.	20	20	0	20	40
Try to engage learners in scaffolding activities.	60	40	0	0	0
Advocating learner-centered teaching rather than teacher-centered approach.	20	80	0	0	0
Allowing students to speak freely without relying on available sources in Dogme ELT.	15	15	0	30	40
Teachers are under the pressure of finishing the course books, and they avoid Dogme EFL approach.	60	10	0	30	0
Dogme approach advocates the provision of space for student voice.	40	15	5	10	30

Table 2. EFL Teachers' perspective on Dogme EFL approach regarding course books, syllabuses, and printed.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Materials should have relevance for the learners.	80	10	0	10	0
Finishing the course textbooks is the ultimate purpose of English classes.	70	20	10	0	0
Teachers rely just on approved sources.	60	10	0	20	10
Teaching learners merely based on the approved syllabus.	60	20	0	20	0
Teachers and students should not use any published materials and textbooks from the designed syllabus	40	22	5	15	18
Teachers should not have the authority to decide on changing the syllabus based on the content and should be relying merely on the syllabus based on the approved framework.	5	15	10	30	40
Materials should be generated by learners and directed by them.	20	10	0	60	10
Making students work independent of sources available.	20	80	0	0	0
Encourage language teaching without the prescribed textbook and conversational communication.	15	30	0	30	25

3.2 Participants

To achieve the purpose of this research, the researchers used a convenience sampling method to select 100 Iranian English teachers. These Iranian English teachers including those having taught high school in the prior year were selected for the study from both state-run and Private schools of either gender. Out of a total number of 100 respondents, 65% were female teachers whereas 45% were male. The teachers were in the age range of 27 to 50 years old. The average amount of teaching experience was 12 years, with a standard deviation of 6.9 years and a maximum of 31 years. Thus, the sample was relatively representative of the Iranian population of teachers. The participants' first language was Persian. A stratified random sampling technique was.

3.3 Instruments

The main instruments of this research were as follows:

3.3.1 A Questionnaire

The first instrument to collect the quantitative data was a questionnaire. It consisted of 22 questions based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." First of all, the theoretical foundations of the study were established based on the current perspectives and trends in Dogme EFL studies (Banegas, 2012; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Thornbury, 2000). Then, interviews were conducted with 5 university professors and 6 EFL teachers to specify clearly the layout and content of the questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire was revised according to the comments received from a panel of 11 EFL experts concerning the relevance, format, and clarity of the items to the intended respondents. The pretest of the questionnaire was done in order to prove its reliability. To do so, the content of the questionnaire was scrutinized and piloted for comprehensibility and relevance among 10 teachers who were not among the main teachers of this study. To check the internal consistency of the items for the questionnaire Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the efficacy of the questionnaire was found to be 0.81 which was reasonably high and acceptable. As stated above the content validity of the questionnaire was established by a panel of 11 EFL experts. The questionnaire consisted of two sections with a sum of 22 items. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to investigate EFL teachers' perspectives toward the application of Dogme EFL courses. The second section of the questionnaire focused mainly on Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives on the Dogme EFL Approach in relation to course books, syllabuses, and printed materials and reasons to reject or accept the application of the Dogme EFL approach in Iranian EFL courses. Data gathered were statistically analyzed using SPSS software version 25.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Oral Interviews

An interview is the most widely used form of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The interview questions verified the same topics presented by the questionnaire. Hence, the content of the interview

3.4 Procedure

The study focused on Iranian high school English teachers during the 2018–2019 school year. The aim of the present research was to examine teachers' perspectives on the plausibility of the application of the Dogme language teaching approach in Iranian EFL classes. The main instruments of the present research were a questionnaire and a semi-structured oral interview. Before going to the schools, the researcher received permission to collect data from the Research Center Office, Ministry of Education, Kermanshah, Iran. Appointment times were scheduled by the researcher by contacting the principals of the schools from which participants were selected. Participation was completely voluntary. All teachers were addressed with pseudonyms in place of their real names, and the schools where they worked were not identified. In this study, the researcher maintained all formalities in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. To collect the required data for answering the research questions, the following procedure was done. At first, the researcher talked with the participants individually and gave them ideas on this research. Then, the features of the Dogme language teaching approach were introduced to the English teachers. In addition to this, the participants were asked to fill out the first part of their questionnaire with their demographic information. Furthermore, they gave instructions that required participants to mark the specific boxes in the questionnaire according to their perspective regarding Dogme teaching and the possibility of its application in their classes. The researcher was always present to give instructional support to the participants while filling out the questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaires, a one-on-one semi-structured interview was run. Each Interview session ranged from 15-20 minutes. Participants gave their perspectives in Persian because they could express their ideas better in their native language. The interviews were conducted after teachers' lectures to avoid interfering with their schedules at high schools. These interviews were recorded by the researcher. Data were collected for this study from October 2022 through December 2022. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Data analysis for this study included quantitative and qualitative techniques to address the research questions. Frequencies and percentages were used for descriptive statistics.

4. Results

First, the frequency of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire was investigated.

4.1 The Quantitative Analysis

The first question of this study was: What are Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives on the application of Dogme Teaching in English classes?

Therefore, the first section of the questionnaire addressed the Iranian EFL teachers' perspective on the Dogme EFL Approach and its application in classes. Table 1 presents the high school English teachers' responses to this part of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Iranian EFL teachers' perspective on the Dogme EFL Approach in connection with its application in classes.

Most of the teachers, approximately (67%), agreed with the statement that Dogme language teaching only wastes students' time and energy while only a few teachers (33%) believed that new teaching approaches like Dogme ELT facilitate language learning in Iranian classes. On the other hand, some teachers agreed on some features of the Dogme approach such as providing students with center situations (30%), collaboratively constructing learning (47%), engaging learners in scaffolding activities (100%), and group discussion (70%). The teachers argued that the devoted time during the school year to teach English at high schools is very limited (97%). Totally, based on results achieved from the questionnaire, it can be concluded that only a few teachers had a positive perspective on the role of the Dogme approach.

As stated above, the second section of the questionnaire examined the perceptions of EFL teachers concerning course books, syllabuses, and, printed materials in Dogme EFL and reasons to reject or accept the application of the Dogme EFL approach in Iranian EFL courses.

Table 2 demonstrates the EFL teachers' responses in this regard.

As the values in Table 2 suggest, most of the EFL teachers (90%) believed that the aim of English classes is to follow and finish course textbooks and only a few teachers (10%) did not agree with this statement. They (70%) strongly stressed that the teachers relied just on the approved sources. They (62%) added that teachers and students should not use published materials and textbooks out of the designed syllabus. Teachers (70%) believed that they should not have the authority to decide on changing the syllabus based on the content. The teachers reported that they (80%) should rely merely on the syllabus based on the approved framework. A few teachers (30%) believed that materials should be generated by learners and directed by them. None of the teachers agreed with the idea of making students work independently of the sources available. As the values in Table 2 suggest, most of the EFL teachers (90%) believed that the aim of English classes is to follow and finish course textbooks and only a few teachers (10%) did not agree with this statement. They (70%) strongly stressed that the teachers relied just on the approved sources. They (62%) added that teachers and students should not use published materials and textbooks out of the designed syllabus. Teachers (70%) believed that they

should not have the authority to decide on changing the syllabus based on the content. The teachers reported that they (80%) should rely merely on the syllabus based on the approved framework. A few teachers (30%) believed that materials should be generated by learners and directed by them. None of the teachers agreed with the idea of making students work independently of the sources available.

4.2. The qualitative analysis

The second question of this study was: On what bases and criteria do Iranian EFL teachers prefer or reject the Dogme Teaching method?

To discover more comprehensively the teachers' opinions regarding the second research question, and confirm the results stated previously in the questionnaire the selected participants were asked to participate individually in a semi-structured oral interview. To do so, a total of 100 English teachers were asked to answer six open-ended questions related to their perspective on the Dogme EFL application in their classes.

The interview began with the first question that asked "How much do you know about Dogme ELT or unplugged teaching Approach as a new way of teaching? Generally, the answers to this question were divided into three views; nearly 28 teachers said that they never heard about it. On the contrary, 35 teachers expressed their opinion in this way that they read about this approach, but they had no clear idea about the aims of this approach. Only 37 teachers were able to describe the Dogme ELT approach and its principles.

The second question asked, "Do you consider Dogme ELT as a new approach to language teaching?" Responses were divided between those who accept and consider Dogme ELT as a new language approach and those who think the Dogme ELT is not an approach at all. 80% percent of the respondents stated since they could not find sound theoretical bases for Dogme ELT, they would not apply it in the classroom. Only 20% of the teachers considered Dogme ELT as an innovative approach to language teaching.

The third question asked about, "What are the reasons to apply or reject using the Dogme ELT approach?" Not believing in the practicality of the Dogme ELT, most teachers said they could not totally ignore the books and printed materials even for one session because of time constraints, overloaded curriculum, and low language proficiency level of students. Some teachers (75%) revealed that their class activities were monitored by school administration and parents. In their view, the progress of the teaching process was based on the number of pages that a teacher taught in the classroom. They concluded that if a teacher did not follow the preplanned syllabus and tried to ask students to do other activities in the classroom, he/she would be considered as a huge time killer. Some respondents (76%) point out that it is wrongly assumed that those who wanted to find some students for private classes would spend the class time only on conversation

practices. On the whole, the negative impression toward Dogme ELT was given by teachers (89%) who believed that the English language in Iranian classes was considered a subject matter. They argued that students study English for an examination which has serious implications for career prospects in Iran. Then, learning a language is just the collection of some grammatical rules and vocabulary about language rather than genuine and practical English ability to interact with foreign-language speakers. Another reason for the teacher not applying the Dogme ELT is the number of students in a class. They said that these overcrowded classes hamper any oral drills. Conversation practices were very limited and because of time restrictions, students did not find an opportunity to speak. For instance, one of the teachers reported: that we have to rush to finish the syllabus which leads to ineffective teaching. We cannot spend any time on oral drills or developing speaking abilities.

Other teachers reveal that the less experienced and newly trained teachers who were recruited in the last five years consider the teacher guide book which was published by the Ministry of Education was a must and no deviation was acceptable. On the other hand, teachers who supported using Dogme ELT believed that applying Dogme ELT did not require a lot of time for preparation and lesson plan production. They add if there were a few students who had already participated in private language institutes you can encourage them to speak more in the classroom. These teachers gave examples of situations in which students started to discuss freely without sticking to the book contents. Therefore, these students put into practice their learning and are very motivated. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers were more concerned about finishing the contents of the book than communicative abilities. This is in contrast with Dogme's teaching approach principle which states that learners should be the communicators. Thus, learners behave as members of the group and must interact cooperatively and have responsibility for their own learning (Dold, 2012, p4).

The interview continued with the question that asked, "Have you ever applied the Dogme ELT approach during teaching? Why?" Many teachers (78 %) declared not using Dogme ELT at all because of the aforementioned reasons. Some teachers (69%) believe that they are limited by the content included in the textbooks for many years. This was said explicitly by most teachers: "If we allow students to talk freely, students may delve into topics in which we do not know the words and vocabularies." Some Teachers (30%) commented that they rarely created opportunities for learners to talk more. This may weaken the role of teachers and consequently undermine the teachers' authority in the class. 20 respondents said that they try to use this method at the beginning of the school year when the registration is not completed or at the end of the school year when all the course book contents have already been taught. The teachers (90%) recognized that a Dogme-based approach provided opportunities for oral

practice. One of the teachers said: Those teachers were more concerned about teaching vocabulary and grammatical rules which were part of the university entrance exam than speaking skills. The fifth question asked, "Do you think the Dogme ELT approach is more practical than a course book-based approach?" since they had no clear idea about the concepts of the Dogme approach, they were not able to compare the practicality of this approach with other language teaching approaches.

The last question was about, "Which features of the Dogme ELT approach do you consider most important? Why?" The responses given by the teachers to this question allowed drawing a summary of important aspects that seem to be of interest to teachers advocating the Dogme approach. According to teachers using the Dogme approach gave more freedom to both teachers and students. Teachers were free to choose any topics of interest to students and students to feel more motivated while talking about interesting topics. On the whole, teachers stressed the importance of the interests, needs, and, attitudes of students about using Dogme EFL in the class and developing the students' communicative abilities.

From what the EFL teachers reported regarding Dogme EFL application in their professional teaching practice, it might be suggested that English language policymakers in Iran should develop some in-service classes for EFL teachers to develop their professional teaching performance and contribute to their students' English language learning. On the whole, the results of semi-structured interview data analysis indicated that only a few EFL teachers had positive perceptions towards the application of Dogme EFL in their classes.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the views of Iranian EFL teachers towards the application of the Dogme approach in their classes. Based on the results of analyses, it was revealed that the majority of the participants reflected their negative perceptions about the Dogme approach both in questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that only a few EFL teachers put into practice the Dogme approach. However, there were some setbacks for EFL teachers' application of this approach. For instance, the teachers in this study reported that the working context, rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education, parents' misunderstanding of the aim of language learning, and interference with the authority of schools did not support this innovative approach in language teaching. The aforementioned setbacks might be the greatest impediment to some EFL teachers' teaching practice. The teachers themselves did not believe in the practicality of the Dogme approach. They stated that the aim of language learning for most of the students was to pass the examination; therefore, they did not try to interact and communicate even in the classroom. The findings of the study echo those of Paulston and Tucker (2003) who suggested "the big concern perhaps about the

grammar-based examination that requires teachers to stick to the syllabus and students' low proficiency in English that can hinder educators in implementing Dogme ELT classroom (p. 8)."

Furthermore, these EFL teachers claimed that overcrowded classes and the lack of educational facilities in many high schools make them reluctant to delve into communicative drills. They added that most of the class time is spent on the translation of the passages and explaining the grammatical rules.

Looking at the issue from another perspective, the teachers further proposed that the learners' language proficiency in classes is not homogenous at all and it makes teaching them very hard. While some students can speak about a topic easily, the majority of students do not understand and accordingly do not participate in interactional activities. Moreover, the participating teachers stated that if they have a little deviation from the preset syllabuses, they will be accused of not obeying the rules and overlooking regulations. That is why they have to stick to the syllabus. The results further highlighted the attitudes and perceptions of EFL teachers towards the Dogme approach. For example, the teachers claimed that if they started a class with free discussion or posed a topic in the class for speaking purposes, the preconceived idea of a lazy teacher, not having prepared their lesson, would come to the mind of students.

It can be concluded that there were several obstacles to implementing the Dogme approach in Iranian EFL courses such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of educational facilities, strict regulation, limited time, inadequate teacher training programs, rigid curricula, parents' wrong expectations, teachers' lack of knowledge and resources, lack of experience and access to materials, students' diverse needs and so forth. These barriers may be the main factors that demotivate EFL teachers from using the Dogme ELT approach.

A major obstacle that was indicated in the questionnaire and interviews was the lack of teaching time. This problem may be aroused by language policymakers' views toward English. They consider English as a subject matter, not as a language for communication. This is in contrast with the purpose of the Dogme approach principle because according to Meddings and Thornbury (2009), Dogme unplugged teaching is known as a great manner of communication between learners' participation and learning improvement and it looks whatever learners take part in classroom task orally; their improvement in learning would be higher in comparison with those who do not speak. They added in order to remove the aspects that cause communication breakdowns; the speakers must make use of some interaction Dogme language teaching strategies.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study show Dogme EFL approach is not well accepted by Iranian EFL teachers; thus the negative perceptions about the Dogme approach

need to be addressed by educational policymakers. They should design some pre-service and in-service courses for English teachers to empower their professional teaching practice and create a stimulating teaching environment by providing a series of programs incorporated in their educational context. Furthermore, English teachers should have some freedom in selecting printed materials to encourage students to speak. They should spend more time teaching communicative strategies in the classroom. Parents should be informed about the outcome of language learning. This idea that students' test scores are the most important factor in English classes should be replaced with the ability to communicate in real-life situations. Put briefly; the findings of the current study suggest that a few teachers have a positive perspective toward the use of the Dogme language teaching approach. Therefore, the results of the study make a significant contribution to the understanding of the current knowledge of teachers about innovative teaching methodology. The English teachers in Iranian high schools had no in-service classes and were too busy with many classes to study new books and articles about new findings of language teaching and learning to enrich their methodology knowledge.

The results showed that the application of Dogme language teaching faces serious barriers in Iranian educational contexts. Hence, EFL teachers strongly recommended discussing these problems with the educational authorities and asking them to plan some programs for the future of English language teaching in Iran. To put it in a nutshell, it is believed that teachers' understanding influences the quality of their performance in class. "It is recommended that if teachers are informed of the kinds of conversation breakdowns and apply Dogme language teaching strategies, they can use the necessary instructional tactics to help learners in the improvement of more advanced Dogme language teaching strategies" (Cho & Larke, 2010, p. 2).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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