

DOGMAS AND HERESIES IN ELT

Focus: Teacher Reflection

Theme: Balanced pragmatism

Activity: Matching ELT opinions
and their opposites

A balanced, pragmatic point of view is all very well, but an extreme, polar position is so much more noticeable! There have been plenty of polar positions in the history of ELT, and for every polar position, there is the polar opposite. For example, the dogma "Use only the target language in class" opposes "Make use of the learners' mother tongue in class", the latter being a heresy with respect to the former.

Meanwhile, the balanced pragmatist would probably find some virtue in both of the pole positions in the examples above, depending on the circumstances, and steer a course between the two extremes.

In this game, there are a selection of polar positions in the white rectangles and the opposite positions in the black rectangles. Your objective is to match the two. Then, play the role of balanced pragmatist and decide to what extent and in what circumstances you agree with both positions

DOGMAS & HERESIES

- 1 They're here to learn English, not to develop their life skills
- a Get them to attempt a task first to elicit a need for the target forms
- 2 Maximise L2 exposure by using only English in class
- b Code-switch in class to build bridges between L1 and L2
- 3 Give them tasks you know they *can* do, never ones you know they *can't*
- c Mobile devices will fundamentally change the way we learn
- 4 If you want to be easily understood, speak like a native speaker
- d Keep your own accent, but be prepared to understand many others
- 5 Practise English in imagined everyday functional encounters
- e Let the lesson emerge naturally from the interaction of all participants
- 6 Present learners with graded, target-form-rich samples
- f Our educational aims should go beyond the narrowly linguistic
- 7 The best lessons come from careful planning and well-chosen materials
- g Present only authentic, corpus-attested samples
- 8 Present new language carefully and then give them opportunities to practice
- h Practise English through using it to learn other educational content
- 9 Technology is useful but not essential - it is only a tool
- i Tasks should push them to the limits of their abilities