

PPP | PRESENTATION-PRACTICE-PRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

PPP stands for **Presentation-Practice-Production** and it refers to a way of sequencing lessons. It's a three-stage process that promotes **deductive language learning** (language study before language use) and it's rooted in **skill acquisition theory**. According to this theory, learning is a progression from **declarative knowledge** (knowing about something) to **procedural knowledge** (knowing how to do something). Skills develop through practice, moving from '**controlled processing**' (performance that requires conscious mental effort and attention) to '**automatic processing**' (performance without any effort or attention).

The PPP sequence can be said to match the following:

- **Presentation** > developing declarative knowledge
- **Practice** > developing procedural knowledge (controlled processing)
- **Production** > developing procedural knowledge (automatic processing)

PPP is generally used in **grammar** and **vocabulary** lessons, although it can also be used in **speaking** and **writing** lessons. In a typical PPP lesson, the **sequence** and **procedures** tend to be as follows.

PRESENTATION

The teacher introduces a target language item in context via a **text-based** (reading or listening text) or an **oral-situational** (demonstrations, anecdotes, etc.) presentation. The teacher raises **awareness** of aspects of meaning/use, form and pronunciation of the target item, usually via **explanation**, **elicitation** or **discovery**.

PRACTICE

Learners practice the target language item within a **restricted/controlled** environment designed to promote the formation of **correct examples** of language. Learners are encouraged to focus on **accuracy**, often via exercises like sentence creation, completion, transformation or correction, multiple-choice questions, drills, etc.

PRODUCTION

Learners produce the target language item within an **authentic/freer** environment designed to promote real **communication**. Learners are encouraged to focus on **fluency**, often via activities like discussions, role-plays, information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, etc.

This sequence, however, doesn't necessarily have to be followed so rigidly. An **alternative** sequence can start with **production** followed by **presentation** and complemented by **practice**. This is a more **inductive** (language use before language study) perspective on PPP, and it allows the flexibility to select what to 'present' in response to the outcomes of the production activity and therefore respond to the **learners' needs** more **reactively**.

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of commonly mentioned benefits and challenges.

BENEFITS

- it may promote a shift from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge
- it may promote noticing of specific language features
- it may allow learners to relate what they know to what they don't know
- it may encourage learners to produce language above their current level
- it may allow learners to test their hypothesis about the way specific language features work
- it may promote automaticity of specific language features
- it may allow learners and teachers to predict the contents of the lesson and trigger a greater sense of security
- it may create a more tangible sense of achievement for teachers and learners
- it may make lessons look more familiar as many course books sequence lessons in the same way

CHALLENGES

- it may restrict instruction to discrete items which may be less useful to promote communicative competence
- it may induce teachers and learners to believe that input and output activities alone are sufficient to promote language acquisition
- it may induce teachers and learners to believe that declarative knowledge automatically translates into procedural knowledge
- it may emphasize aspects of form at the expense of meaning
- it may limit opportunities for language experimentation
- it may be too teacher-centered and induce teachers to neglect the real needs of the learners
- it may be too prescriptive and respond less well to the needs of the learners
- it may be too predictable and less motivating for teachers and learners

FRAMEWORK, PLANNING & ACTIVITIES

For more information on how to plan a PPP lesson, please refer to the following handout:

- **Lesson Frameworks & Planning Processes – PPP**

For more information on how to design practice and production activities, please refer to the following handout:

- **Designing Practice Activities**

TEACHING TIPS

- The PPP model is generally used for language systems lessons (i.e. grammar, vocabulary and functional language) and productive skills lessons (e.g. speaking and writing).
- Make sure the presentation stage establishes a clear and relevant context.
- Exploit this context for the practice and production activities.
- Text-based presentation stages don't need to make use of long texts: sometimes, a single written sentence or spoken utterance, if supported by a clear context, can be sufficient.
- Try to design clarification activities which promote discovery of rules via collaboration.
- Provide opportunities to develop accuracy via meaningful practice. Avoid mechanical manipulation of de-contextualized models of language (i.e. traditional gap-fill or drill).
- Provide opportunities to develop fluency via communicative practice. Make sure speaking or writing tasks have a clear objective / outcome.
- Try to add variety to the activities by considering the four skills (e.g. a bit of listening first; then some writing and finally speaking).
- Provide language support and immediate error correction, if necessary, during the practice stage.
- Allow more freedom during the production stage and avoid interrupting the flow of communication to insist on accuracy (unless errors are becoming systematic). Let learners practice freely and provide delayed error correction, if necessary.
- Don't limit your feedback to errors: make sure you also inform learners on areas of success and provide positive reinforcement.
- Carefully consider the target language and the level of ability of your learners before finalizing the sequence of your PPP lesson. Sometimes, it's more useful to start with some practice before the presentation.
- Don't expect a proactive clarification of language to magically allow learners to be 100% accurate with the target language: second language acquisition is a more complex process. Don't expect PPP to be the 'logical way' a lesson should be sequenced.
- Focus on real-life communication and make sure you allow plenty of time for communicative practice in the production stage and feedback.

FURTHER READING

- Byrne, D. (1996). *Teaching Oral English. New Edition*. London: Longman.
- Hadfield, J. & Hadfield, C. (2008). *Introduction to Teaching English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 2.1.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching. Fourth Edition*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman. Chapter 4(A2, A3).
- Scrivener, J. (2011). *Learning Teaching. The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching. Third Edition*. London: Macmillan Education. Chapter 6(3), Chapter 7(2).