Advantages Disadvantages and Alternatives of Presentation Practice Production (P-P-P) model of Teaching Grammar

د. هدى بكوري

Hoda.Alalim.Bakori (PHD)

Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Traghen

University Of Sebha / Libya

Crosspnding author: hod.bakori@sebhau.edu.ly *

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ABSTRACT:

The P-P-P model (Presentation, Practice, and Production) has been used in teaching grammar and its aim is to learn a particular form (i.e. grammatical items such as present simple, past tense, future tense, etc.). The P-P-P model begins with presenting a form of language and shows how to use it and the second stage practicing the new form until learners can use the form correctly. Finally L2 learners are given opportunities to produce the item freely. Recently, the P-P-P model has criticised for many reasons; its assumptions about language learning and how learners learn grammatical structures. This paper has been provided the theoretical assumptions, advantages and disadvantage about the mentioned model. Furthermore it has been suggested alternatives to the P-P-P model for teaching grammar; such as task- based approaches. In a task based the focusing is on meaning rather than form, in other words, it provides a task and encourages learners to do it in the way by focusing on meaning rather than focus on form.

KEYWORDS: disadvantages, alternative, grammatical structures, L2 learners, **p**resentation, **p**ractice and **p**roduction(P-P-P)

1. Introduction

"P-P-P" (Presentation, Practice and Production) approach has been used in teaching grammar for many years. However, there are arguments that (PPP) is 'totally unsatisfactory' in teaching as claimed by Lewis (1996:11), because it is focused on form rather than meaning. Also, it does not encourage students to use 'target language in real life communication' and leads L2 learners to 'misunderstanding of learning processes'. The learning does not take place the way that PPP methodology supposes (Willis 1996:44-45).

PPP is defined as a method used to present and explain the form or 'item', and practice it and give opportunities to use it 'in context'(Hedge 2000:159). Nowadays, PPP is known as traditional

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method in teaching grammar and replaced with the alternatives such as 'Task-Based approaches which evidence has shown is better than the P-P-P model in teaching grammar.

The purpose of this essay is to compare the differences between two approaches used in teaching of grammar. I t is subdivided into two sections. In the first section, I will explain the P-P-P model and I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of PPP. In the second section of the essay I will look at alternatives to the P-P-P model.

2. The P-P-P Model:

PPP consists of three parts: 'Presentation, Practice and Production' which are involved in teaching grammatical structure (Willis 1996:133), and it is based on 'behaviourist theory' that learning a language is like other skills (Ur1996:19).It use 'deductive approach' in teaching grammar.

Presentation: is the first stage in the P-P-P model; its purpose is to present new 'items' and explain them to students in context to make them clear and to make students learn the rules for its use correctly(Ur 1996:81).

Practice stage: which involves activities 'controlled activities' (Hedge 2000:164) to 'repeat' the structure and to help understanding by providing questions to answer .Its purpose is to 'help students to memorize the form' (Hedge 2000:166).

Production: is the final stage, it gives students the opportunity to produce what they learnt in the first two stages and to use the language 'freely' without control. It can give an opportunity to use language in a communicative way (Willis 1996:134). It is assumed that students know the structure of the 'target language' so here is the time to 'express their own content' (Hedge 2000:166).

The P-P-P model provides a context which makes to the learners focus on 'form, meaning and use'. Also, the model is presented as a natural 'spoken or written text' (Hedge 2000:160-166) which is simple and the teacher also explains it directly. Furthermore, activities are provided by the teacher to give learners opportunity to consider the 'item' and they try to restructure it in a context.

PPP is one of the successful methods in teaching grammar; it was introduced for a long time in classrooms and until this day many teachers use it in their classes. (Hedge 2000:164) It shows the teachers (especially for teachers training) how to present the language. Furthermore, it gives the learners the ability to use the structure in the 'real communication' (Ellis 2003:29) by providing a text. As Skehan (1998:94) who cites Wright (1987) says;

"The 3Ps sequence is relatively easy to organize, large groups of students efficiently. Also demonstrate the power relations within the class, since the teacher is the centre of what is happening at all time. In addition, it gives students 'clear and tangible goals' and provides them neatly 'item' or structure. In other words, it can lead them to 'ambiguous' way how to use it."

It provides 'conformity, accuracy and fluency'; which helps learners to develop their grammar, as the goal of 'conformity' and the accuracy is developed through controlled practice activities, and fluency is involved in encouraging and practicing the 'target language' in the production stage. (Willis 1996:245-46) As can be seen; presentation and practice stages allow students to learn new things and give them opportunity to practice them and concentrate on the form. As Skehan (2002:290) says:

"The learning theory on which this is based is essentially that of an autoimmunization, i.e. we start with something new which we can only control slowly, with effort, and under supportive condition, They gradually (through the practice and production stages in language learning) withdrew these supports until the structure can stand all alone and be used effectively."

P-P-P invites students to become more 'communicative' when their attention is focused on 'a grammatical structure' Ellis (2003:16-17) and gives them confidence to achieve the language 'automatically'. P-P-P is focused on form and prepared 'drills' that help learners to promote the structure sound, word and text in final stage. (Ur 1996:11) Also, it encourages learners to remember or 'describe a systematic procedure' and makes the rule clear so they appear achievable (Willis 1996:84).

Hence , it is clear that focus on form is more important in teaching grammar to second language learners to show how to use language in an appropriate way; and try to express language effectively, clearly and correctly (Willis 1996:50). P-P-P is familiar to every teacher as well as students. Many of them like this model and they do not wish to change from a paradigm like P-P-P to another method, because it the focus on form that they believe necessary to learning language. Students are presented with one language 'item' at a time and they do not have to cope with too much new information at once. In addition, many students expect to leave class every day having learnt how to do or say something.

In recent years, many writers argue that the P-P-P has many disadvantages in teaching grammar as claimed by (Skehan 1996; Willis 1996, Lewis 1996). The P-P-P model is not the best way to teach grammar and many teachers find difficulty to 'control' the language and use it in a 'natural way' (Hedge (2000:61). Furthermore, it has been shown that when presenting an 'item' to learners,

they can understand the 'input' but they cannot use it. We cannot know if students are ready to learn the next stage.

The presentation stage is focuses on 'a particular form' rather than meaning. In other words, it emphasizes 'a single item' of grammar and it is explained by using the 'declarative way' (Skehan 1998:93). Moreover, presenting grammar is easy but the more difficult aspects are ignored. Rules are often simplified to the point that the generalisation is more of a hindrance than a help in understanding, and learners are unable to achieve target language (Ur 1996:75-78). It does not show learners how they can use structure in 'longer units' instead giving simple sentences. Also in this stage teachers find it difficult to focus on form and meaning at the same time.

Thus, Skehan (1996:19) says that the PPP is 'misguided', because it is given 'ambiguous structure'. It is also given 'lack of flexibility', so learners are unable to use it in an appropriate way. (Scrivener1996:80). Students pay attention to syntax rather than semantics (Hedge 2002:167).

Nunan (1991:152) says that "When the teacher wants to focus on a particular grammatical item, that item is introduced within a particular context and learners work from context to text to sentence and clause, rather than from clause/sentence to text". Nevertheless, it provides practice; learners will do it by making 'hypotheses' but, sometime these hypotheses are wrong. (Skehan 1996:18) Many arguments say that these activities lead to a lack of improvement for learners and are 'time consuming' (Skehan 2002:29), when it is presented first conditional (e.g. If it hurts I will tell you) for instance. It is difficult for learners to understand it in a short time, because the use of the present simple with reference to future time, so it takes a long time focusing or explaining it. The form may be presented to learners and they are not ready to observe it.

SLA research has shown that learners cannot achieve the language when they use this approach to learn 'target language' (Ellis 2003:29); it has encouraged learners to use the language without thinking and see 'the language as a set of isolated patterns' Willis (1996:44-49). In this approach the rules provided the rules first and then the task, so students are unable to use it in the final stage (Ellis 2003:30). Also Ur (1996:83) argues that the PPP model is 'unsatisfactory for students to be able to produce correct samples of a structure', because items have not been absolute controlled. P-P-P has tried to do its best for helping learners by giving a particular structure and showing them how to use it, but students have different purposes and 'motivations' to learn grammar and some learners might want to learn how to speak fluently and they do not care about grammatical structure for instance. They are likely to forget the item quickly, because they try to memorize what they have learnt to produce activities correctly. (Skehan 2002:290).

JOURNAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND
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The production stage of the P-P-P paradigm is strongly criticised. The consensus view among many writers is that students are still concentrating on form rather than meaning at this stage, and if they do attempt to concentrate on meaning, they tend to be totally inaccurate with regard to form. (Willis 1996) In addition to this, if the production stage is no less controlled than practice and students are given few choices on what they can and cannot say, as is the situation in many cases, 'real communication' is an illusion. Thus, it is disappointing to L2 learners; it is just another example of students displaying language, in other words, it is 'unrealistic' (Willis 1996:46). Also this stage forces students to use this item, and they want to use whatever language to continue to produce their communication without focusing on any forms.

As Lewis (1996:11) argues:"Any paradigm based on, or remotely resembling, present-practise-produce (P-P-P) is wholly unsatisfactory, failing as it does to reflect either the nature of language or the nature of learning." Because of the P-P-P model has been shown to give unwarranted emphasis to a focus on form, not meaning, stressing language manipulation at the cost of language use, and focusing on language patterns and sequences which are of little use to the students (Willis 1996:45-49). In other words, it does not use the language in 'real situations' and does not allow them to use language freely.

3. Alternatives to the P-P-P model

In recent years, new approaches have been introduced to teaching grammar, and they are replaced the traditional method (i.e. P-P-P) with the Task Based Approaches (TBA).They are a methodological idea which attempts to get away from the P-P-P method; students are not taught in pieces, but rather they are given communicative tasks to prepare for; these tasks require them to ask the teacher to give them whatever language use they might need to complete the task. Furthermore, a task is common in English business course, as meeting, negotiation and presentation. Many writers have claimed that the task-based approaches are better than the P-P-P model.

A task has many definitions which have been provided by many authors such as, Skehan (1996:38-39) who defines a task 'an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real word; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome." In other words, it is focused on 'forms' as well as on 'form' (Skeen 2002:303). It emphasises 'communicative competence' (Ellis 2000:1993) i.e. it is focused on fluency rather than accuracy. Thus, a task encourages learners to use the target language to become more 'communicative' and gives learners opportunities for 'free language

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use' (Willis 1998:136). Nevertheless, it allows learners to pay attention to meaning rather than to form in their production (Skehan 1996:40) by giving a task and asking them to do it in a communicative way. Skehan (1996) provides three goals for task-based instruction: 'accuracy, complexity and fluency.' These stages are similar to P-P-P, but in a different order.

1- Accuracy gives learners motivation to use the 'target language' in their communication (Willis 1996:50).
2- Complexity encourages learners to restructure and reorganize their own underlying and developing language system (Skehan 1996:22).
3- Fluency allows learners to use or produce language in a real way and gives them the opportunity to become more active and 'communicative in context' (Skehan 1996:22).

A task-based approach 'can provide opportunities for kinds of interaction' (Fotos and Ellis 1991:610). The teacher gives a task and encourages learners to do it by 'negotiation of meaning' rather than by focusing on form, as P-P-P does.

In a task-based approach learners are more active when they are doing activities that concentrate on meaning and it allows learner to work in pair or group work by giving them chance to help and share ideas with each other, so that they can co-operate to produce the language by exchanging information and in their way develop their skills (Fotos and Ellis 1991:610). Tasks for this approach are managed by learners and they become fluent in target language by doing them. The teacher's role here is not correct the error at once as in the PPP model and the students are not concentrate on form but only to express their ideas clearly. In fact while paying attention to the meaning, some, though not too much attention can be paid to the form (Willis 1996:137).

During the tasks they are allowed to use whatever language they want and to ask the teacher for help 'if they want'. Moreover, students use language in a natural way, and practise what they learned from the task. They perform the task more successfully better than in the P-P-P model and tasks are 'familiar' to the student. For example, they include tasks such as 'playing games and problem solving' (Willis (1996:53) and it is suitable for their level. Intuition tells us that students learn only what we teach and so the notion of performing the task or production stage from the P-P-P before any language work seems peculiar. As Willis (1996:62) says, to be successful teachers must overcome the belief that learners, 'must be taught the right forms first otherwise how they can do the task?' Also, she suggests the tasks must relevant, because she believes that some tasks are irrelevant and do not refer to 'real life communication' such as tasks that ask students to 'describe a picture by using words and phrase'. These activities force students to use structure as P-P-P does. By contrast, activities which involve them in playing a game, offers them

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مجلة التنمية البشرية والتعليم للأبحاث التخصصية| المجلد 8 العدد 1 | جانفي
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opportunities to think about their role first and then to find the words that they will use in this situation. (Willis 1996:54)

Tasks-based approaches give opportunities for 'interaction' during the task and this can take place in the fluency stage when the learners speak freely (Willis1996:55). When they work as group, they feel more 'confident' to present the language. However, in P-P-P they do not have 'confidence' at this stage and they speak only carefully and slowly or even not at all.

Dictogloss is a 'reconstruction activity' which is 'popular' with many teachers when they are teaching grammar in the classroom.

In dictogloss or dictation the learners simply listen to a short text once or twice in its entirety and reconstruct it from memory, either individually or in 'pairs or groups' (Thornbury 1997:331). In other words, the learners write down any word that they have heard from the text. It is not necessary for them to write down or try to remember every word, because there is a time limit and the teacher does not repeat the text. After that, they try to fill in missing words by working with another student and when they have finished, the teacher lets them see the original text and compare it with their own text. Dictogloss has four main stages as follows:

1- 'Preparation': this involves the topic which should be familiar to the learners, who should at least have 'background knowledge' (Thornbury 1997:331), or it can be an interesting topic and students can prepare the vocabulary that might be involved it. Also, the topic should be suitable and should 'match' the level of students. In particular beginners should not be given complex topics or texts with words which are difficult to understand. Next, the teacher explains the instructions of the task and divides the class into groups.

2- 'Dictation': the teacher reads the text once or twice at 'normal speed' and learners just listen in the first reading; after that they write any words or phrases they recognise from the text.

3- 'Reconstruction': in this stage they had to try and to 'reconstruct the text from memory' (Thornbury 1997:331). Learners do not have to write the original words, but they can use similar words which have to match their meaning in the text. Thornbury (1997:332) cites Wajnryb (1990) says:

"In the reconstruction stage, specifically in the group effort to create a text, learners expand their understanding of what options exist and are available to them in the language." Furthermore, grammar in this stage is required and the sentences have to be 'grammatically formed' (Ferguson 2004).

4- 'Analysis and correction': the teacher analysis the text and 'highlight mistakes' which may be difficult or unfamiliar to the learners. The teacher's role is to correct the error and discuss the

text and she/he shows the learners the main points or common grammar errors such as: sentences starting with small letter or using defiant or indefinite article. Finally, the teacher gives them 'handout to see the original text and asks learners to compare it with their own text' (Ferguson 2004).

Dictogloss is very helpful to learners and it often helps in remembering vocabulary with correct spelling. The most important thing is that the task should be familiar to students and encouraging them to do it. Its procedure is 'memory against creativity'.

4. Conclusion

This paper has shown some of the important differences between the P-P-P model and task-based approaches to teaching grammar. As it can be seen a task-based is more effective in teaching grammar than PPP model. Its aim is to emphasize on meaning first than form, and encourages learners to do it in groups. This makes task-based approaches totally different from P-P-P. However, P-P-P still survives and popular for many teachers (especially trainee teachers), because it has proved itself to be the most easily learnt teaching approach, the most effective at managing large classes. Furthermore, it gives confidence in presenting language and it is believed that when learners know the rules they will probably continue to develop their communication.

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ISSUE:1 | JANUARY 2022

مجلة التنمية البشرية والتعليم للأبحاث التخصصية| المجلد 8 العدد 1 | جانفي
2022

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