

PRESENTATION – PRACTICE – PRODUCTION (PPP)

WHAT IS PRESENTATION – PRACTICE – PRODUCTION?

Presentation – Practice – Production, or PPP, is a method for teaching structures (e.g. grammar or vocabulary) in a foreign language. As its name suggests, PPP is divided into three phases, moving from tight teacher control towards greater learner freedom. Note that some writers¹ use the name to refer to a specific method that focuses on oral skills, but it can also be applied more broadly to a family of related methods which rely on the progression from presentation, through controlled practice, to free production.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PRESENTATION PHASE?

A presentation phase is controlled by the teacher. The teacher might use a text, an audio tape or visual aids to demonstrate a situation. From this, she will extract the required language forms. For example, the teacher may show the class the following picture and model the following sentences:

- *Mr Smith is feeding the baby.*
- *Mr Smith IS feedING the baby.*
- *Mr Smith ...IS feed...ING the baby.*
- *Mrs Smith is looking at her laptop.*
- *Mrs Smith IS lookING at the laptop.*

and so on. She might then write the sentences on the board and perhaps describe the grammar rule.

Alternatively, the teacher might present the grammar rule without reference to a situation, e.g. through description supplemented with examples or through substitution tables.



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The Present Continuous

BE VERB+ING
e.g. *I am reading*

BUT: I am sitting, I am comeing

A DECONTEXTUALISED PRESENTATION

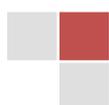
I am	playing	now
You are	working	at the moment
He is	sitting	today
She is	coming	

A SUBSTITUTION TABLE

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PRACTICE PHASE?

During the (controlled) practice phase, learners practice saying or writing the language structure correctly. Typical practice activities include drills, multiple-choice exercises, gap-and-cue exercises, transformations etc. In this phase, the teacher's role is to direct the activities, to provide positive feedback to students, correct mistakes and model the correct forms.

¹ e.g. Harmer, J. 2009. *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edn). Harlow: Longman. pp. 64 et seq.



T: Read!
 S1: I am reading.
 T: Play!
 S2: I am playing.

A DRILL

Tom _____ (play) tennis.
 We _____ (do) our homework.
 Susan and Mary _____ (have) sex.
 I _____ (cook) spaghetti.

A GAP-AND-CUE EXERCISE

I drive to work every day.
 Today....
 Mary watches TV every afternoon.
 Now...

A TRANSFORMATION EXERCISE

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PRODUCTION PHASE?

When the learners have completely mastered the form and have learnt how to produce it without mistakes in controlled exercises, they can move on to the (free) production phase. In this phase, they use the newly learnt language structure to produce oral or written texts. Typical production activities include dialogues, oral presentations, and the production of sentences, paragraphs or longer texts. The teacher does not generally intervene or correct in this phase: after all, the students should not make mistakes by now. If mistakes are made, they are pointed out after the exercise has finished.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRACTICE AND PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES?

Practice activities typically will have only one correct answer, whereas in free production several answers will be acceptable. Furthermore, in the practice phase emphasis is on accuracy (the ability to produce the correct form), whereas the production phase is supposed to develop fluency (the ability to speak naturally).

IS PPP AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO LEARN?

It could be said that PPP is an effective way to *teach*, since it makes planning easy and it can be implemented by relatively inexperienced teachers. However, this is not the same as saying that it is an effective way to *learn*. Some critics have suggested that it rests on a simplistic view of language learning: language learning often involves more than mechanical practice. In addition, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that learners who do well in the practice phase fail to transfer this ability to the production phase, and –even if they do successfully manage the production phase– they often fail to transfer this ability outside the classroom.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGNING A PPP LESSON PLAN

Phase	Things to consider
Presentation	Will you present the language in context / abstractly? Will you use terminology (e.g. the names of tenses)? Which language will you use?
Practice	Will the exercises be oral or written? Will the exercises be productive or receptive? Will the exercises be done individually, in pairs or in groups? How will the exercises be corrected? / How will feedback be provided?
Production	How will you ensure that the activity will elicit the newly-taught form? Will the activity be oral or written? Will the exercises be done individually, in pairs or in groups? How will the exercises be corrected? / How will feedback be provided?

