POTENTIAL FUTURE OF PPP PARADIGM ON EFL GRAMMAR TEACHING: AN ANNOTATED SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Grammar is not an empty space that need to be filled with lexis. Grammar, however, is a source of meaning. Thus, grammar plays an important role to gain high proficiency level, both in accuracy and fluency and needs to be treated with respect. The Presentation, Practice, Production or PPP is a paradigm for structuring language lessons involving the introduction and practice of new language features (lexical, grammatical or functional). It has meaningful learning, implicit learning, fluency based learning, meaning centeredness, student centeredness and authentic language use. It extremely contradicts with the behaviorist PPP approach, which are mechanical learning, explicit learning, accuracy based learning, form centeredness, teacher centeredness, and concocted language use. This annotated survey summarizing the studies on potential future of PPP paradigm on EFL grammar teaching, shows that PPP can work effectively, and described a procedure for using it in the language classroom. This paradigm requires opportunities for both extensive and intensive skills practice for learners to benefit fully. Further, it has endured because many learners, teachers and teacher educators find it useful and familiar, similar to paradigms found in other areas of education in the literature. Some pedagogical implications are discussed with recommendations for curriculum designers, coursebook writers, language teachers and learners of foreign language contexts.

Keyword: PPP Paradigm, EFL, Grammar Teaching, Annotated Survey.

INTRODUCTION

Today, English is used for many purposes around the world, and there are many reasons to place English is important to learn. Despite English grammar is important in language learning, the concept of grammar and whether it should be taught in the classroom or what is the best method for teaching grammar have caught the attention of many researchers. Underpinning the concept of grammar, there are several ways to define grammar, and many have written definitions of grammar. Where linguistic grammar is concerned with what grammar is and how it works, pedagogical grammar is more specifically concerned with how grammar is described for learning purposes and how it should be taught in the EFL classroom (Summer, 2011). It also regarded as words of language are arranged according to the set of formal patterns in order to convey the meaning of each larger or smaller (Savage, Bitterline & Price, 2010).

For many people, grammar is synonymous with learning the grammatical forms, and it is often associated with rules, drills, red ink, and boredom (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Summer, 2011). It seems that English grammar is associated with boring rules and many red ink. While grammar classes are often associated with tiredness, frustration and lack of concentration, affect and emotion have received little attention in such classes. To solve these and develop a grammar competence, learners have to go through some developmental stages.
The Present, Practice, Produce (PPP) method has long been used to teach points of grammar. It could be described more critically as a simplistic teaching method rather than one effective for learning (Case: 2008). However, PPP has endured because many learners, teachers and teacher educators find it useful and familiar, similar to paradigms found in other areas of education. Given the current long-term trend that is seeing the majority of English language teaching worldwide move from tertiary to secondary and primary contexts (Graddol 2006), where many teachers are often trained to teach a range of subjects with limited subject-specific pedagogy, PPP is likely to remain popular.

This survey on potential future of PPP paradigm in EFL grammar teaching was prepared from many different perspectives. First, a brief introduction to the topic is provided by focusing on previous research findings. Second, the studies are grouped under general research aims and discussed in terms of how PPP can work effectively and the issue surrounding grammar teaching itself, what is the procedure for using it in the EFL grammar classroom, and what future studies should investigate. Lastly, some pedagogical implications are discussed with some recommendations.

THE PPP PARADIGM ON EFL GRAMMAR TEACHING

PPP Paradigm

Present, Practice, and Produce (PPP) does not originate in either audiolingual or ‘behaviourist’ perspectives anymore. This new PPP paradigm goes to the transition period between situational language teaching (SLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT) in the UK that Donn Byrne coined the three stages; Presentation, Practice and Production in his first edition of Teaching Oral English in 1976. In supporting notion of new PPP paradigm, Herazo, Erez, and Arellano (2012) claim the legitimacy of its characteristics, including meaningful learning, implicit learning, fluency based learning, meaning centeredness, student centredness and authentic language use. It extremely contradicts with the behaviorist PPP approach, which are mechanical learning, explicit learning, accuracy based learning, form centredness, teacher centredness, and concocted language use.

Furthermore, Anderson (2016) portrays the development of PPP paradigm along with critics and supports. During the 1990s PPP considerably note in out of fashion. A number of authors criticised the PPP paradigm, commonly citing three related arguments, namely: The synthetically-sequenced, isolated focus on form of PPP does not reflect how languages are learnt (e.g. Ellis 1993a; Lewis 1993; Willis 1994; Skehan 1998); PPP focuses on teaching to the detriment of learning, making it incompatible with learnercentred approaches to education (e.g. Lewis 1996; Scrivener 1996); It is prescriptive and inflexible, describing only one of many possible types of lesson (e.g. Scrivener 1996).

On the other hand, recent works support the use of PPP paradigm in language teaching. Dawson (2001) claims PPP might be used to provide students with opportunities for communication and maybe even a balance between a focus on form and a focus on meaning if combined with other activities. In addition, two important meta-analyses conducted since then have indicated strongly that explicit instruction (which includes PPP) is more effective than implicit instruction (Norris & Ortega 2000; Spada & Tomita 2010), one of which has also indicated that Focus on Forms instruction (including PPP) is no less effective than Focus on Form instruction (Norris & Ortega 2000).

In line with this notion, Carless (2009) in his comparative study between TBLT and PPP claims that the advantage of PPP is that the role of the teacher is very clear and the teacher can control the pace of the lesson easily. Furthermore, through some interviews to teachers in his study claims that one of the advantages of PPP (compared to TBLT) is that for teachers PPP is easier to understand and more manageable. PPP also contributes to the teacher’s instructional role, which by Carless is seen as another advantage compared to TBLT. Educators in the Hong Kong based study admit that direct
grammar instructions were more effective with PPP than TBLT. In short, PPP is enduring, not easily dismissed, particularly because of its perceived pragmatic advantages, and meriting further analyses.

On pedagogical pragmatism, PPP affords teachers procedures for maintaining control of the classroom, thus reinforcing their power over students and also because the procedures themselves are eminently trainable (Ellis 2003; Skehan 1996). Besides, the PPP approach gives teachers a secure frame where they can stand and where chaos and disorder can be minimized, which is something teachers and learners usually value as good teaching and good learning (Herazo and Jerez: 2009).

These notions has been supported by Hellström (2015) through an experimental research. The research works on comparing two language teaching methods are PPP and TBLT. Strictly toward the results of this study, the work indicates that PPP is more effective in teaching a grammatical feature (different verb forms/tenses specifically) than a TBLT method is, as the PPP group improved more than the TBLT group. The reasons for this can be connected with both the nature of the methods, and the design of this study.

Similarly, Astria (2016) draws four positive impacts of PPP, they are: the students easier to understand the material, they more interest in learning English, they more active and confident during learning process, and the teacher easier to prepare the material and evaluate the students. Within the same experimental research, Mezied (2017) through his experimental research draws on the result that PPP has provided students with a better learning environment and created many types of collaborative learning within the same group and competing with other groups. Various courses have been provided, offering different situations depending on participants’ contributions, and using R-enabled real-time role-playing for students and teachers despite different geographical areas. This has led the conclusion that the importance of diversifying teaching steps and skills such as presentation, practice, and production model. Such steps give teachers the feeling of control and power that actually could be transformed to students if teachers use an approach that motivates students’ target language use.

The PPP approach to Language Teaching is the most common methodology employed by professional schools around the world. First, presentation is the first and probably the most crucial stage to the language learning process since it actually influences on the effectiveness of the other two stages. This stage involves the creation of a situation where the new language is naturally used. When the “situation” presented is understood by the students, they will start constructing a conceptual understanding of the meaning which underlies the new language and why it will be relevant and useful to them. When all of this has been accomplished the new language should be introduced as a linguistic “model” which students will practice and hopefully get it during the productive activity on their own. Presenting a new language to EFL students is crucial since they are exposed to little or no English outside the classroom. Therefore it is the teachers’ job to make up “realistic” situations requiring the new language so that learning occurs effectively. It is important to build up the situation requiring and concept underlying new language using whatever English the students have already learnt. Pictures and body language can be used at lower levels when presenting new language. Dialogues and text can also been used as students progress. Presenting language depends on the teachers’ creativity, but presentations should be meaningful, memorable and realistic.

Second, practice as middle stage is the step toward the production stage. It is important for teachers not to over use it or use it ineffectively. Thus the importance of making up appropriate activities to the language being learned and taking into account the students’ level and competence. Essentially, Practice involves testing accuracy in terms of phonology and syntax as well as making students familiar with the new language. It is definitely a remedial stage. It is the teachers’ job to prepare activities for this stage that are clear and understandable and able to promote the students confidence and motivation. The activities need to be challenging but students need to have the feeling
that they are “within their reach”. At this stage, learners move from individual drills to pairwork communicative practice towards production.

Third, Production: This is the most important stage of communicative language teaching since if at this level students produce successfully, that will mean they are making a transition from “students” of the target language to “users” of the language. In this stage teachers need to make up situations that require the language that was introduced in the presentation stage, but students should not be told what to say. They do not have information and must think. This stage is highly dependent on the Practice stage and if they do not feel confident enough, they will be hesitant to produce the language. Some good examples of effective Production activities include situational role-plays, debates, discussions, problem-solving, narratives, descriptions, quizzes and games.

To sum up, PPP doesn’t belong to the behaviorist PPP approach, which are mechanical learning, explicit learning, accuracy based learning, form centredness, teacher centredness, and concocted language use. PPP, however, more meaningful learning, implicit learning, fluency based learning, meaning centeredness, student centredness and authentic language use. PPP is often culturally much closer to learner and teacher expectations than alternative lesson frameworks based on for example task-based learning. Through some critics and supports, PPP considerably has future potential effective teaching paradigm since the students easier to understand the material, they more interest in learning English, they more active and confident during learning process, and the teacher easier to prepare the material and evaluate the students. In addition, PPP approach gives teachers a secure frame where they can stand and where chaos and disorder can be minimized. Finally, PPP has provided students with a better learning environment and created many types of collaborative learning within the same group and competing with other groups.

EFL Grammar Teaching

Grammar is the heart of language. It is the foundation of language, on which one starts to build language. In the other words, grammar is “rules” about how language should be used, or, actually, it tells how mother tongue speakers use language. Thus, the role of grammar in language learning is very important. It is the basis of high-quality language learning. Without grammar one can’t know a language. Likewise, without grammar it’s hard to make oneself understood, but when speaking a foreign language every comma doesn’t matter that much. Indeed, without grammar one cannot know language, even use language (Saaristo: 2015).

Grammar is not only the concern of EFL learners but also a serious concern of EFL teachers as well. There has always been debate about the most effective way to teach grammar. Jean & Simard (2011) argued that grammar teaching and learning in EFL contexts are necessary but boring. Thus, Grammar teachers are suggested to pay special attention to the generations of positive emotions and feelings. Garret & Young (2009) asserted that affect and emotion are terms that have been in the shadows of discussions of foreign language learning, where the primary focus has been on the development of knowledge and the use of new knowledge.

Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it (Ellis: 2006). Penny Ur (1988) suggested four basic stages in grammar teaching: presentation, isolation and explanation, practice and test.

The first stage of presentation helps us to perceive the grammatical structure and it is connected with the short-term memory. Teachers usually use a story or a dialogue in which new grammar is used and presented as a pattern for another practice. In the second stage, the main aim is to make the grammatical structure clear in order that the learners can understand it. The third - practice stage
contains a set of exercises and the knowledge is transferred from the short-term to the long-term memory. The possibilities of different exercises are huge. The last stage, which is called “test”, is aimed to provide feedback for the teacher and also for the learners.

Harmer (2007) also describes similarly the procedure of teaching grammar as presentation, practice and production. This procedure is understood by Harmer as a variation of audiolingualism. Firstly, the grammar is presented or the situation is somehow introduced. Then learners practise given grammar issue by different reproduction techniques; finally the last stage of production comes.

**Potential Future of PPP on EFL Grammar Teaching**

The PPP approach has been proved as an effective way on teaching grammar. It is deductive pattern that is very common in language lessons and especially the traditional grammar-translation method follows this pattern. The way Nassaji and Fotos (2011) describe the PPP model is the following: The presentation stage is where the unfamiliar grammar item is introduced, thus made familiar to the learners. The next stage of this model is the practice stage where learners do different kinds of exercises in which the role of learners’ own minds is kept in minimum, drawing their attention to specific structures. Finally, in the production stage, learners are given more freedom to use their imagination and produce speech where they use the newly learned structures.

Huong (2015) describes three stages on PPP approach in teaching grammar. Presentation: This stage is controlled by the teacher; it involves presenting the target language (the language to be taught to the students) to the students generally through eliciting to see if they know it and providing the language if no one does. The target language is usually written on the board either in grammar structure or scramble way. It is also during this stage that the teacher explains the new vocabulary including both meaning and form, and how to say and write it correctly.

Second, Practice: the purpose of this stage is to help students use the new language that teacher has just explained to them. The teacher can ask the students to produce sentences or answer questions that demonstrate they understand how to use the language correctly. During this stage students 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.

Third, Produce: is the stage of the lesson where the students take the target language and use it in conversations that they structure, and use it to talk about themselves or their daily lives or situations. When the students have completely mastered the form and have learnt how to produce it without mistakes in controlled exercises, they can move on to the 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.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Although a few studies found that PPP has a limited effect teaching grammar with some certain notes, both literacy review and experimental data recently suggest that PPP has potential future on EFL grammar teaching. This annotated survey shows that despite numerous studies, there are still lots of ways to go with research on the implementation of presentation, practice, and production paradigm on teaching grammar. As a teacher and a teacher trainer with extensive experience in both pre-service and in-service teacher education, Anderson (2016) have found PPP useful as a structuring framework when appropriate to the learners, the learning conditions, and the chosen focus of the lesson, especially in the following three contexts: First, initial intensive language teacher training courses. It relates to pre-
service English language teacher training with a number of advantages like: It is a common sense, logical framework for skill training (as argued above); It is familiar to the prior educational culture of many trainee teachers; The prescriptive structure of PPP serves as a useful scaffolding artefact, especially beneficial for such trainee teachers often experiencing high levels of stress and steep learning curves.

Second, in-service teacher training in low income countries. It has some characteristics, such as: curricula are externally imposed and ambitious; classes are large (over 30 learners); learners share their L1 or other community language; learners have only a few hours of instruction per week; educational culture tends towards higher levels of teacher intervention. In such countries, teachers who have willingness to adopt PPP-type paradigms in their own classrooms, likely due to similarities to generic lesson structuring models often used across different subjects in such countries.

Third, EFL and ESOL learners at lower levels of achievement. It will give good impact to use PPP with classes of learners that tend towards the following characteristics: low levels of overall language proficiency; low language learning aptitude; low levels of literacy; low levels of learner autonomy; limited experience of formal classroom study; specific educational needs.

At this point it is important to emphasise that PPP cannot and should not be promoted as a framework for structuring all lesson types. It is of less use at higher levels of proficiency and with very young learners. Even in contexts where it is appropriate, it should not be seen as the only planning/structuring paradigm. PPP should be promoted alongside appropriate paradigms for skills development, such as the ‘pre, during and post’ structure for receptive skills lessons commonly used in initial training contexts and carried forward into the practices of novice teachers (Harris 2015). Ur’s Mix and Match solution (2011), including five suggested procedures of which PPP is only one, may also provide useful variety, enabling skilful teachers to tailor lesson design to intended outcome (Ur’s 5 Options are: 1. Task plus focus on form; 2. Grammar explanation plus practice [i.e. PPP]; 3. Communication; 4. Consciousness-raising; 5. Exemplar-learning).

Future studies may focus on this shortness, implementation of PPP in the classroom and the variation alongside the approach in teaching a numerous material on grammar classroom. PPP has dominated the organisation of the majority of mainstream ELT coursebooks ever since Abbs and Freebairn used it for their Strategies series in the 1970s (Tomlinson et al. 2001; Nitta & Gardner 2005; Tomlinson & Masuhara 2013). Thus, while it should be noted that not all learners necessarily expect a language lesson to follow the typical stages involved in skill-learning, the fact that PPP does is likely to contribute significantly to its usefulness for those learners who do, and their teachers.

Furthermore, there are some implications for the stakeholders of English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. For instance, the curriculum designers and ELT grammar coursebook writers should consider utilizing this approach in more advanced variation of language teaching by considering its approach as the main lines to make the language teaching easier and effective for learners.

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