METHODOLOGY · PPP

PRESENTATION – PRACTICE – PRODUCTION

Understanding the approach behind the lesson shape

AT A GLANCE

What it is	A lesson shape in which learners meet new language in context, practise it accurately, then use it freely to communicate.
Best for	grammar, vocabulary and functional language that learners know little about; also speaking and writing lessons with a clear language focus
Direction	language study before language use
Lesson shape	Lead-in > Presentation > Practice > Production
Plan it with	the **Presentation – Practice – Production** framework

The thinking behind PPP

PPP is rooted in **skill acquisition theory**. Learning a language is seen as learning a skill, like driving a car: first you learn *about* it (**declarative knowledge**), then you learn to *do* it (**procedural knowledge**). With practice, performance moves from **controlled processing**, which needs conscious effort and attention, to **automatic processing**, which needs very little.

Each stage of a PPP lesson supports one step in this process.

Stage	What it builds	What it looks like for learners
Presentation	declarative knowledge	They understand what the language means and how it is formed and pronounced.
Practice	procedural knowledge (controlled processing)	They use the language accurately, with time to think and support from the activity.
Production	procedural knowledge (automatic processing)	They use the language freely, alongside other language, to communicate.

In reality, language learning is less tidy. Learners rarely move from knowing a rule to using it automatically in one lesson, and they may use a new form accurately in practice and then avoid it in conversation. PPP is a useful way to **organise** a lesson, not a guarantee of **acquisition**. Plan to recycle the language in later lessons.

How it works

1 LEAD-IN

Generate interest in the topic and set the context.

2 PRESENTATION

Present the target language (TL) in context, help learners notice it, and clarify its meaning, use, form and pronunciation.

ROUTE A Text-based

Learners find the TL in a short reading or listening text.

ROUTE B Situational

The teacher sets up a story or situation and elicits the TL.

3 PRACTICE

Learners use the TL accurately in controlled or restricted activities.

4 PRODUCTION

Learners use the TL freely to achieve a communicative outcome.

Stage	The teacher…	Learners…	Typical activities
Presentation	sets a clear context, highlights the TL and clarifies it through explanation, elicitation or guided discovery	notice the TL and work out or check its meaning, form and pronunciation	short texts, anecdotes, concept questions, timelines, guided discovery tasks
Practice	gives support, monitors closely and corrects where helpful	focus on accuracy	gap-fills in context, sentence writing, transformation, drills, personalised questions
Production	sets up the task, steps back and notes language for feedback	focus on fluency and achieving an outcome	discussions, role-plays, information gaps, problem solving, short written texts

A lesson in action

Here is how a 60-minute PPP lesson might look. It uses the same example as the framework handout: talking about a past holiday using the past simple, for elementary learners.

Stage	Time	What happens
Lead-in	5 min	In pairs, learners discuss: *When was your last holiday? Was it good or bad? Why?*
Presentation	15 min	Learners read a short text about someone's holiday and decide if it was good or bad. They underline verbs that describe past actions. The teacher clarifies meaning and use with concept questions (*Is it finished? Do we know when?*), then form (regular *-ed*, irregular verbs, questions and negatives) and the three *-ed* sounds.
Practice	15 min	Learners write six questions about past holidays (three with regular and three with irregular verbs) and note their own answers. They check the questions in pairs, and the teacher monitors and corrects.

Stage	Time	What happens
Production	15 min	In new pairs, learners ask and answer their questions, adding follow-up questions. They decide whose holiday sounded more fun, and tell the class why.
Feedback	10 min	The teacher praises good language and boards a few errors from Production for learners to correct together.

Notice how one **context** (a past holiday) runs through every stage, how Practice **prepares** learners for Production (they already have their questions), and how about half the lesson is spent on **using** the language, not just studying it.

Variations

How you present

Presentation can be **text-based** (learners find the TL in a reading or listening text) or **situational** (you tell a story or set up a situation and elicit the TL). Clarification can be teacher-led, through explanation and elicitation, or learner-led, through guided discovery. A guided discovery presentation makes PPP more inductive: learners work out the rule from examples before they practise it.

How you order the stages

The sequence doesn't have to be rigid. If learners already know something about the TL, a short practice activity before the presentation can show you what to focus on. If you start with a communicative activity and teach in response to what learners need, you are no longer teaching PPP but **Test–Teach–Test** or **Task–Teach–Task**, which have their own handouts.

A related model: ESA

Harmer (2007) describes three elements that every lesson needs: **Engage** (getting learners interested), **Study** (focusing on language) and **Activate** (using language freely). A PPP lesson is one possible ESA order (Engage, Study, Activate), but the elements can be combined in other orders, for example Engage, Activate, Study, Activate.

Benefits and challenges

Benefits	Challenges
It has a clear, logical shape that is easy to plan and follow.	It focuses on one language item at a time, while communication needs much more.
Learners know what to expect, which can make them feel secure.	It can suggest that presenting and practising a form leads straight to accurate use, which it rarely does.
It helps learners notice specific features of the language.	It can become teacher-centred, with too much time spent on form.
Controlled practice builds accuracy and confidence.	The teacher, not the learners' needs, decides what is taught.
It gives learners and teachers a clear sense of achievement.	It can be predictable and less motivating if used all the time.
Many coursebooks follow the same sequence, so it feels familiar.	Production is often squeezed out when Presentation runs over time.

Making it work

Set a clear context and keep it

Choose a context that is relevant to your learners, and use it in every stage. The presentation text doesn't need to be long: a short anecdote, a text message exchange or even one sentence in a clear situation can be enough.

Make clarification active

Instead of explaining, ask concept questions or design a short guided discovery task, so learners work out the meaning and form themselves. Check understanding before moving on: a few concept questions are worth more than "Do you understand?".

Make practice meaningful

Mechanical practice, such as a quick drill or gap-fill, can build confidence with form, but don't stop there. Move on to practice where learners make meaningful choices, for example writing true sentences about themselves. Use the same context as the presentation.

Protect the Production stage

Plan your timings backwards from Production, so it doesn't get squeezed. Give it a real outcome (deciding, ranking, finding out, agreeing), not just "use the past simple to talk about your holiday".

Match feedback to the stage

During Practice, accuracy matters, so immediate correction is often helpful. During Production, let communication flow: note errors and deal with them afterwards, unless they block communication or keep coming up. Always include positive feedback, not only errors.

TEACHING TIP

Add variety by working with different skills across the lesson, for example reading in Presentation, writing in Practice and speaking in Production.

Common pitfalls

Pitfall	What to do instead
Presentation takes up most of the lesson.	Keep it focused on what learners need, and plan timings backwards from Production.
The context disappears after the presentation.	Use the same context for Practice and Production.
Practice is only mechanical.	Add personalised, meaningful practice before Production.
Production is really more controlled practice ("Make five sentences...").	Give learners a real communicative outcome and freedom to use any language.
You correct every error during Production.	Note errors and give delayed feedback after the activity.
You expect learners to be fully accurate by the end of the lesson.	Treat the lesson as a first step, and recycle the language in later lessons.
You use PPP for language learners mostly know already.	Use Test–Teach–Test instead, to focus on what they actually need.

ONLINE CLASSES

Present the context on a slide or shared screen, and use annotation tools to highlight the TL. For Practice, use the chat, a shared document or a quick online quiz so you can see everyone's answers. For Production, use breakout rooms, and give a clear outcome before learners leave the main room.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- PPP moves from studying language to using it: Presentation, Practice, Production.
- It is based on skill acquisition theory, but learning is rarely as linear as the sequence suggests.
- Keep one context throughout, make clarification active and practice meaningful.
- Protect the Production stage and give it a real outcome.
- If learners already know the language, Test–Teach–Test may be a better choice.

WHERE NEXT

Presentation – Practice – Production (framework) how to plan a PPP lesson, step by step

Guided Discovery learner-led clarification

Conveying Meaning and Checking Understanding concept questions and timelines

Practice Activities designing practice and production activities

Error Correction feedback during Practice and Production

Test–Teach–Test an alternative when learners already know the language

Further reading

Byrne, D. (1986). *Teaching Oral English* (new ed.). Harlow: Longman.

DeKeyser, R. (Ed.). (2007). *Practice in a Second Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Longman. Chapter 4.

Scrivener, J. (2011). *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). London: Macmillan Education. Chapters 6 and 7.