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A critical review of the Presentation-Practice-Production Model (PPP) in Foreign Language Teaching

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1 Introduction

The Presentation-Practice-Production model of activity sequencing (PPP) is the traditional activity sequencing pattern on which many Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) course books have relied, and its presence can still be appreciated today. Accordingly, Cook (2008) even identifies this pattern as the major distinctive trait of the "mainstream EFL style", which has been in vogue for the last thirty years or even longer.

The three Ps correspond, in this order, to *presentation* (P1), *practice* (P2) and *production* (P3). Hence the shortest and clearest definition of this model emerges as, "an approach to teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, practice of the item and then production (i.e. use) of the item" (Tomlinson, 2011a: xv). This procedure is also called the "school model" by Sánchez (1993, 2001, 2004).

The origins of PPP and of the explicit attention to activity sequencing issues can be traced back to the mid 20th century, when PPP became the adopted teaching sequence by the Structural Methods –the North-American Audiolingual Method, the British Situational Language Teaching Method and the French Audiovisual Method. The objective of Structural Methods was the acquisition of structures. PPP was very useful to fulfil this objective, since it adapts well to the teaching of structures: aural exposure and teacher modelling in P1; drills or controlled practice in P2; and the transference of the previously studied structures to different situations in P3.

Precisely because of its ascription to Structural Methods, PPP has been and still is vilified on learning and linguistic grounds. These criticisms are specially launched by Lexical Approach and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) supporters (Lewis and D. Willis & J. Willis, among others). At the same time, however, it would seem unfair not to recognise at least a certain degree of efficiency of this model since many students have learnt –and are still learning– foreign languages in classrooms which draw on this technique. Also, contemporary FLT textbooks offer a somewhat "softened" version of PPP regarding its original shape in the times of Structural Methods, allowing for more flexibility in the teaching procedures. I have previously labelled this as the "contemporary FLT materials version of PPP" (Criado, 2010).

The weighty presence of PPP in past and contemporary FLT literature and practice despite the numerous hard criticisms it constantly receives provide the rationale for the present work: a thorough critical analysis of this model.

This chapter will be structured as follows. Firstly, in section 2, PPP and its stages will be described. Next, in section 3, a critical review of this model will be included from positive and negative perspectives at psychological, psycho-linguistic and pedagogical levels for both perspectives, plus linguistic-based negative criticisms; this review will also entail a description of the "contemporary FLT materials version" of PPP. Finally, some concluding remarks will be added.

2. Definition of PPP

In the first place, it should be remarked that PPP is not a "method" or an "approach" (labels that some authors such as Skehan, 1998, use to refer to this model), but a pedagogical strategy at the teachers' disposal to teach language items which seems to be more suitable for adult language instruction contexts. There are many descriptions of PPP in the FLT literature (Brumfit, 1979; Byrne, 1986; Gibbons, 1989; Harmer, 1996, 2007; Hedge, 2000; Read, 1985; Sánchez, 2004; Scrivener, 1994; Skehan 1998; Tomlinson, 2011a; D. Willis, 1996a; J. Willis, 1996; Woodward, 1993, 2001; Wu, 1998, etc.). In what follows, I have tried to summarise the main points purported in all these accounts. PPP, then, consists of the three following phases:

- An initial *presentation* phase (P1) in which the teacher highly controls the teaching/learning process. The materials in this phase contain all the targeted linguistic items and structures in the unit. This presentation can take a deductive or an inductive mode. In the former, the teacher/textbook models the target structure or lexical items and offers the explanation behind the construction of such structures or the meaning of the words. In the latter, also called "discovery learning", students themselves are provided by the teacher/materials with sample structures and/or vocabulary contextualised in aural or written texts. Students have to induce the underlying rules and meanings.
- A *practice* phase (P2), which still reflects a high level of teacher control in the sense that he/she checks his/her students' correct understanding of the items presented in the first stage. These activities are aimed at achieving accuracy of forms so that fluency can be later achieved in production activities. The activities are aimed at achieving the linguistic targets presented in the initial phase (P1), following the models to which the learners must adjust. "Drills" (whose origins are to be found in the

Audiolingual Method) embody the most common type of practice activities –but by no means the only one.

- A *production* stage (P3), which aims at increasing fluency in linguistic use, precisely through "autonomous and more creative activities". The strategies for achieving such a goal are based on a freer use of the targeted structures. The kind of activities in the production stage may imply discussions, debates, role-plays, problem-solving activities, opinion and information gaps, etc.

3. A critical analysis of P-P-P

3.1. Positive criticisms

3.1.1. Positive criticisms at a psychological level

The three Ps model correlates with the model of skill learning or ACT-R (Adaptive Control of Thought-Rational) described by Anderson (Anderson, 1982, 2010; Anderson & Fincham, 1994; Anderson, Fincham & Douglas, 1997; Anderson & Lebiere, 1998; Anderson *et al.,* 2004; Taatgen, 2003; Taatgen & Anderson, 2008). ACT-R draws on the generally accepted distinction in contemporary cognitive psychology between declarative and procedural knowledge as the modes to characterise knowledge in memory. As applied to foreign languages, declarative knowledge implies knowledge *about* the system and procedural knowledge refers to knowledge of how *to use* that system.

Anderson distinguishes three stages in the route towards knowledge attainment: declarative stage, procedural stage and automatic stage. In other words, this route reflects a progression from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge and final automatised knowledge (DECPRO).

Johnson (1994, 1996) explicitly relates PPP to DECPRO; hence the suitability of this model for language adult instruction (as indicated in section 2). The first P (presentation/P1) is mostly devoted to declarativisation while proceduralisation corresponds to the other two (practice/P2 and production/P3). From reading the entirety of Johnson's contribution it seems that he also ascribes automatisation to production/P3.

3.1.2. Positive criticisms at a psycholinguistic level

The two first phases (P1 and P2) can be considered beneficial at a psycholinguistic level. The presentation stage allows students to pay attention to and notice specific linguistic features. Noticing will also favour the link and association of what students already know to the new forms being highlighted in order to facilitate learning (Hedge, 2000).

The significance of output practice is related to Swain's "Comprehensible Output Hypothesis" (1985, 1995, 2005, in Muranoi, 2007). This theory claims that learners should be pushed to speak the language in class if they want to learn to speak. Muranoi (2007), following Swain, mentions four roles for output, Skehan (1998) increases the set with four more roles, to which Hedge (2000) adds a final one. Roles 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 can be applied to controlled practice, whereas all of them (1-9) are relevant to freer practice activities.

1. Noticing gaps in the learners' interlanguage. The very fact of producing any kind of output may cause learners to realise that they cannot say something accurately. In other words, they may notice a "hole" in their interlanguage and therefore be aware of a gap between what they know already and the target language. This will push them to pay more attention to those features that they do not master.
2. Hypothesis (re)formulation and testing. Learners' production can make students test out their hypotheses about the functioning of the language system, restructure their interlanguage accordingly and formulate alternative hypotheses if convenient.
3. Metalinguistic function. The fact that students verbalise on the linguistic system (metatalk) will also make them conscious about their language knowledge -the forms of the target language and their underlying structures and meanings.
4. Syntactic processing. In a two-way interaction, linguistic production itself (i) will promote and increase the learners' attention on the way they express their meanings using specific linguistic forms, and (ii) will make them aware of how effective their verbalisation is for being understood by the listeners.

Skehan's (1998) roles are as follow:

5. To generate better input. This role connects to role 4 and is to the "negotiation for meaning" (Pica, 1994). The production of appropriate and correct output can only result from good quality input.
6. To develop automaticity (i.e. fluency). This goal is related to the purpose of P3.
7. To develop discourse skills. Skehan himself summarises this role:

> "If meaning-making is a jointly collaborative activity, then we cannot read about these skills, or even acquire them passively, but instead have to take part in discourse and realize how our resources are put to work to build conversations and negotiate meaning. Extensive practice is therefore unavoidable".
>
> (Skehan, 1998: 18)

8. To develop a personal voice. Whenever the speaker practises oral production with topics which attract his/her attention, he/she must necessarily engage in a more personal way of expressing meanings.

Finally, Hedge (2000) suggests the following output function:

9. Developing implicit grammatical knowledge, "by providing frequent occurrence of a particular form for students to notice" (p. 167).

Muranoi (2007) warns about the lack of empirical evidence behind the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis but for a few studies on the effect on noticing and output modification. In spite of this, I personally consider that output practice seems to be reasonable from the perspective of language learning. Its pedagogical implications, in such a case, are obvious. And although this theory is focused on speaking, it is also relevant to other skills, as could be the case of writing, especially in live contexts (Internet communication using "Messenger", for example), and roles 1, 2, 6, 7 (e-mail or letter writing).

3.1.3. Positive criticisms at a pedagogical level

Keeping recurrent organizational procedures in teaching materials apparently benefit foreign language students in the sense that recurrence of classroom action patterns induces the feeling of security in their minds (Sánchez, 2001). The fact that students, consciously or not, feel that future events in classroom organisation are predictable and expected, triggers a feeling of security which favours a positive attitude in their learning potential. In other

words, students who do not worry about what is going to come next are better prepared to react and can therefore generate a more attitude towards language learning. This is also one of the reasons advocated by Cook (2008) for the current popularity of many pedagogical practices from the Audiolingual Method. Novelty in the teaching actions is often praised, but it must be taken into consideration that novelty *per se* is not always positive: teachers systematically promoting new teaching procedures may induce confusion in the minds of learners, who can easily get lost or confused by the unexpected. They could also suffer a certain feeling of fear due to their lack of confidence in the validity of their reactions in the classroom. Unconscious reactions of this nature may be at the basis of students' fear when attempting to modify PPP. Introducing variety in activity sequencing brings with it some consequences. In other words, variety faces advantages and disadvantages; teachers and textbook authors should be aware of the fact that too much variety in organizational patterns can generate anxiety and fear, while excessive systematicity may provoke boredom and demotivate students (Sánchez, 2001, 2004; Ur, 1996).

Predictability of action patterns entails a straightforward identification of didactic steps, which has probably favoured its popularity in training courses for teachers and classroom schemes. This is no doubt a sound reason for the recurrence of pedagogic patterns in classroom organization –teachers may feel more comfortable regarding lesson planning– but at the same time it may become the source of some problems, as suggested by some authors (Lewis, 1996; Scrivener, 1996; Skehan, 1998) (see below).

3.2. Negative criticisms

Negative criticisms against PPP abound in FLT literature. Criticisms are more obvious in material developers and teachers who favour focus-on-meaning approaches (e.g. the "strong" Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) version, TBLT, the Lexical Approach, etc.). Disapproval of the PPP is particularly severe in the case of Lewis (1996: 16):

> "For a long time language teaching has gone in diametrically the wrong direction –the PPP paradigm was a travesty for philosophical, psychological, ideological and methodological reasons".

Thus, the negative evaluation of PPP is rooted in many factors. In what follows I will refer to four categories of negative criticisms: Linguistic, psychological, psycholinguistic and pedagogic.

3.2.1. Negative criticisms at a linguistic level

Linguistic criticisms point to two different aspects: the use of structures and discrete items. Lewis (1996) claims that PPP is useless because it is focused on a linguistic component which is not the core of communicative use: structures. He states that it is the lexicon what lies at the core of meaning and therefore of linguistic communication. The lexicon should be understood as a bunch of varied elements: collocations, idioms, multi-word items, etc. Some authors, however, have mentioned that PPP is not restricted to forms but has also included vocabulary (Harmer, 1996).

The second reason for criticism against PPP refers to discrete items. Scrivener (1994) and Woodward (1993) point out its atomistic nature, which allows for an easy and disrupting segregation of the whole into isolated and poorly cohesive parts (Woodward, 1993), thus favouring a sentence-level theory of language (Scrivener, 1994). Woodward (1993) relates this approach back to Descartes ("things should be 'divided up the better to study them' ". Woodward, 1993: 3). She in fact criticises analytical approaches in language studies and argues for more holistic or ecological perspectives, necessary to guarantee a more comprehensive coverage of the linguistic elements that shape language.

3.2.2. Negative criticisms at a psychological level

The analytical view of language correlates well with the behaviouristic psychological theory apparently behind PPP (Scrivener 1994, 1996; Willis, D., 1996b). According to D. Willis (1996b), this model pursues the student's automatic response to specific stimuli received from outside, that is, the teacher and teaching materials. Such practices lead the students to believe that the language they learn is made out of independent discrete items which can be assimilated and added to previously learned elements. This means that PPP assumes a quantitative type of learning, defined by Scrivener (1994, 1996) as a "Straight-line" learning assumption ("following a routine will guarantee the required results"). It is important to point out that this view of learning considers that language items can be learned as isolated elements or chunks, assuming that once they have been learned they do not need further revisiting for consolidation. It is taken for granted that, a) after items have been presented and explained in P1 and practised in P2 they are ready for

use in the P3 phase; and b) after the complete PPP sequence there is no need for further practice.

The learning path in PPP is extremely rigid. It is based on the assumption that the Presentation-Practice-Production sequence suffices for the acquisition of knowledge. Here lies the second criticism against PPP from a psychological point of view. However, as Sánchez (1993) suggests, this assumption does not adjust to real knowledge acquisition processes, since experience tells us that we often acquire new knowledge without previous practice, or in the absence of explicit explanations. The flexible nature of language learning is also acknowledged by Johnson (1994, 1996), when he states that "in the mastery of skills in general, we may directly proceduralise knowledge, without going through the declarative" (Johnson, 1996: 97). And although ACT-R supports the declarative-towards-procedural knowledge route as the most suitable for adult formal instruction, certain advocators also state that

> "It is too strong to argue that procedural knowledge can never be acquired without a declarative representation or that the declarative representation always has to be in the form of an example that is used in an analogy process" (Anderson & Fincham, 1994: 1323)

3.2.3. Negative criticisms at a psycholinguistic level

These encompass the following aspects: the fact that PPP emphasizes a) an excessive focus on accuracy of forms at the expense of a focus on meaning- this assumption clashes against naturalistic learning principles and does not take into account the possibilities for linguistic experimentation on the part of the learner all along the learning path; b) the association of the practice phase with mechanical drills and the fact that the linear nature of learning assumed by PPP ignores the readiness-to-learn, the delayed-effect-of-instruction and the silent period principles.

Firstly, PPP has been severely criticized for its emphasis on accuracy and correctness, favoured by the strict discrete-item based version of PPP. Since risk-taking is an important ingredient of natural learning, the search for perfection and fully defined linguistic goals does not allow for variety and hence for the selection of elements or structures which deviate from what is already prescribed. According to J. Willis (1993), optionality is crucial for the development of interlanguage.

D. Willis & J. Willis (2007), supporters of TBLT, recommend an initial focus on meaning which should be explicitly reflected in receptive and productive activities. They claim that learners "experience" language only if it is preceded by teacher talk, reading or listening to texts including the targeted forms and the task itself. This provides students with the necessary context to make the selected structures comprehensible. These authors also argue linguistic exercises being placed at the end of the sequence will enhance students' motivation. Moreover, language work after completing the task will highlight language features and make learners notice them.

Secondly, the P2 phase has often been associated to mechanical drills (DeKeyser, 1998, 2007) and consequently has also received harsh criticisms. Drilling is rooted in the ALM, "which has become almost synonymous with the use and abuse of mechanical drills" (DeKeyser, 1998: 51). The main criticism against mechanical drills lies in their lack of resemblance to real-life communication and in the dissociation of form and meaning. Emphasis on form alone does not favour the association form-meaning, and thus does not go in line with the cognitive parameters of language processing (DeKeyser, 2007).

Thirdly, the linear and teaching-equals-learning perspective leads to the neglect of three important second language learning principles: Readiness to learn, the delayed effect of instruction and the silent period.

Pienemann's (1984, 1989, 2007) "multidimensional" or "processability model" is at the basis of the readiness-to-learn theory. The readiness-to-learn principle has dramatic consequences in materials design from the perspectives of both activity and language content ordering. Students seem to follow a natural acquisition sequence, which takes a long time and is not fully predictable; therefore it cannot be replicated by textbooks based on PPP teaching sequences, which are typically linear, static and the result of accumulated elements. As Tomlinson (2011b) points out, premature instruction will result in production of erroneous forms, replacement by easier forms and avoidance strategies.

The "delayed effect of instruction" (Tomlinson, 2011b; Willis, D., 1996b) is an additional psycholinguistic principle against the linear learning assumption behind PPP. Since naturalistic and formal acquisition is a gradual process, "it is quite unrealistic to expect students to make acquaintance with a "new" language form and, within the space of a single

lesson, incorporate it into their working grammar of the language" (Willis, D., 1996b: 46).

The "silent period" (Duran & Ramaut, 2006; Islam, 2003; Krashen, 1982) is a crucial psycholinguistic principle for beginners. It basically claims that these learners will not speak the language they learn before they are ready to do so, i.e. before they "feel" they possess sufficient linguistic resources at their disposal. Duran & Ramaut (2006) state that the silent period allows learners to acquire the necessary receptive base needed for producing language; at the same time, this receptive base will grant them the required degree of confidence for speaking. Although the silent period is usually applied to speaking, it may also be applied to other linguistic skills, as it is the case of writing. Consequently, the implementation of PPP from the very beginning of the teaching process is deemed as counterproductive at a beginners' level.

3.2.4. Negative criticisms at a pedagogical level

Disapproval of PPP is also rooted in four pedagogical factors: a) the prescriptive nature of the model; b) the tight teacher control of the sequence; c) the lack of efficiency in its application to real-life communication, and d) the learners' perception of the P3 stage, which does not necessarily match the teacher's perception or the materials' assumptions.

The first three factors are linked to the quantitative type of learning assumed by PPP (as explained in section 3.2.2). Neat and well-structured lessons reflect a quantitative-acquisition perspective, in such a way that they offer "clear and tangible goals, precise syllabuses, and a comforting itemizable basis for the evaluation of effectiveness" (Skehan, 1998: 94). Well-defined goals probably account for the widespread use of PPP in teacher training courses and its presence in commercial materials (Tomlinson, 2011b). In this respect, Scrivener (1994: 15) comments that this model, "confines teachers" and "it leaves no room for growth or exploration" for teacher trainees as it sets, "a limited number of teaching options, all of which can be pre-planned".

Furthermore, PPP strengthens teachers' leadership and the prescriptive character of what learners should do in class. Teacher's leadership is also favoured by his/her role as an informant in P1 and as a corrector in P2. The teacher's control over students' production is only truly reduced in more advanced stages, that is, in P2 and P3 phases. However, the P3 phase has

also been criticised because fluency and the consolidation of the students' use of linguistic items may not be perceived as such by learners themselves (Hedge, 2000; Willis, D., 1996b and personal communication; Willis, J., 1993). In any event, I believe that although students' styles and attitudes to learning are important, subordinating the nature and goals of an activity to the learners' perception will lead to a dead-end in the general analysis of activities. The quantity and quality of students' perception could not be predicted or extrapolated because it would depend on the students' individual characteristics and thus would involve great heterogeneity.

3.3. The contemporary FLT materials version of PPP

Scrivener summarizes the dislikes of PPP with neat words (1994: 15): "It is fundamentally disabling, not enabling". Scrivener's opinion is too severe, especially from a contemporary point of view. I agree with Harmer's (1996: 8) position when he states that this criticism, "may come as a surprise to the many hundreds of thousands of students who have managed to progress despite having been subjected to such discredited disablement". Furthermore, if PPP was to be considered a disaster in the history of language teaching, it would be very surprising to find it mentioned in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (CEFR) (2001). The CEFR includes certain varieties of PPP to illustrate some of the ways in which learners are expected to learn a foreign or a second language:

> "f) by a combination of presentations, explanations, (drill) exercises and exploitation activities, but with L1 as the language of classroom management, explanation, etc.;
> g) by a combination of activities as in f), but using L2 only for *all* classroom purposes;
> h) by some combination of the above activities, starting perhaps with f), but progressively reducing the use of L1 and including more tasks and authentic texts, spoken and written, and an increasing self-study component".
>
> (CEFR, 2001: 143)

Perhaps we should look at PPP from a more aseptic stand and recognise the existence of relevant nuances and differences in PPP throughout the last decades. The initial PPP pattern has changed and adapted to a more communicative format. Regarding intermediate and higher levels, I agree with Hopkins' affirmation (1995: 11) that "No language course these days

offers an undiluted diet of the dry meaningless PPP structured lessons that so many commentators like to set up as a straw-man foe".

In my opinion, it would be unfair and inaccurate not to recognise the existence of a contemporary FLT materials version of PPP. No doubt, this version is closer to the "weak" CLT version (Howatt, 1984) developed during the 1980s. We can summarize its main features as follows:

1) Language elements are not reduced to structures alone. The sequencing pattern involves vocabulary and even linguistic longer stretches of discourse (Harmer, 1996).

2) The insertion of focused and unfocused skill activities. This allows for a combination of linguistic and skill focus in the same related group of activities. The main objective of focused skill activities is language forms, which are contextualised in aural or written texts; in fact, such texts are used as a pretext to study language forms. This study can take the shape of presentation (of structures or lexis located in the texts) or practice (generating samples similar to those encountered in the texts, for instance). On the contrary, unfocused skill activities are not primarily centred on language study and practice, given that their main objective is the message of the texts, either as reading/listening (receptive) practice or as speaking/writing (productive) practice.

3) Meaning is also included in the sequence, as can be detected in the wider activity typology and the amalgamation of skill and linguistic work outlined in 2). Attention to form is not eliminated, though.

4) An increasing degree of variety in PPP is perceived, together with and a reduction of its rigid and repetitive patterns owing to:

4.1.) The same reasons as those mentioned in 3).

4.2.) The three stages are not so rigidly sequenced in all instances. Some textbook lessons may offer P2 or P3 at the beginning and either a P1 or a P2 at the end. This is especially so in intermediate and more advanced levels. Elementary textbooks in their turn may include a P2 or even a P3 activity at the onset for diagnostic purposes.

This contemporary FLT materials version of PPP somehow soothes certain psychological and linguistic features which are the core of more severe criticisms. Admittedly, the acknowledged higher degree of variety given by different activity types and formats of the stages does not exclude the

constant repetitive patterns of action. The transitions created by the combination of skill and linguistic practice in focused skill activities, by the modification of the phase order and even by small digressions (linguistic notes, brief review sections, etc.) are not enough and cannot disguise the recurrent nature of a similar sequence. Such uniformity in the lesson structure does not favour the teachers' potential for variety in their pedagogical actions and may actually constrain it. Students are not perhaps aware of this uniformity in the lesson structure, but they will unconsciously perceive it in their daily work as a well-defined routine. Probably their motivation will be negatively affected by such a perception.

FLT researchers have the responsibility of offering alternatives to PPP in order to successfully contribute to the following: a) Efficacy in language learning; b) avoiding an unbalanced degree of variety in the classroom organisational procedures; c) adjusting to the psychological and psycholinguistic principles illustrated in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.; and d) lowering the prescriptive degree of PPP as perceived by teachers and learners (as indicated in section 3.2.4.).

4. Conclusion

One of the most important implications of this critical review of PPP is that it cannot be regarded as either the panacea, fit-in-all solution or a devil in FLT. There is no empirical support in favour of either one or the other stance. What we do have, however, is a well-established pedagogical tradition and the experience of many thousands of learners who seem to have learned foreign languages in this way (Swan, 2005).

Many of the negative criticisms that PPP has received on the part of contemporary authors derive from its ascription to the Structural Methods. These followed a rigid and virtually exclusive sequence of presentation-practice-production of discrete items, where the use of "mim-mem" and drills was overemphasised. These teaching strategies were thought to be the best pedagogical adaptation of behaviourism in the language classroom. The PPP as understood in the Structural times was a failure because the kind of practice activities it included was excessively focused on form and excessively far away from meaning. Furthermore, the language transference offered by production activities designed to reproduce language samples structurally similar to those presented in P1 and practised in P2 was too limited. Drilling patterns in different contexts did not finally entail using the

language in natural, communicative situations. This gap was to be filled in by CLT, whose strong version (Howatt, 1984) in turn overemphasized the final P (P3) in the shape of communicative activities or tasks at the cost of focus on form.

A quick glance at any contemporary textbook reveals that such extremely dogmatic and mechanical practices, common forty years ago, are not so frequent nowadays. Instead, modern teaching materials are more flexible in the sequence they offer and abound in better contextualized aural and written dialogues, inductive (discovery learning) exercises, use of skill-based activities in-between the actual presentation and practice of language items, etc. Moreover, PPP correlates fairly well with a well-known model of skill learning, Anderson's ACT-R, which has been empirically tested in SLA by DeKeyser (1997) and de Jong (2005).

Nevertheless, it is also true that a rigid PPP model alone cannot be adopted as the single pedagogical strategy in the FL classroom. Not all aspects of language can be taught following a PPP sequence; for instance, certain subtle pragmatic aspects and even some grammar forms which are abstract and complex. Rutherford (1987; in Johnson, 1996), offers as an example infinitival relative clauses such as "the best bus to take", where the head noun can function as a subject or object for the infinitive. Such intricacies are better explained or discovered by students themselves after they have been met in language use; in other words, they seem to adjust to a P1 phase coming after P3. On the other hand, PPP contains elements which adapt well to the classroom situation and adult foreign language pedagogy, although authentic communicative situations do not easily fit this linear pattern. Furthermore, the repetition of the same sequence can have a harmful influence on students' attitudes towards the language course. Also, teachers should make sure that students constantly recycle the language items that had been introduced in a PPP lesson, since abundant practice at both receptive and productive levels is necessary to fully consolidate language knowledge.

Overall, until large-scale quasi-experimental studies are conducted to test the efficacy of PPP against other instructional sequences (for example, Di Pietro's (1987) "Scenarios"; Scrivener's (1994, 1996) "Authentic (use)-Restricted (use)-Clarification" (A-R-C); McCarthy & Carter's (1995) "Illustration-Interaction-Induction" (III); J. Willis' (1996) Task-based Learning Framework or "pre-task, task phase and language focus"; Harmer's (1996, 2007) "Engage, Study and Activate" (ESA); Lewis' (1996)

"Observation Hypothesize and Experimentation" (O-H-E)), what seems to be an eclectic and fair approach towards PPP is to regard it as one out of the many pedagogical techniques that teachers can draw on in their teaching kits to teach language.

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