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Effectiveness of PPP approach in teaching of English composition

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Abstract

The paper is on the effectiveness of PPP approach in Teaching of Composition Writing Skill in English. It is based on the theoretical basis provoked by earlier studies and of some recent research findings. The paper includes an exposition on what 'the 3Ps' stand for. They represent Presentation, Practice and Production. Presentation stage involves motivation, imitative practices and orientation involving correction. Practice sessions involve communicative practice of dialogues and role plays. The production sessions include communication using syntax to create meaning they desire to. The paper makes reviews of relevant literature available on teaching of composition skills. The paper concludes with PPP approach as acceptable model for the teaching composition.

Keywords: Presentation, practice, production, process oriented approach, pre-writing, drafting, revising

Introduction

This paper initiates by allowing a notorious theme for many modern researches: the place of teaching composition in teaching of English, a variety of views for and against such teaching. It will review and exemplify the P-P-P model, one of the more popular approaches to teaching composition in the educational field. To this end, the following questions will be addressed.

- 1 Is there a place for composition in teaching? What are the scholars' views regarding the teaching of composition?
- 2 What has the P-P-P model contributed to the teaching of composition, and what are the arguments for and against it?

My own interest in writing this paper arises from two reasons: firstly, there is an increasing debate on such issues in Saudi Arabia, which has stimulated my desire to know what the possible and practicable approaches are there to the questions asked above. Secondly, it is hoped that the ideas and activities presented in section 3 might be useful to make composition teaching more communicative. Among the various approaches to teaching composition, the P-P-P model, according to Hedge (2000) ^[8], is very popular with many teachers. It first appeared in the 1970s and is considered to be easy to understand and apply.

P-P-P, otherwise known as 'the 3Ps', stands for Presentation, Practice, and Production. Each of these three elements is explained below

1. **Presentation:** Is the first stage, where the teacher is to present new items in clear contexts. Considering what the learners already know, the teacher attempts to introduce forms of their meanings in a variety of suitable ways (pictures, dialogues, or situations), taking into account whether an inductive or a deductive model is more likely to be used. Thus, due to the nature of this stage, correction plays an important role. The teacher checks to see that the students understand the nature of the situation, and then builds the "concept" underlying the language to be learned using small chunks of language that the students already know. Having understood the concept, students are then given the language model and engage in choral drills to learn statement, answer and question forms for the target language. This is a very important orientation stage where error correction is taken care of. A good presentation will be understandably interesting and in a context the children can understand such as a song, game, or story.

2. **Practice:** Learners are gradually led, individually or as a group, to use grammatical items correctly. By the use of grammar games, gap exercises or some other appropriate means, the teacher guides the students towards greater familiarity with the new conception in which the controlled practice activities are applied. Practice usually begins with what is termed "mechanical practice" open and closed pair work. Students gradually move into more "communicative practice" involving procedures like information gap activities; dialog creation and controlled role plays. Practice is seen as the frequency device to create familiarity and confidence with the new language, and a measuring stick for accuracy. The teacher still directs and corrects at this stage, but the class room is beginning to become more learner- centered.
3. **Production:** At this stage, learners are supposed to be more fluent. They are moved from a focus on form to paying more attention to meaning (Ur 1996), by providing suitable practice. The teacher role is limited, unless the situation requires his/her facilitation. Production is seen as the culmination of the language learning process, whereby the learners have started to become independent users of the language rather than students of the language. The teacher's role here is to somehow facilitate a realistic situation or activity applicable to the language they have been practicing. The teacher does not correct or become involved unless students directly appeal to them to do so. This stage can help motivate children to communicate meaning with the new language. Children should have the opportunity during this stage to experiment with the language.

Review of Recent Literature

The weightage of the book covers 50 percent of the total 100 marks of the final examination. It is an integrated course in General English. To be specific, it is a course in grammar and its use in communication. It sets out to teach the grammatical system of English in relation to the uses to which the learner will predictably want to put it. As its name indicates, grammar of English has been presented as a means for putting into words many of the meanings the learner will want to express in the process of using language for various communicative purposes. It also aims to develop an understanding and command of grammar in terms of form, meaning and use.

This in fact integrates both traditional and communicative approaches to language teaching. The book synthesizes both structural and functional contents together. This is because structural courses tend to teach form and meaning, but not use which is covered by functional syllabus. The book contains 24 units altogether.

Based on functional-notional syllabus, each unit of the book contains

Presentation material which introduces key language items, intensive controlled practice, freer communicative practices, writing activities, listening and reading passages, and language summary at the end. Presentation techniques in the textbook are designed to suit the requirements of the language being taught, and to involve students as much as possible. There is a wide variety of presentation material: language may be presented by reading, by listening or by

written examples and the presentation often involves interpretation and class discussion.

The practice stage is concerned with controlled practice of new language. It ranges from simple exploitation of structures to more imaginative practice in which students use language in realistic situations. Practice is usually done in pairs or small groups and is concerned with appropriate use of language as well as with accuracy. At this stage, students are not limited to using particular language. Practice may take the form of role play, group discussion or students talking about themselves and gives them a chance to practice the language they have learnt in a wider context. Practice in writing is provided at any stage of the unit where it is appropriate. It usually takes the form of paragraph writing, either based on classroom discussion or as a follow up to listening or reading comprehension.

Meanings into Words Intermediate cover seven functional areas of language: Action, Description, Personal Information, Narration, Past and Present, Comparison and Explanation. The area of action consists of language used for talking about the desirability and possibility of actions: initiating action in oneself and commenting on one's own actions and the actions of other people. Description consists of language used for physical description of places, things and people: their appearance, their features and their location. The area of personal information consists of language used for giving information about students themselves, and other people: who you are, what you are, what you do, and what kind of person you are. The area of Past and Present consists of language used for relating the past and the present: present situations and their past origins, past events and their connection with the present actions and activities during the period up to now. Similarly, the area of comparison consists of language used for comparing and evaluation: talking about similarities and differences, measuring differences, and assessing advantages and disadvantages. Finally, the area of explanation consists of language used for explaining things and speculating about them. This includes saying why and how things happen, establishing the truth about things, and drawing conclusions about the past, present and future. Each of the seven areas is categorized into a number of units, which are arranged in such a way as to provide a natural and logical progression, an increasing level of difficulty throughout the textbook, maximum variety and motivation for the student.

From the experience of classroom teachers and from the research conducted during the past 15 years, there has emerged a process-oriented approach to teaching writing. Recognizing that writing is a complex, recursive, dynamic nonlinear process, experts in the field of composition have developed and tested instructional methods more in keeping with the true nature of the act of writing. Looked at this way, it becomes obvious that the process has a number of distinct stages.

Krishna Rao (1984) ^[9], in his article entitled 'communicative English and second language learner', opines that communicative behavior in a classroom is rather complex. In a class where the strength is of alarming proportions, developing communicative skills may be impossible. Multi-lingual situation is yet another problem. Anyhow if a course syllabus is drawn keeping in mind the learners' need of the hour, it is possible to make headway considerably in teaching English as a tool for communication at different levels.

Ramani (1987) ^[10], in his article 'Organizing a Quiz', describes the ways of developing communicative skills among first year undergraduate students. The students were divided into different groups. The groups were asked to discuss their questions in order to select ten out of the total number and to revise the questions to make them clearer and more intelligible. They had to draw up a list of rules for conducting the quiz. Each group administered the quiz to the other groups. This task helped to build up the confidence of the student sufficiently for him to attempt to use English in speech and writing.

N. Balasubramanian and M. Yoganandam (1994) ^[11] conducted a comparative study for determining effectiveness in improving English pronunciation.

The objectives of the study were

1. To develop an audio package for improving the pronunciation of English vowels, diphthongs and consonants among standard V pupils.
2. To find out the relative effectiveness of the developed audio package over direct teaching by a trained teacher in the production of correct English sounds among standard V pupils.

The study revealed that though the training given by the trained teacher through pre-recorded audio-cassette is almost similar in their effectiveness in improving the pronunciation of English sounds among std V pupils. The study states that the teacher and the technology should be complementary to each other in any scheme of education.

Sasikala (1994) ^[12] conducted an experimental study for "Improving Oral Communication in English among Tamil Medium Students at Higher Secondary Level" The major objectives of the study were

1. To develop a course package for improving the fluency and accuracy in oral communication in English among Tamil medium Higher Secondary students
2. To improve oral communication in English among Tamil medium students applying packages developed by the investigator

Thompson Geoff (2009) ^[13] in his investigation on "some misconceptions about Communicative Language Teaching" presented four misconceptions surrounding Communicative Language Teaching and discusses the reasons for their existence. These misconceptions are (i) CLT means not teaching grammar (ii) CLT means teaching only speaking (iii) CLT means expecting too much from the each other.

Teaching of Composition

Educators and their constitutes require the conflicting opinion as to what constitute the "basic skills." Nearly everyone, however, would cite the "reading, writing and listening" -- which have traditionally been regarded as the core of the educational program at all levels of instruction. The focus of the present report is the writing part of that core.

Unfortunately, writing is an area characterized by considerable divergence between research and practice. Smith (1982) ^[14] notes that "much is known about which practice in teaching, the writing process is effective, [but] several of these findings are in conflict with widespread practices in the schools" (p.3). For example, staff of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

reported in 1984 that "while most authorities of writing agree that children learn to write by writing, [there is] a distressing lack of classroom time devoted to extended periods of writing" (p. 1).

Still, writing remains a critical area of the school curriculum and an important part of students' lives after school. In addition to the insistence of many employers that employees possess well-developed communication skills -- including writing skills -- a variety of other purposes are served by writing and developing writing capability. Graves (1978) ^[15] identified several ways that writing is important in our lives.

- As a contribution to the development of a person, no matter what that person's background and talent. Writing is a highly complex act that demands the analysis and synthesis of many levels of thinking.
- Writing develops initiative. In reading, everything is provided. In writing, the learner must supply everything: the right relationship between sounds and letters, the order of the letters and their form on the page, the topic, Information, questions, answers, order.
- Writing develops courage. At no point is the learner more vulnerable than in writing. Writing, more than any other subject, can lead to personal breakthroughs in learning.
- Writing can contribute to reading from the first day of school. Writing, some say, is active, whereas reading is passive.
- Writing contributes strongly to reading comprehension as children grow older. The ability to revise writing for greater power and economy is one of the higher forms of reading. (pp. 5-6).

Example – 'Sita is going to her house'-with some variations in this model sentence the pupils can be induced to produce their own sentences, the basic pattern remaining the same.

Ways to help students achieve these goals are discussed in a later section on composition research. To set a context for presenting this information, the next section discusses the research base concerning effective schooling in general. The outcome area of concern in 26 of the reports was writing achievement, either in general or as indicated by measures of syntactic maturity, fluency, various writing sub skills, degree of change or degree of retention of skills over time. Seven reports presented findings on the affective outcomes of various approaches to instruction. These reported on student attitudes toward writing, self-esteem, motivation, and extent of cooperation and collaboration with others.

Teaching methods of composition

Teaching is mainly based on two major categories of methods; namely the teacher-centred and pupil-centred. Both have their own advantages and disadvantages. In order to make an informed choice of teaching method (s) in the teaching and learning process, the teacher must know.

- The teaching methods available.
- The strengths and weaknesses of each method.
- The purpose each can serve.
- How each method can be used in practice.

Objectives

It sign-posts the following objectives

- Outline pupil-centred and teacher-centred methods and techniques.

- Explain how best different methods and techniques can be used in a lesson.
- Select appropriate technique(s) for a particular teaching and learning process.
- Apply various techniques in your lessons.

Pre-writing: The writer gathers information and plays with ideas during the prewriting stage. Prewriting activities may include drawing, talking, thinking, reading, listening to tapes and records, discussion, role playing, interviews, problem-solving and decision-making activities, conducting library research, and so on.

Drafting: The writer develops his/her topic on paper (or a computer screen) during the drafting stage. Beginning may be painful and difficult, producing false starts and frustration in the writer. In the process-oriented approach, the focus is on content, not the mechanics of writing.

Revising: During this stage, the writer makes whatever changes he/she feels are necessary. Revision may involve additions and deletions; changes in syntax, sentence structure, and organization; and in some cases, starting over completely.

Direct Method of Composition

The purpose of composition exercise is to follow-up and fix in the mind of the pupils the work that has been done through oral method and reading in the classroom. The following general principles are to be observed.

- Only those phrases or constructions should be presented in the exercises which have been made familiar with the class through oral work and reading.
- It follows from the above point that the words and contents of the exercise should be closely related to the vocabulary and subject matter of oral work.
- The principle of usefulness should be adhered to, i.e., only those sentence patterns and words should be used which are desirable for the learner to use.
- In the beginning the exercise should be restricted to the completion type and conversation type of tasks. Exercises to which the learner is required to compose his own material should not be given in the beginning.

The teacher should not take a narrow meaning of the word 'composition'. By composition some teachers mean easy-writing or letter-writing. Composition means to compose ideas in a language, putting one's thought or thoughts together with a certain end in view. Even a child of two years can put his thoughts together. The ability to put many thoughts together in a logical, coherent and interrelated manner is acquired gradually with systematic efforts from the very beginning. For developing good compositional ability, the teacher should keep the following points in his mind.

- He should help the students from the very beginning to speak and write correctly and systematically.
- He should select and grade the material at different levels, from class VI to XII.
- Bad habits of speech spelling, confused thinking, and improper use of words should be checked carefully from the very beginning.

- The teacher should emphasize the interrelationships between sentences in expressing ideas. This can be done only by controlling composition-words in the beginning. Teaching of composition has been discussed elsewhere in this book under "Direct Method" and under "Teaching of Writing and Composition".
- The ability to write good composition can be acquired only by practicing to compose through gradual steps.
- Students should not be asked to write anything for which they have adequate vocabulary.
- It is not necessary to have written composition from the very beginning.
- In teaching composition, the teacher should always proceed from concrete to abstract.

"Sita is going to her house".
Mohan is going to his house.
Sohan is going to his school.
Sohan, Radhey and Neenah are going to their school.
The children are going to their school.
The man is going to his farm.
Men are going to their farms.
Ramesh is going to Calcutta.
This letter is going to Delhi.
I am going to the bazaar.
They are going to the market.

Thus, with the help of the model sentence the pupils can express their ideas through such sentences, of course, on a given pattern.

Teaching of methods and composition to students at the advanced level

The main problem at the advanced level is whether the teacher should allow his pupils to write as they speak. According to the linguists, speech is primary and writing secondary, but governing these two forms of language behaviour, there are two different conventions. There are different laws for the vocabulary and structure of speech and writing. Speech habits are only partially indicated in the writing system, e.g., stress, pitch etc., for others there are no conventional notations at all, e.g., tempo, gestures, mumbling, facial expressions etc.,

As research findings become more available to practitioners, an opportunity is created for the gap between research and practice to be closed. This would be extremely beneficial to the nation's students for many personal, academic and vocational reasons. Perhaps the most important of these reasons is that cited by writing authority Donald Graves: "In writing, kids find themselves."

When comparing the t values of the pre-test for both the groups, it was found that there was no significant difference between the two groups. The observed t values are 0.8, 0.75, 0.9, 1.2, and 1.8 respectively.

But when comparing the t values of the post-test for both the groups, it was found that there was a significant difference between the two groups. The observed t values are 8.1, 12.8, 15.6 and 17.8 respectively.

This proves that PPP approach is more effective than the traditional way of teaching English composition to the higher secondary school students.

Table 1: The performance of pre-test scores of control and experimental group students in writing skills

S. No.	Writing Skills	No	Control group		Experimental group		't'- value
			Pre- test		Pre- test		
			Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1.	Regulatory Function	40	11.5	1.10	11.1	1.85	1.33
2.	Interactional Function	40	11.4	1.06	10.9	1.79	1.66
3.	Personal Function	40	11.1	1.25	10.9	1.19	0.08
4.	Heuristic Function	40	12.3	1.04	11.8	1.09	1.82
5.	Imaginative Function	40	12	2.2	10.8	1.99	1.8
6.	Representative Function	40	11.2	1.42	10.9	1.19	1.5

Table 2: The performance of post-test scores of control and experimental group students in writing skills

S. No.	Writing Skills	No	Control group		Experimental group		't'- value
			Post- test		Post- test		
			Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1.	Regulatory Function	40	15.72	2.94	25.1	2.76	15.66
2.	Interactional Function	40	15.9	2.33	25.3	1.76	23.5
3.	Personal Function	40	15.5	2.24	25.8	2.08	22.3
4.	Heuristic Function	40	15.8	1.12	25.4	1.77	30.9
5.	Imaginative Function	40	16.3	2.89	25.6	1.12	23.2
6.	Representative Function	40	16.2	1.79	25.8	1.95	23.4

When looking at the research on composition together with the effective schooling research, the following points can be made

- The composition research corroborates the general effective schooling research; what works in a general way also works in this specific curricular area. Some effective schooling research findings are, of course, more relevant than others to the process of teaching writing.
- There are no instances of out-and-out contradiction between the effective schooling research and the research on teaching writing.
- Those effective schooling research findings which are most relevant to composition instruction is those which emphasize the importance of:
 - Clarity of objectives
 - Continuity and sequencing of instruction
 - Opportunities for guided and independent practice (homework)
 - Alignment of practice activities with concepts studied
 - Frequent monitoring of student learning.

Conclusion

This comprehensive exploration delves into the significance of teaching composition in English education, examining diverse perspectives and the widely-used P-P-P model. Addressing both theoretical and practical aspects, it highlights the vital role of composition in language learning and communication. Through extensive literature review and empirical evidence, the paper underscores the effectiveness of process-oriented approaches and the need for alignment between research and practice. Ultimately, it advocates for pedagogical strategies that foster students' writing skills, empowering them as effective communicators in a globalized world.

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