

Why PPP won't (and shouldn't) go away

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IATEFL Birmingham 2016

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1. Introduction
2. Where does PPP come from?
3. Why does it endure?
4. Why was it rejected?
5. Is the rejection justified?
6. Conclusion

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(and shouldn't) go
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Structure of my talk

1. Introduction
2. Where does PPP come from?
3. Why is it so enduring / 'popular'?
4. Why was it rejected?
5. Is the rejection justified? (i.e. Does PPP Work?)
6. Conclusion – PPP shouldn't go away.

Anderson, J. 2016. 'Why practice makes perfect sense: The past, present and potential future of the PPP paradigm in language teacher education.' *ELT Education and Development* 19: in press.

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(and shouldn't) go
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Where does PPP come from?

- PPP isn't 'audiolingual' (e.g. Kumaravadivelu 2006) or 'behaviourist' (e.g. Lewis 1993)
- Originated in the transition period between SLT (Situational language teaching) and CLT in the UK in the mid-1970s
- Rixon & Smith (2012): many writers were experimenting with a freer, additional stage after presentation and controlled practice (e.g. *Strategies* Abbs, Ayton & Freebairn 1975)

Donn Byrne's (1976) Teaching Oral English coined the 3 stages: presentation, practice, production

- Byrne's *Presentation* stage was pretty much lecture mode; "The students listen and try to understand. They do little talking..."
- *Practice* should be "both *meaningful* and *memorable*".
- His *Production* phase was clearly communicative:
- '... no real learning can be assumed to have taken place until the students are able to use the language for themselves. At any level of attainment they need to be given regular and frequent opportunities to use the language freely, even if they sometimes make mistakes as a result. It is not that mistakes do not matter, but rather that free expression matters much more, and the greatest mistake the teacher can make is to hold his students back.' (Byrne 1976: 2)

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The origins of PPP – Julian Dakin's work

- *The Language Laboratory and Language Learning* (1973; Series editor: Donn Byrne).
- Dakin's earlier paradigm had 4 stages:
 1. Presentation
 2. Practice
 3. Development
 4. Testing.
- Dakin's *Presentation* emphasised: "demonstration or involvement", "interaction between teachers and pupils", even implying discovery learning; "...the teacher can sometimes even get the pupils to 'invent' the structure themselves." (1973: 4).
- *Practice* implies lock-step drills, but Dakin also stressed the difference between 'meaningless' and 'meaningful drills'.

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The origins of PPP – Julian Dakin's work

Development included relaxing...

- ‘...control over the pupils’ performance. The pupils are set tasks such as telling a story themselves, describing pictures, retailing (sic) their daily lives and past or future activities, expressing their own needs and preferences. The successful completion of such tasks calls for the use not only of the structure that has just been practised but of all that has been learnt before. The teacher cannot and should not interrupt the pupils’ performance by correcting every single mistake.’ (Dakin 1973: 5)
- Pit Corder’s 1967 paper on error correction was published ‘under the stimulus of work being done by’ Julian Dakin (Howatt 1984: 284).

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The origins of PPP – The 'weak version' of CLT

From Howatt (1984: 279)

- 'The weak version, which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching.'
- Similar paradigms to PPP were advanced by Willis (1981), Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) and Harmer (1983).

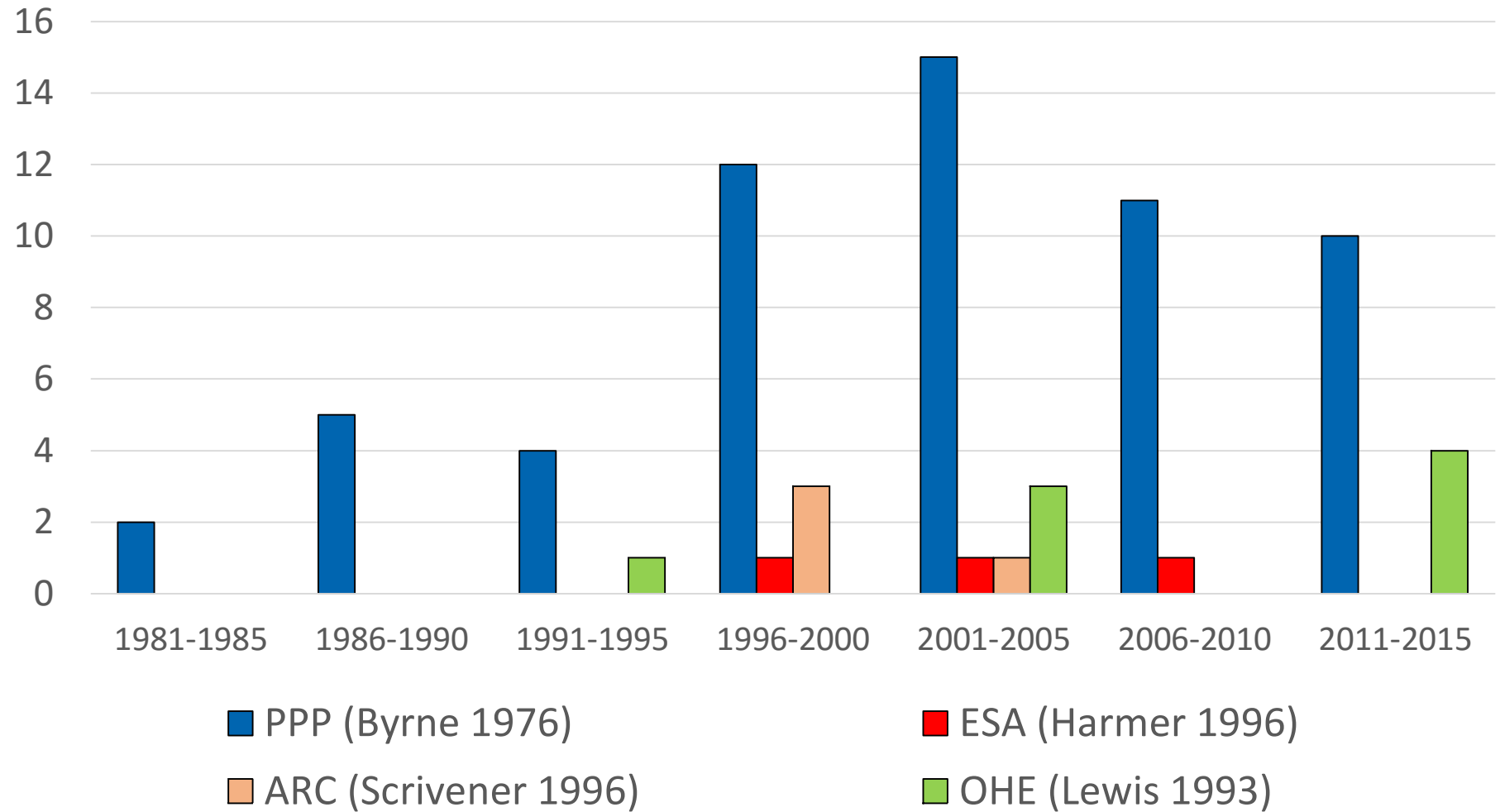
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Why does PPP endure?

References to 4 planning paradigms in ELT Journal



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Why was PPP rejected?

1. PPP is teacher-centred, causing teachers to neglect the needs of individual learners
 2. PPP is too prescriptive and inflexible, describing only one of many possible types of lesson
 3. **Most importantly:** Research from the 1970s and 1980s supported (at best) a weak interface between explicit and implicit knowledge. *Noticing*, *consciousness-raising* and *integrated form focus* were in fashion – this all supported TBL but not PPP
- (e.g. Ellis 1991, 1993; Lewis 1993; Scrivener 1996; Willis 1996; Skehan 1998, etc.)

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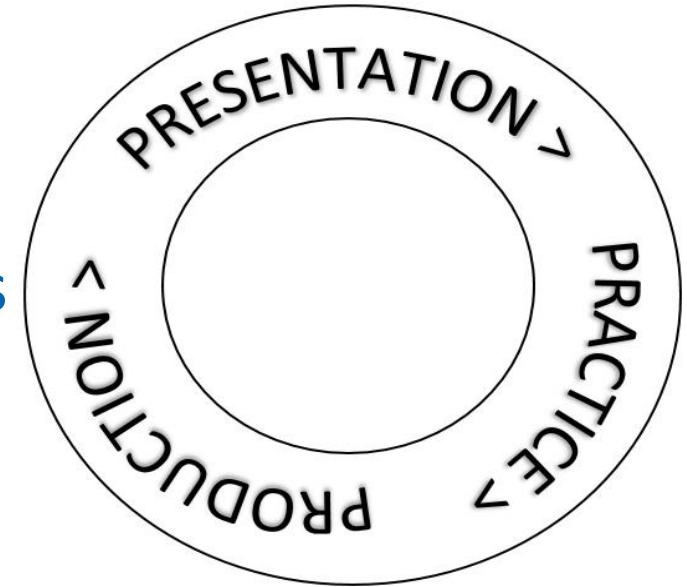
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Argument 2: PPP is too prescriptive and inflexible, describing only one of many possible types of lesson

Byrne saw PPP as flexible

From *Teaching Oral English*, 2nd edition

‘Since our main aim is to get the learners to communicate, we can reverse the sequence outlined above by first setting them tasks which will require them to communicate as best they can with the language at their disposal and then using the outcome as a way of deciding what new language needs to be presented and perhaps further practised.’ (Byrne 1986: 3)



Byrne's (1986) PPP cycle

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Argument 3: PPP is not supported by SLA research.

No longer true:

- ‘... focused L2 instruction results in large target-oriented gains, that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types, and that Focus on Form and Focus on Forms interventions result in equivalent and large effects’. (Norris & Ortega 2000: 417)
- ‘... the positive effects of explicit instruction on measures of spontaneous L2 production could be interpreted as support for the strong interface position and the argument that declarative (i.e., explicit) knowledge obtained via explicit instruction can be converted into procedural (i.e., implicit) knowledge with practice’ (Spada & Tomita 2010: 287 - effect sizes: $d = \underline{0.88}$ and $d = \underline{0.73}$)

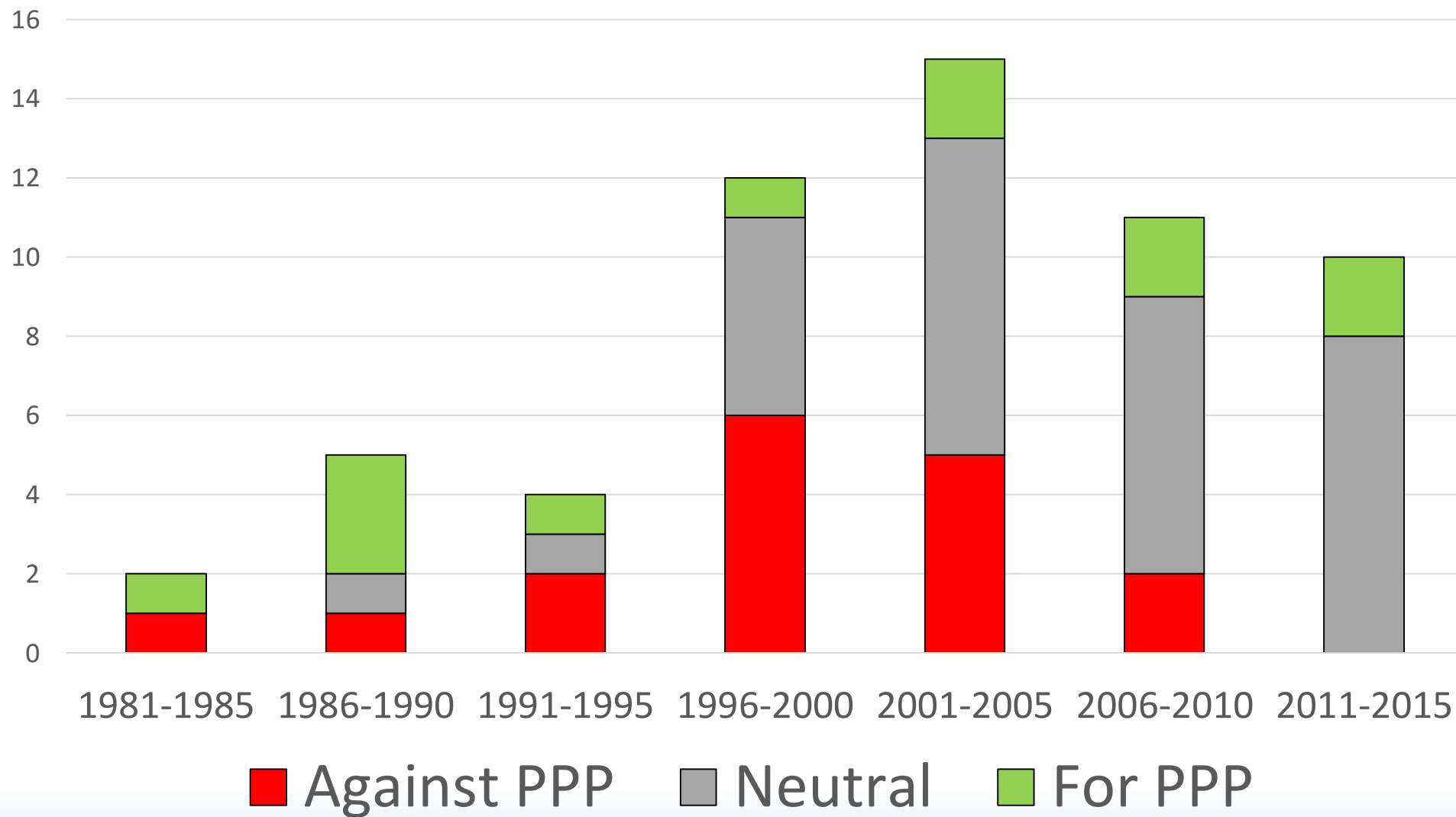
The future of PPP?

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Orientation of articles towards PPP in ELT Journal



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Conclusion

- **Disclaimer:** PPP is just one planning paradigm among many, and we need to combine these to ensure that students get both intensive and extensive input and output opportunities.
- PPP has always been *communicative*
- PPP is *learner-sensitive*.
- SLA research evidence can no longer be used to reject PPP.
- Rather than rejecting it, teacher educators should focus on helping teachers to understand and use PPP more effectively, especially in more challenging contexts (Anderson 2016).

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Thank you

- See my website for the slides to this talk:
www.jasonanderson.org.uk
- See my forthcoming paper in *ELT Education and Development* (19):
‘Why practice makes perfect sense: the past, present and potential future of the PPP paradigm in language teacher education’. *English Language Teaching Education and Development* 19: in press.
- See my ‘Speaking Games’ blog for the references:
<http://speakinggames.wordpress.com>
- Or email me for all of the above:
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