

## **Pedagogical Authority Practices of English Language Teaching in the Pandemic Time**

**Ni Ni Hlaing<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Head of English Department (Retired), Mandalay University of Distance Education, Mandalay Myanmar

E-mail: ninihlaing59@gmail.com

**Received:** July 24, 2023

**Revised:** August 28, 2023

**Accepted:** August 30, 2023

### **Abstract**

A well-thought-out pedagogy is important to develop the quality of teaching and the way students learn. This study explores the practices of pedagogical approach in English language teaching by using pedagogical authority (PA), which has three dimensions: didactic (teaching particularly in having moral instruction), pedagogic (relating to teaching), and deontic (expressing responsibility or commitment) in university context of Myanmar. The author surveyed six female teachers and conducted in-depth written interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of their emotions and experiences. The participants had different durations of teaching experience. The study was conducted in the department of English at five different Arts and Science universities during the 2021/2022 academic year. According to the interview responses of English language teachers who have variable degrees and length of teaching experience, the study found different PA practices demonstrating the three dimensions. Findings show that language teaching during and after the pandemic covered all the three dimensions of PA practiced in university contexts. It suggests the presence of three types of interaction or relation from which pedagogical authority comes: didactic interaction, pedagogical interaction, and deontic interaction. PA is established during the teacher-student interactions which is also thought to increase the quality of teaching and learning processes. It was also found that didactic and pedagogic interactions were identified as very important aspects of virtual classrooms in the early time of the Pandemic, while pedagogic and deontic were found to be more frequent in face-to-face classrooms of post-pandemic time. The findings of this study will support language teachers to rethink their teaching practices in the new post-pandemic time. Additionally, it will contribute to available practices for language teaching during urgent situations.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, pandemic time, pedagogical authority (PA)

### **Introduction**

Generally defined as the theory and practice of teaching, pedagogy refers to the methodology and process of how instructors approach teaching and learning using a specific curriculum with specific goals in mind. Pedagogical practices are practices educators have that support students' lifelong learning. Pedagogical Authority (PA) is created in classrooms, in teacher-student interaction and in the spirit of their physical presence, confidence, appreciation, responsibility and respect. PA is an interactional construct created during teacher-student interactions which is also thought to increase the quality of teaching and learning processes.

According to Harjunen (2009), three dimensions of PA were practiced in only university contexts.

It suggests the presence of three types of interaction or relation from which pedagogical authority comes: didactic interaction (teaching particularly in having moral instruction), pedagogical interaction (relating to teaching), and deontic interaction (expressing duty or obligation). Data collected from teachers' interviews are investigated and how they establish this view of authority. Didactic interaction means the teacher's efforts to facilitate learning and guide students toward learning resources that lead to high levels of autonomy and motivation. Pedagogical interaction refers to the personal or kind relationship between teachers and students, whereas deontic interaction refers to managing the classroom and dealing with unexpected situations. Studies have highlighted the importance of encouraging language learners to increase their level of autonomy amongst these learners, particularly in virtual learning environment. (Chen & Kent, 2020; Inayati et al. 2021; Villamizar & Mejia, 2019). However, concerning the implementation of PA, a few studies have investigated the encouragement of English language learners in online contexts.

More research on pedagogical authority resulting from these relations in classroom settings is needed to account for the critical educational events.

### **Pedagogical Authority (PA)**

Authority, a fundamental part of the teaching–studying–learning process, is a challenging and poorly understood component of classroom life. It can be said that pedagogical authority is constructed in classrooms, in teacher–student interaction and in the spirit of their physical presence, confidence, appreciation, responsibility and respect, and in the way they both relate to the content and norms. Based on the tradition and classroom interaction, there are three types of interaction or relation from which pedagogical authority comes: didactic interaction, pedagogical interaction, and deontic interaction (Andriivna et al., 2020). Depending on how these relations are played in the classroom, they may develop into pedagogical authority. The availability of various educational platforms and social networks, which took place in face-to-face classrooms, made teaching and learning effective and increased students' motivation and confidence, owing to the richness of teaching materials and information resources (Fitria, 2020), which fits under the didactic interaction. Medina (2021) has emphasized the advantages of relationship in the classroom (i.e., the second dimension: pedagogic interaction). Finally, a few studies have addressed the issue of class management either before or after the pandemic (i.e. the third dimension: deontic interaction) (Ishino & Okada, 2018).

### **Challenges of Transitioning from Face-to-face Teaching to Online Teaching**

Teachers who suddenly switch to online teaching may be confused about what and how to go about things. With no clear timetable, lesson plan, books and resources teachers may find it challenging to decide what activities to do, how to engage and motivate students. Chung and Choi (2021) recognized the challenges of transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during the growing phases of the pandemic which led to less interaction. Harjunen's (2009, 2011) components of the three PA dimensions do not represent a novelty in the field of language teaching

and learning. In the past, several studies have investigated the encouragement of English language learners in online contexts. Studies have highlighted the importance of encouraging language learners to increase their level of autonomy amongst these learners, particularly in virtual learning environment. (Chen & Kent, 2020; Inayati et al. 2021; Villamizar & Mejia, 2019). Concerning the implementation of PA in online environments, technologies seem to reduce teachers' presence and in essence, the importance of PA practices since students can gain knowledge from other sources.

### **Research Objectives**

According to the researchers' knowledge and experience of language teaching policies and approaches in Myanmar, there is no direct mention of PA. Some studies stress the need for language learners' empowerment through the implementation of critical thinking pedagogies (Alzahrani & Elyas, 2017). New English language course books for universities are designed by well-known publishers (MacMillan, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press), which locate the emphasis on thinking skills as well as the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Teachers' training courses focus on implementing thinking skills pedagogy; therefore, teachers may practice PA unconsciously because this term is not directly referred to in the Myanmar policy of language education, even though its three dimensions are addressed in the literature. The present study answers the following questions:

- 1) What PA practices are presented in language classrooms as reflected by EFL teachers in the early time of Pandemic?
- 2) What PA practices are offered in language classrooms after returning to campus as reflected by EFL teachers in the post Pandemic time?
- 3) What might prevent or help the implementation of PA practices in transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during the COVID pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus was confirmed to have reached Myanmar on 23 March 2020. On 31 March 2020, the Committee for Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) was formed by President to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Although the government rapidly implemented containment measures and public health responses, the country had experienced one of the most severe COVID-19 outbreaks in Southeast Asia by late 2020. The UN raised concerns about Myanmar's vulnerability to the pandemic due to its weak healthcare infrastructure. So, the period between March 2020 to late March 2020 has been regarded as early time of Pandemic in Myanmar.

### **Methodology**

This is an exploratory case study design which adapts the qualitative approach. The researcher was interested in exploring PA practices to acquire a deeper insight into EFL teachers' experiences during COVID pandemic. The motivation for an exploratory case study approach was provided by the lack of previous research on the comprehensive implementation of PA that includes the didactic, pedagogic, and deontic dimensions in EFL classrooms, combined by the changing contexts explained in the introduction due to the pandemic in Myanmar.

## Participants and Research Context

The sampling technique chosen for this research was convenient sampling. Six female teachers accepted to participate and signed the consent forms. The participants had different durations of teaching experience. Two participants were senior teachers with Ph.D. degree holders. Teacher participants from the department of English participated in this study. During the interview, they provided qualitative comments regarding pedagogical authority practices of English language teaching in the Pandemic time.

**Table 1**

*Teacher Participants and Their Duration of Teaching Experience (n=6)*

Sr No	Teachers	Educational Qualification	Gender	Teaching experience
1	A	M.A. (English)	Female	17 years
2	B	M.A. (English)	Female	17 years
3	C	M.A. (English)	Female	16 years
4	D	Ph.D.	Female	27 years
5	E	Ph.D.	Female	20 years
6	F	M.A. (English)	Female	11 years

The study was conducted in the department of English at five Arts and Science universities during the first semester of 2021 to the second semester of the academic year 2022 when the Ministry of Education announced that university students should return to campus because of the low number of COVID cases in Myanmar.

## Methods

To determine the teachers' practices for their learners' empowerment through a PA lens, interviews were considered more appropriate for this study than the scale measures that require teachers to have prior knowledge about the PA concept and practices. Interviews are an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Interviews are useful when the topic of inquiry relates to issues that require complex questioning and considerable probing. Teachers were asked to reflect on their online teaching experiences in relation to Harjunen's (2009) three dimensions of PA. They were given guiding questions to enable the writing of the reflections. The interviews were conducted at the end of semester 1, in which teachers were asked to evaluate the entire experience of online teaching and in-campus teaching after return, considering their reflections.

## Data Analysis

The present study clearly adapts the concept of PA into the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, as a form of pedagogy practices, and thus will classify language teaching practices under the three components of PA to provide a comprehensive collection. Content analysis was used as a qualitative method of data analysis in this research. Some interview data help the researcher count instances of codes. The analysis helps researchers with large amounts of textual data, as content

analysis is useful for determining how words and word patterns are used in context. The interview protocol framework is comprised of four-phases: Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions, Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation, Phase 3: Receiving feedback on interview protocols and Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol and the research questions. After that, interview data were coded for significant characteristics that reflect the PA interaction's three dimensions: didactic interaction, pedagogical interaction, and deontic interaction.

## Results

The PA concept with its three dimensions provides a complete interactional practice of empowering learners during the COVID pandemic. The following data responses reflect PA practices during the time of COVID.

### Phase 1: PA Practices of English Language Teaching in the Early Time of Pandemic

Phase 1 explores whether teachers find online platforms useful for engaging students and to continue with the blended mode for successful teaching and learning experiences even after the pandemic ends. In the early time of the pandemic, teaching was fully online. The study found various pedagogical authority practices representing the three dimensions in this stage based on the interviews with language teachers who have varying degrees and length of teaching experience. Language teaching during the early time of the pandemic covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA. However, didactic, and pedagogic interactions were found more frequently in language classrooms during the early time of the Pandemic. Sample responses of the participants on three dimensions are as follows.

#### Didactic Interaction

In didactic method of teaching, the teacher gives instructions to the students and the students are mostly passive listeners. It is a teacher-centered method of teaching and is content-oriented. Neither the content nor the knowledge of the teacher are questioned. The instructor participants agreed that virtual learning environments offered their students with some chances to practice critical thinking skills while also showcasing more autonomy. The reflective questions and sample responses were as follows:

1) What motivational strategies do you use with your students to engage them with blended learning?

*"I could construct relationship and show real interest to be enthusiastic and professional. I try to show a high level of skills and interest in my subject. I encourage my students a sense of belonging, community, and safety. I also highlight the long-term effects of learning and the future benefits."* (Teacher A)

2) How do you make sure that you have addressed your students' needs?

*"Some strategies for studying current knowledge of the students such as end-of-topic tests, questionnaires, mini-quizzes, creating concept maps, knowledge grids, asking key questions or discussing contextual awareness etc were used."* (Teacher B)

3) What do you do to develop the thinking skills of your students?

*“To increase critical thinking skills of my students, I often ask questions. It is seen that students were uncertain to ask questions in the classroom. So, I let them participate in discussions. Also let them practice active learning and study with the help of examples.”* (Teacher C)

4) How do your above-stated online practices differ from in-class practices after returning to campus?

*“In our situation, online learning delivers the content through text, images, or videos, and the students are asked to complete an online assessment or other activities. The teaching can be set at any specific time, but there's limited interaction. On the other hand, traditional learning has a fixed schedule and place.”* (Teacher D)

Responses of the participants suggest the presence of didactic interactions in the early time of the pandemic. They discussed that they have some didactic interactions by using moral instructions relating to their teaching. Depending on how these relations are enacted in the virtual classroom, it may change into pedagogical authority. According to them, the teachers try to facilitate learning and guide students toward learning resources that lead to high levels of autonomy and motivation.

## **Pedagogical Interaction**

Pedagogical values refer to the worldviews, beliefs, perspectives, and biases about teaching and learning that underpin our specific educational practice. Students are provided choice of readings, assignments, and assessment tools in a class. It refers to a pedagogy that places students at the centre of the teaching-learning process. Students are more active and participative, and the process turns knowledge into a negotiation between teachers and students. The reflective questions and sample responses were as follows:

1) How do you build rapport with your students and emphasize mutual respect in your online teaching?

*“I usually emphasize mutual respect in my online teaching. In the classroom, we treat each other with dignity and respect, listen to each other's points of view, recognise that there may be disagreement, keep discussion and comments on the topic”.* (Teacher E)

2) How do your above-stated online practices differ from in-class practices during the pandemic and after returning to campus?

*“According to my experience, face-to-face learning methods usually only involve traditional learning materials such as textbooks and lecture notes. An online learning session is more interactive in comparison, with many different types of training.”* (Teacher F)

Responses of the participants suggest the presence of pedagogical interactions in the early time of the Pandemic. They discussed that they have pedagogical interactions by building rapport with their students and emphasizing mutual respect in online teaching. Depending on how these relations are enacted in the virtual classroom, it may change into pedagogical authority. Teacher participants show the personal or kind relationship between teachers and students.

## Deontic Interaction

Deontic authority is an interactional achievement, claimed, displayed, and negotiated at the level of the turn-by-turn sequential unfolding of the interaction. The reflective questions and sample responses were as follows:

1) What do you do with your students to make them feel they are responsible learners and citizens (e.g., following university rules, class attendance rate, and submitting assignments on time)?

*“One of the most effective ways to help students take responsibility for their learning is through goal setting. When students set goals and achieve those goals, they build self-confidence and become more willing to try again. But it was not easy to make them feel they are responsible learners and citizens in following university rules, class attendance rate, and submitting assignments on time in the virtual classroom situation.”* (Teacher A)

2) What strategies do you adopt for managing the classroom when things go wrong or when you need to decide?

*“Teachers should implement such classroom management strategies for the best chance of succeeding at managing their classrooms as: leading by example, allowing students to participate in rulemaking, and holding students accountable for breaking rules. But we could not do most of them in online teaching.”* (Teacher B)

3) Do you think that students should take part in these decisions? Explain your answer?

*“Learning decision making skills to make their own choices helps students to be more independent, responsible, and confident. It gives them a sense of control over their lives, reducing anxiety and promoting resilience. Furthermore, it encourages self-exploration and helps them to set their values. But we could not do most of them in online teaching. I don’t think that students will not take part in these decisions in the virtual classroom situations.”* (Teacher C)

4) How do your above-stated online practices differ from in-class practices during the pandemic and after returning to campus?

*“We find online platforms are not effective for engaging students in a relationship characterized by equal power and therefore, we couldn’t stay with the blended mode for successful teaching and learning experiences even after the pandemic ends.”* (Teacher D)

Responses of the participants suggest the presence of a few deontic interactions in the early time of the Pandemic. They discussed that they have a few deontic interactions as there are many challenges in following university rules, class attendance rate, and submitting assignments on time with blended mode. Apart from the effective use of technology, factors such as the availability of suitable facilities, infrastructure, and the financial state of the students also play an important role in online learning. Depending on how these factors are enacted in the virtual classroom, it may change into pedagogical authority. According to the discussion, teachers try to manage the classroom and dealing with unexpected situations.

## Phase 2: PA Practices of English Language Teaching in the Post-Pandemic Time

After returning to campus, when teaching in face-to-face classrooms of post-pandemic time, the study found various pedagogical authority practices representing the three dimensions in this stage. Language teaching after the pandemic also covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA. However, pedagogic, and deontic interactions were found to be more frequent in the face-to-face classrooms of post-pandemic time.

### Didactic Interaction

Didactics tends to be teacher centered. A common didactical strategy is a teacher presenting a lecture directly to their students. Pedagogy, however, is learner-centered and involves coming up with teaching strategies that focus on how specific students learn in different ways. The reflective questions and sample responses in phase 2 were as follows:

1) What motivational strategies do you use with your students to engage them in teaching face-to-face classrooms of post-pandemic time?

*“Teachers play a vital role in creating an environment that supports students' learning. They often do this through their support for students' autonomy. But the pandemic's “no clear end in sight” and “uncertainty about the future” may be partly to blame to decreased motivation. Students need to lay out smart goals and plan specific daily tasks.”* (Teacher E)

2) How do you make sure that you have addressed your students' needs?

*“These strategies may be helpful for meeting all students' needs. But I am not sure.*

- i. Collaborate with colleagues.*
- ii. Cultivate consistency.*
- iii. Develop a student-centered mindset.*
- iv. Set aside time to focus on study skills and extra support.*
- v. Use multiple forms of assessment.*
- vi. Draw on other professionals' expertise.*

*Partner with families.”* (Teacher F)

3) What do you do to develop the thinking skills of your students?

*“We should build in opportunities for students to find connections in learning. We also should encourage students to make connections to a real-life situation and identifying patterns is a great way to practice their critical thinking skills. However, developing the thinking skills of our students using real-world scenarios is not easy during the class hour.”* (Teacher A)

4) How do your above-stated online practices differ from in-class practices after returning to campus?

*“The classroom environment is usually more dynamic and allows active debates and participation, whereas online learning may not have this much engagement. Online classes usually have one-way communication, in which the teacher provides required materials and instructions to the students.”* (Teacher B)

## Pedagogical Interaction

Pedagogy is the combination of teaching methods (what instructors do), learning activities (what instructors ask their students to do), and learning assessments (the assignments, projects, or tasks that measure student learning). The reflective questions and sample responses were as follows:

1) How do you build rapport with your students and emphasize mutual respect in your teaching?

*“In my opinion, rapport is the relationship that the learners have with the teachers and vice versa. It is a class where there is a positive, enjoyable, and respectful relationship between teacher and learners and between learners’ themselves. I make my classroom a place they want to be. I provide ample praise, encouragement, and affection, so much so that they feel genuinely liked, cared about, and important to me. I demonstrate genuine respect through the things I say and do, and I will earn their respect in return.”* (Teacher C)

2) How do your above-stated in-class practices differ from online practices during the pandemic and after returning to campus?

*“The classroom environment is usually more dynamic and allows active debates and participation, whereas online learning may not have this much engagement. Online classes usually have one-way communication, in which the teacher provides required materials and instructions to the students.”* (Teacher D)

## Deontic Interaction

Someone’s “deontic authority” is their right to determine others’ future actions. It can be acquiesced to or resisted. We will deal with occasions when the participants agree about who has the right to determine the future actions in question. We will call this “deontic congruence.” These cases represent the most common sequences of our data collection. They offer the basis by reference to which we subsequently analyze the instances of “deontic incongruence.” The reflective questions were as follows:

1) What do you do with your students to make them feel they are responsible learners and citizens (e.g., following university rules, class attendance rate, and submitting assignments on time)?

*“Strategies include, but are not limited to, question-and-answer sessions, discussion, interactive lecture (in which students respond to or ask questions), quick writing assignments, hands-on activities, and experiential learning were often used.”* (Teacher E)

2) What strategies do you adopt for managing the classroom when things go wrong or when you need to decide?

*“Classroom management techniques can help prevent disruptive behaviour from occurring in the first place. Setting clear expectations for student behaviour – When students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to behave appropriately.”* (Teacher F)

3) Do you think that students should take part in these decisions? Explain your answer?

*“Learning decision making skills to make their own choices helps students be more independent, responsible, and confident. It gives them a sense of control over their lives, reducing anxiety and promoting resilience. Furthermore, it encourages self-exploration and helps them to solidify their values.”* (Teacher A)

4) How do your above-stated online practices differ from in-class practices during the pandemic and after returning to campus?

*“Online learning is more flexible. In addition, as one can attend virtual classes anywhere and anytime, students don't have to travel. At the same time, the physical classroom method involves in-person teaching and hands-on training from a professional, which is also necessary for specific situations.”* (Teacher B)

In phase 2, responses of the participants suggest the presence of a few didactic interactions in the post Pandemic. They discussed that they have a few didactic interactions as there are many challenges on availability of various educational platforms and social networks which fits under the didactic interaction. Depending on how these factors are enacted in the face-to-face classroom, it may change into pedagogical authority. According to the discussion, teachers try to manage the classroom and dealing with unexpected situations.

### **Phase 3: Challenges of Transitioning from Face-to-face Teaching to Online Teaching**

While it was more than two years removed from the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning are forever changed. The pandemic caused a rush to remote and online teaching that many of teachers were not prepared for. However, at the same time, it necessitated to be flexible, creative, and explore pedagogical techniques that teachers would not previously engage with or prioritize. Now that it was moving into post-pandemic teaching, educators need to remember certain things for their instructional approach. Participants' interview responses in phase 2 include the following.

- i. *“My students were reluctant to participate during the early period of the pandemic. The students had some pressure because they knew the teacher was there for monitoring.”* (Teacher C)
- ii. *“In a virtual classroom, teachers and students have fewer opportunities to interact. Without careful planning, they have fewer opportunities for academic discussions and cooperative learning.”* (Teacher D)
- iii. *“Some significant challenges to blended learning models include the expense of technology, inadequate training, technological issues, the need to adapt content for blended learning, decreased motivation, and weakened relationships between students and teachers.”* (Teacher E)
- iv. *“Face to face class meetings occur at a specific time in a specific location according to a set schedule. When in class, the instructor typically sets the pace. Online learning is up to the student to set their own pace for much of the work that needs to be completed in an online course.”* (Teacher F)

- v. *“This lack of motivation stems directly from the many other challenges that online students face, including a lack of interaction with peers, difficulty learning in a virtual format and distracting home environments.” (Teacher A)*
- vi. *“Communication barriers exist in any communication process. They are greater in distance education due to physical distance between members, insufficient technology skills, difficulties using media, need for more human interaction, time constraints and restrictions, and lack of experience with distance education.” (Teacher B)*

According to the, data analysis some teachers highlighted the students’ reluctance to participate as a common challenge related to online participation. The increased use of online learning makes students rely on technology instead of interacting and communicating with others. It decreases the growth of communication skills and results in increased social isolation. Face-to-face interactions are mainly synchronous, meaning they occur naturally. The listener students has have direct receipt and a quick response. Online communication can be synchronous with rapid-fire responses, but it can also be asynchronous. Some challenges mentioned by the participants are inability to submit on time, difficulty in reading and comprehension, personal teenage problems, poor Wi-Fi connections, and inability to comprehend the lessons.

## **Discussion**

Concerning the implementation of PA in online environments, technologies seem to minimize teachers’ presence and in essence, the importance of PA practices since students can obtain knowledge from other sources. It was also observed that online teaching can be a manageable environment because of the flexibility of asynchronous tools, availability of learning materials, and setting out discussions and exams. However, they also discussed the negative aspects of online education including technical problems, lack of motivation, distractions at home, social isolation, lack of technology skills, and digital readiness. On the other hand, positive outcomes of online education were also identified: easy access anytime and via mobiles, which then boosted the confidence of shy students. On the contrary, it was suggested that it was the institution’s policy that shaped the positive experiences of online teaching and learning.

## **PA Practices during COVID Pandemic**

In response to research question 1 (What PA practices are available during the COVID pandemic?), the results showed that the teachers were indeed applying PA practices without admitted conscious knowledge of the PA approach. The interview responses present some PA practices.

## **In-Class PA Practices after Return to Campus in the Post Pandemic**

This sub-section addresses the results of questions (2):

2) What PA practices are available in language classrooms after returning to campus as reflected by EFL teachers in the post pandemic?

Teachers were instructed to speak about their experiences of practicing PA in classrooms after returning to campus and compare these experiences with their PA practices in the online environment during the pandemic. After returning to campus,

teachers continued to apply PA practices. They agree that their teaching practices have not changed much, but they do believe that in-class teaching creates a stronger bond with students due to physical presence and interaction.

### **Challenges of Transitioning from Face-to-face Teaching to Online Teaching**

This sub-section addresses the results of (3):

3) What might prevent or facilitate the implementation of PA practices in online and on-campus language classrooms during the pandemic?

They find that in-class learning is a more fertile learning environment for practicing the target language than in virtual learning environment. Not even a single teacher found significant differences between their PA practices in online or on-campus classrooms. However, they did highlight some challenges and advantages of each teaching mode, such as the efforts and flexibility of timing. One participant reveals that PA practices in virtual learning environment do not differ much from in-class practices, but he would rather say online teaching requires a double effort to engage all students in the learning process.

### **Research Question 1: What PA practices are presented in language classrooms as reflected by EFL teachers in the early time of pandemic?**

The findings show that each phase of PA implementation during the pandemic has its advantages and disadvantages, whether fully online mode or blended in-campus mode. Regarding the first research question asking about practicing PA during the full online shift, teachers practice PA in online classes to different levels. Also, online environments were found to provide a fertile space for learners to practice critical thinking. The study found various pedagogical authority practices representing the three dimensions in the two stages. According to the findings, language teaching during the pandemic covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA. PA is created during teacher-student interactions which is also thought to increase the quality of teaching and learning processes. It was also found that didactic and pedagogic interactions were identified as very important aspects of virtual classrooms in the early time of the Pandemic. This finding is in agreement with Al-Nofaie's (2020) study. Giving students more space for thinking and expressing themselves had their reflections on their increased motivation and autonomy in online learning, which supports similar findings by (Andriivna et al., 2020; Fitria, 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021). This finding suggests that the features of virtual learning environment that increase the levels of students' autonomy and critical thinking should continue after the pandemic ends. Deontic interactions were not apparent in the participants' experiences as teachers faced some challenges during full online teaching, such as poor internet connection.

**Research Question 2: What PA practices are offered in language classrooms after returning to campus as reflected by EFL teachers in the post pandemic time?**

The findings confirm that it is possible to implement the PA practices efficiently after the pandemic. However, when it came to comparing in-class and online teaching, the teachers were in favour of face-to-face interactions that occur in real classes, and they related their preference to physical presence and interactions (Chung & Choi, 2021). Regarding classroom management, teachers experienced a difference between deontic interactions in online and in-class contexts. Some researchers have acknowledged the issue of time flexibility (Khafaga, 2021). In general, the teachers' appreciation of online teaching experiences in which they managed to implement PA practices encouraged them to continue with blended teaching after returning to campus. This indicates that virtual learning environment and face-to-face teaching need to be combined after the pandemic ends for sustainable teaching practices. Notably, PA practices, whether implemented online or in blended teaching, are not impervious to limitations, such as technical issues related to the speed of the internet, teachers limited or no understanding of the value of PA, and critical pedagogy in their classrooms. Based on the interviews with English language teachers who have varying degrees and length of teaching experience, the study found various pedagogical authority practices representing the three dimensions in the two stages. According to the findings, language teaching after the pandemic covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA. It was also found that pedagogic and deontic interactions were identified as very important aspects of face-to-face classrooms of post-pandemic time. The personal or kind relationship between teachers and students and managing the classroom and dealing with unexpected situations are found in the participants' discussions.

**Research Question 3: What might prevent or help the implementation of PA practices in transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during the COVID pandemic?**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it uses the practices of PA to provide a more holistic approach to implementing critical pedagogy that combines a supportive learning environment, students' needs, and balanced student-teacher relationships to increase learners' awareness of their agency, which has been identified as a gap in the literature. In addition, it reveals some practical aspects for utilizing both virtual and face-to-face teaching for sustainable EFL education by comparing PA practices during fully online teaching and face to face teaching. Thus, the study expands available literature on PA for other disciplines, more particularly during emergencies. The findings of this study may help enhance the awareness of language teachers of PA as a comprehensive practice of critical pedagogy during the pandemic and post-pandemic times. It may also inform future ELT classroom researchers who can then expand the scope of this study to include gender differences in practicing PA, age, and contexts with a wider sample. Therefore, future findings could lead to the design of a teaching guide for language teachers who teach during emergencies and for those who teach blended courses. Despite the merits of applying PA in EFL classrooms, the implementation of the three dimensions of PA can propose some challenges for EFL teachers. The component of each dimension requires teacher training to acquire the

skills needed for online and on-campus teaching. One limitation of this study is its inability to provide a generalizable finding due to the small number of participants; however, it is hoped that future studies investigate PA practices with a larger sample size to design a teaching guide for language teachers interested in critical pedagogy approaches or those who must teach during emergencies.

### **Implication**

According to Saini et al. (2020), pedagogical discussions on foreign language classrooms in the post-COVID time have been encouraged. The academic year 2021/2022 is marked with the decision made by many universities across the world to return to campuses fully or partly. Reopening universities was challenging since there were no risk-free strategies (Wrighton & Lawrence, 2020). Social distance was necessary in order to avoid infections, and this affected the quality of communication, particularly in large classrooms where teachers had to speak louder (Tran et al., 2021). Thus, this study aims to produce the attention of language teachers towards the importance of PA and the qualities it can bring into virtual or face-to-face classrooms, as the literature suggests. Factors that prevent or support the practices of PA for successful PA implementation, whether in online or on-campus classrooms, were identified in this study. In Myanmar, the return has been gradual since many universities have adopted the blended teaching mode. At most universities, on-campus lectures were activated more than the online mode in post Pandemic time. The researcher was interested in knowing whether teaching staff at the department of English at university were in favour of online teaching that was experienced during COVID lockdown or on-campus teaching that has been experienced after their return to campuses in terms of applying PA practices. It was found in this research that language teaching during and after the pandemic covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA. Identifying aspects of PA practices and the challenges of its implementation and blended environments for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs will not only deepen our understanding of successful teaching practices for educational sustainability but also widen the scope of critical pedagogy practices in EFL classrooms, since the PA concept fits under the critical pedagogy of language teaching. Like other global educational contexts, the transition to emergency online teaching in Myanmar was also full of challenges in the early stages of the pandemic. According to the findings, teachers and students have been trying to build a positive view because of its ease of use. The current study has also highlighted the importance of empowering language learners to increase their level of autonomy amongst these learners, particularly in virtual learning environment.

### **Recommendations**

This case study explores the implementation of the three dimensions of PA during the COVID pandemic and looks at two stages of teaching during the pandemic: The early stages of the COVID pandemic where teaching was fully online and after returning to campus in which teaching followed the on-campus mode. This study identifies various PA practices representing the three dimensions of PA in virtual learning environment during the early stage of COVID. A general finding was that the virtual learning environment provided a rich space for practicing critical thinking. However, there are common disadvantages that might lead to some disturbances, such as technical issues. Regarding PA practices after returning to campus, the participating

teachers continued to implement PA practices, as there were practices that represented the three dimensions of PA. Comparing the full online teaching experience and on-campus teaching experience through PA practices, the participants valued the aspects of didactic and pedagogic interactions of PA practices that occurred in both online and on-campus; however, they revealed that physical interaction remains a very significant aspect of pedagogic and deontic interactions in post Pandemic time. It was found that students' level of autonomy and increased motivation was more important in the virtual learning environment mode of teaching as compared with the on-campus mode. Further studies should expand the scope of critical pedagogy in EFL classrooms via introducing the PA dimensions for comprehensive implementation. It is hoped that the findings of this study will encourage EFL researchers to think of novel teaching practices, more particularly for teaching blended courses and teaching during the time of emergencies.

## References

- Al-Nofaie, H. (2020). Saudi university students' perceptions towards virtual education during Covid-19 pandemic: A case study of language learning via blackboard. *Arab World English Journal*, 11, 4-20. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.1>
- Alzahrani, B., & Elyas, T. (2017). The implementation of critical thinking in a Saudi EFL context: Challenges and opportunities. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 1, 133-141. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v1i2.21>
- Andriivna, B. O., Vasylyvna, K. O., Pavlivna, K. O., & Mykhaylivna, S. V. (2020). Using distance EdTech for remote foreign language teaching during the COVID19 lockdown in Ukraine. *Arab World English Journal: Special Issue on English in Ukrainian Context*, No. 3, 4-15. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/elt3.1>
- Chen, J., & Kent, S. (2020). Task engagement, learner motivation and avatar identities of struggling English language learners in the 3D virtual world. *System*, 88, Article ID: 102168.
- Chung, S. J., & Choi, L. J. (2021). The development of sustainable assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of the English language program in South Korea. *Sustainability*, 13, 4499. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084499>
- Fitria, T. N. (2020). Teaching English through online learning system during Covid-19 pandemic. *Pedagogy: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8, 138-148. <https://doi.org/10.32332/pedagogy.v8i2.2266>
- Harjunen, E. (2009). How do teachers view their own pedagogical authority? *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15, 109-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600802661345>
- Harjunen, E. (2011). Students' consent to a teacher's pedagogical authority. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 55, 403-424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2011.587325>
- Inayati, N., Karifianto, D. M., & Jarum, J. (2021). Student awareness, attitude, affordances, and challenges in online autonomous English language learning. *Bahasa dan Seni: Journal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Pengajarannya*, 49, 28-39. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um015v49i12021p28>

- Ishino, M., & Okada, Y. (2018). Constructing students' deontic status by use of alternative recognitional for student reference. *Classroom Discourse*, 9, 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2017.1407947>
- Khafaga, A. (2021). The perception of blackboard collaborate-based instruction by EFL majors/teachers amid COVID-19: A case study of Saudi universities. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17, 1160-1173. <https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.904145>
- Maican, M.-A., & Cocorada, E. (2021). Online foreign language learning in higher education and its correlates during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, 13, 781. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020781>
- Medina, S. A. L. (2021). An online English teaching experience during Covid-19 pandemic: preliminary findings. *Linguística Literaria*, 42, 203-220. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.lyl.n80a13>
- Saini, R., Kovács, G., Faridghasemnia, M., Mokayed, H., Adewumi, O., Alonso, P., Rakesh, S., & Liwicki, M. (2020). Pedagogical principles in the online teaching of text mining: A retrospection. *Proceedings of the Fifth Workshop on Teaching NLP*, 1-12. Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2021.teachingnlp-1.1>
- Tran, A., Kerkstra, R. L., Gardocki, S. L., & Papuga, S. C. (2021). Lessons learned: Teaching in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, Article ID: 690646. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.690646>
- Villamizar, A., & Mejía, G. (2019). Fostering learner autonomy and critical reflection through digital video-journals in a university foreign language course. *Reflective Practice*, 20, 187-200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2019.1575195>
- Wrighton, M. S., & Lawrence, S. J. (2020). Reopening colleges and universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 173, 664-665. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-4752>

**Author**

**Professor Ni Ni Hlaing** is a Retired Professor of English Department at MUDE, Myanmar. She taught English courses in Higher education for over 38 years. Professor Ni Ni Hlaing has been engaged in the research on English Literature, Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching since 1993. Her ideas have been published with more than 30 academic papers nationally and over 50 internationally. She is also a member of the Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science (MAAS) which is one and only national level research organization in Myanmar and an Education Expert of British Education Training and Technology in Asia (Bett Asia), UK.