

A Road Map to English Language Teaching in the Post-Pandemic Era: An Adaptation of Pedagogical Authority Approach

Haifa Al-Nofaie

Department of Foreign Languages, Taif University, Taif, KSA

Email: haifa.a@tu.edu.sa

How to cite this paper: Al-Nofaie, H. (2023). A Road Map to English Language Teaching in the Post-Pandemic Era: An Adaptation of Pedagogical Authority Approach. *Creative Education*, 14, 213-231.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2023.142015>

Received: December 31, 2022

Accepted: February 6, 2023

Published: February 9, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This case study expounds on the practices of critical pedagogical approach of English language teaching by introducing pedagogical authority, which has three dimensions: didactic, pedagogic, and deontic. The study specifically places its emphasis on the implementation during the COVID pandemic: The early time of the pandemic, when teaching was fully online, and after returning to campus, when teaching followed the blended mode. The study identified various pedagogical authority practices representing the three dimensions in the two stages based on the reflective journals and interviews with four language teachers, albeit to varying degrees depending on the length of teaching experience. Physical interaction was identified as a very important aspect of pedagogic and deontic interactions in face-to-face classrooms, while critical thinking was found to be more recurrent in virtual classrooms, which creates more space for didactic and pedagogic practices. The findings of this study will encourage language teachers to rethink their teaching practices in the new post-pandemic era. Additionally, it will contribute to available practices of critical pedagogy approach for language teaching during emergencies.

Keywords

COVID, Critical Pedagogy, Pedagogical Authority, Post-Pandemic, Interaction, Teaching English

1. Introduction

Pedagogical Authority (PA) is an interactional construct created during teacher-student interactions. This positive classroom component exemplifies respect,

confidence, and responsibility (Harjunen, 2009). PA is also believed to increase the quality of teaching and learning processes. Harjunen (2009) identified three dimensions of PA practiced in school contexts: didactic interaction, pedagogical interaction, and deontic interaction. Didactic interaction denotes the teacher's efforts to facilitate learning and guide students toward learning resources that lead to high levels of autonomy and motivation, whereas pedagogical interaction refers to the personal or humane relationship between teachers and students. On the other hand, deontic interaction refers to managing the classroom and dealing with unexpected situations (e.g. spur-of-the-moment decisions). Harjunen (2009) put forward a teacher-student-learning (TSL) framework to explain the relationship among these three dimensions.

Pedagogical authority is a possible goal, whose realization depends on the teacher's ability and desire to be a human being, as well as a teacher: an ethical, responsible, caring, and just educator who realizes his/her task and moral values through a set of didactic, pedagogical and deontic characteristics present in these three interactional spaces in the classroom. (Harjunen, 2009. p. 110)

Most of the available studies on PA have focused on the context of school education or college levels, in mother tongues, (e.g., Afonso et al., 2018; Gil-Madrona et al., 2020; Harjunen 2009; Harjunen, 2011; McCullough, 2020; Zamora-Poblete et al., 2020; Zamora & Zeron, 2010). 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. There are a few reflective calls for implementing PA in foreign language contexts (e.g., Kutala, 2021; YobouÃ & Michel, 2018). Available studies in EFL contexts indirectly refer to some aspects of PA (i.e., didactic, pedagogic, or deontic) as practices of critical pedagogy approach (e.g., Bora, 2020; Afonso et al., 2018). The present study explicitly adapts the concept of PA into the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, as a form of critical pedagogy practices, and thus will classify language teaching practices under the three components of PA in order to provide a comprehensive repertoire. Pedagogical discussions in foreign language classrooms in the post-COVID era have been encouraged (Saini et al., 2020). Despite the richness of literature on EFL teaching during the COVID pandemic, the author of this study could not identify studies in the field of education in mother tongue or EFL contexts that compare the practices of PA, including its three dimensions, in online and on-campus environments, which marks another significance point. The availability of such studies, especially amidst the pandemic, will allow language educationalists to examine whether teachers find online platforms useful for engaging students in a relationship characterized by equal power and therefore, continue with the blended mode for successful teaching and learning experiences even after the pandemic ends. In addition, such studies aim to elicit the attention of language teachers towards the importance of PA and the merits it can bring into virtual or face-to-face classrooms, as the literature suggests. Finally, identifying factors that inhibit or reinforce the practices of PA might in-

form EFL teacher practices for successful PA implementation, whether in online or on-campus classrooms.

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). In Saudi Arabia, the return has been gradual since many universities have adopted the blended teaching mode. At some universities, the online mode was activated more than on-campus lectures and vice versa. The researcher was interested in knowing whether teaching staff at the department of English language at a Saudi university were in favor of online teaching that was experienced during COVID lockdown or on-campus teaching that has been experienced after their return to campuses in 2021 in terms of applying PA practices. Harjunen's (2009) framework inspired the design of this study. Identifying aspects of PA practices and the challenges of its implementation in VLE 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. Against this backdrop, the present study answers the following questions:

- 1) What evidence of PA practices is available in online language classrooms as reflected by EFL teachers during the COVID pandemic?
- 2) What evidence of PA practices is available in language classrooms after returning to campus as reflected by EFL teachers during the COVID pandemic?
- 3) What might inhibit or facilitate the implementation of PA practices in online and on-campus EFL classrooms during the COVID pandemic?

The issue of inequality and learners' empowerment in foreign language classrooms has been raised earlier by some language educationalists (Benesch, 1999; Pennycook, 2001). These educationalists have adapted critical pedagogy, a notion proposed by Freire (1970), who stresses the importance of placing learners in powerful positions for raising learners' critical consciousness, also called learners' conscientization of their socio-political surroundings in classrooms and in the larger society (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Although critical pedagogy appeared in the 1970s, it was introduced into the field of second language (L2) only by the late 1980s, coinciding with the development of the communicative approaches in L2 teaching (Canagarajah, 2005). The student-centered critical pedagogy scrutinizes teaching practices that report power, variances, or social stratification, including political environments of many countries are characterized with issues of diversity, inclusion, immigration, multiculturalism, and globalization and preparing students for intercultural communicative competence (Giroux, 2004; McLaren, 2015; Johnson & Randolph, 2015).

Identifying aspects of PA practices and the challenges of its implementation in Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and blended environments for EFL programs will widen the scope of critical pedagogy practices in EFL classrooms, since the PA concept fits under the critical pedagogy of language teaching.

As evidenced from the above discussion, interaction is the key concept in critical pedagogy (Auerbach, 1991; Canagarajah, 1996). The PA concept with its three dimensions provides a comprehensive interactional practice of empowering learners which is congruent with critical pedagogy and its goals of unraveling problematic beliefs and practices which may lead to marginalization, particularly during the COVID pandemic when students may feel isolated. The following paragraphs succinctly elucidate the examples of studies that have implemented critical pedagogy in EFL classrooms. Critical pedagogy studies focus on creating spaces for engagement and opportunities to examine sociocultural relations in language learning (e.g. Appleby, 2009; Barry, 2011). The proliferation of communication technologies has allowed teachers and learners to communicate relevant sociopolitical issues for more productive interactions.

As a case in point, Kuo's (2009) work examines the potential of picture books to communicate social issues among Taiwanese EFL students, highlighting the benefits of using personal and cultural resources that lead to critical responses in addressing discrimination. Tracing the influence of critical pedagogy in Indonesian EFL classrooms, Mambu's (2011) work asserts that educators have used the approach in developing advocacies through news editorials and literary appreciation pieces that counter dominant voices in society. In the Philippines, poster essays were used to elicit critical responses related to labor, migration, and gendered discourse (Valdez, 2012). While critical pedagogy has also been implemented in Asian English language classrooms. There are common thematic trends for the benefit of researchers and educators (Valdez, 2020). For example, critical pedagogy values diversity as a resource and not as an obstacle.

The critically oriented English language classroom values differences in dialogue. In addition, critical pedagogy depends on the potentiality of technology as a tool to bridge the gap between time and distance by providing various platforms and resources to negotiate ideas and maximize opportunities for engagement. While various methods exist when it comes to implementing critical pedagogy in Asian classrooms, developing critical awareness among learners sensitizes their notions of agency. Thus, to increase learners' awareness of their agency, it is important to embrace a more holistic approach to implementing critical pedagogy that combines a supportive learning environment, students' needs, and balanced student-teacher relationships (Valdez, 2020). Studies have researched critical pedagogy techniques in non-Asian contexts in foreign language classrooms. For example, Bora (2020) examined the developmental effects of drama transcripts on oral performance in Italy. Having demonstrated some research-based teaching practices for empowering lan-

guage learners', the present study reveals that PA, including its three interactional dimensions, contributes to the balanced implementation of critical pedagogy. The following paragraphs provide an overview of EFL studies that reflects PA practices, although not directly referred to as PA practices, during the time of COVID.

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 empowerment of language learners in online contexts. For instance, studies have highlighted the importance of empowering language learners to increase their level of autonomy amongst these learners, particularly in VLEs (i.e. the first dimension: the didactic component) (e.g. Chen & Kent, 2020; Inayati et al. 2021; Villamizar & Mejía, 2019). Chung and Choi (2021) acknowledged the challenges of transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during the nascent phases of the pandemic which led to less interaction. Their study suggested some useful strategies to increase interaction and social presence, such as asking students to turn their cameras on and show empathy for isolation. These strategies are aligned with the pedagogic dimensions of PA practices. Regarding the effects of teaching experience on online teaching strategies during COVID, Bailey and Lee (2020) observed that experienced teachers could tackle the challenges of online teaching and provide more materials than their less experienced counterparts.

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 (e.g., Andriivna et al., 2020; Fitria, 2020), which fits under the didactic interaction. Some studies have underscored the merits of rapport in the classroom (i.e. the second dimension: pedagogic interaction) (e.g. Medina, 2021). Finally, a few studies have addressed the issue of class management either before or after the pandemic (i.e. the third dimension: deontic interaction) (e.g. Ishino & Okada, 2018). Maican and Cocoradă's (2021) study offered thorough findings on online language teaching during the pandemic which covered nearly all the three dimensions of PA, although the study did not make a direct reference to PA. Their study dealt with coping behavior strategies and acknowledged that effective teaching and learning require teachers to empower students' adaptive behavior by paying more attention to low-achieving students and personalizing learning for high-achieving students (i.e. didactic dimension). The feelings of isolation and anxiety can be reduced by encouraging cooperation, using breakout rooms, online lectures, discussion questions, and emails (pedagogic dimension).

According to the researchers' knowledge and experience of language teaching policies and approaches in Saudi Arabia, there is no direct mention of PA. Some studies stress the need for language learners' empowerment through the imple-

mentation of critical thinking pedagogies (e.g. Alzahrani & Elyas, 2017). New English language course books for schools and universities are designed by well-known publishers (MacMillan, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press), which place the emphasis on thinking skills as well as the 21-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 Saudi policy of language education, even though its three dimensions are addressed in the literature (e.g. Alzahrani & Elyas, 2017; Jawhar, 2018).

Like other global educational contexts, the transition to emergency online teaching in Saudi Arabia was also replete with challenges in the early stages of the pandemic. These challenges have become less evident later, as teachers and students have managed to build more positive views toward online teaching and learning. For instance, Alsuhaibani (2019) measured perceptual changes among Saudi students during the early period of the pandemic in 2020 and later in 2021. According to her findings, teachers and students have been building a positive view of using BB because of its ease of use, particularly using asynchronous tools.

Another study by Khafaga (2021), which focuses on the deontic dimension of online education, observed that online teaching and learning can be a manageable environment because of the flexibility of asynchronous tools, availability of learning materials, and setting out discussions and exams. Al-Samiri (2021) coalesced the literature on online education during COVID-19 at the Saudi tertiary level. The negative aspects of online education include 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 identified: easy access anytime and via mobiles, which then boosted the confidence of shy students.

Unexpectedly, unlike the findings of Bailey and Lee's (2020), a study by Al-hawsawi and Jawhar (2021) found that teachers' experience of online teaching did not play a significant role in facilitating online teaching and learning. On the contrary, the study suggested that it was the institution's policy that shaped the positive experiences of online teaching and learning.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

This is an exploratory case study design (Yin, 2009). It adapts the qualitative approach. One of the key advantages of qualitative research is that it offers opportunities to explore human experience (Creswell, 2012). The researcher was interested in exploring PA practices to acquire a deeper insight into EFL teachers' experiences during COVID pandemic. The rationale for an exploratory case study approach was provided by the dearth of previous research on the comprehensive implementation of PA that includes the didactic, pedagogic, and deontic

dimensions in EFL classrooms, compounded by the changing contexts explicated in the introduction due to the pandemic.

2.2. Participants and Research Context

The sampling technique chosen for this study was convenient sampling. The study was conducted in the department of foreign language at a Saudi university during the first semester of 2021 when the Ministry of Education announced that university students should return to campus because of the low number of COVID cases. When the researcher decided to carry out this study, university teachers were in the early weeks of their return to campus, and they were busy organizing their teaching plans, offices since they were working remotely for almost two semesters. Many of them apologized for not participating in this study due to time constraints and busy schedules. Only four female teachers accepted to participate and signed the consent forms. The participants were Ph.D. holders and had different durations of teaching experience (**Table 1**). However, none of them were familiar with the synchronous features of BB before the pandemic, as their use of BB was limited to the asynchronous features.

2.3. Methods

In order to determine the teachers' practices for their learners' empowerment through a PA lens, reflective logs and interviews were deemed more appropriate for this study than the scale measures that require teachers to have prior knowledge about the PA concept and practices. Following the suggestions of **Harjunen (2009)**, the participant teachers were not intimidated about the exact research topic to avoid any factors affecting their thinking. They just started to tell the researchers about their thoughts and experiences of successful online teaching. 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 facilitate the writing of the reflections. These questions were premised on the findings of previous studies on PA (e.g., **Gil-Madrona et al., 2020; Harjunen, 2009**). The interviews were conducted at the end of semester 1, wherein teachers were asked to evaluate the entire experience of online teaching and in-campus teaching after return, in light of their reflections.

Data Analysis

Data from reflective logs and interviews were coded for salient features that reflect the PA interaction's three dimensions: didactic interaction, pedagogical interaction, and deontic interaction. The reflective questions were as follows:

Didactic interaction:

- 1) What motivational strategies do you use with your students to engage them with learning?
- 2) How do you make sure that you have addressed your students' needs?

Table 1. Teacher participants and their duration of experience.

Teachers	Duration of Teaching Experience
T1	17
T2	16
T3	10
T4	4

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

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

Pedagogical interaction:

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

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

Deontic interaction:

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, avoiding plagiarism, and submitting assignments on time)?

2) What strategies do you adopt for managing the classroom when things go wrong or when you need to make a spur-of-the-moment decision?

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

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

3. Results

3.1. Evidence of PA Practices in VLE during COVID Pandemic

In response to research question 1 (What evidence of PA practices are available in VLEs during the COVID pandemic?), the results showed that the teachers were indeed applying PA practices without admitted conscious knowledge of the PA approach. The sub-sections below present some PA evidenced practices.

3.1.1. Didactic Practices

The instructors concurred that VLEs provided their students with satisfactory opportunities to practice critical thinking skills while also showcasing more autonomy.

“I noticed that my students appreciate BB discussion forums. They negotiate concepts like linguistics theory and come up with amazing conversations. I did not see these discussions in traditional classrooms, before the pandemic, perhaps because I overwhelmed my students with many short exercises from the book

and the short class time did not allow the student to express themselves.” (T1/reflective log)

“Before the pandemic, it was not easy for me to encourage them to participate. They did not like to engage in group work, and when I addressed them by name to provide answers, things got worse. When classes shift online during the pandemic, I saw my shy students participating in BB forums and commenting on their classmates’ opinions with evidence and examples. This was surprising! They have great thoughts, but they like to share them remotely. In addition, I noticed that the quality of their project topics at the end of the semester improved in terms of choosing argumentative topics. I think this happened because they had a chance to listen to others and to express themselves in BB forums during the semester.” (T2/reflective log)

“I was teaching a joint course with T2, and we set up a Zoom webinar for the two groups where students had to discuss the main concepts of the course. This was a very informative experience because there were many debates and discussions. This experience reflects the quality of their assignments. We could see more creativity in the posters they created and more convincing arguments in the final projects. I think in online education, students learn from peers more than from teachers because they have more space to think and talk” (T3/reflective log)

T4 highlighted the students’ reluctance to participate as a common challenge related to online participation that had been identified in previous studies and offered some strategies for solving this challenge.

“My students were reluctant to participate during the early period of the pandemic. Breakout rooms were very helpful. The students had less pressure because they knew the teacher was there for monitoring, not for judging what they said. They came back to the main session with many shared stories and comments which enriched the discussion in the main session.” (T4/reflective log)

3.1.2. Pedagogic Practices

All participants concurred on the significance of building rapport with their students in online classrooms. As revealed in quotes below, they provide some teaching practices for rapport building, such as humor, using the mother tongue, respect, and providing students with a space to know each other.

“I keep a good relationship with my students through telling stories and previous experiences of learning and teaching the language. In addition, using funny expressions and comments on certain points using the shared L1” (T1/reflective log)

“Being yourself as an instructor by showing your personality, passion, respect, and expertise to them.” (T2/reflective log)

“I divide my students into different groups in online rooms, so they get to know one another and create a friendly atmosphere.” (T3/reflective log)

“I always tell my students that I am available any time and they can reach me via email to talk about their studies or even their personal problems and I see

how I can help." (T4/reflective log)

3.1.3. Deontic Interaction

The teachers knew the importance of raising their students' awareness of their responsibilities as learners. This awareness strategy took place by setting rules for the course as well as study modes to organize learning.

"Similar to in-class assignments, deadline dates for submitting assignments are announced, and students are made aware of their responsibility to submit assignments on time." (T1/reflective log)

"At the beginning of every semester, I do explain to them that learning the language is the learner's responsibility in the first place. It is his/her role in anticipating a successful or unsuccessful learning journey. At the exercises that require searching the web or so, I keep reminding them that they are now adult learners who can do such tasks themselves." (T2/reflective log)

"For me, it was very important to remind students from time to time that classes must be attended on time, assignments should be submitted on time. Studying from a home does not mean that we can skip deadlines." (T3/reflective log)

"Firstly, a teacher has to be serious about University rules, class attendance, avoiding plagiarism, and assignments as well. By being serious in this regard, the students will immediately know that they are now in a university, and they have to be serious too. Otherwise, if the teachers do not happen to be serious, the majority of the students will not become serious about studying. I spent a long time training them on how to avoid plagiarism and any other form of non-ethical practices." (T4/reflective log)

The instructors also offered some evidence of managing online classes, solving the challenges of online teaching and making spontaneous decisions in order to maintain the students' interest in the lectures, as shown by the following quotes:

"Trying to conduct the class by any means. If things go wrong, I may decide to postpone the class or rarely cancel it. I always care about the student's progress by contacting them via email and encouraging them to share any difficulties." (T1/reflective log)

"Back up lectures and lecture recording help me to overcome any internet connection issues from the students' side. They can listen to the lecture later." (T2/reflective log)

"Stay motivated and motivate your students. If you feel bored, think of breakout rooms. Students like to get together and talk. Keep your students' information (phone numbers, email addresses.) If there is a sudden power failure, a server issue, or any other related interruption on BlackBoard." (T3/reflective log)

"One of the biggest challenges for my student, particularly at the early time of on-line classes, was the internet speed. We could not have done anything, but some of the alternative solutions were recording classes and using more asynchronous tasks, so students could access the task at their convenient time."

(T4/reflective log)

The involvement of students in decision-making was another important PA practice brought up by teachers.

“If we need to change anything, it must be done with student willingness, after all, they are the main participants and we are doing our best for them. Changing assessment methods need to be accepted and welcomed by students, especially during the time of Covid. Many students were used for on-campus exams before the pandemic. Things changed when the Covid started. We started to rely more on asynchronous tools, such as breakout rooms, BB forums, and online submission for assignments.” (T1/interview)

“I always enjoy listening to my students’ comments and views on the course and assessment tools. It is a habit for me to ask students to evaluate the course, my teaching, and assessment tools three times per semester via a questionnaire form. I strongly believe that taking students’ opinions encourages them to learn more and succeed in learning.” (T2/interview)

“Students are the focus of learning and to ensure motivation and autonomy we need to include them in decisions. I give my students the freedom to choose the topics of their projects and presentations. I should not be a decision-taker at all times. Students show more appreciation to teachers who provide with such opportunities.” (T3/ interview)

However, the view of T4 differed from that of other teachers.

“Depending on their level of maturity and in somehow, we should take their opinions in some matters... There are situations in which I cannot take students’ views as in assessment and mark distribution. I am required to follow the department’s instructions and take into consideration the views of my colleagues who are teaching the same course. We are more aware than students of how learning outcomes should be assessed.” (T4/interview)

3.2. In-Class PA Practices after Return to Campus versus Full VLE during the Pandemic

This sub-section addresses the results of questions (2) and (3):

2) What evidence of PA practices is available in language classrooms after returning to campus as reflected by EFL teachers during the COVID pandemic?

3) What might inhibit or facilitate the implementation of PA practices in on-line and on-campus language classrooms during the COVID 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. Since the two questions were interrelated, the participants provided answers that addressed the two questions.

3.2.1. Evidence of PA Practices for the Didactic Interaction: Challenges and Merits

After returning to campus, teachers continued to apply PA practices, albeit to

different degrees. They continued to use the VLE as a form of blended teaching because they agreed that face-to-face classrooms decreased learners' autonomy and provided less critical thinking space, unlike VLEs.

"I used to teach all the classes in the campus for many years. I found myself nervous during the lockdown, and I was not used to online teaching. However, what made the journey easier is that every colleague was going through the same experience. I was trying my best to help my students who were also nervous... they were not used to online lectures and exams." (T1/interview)

"Online teaching supports an independent learning style whereas in face-to-face classes, we learn from and each other. While students are online, they can search the Internet and get deeper into the discussion. Classrooms are not all equipped with PCs, so students might not be able to refer to the Internet during the lessons to search for more information when they have their lectures in the classroom ...I am still relying on BlackBoard features after returning to campus because I believe that students need more space to show us how they achieve learning outcomes." (T1/reflective logs)

T2 agreed with T1 when it came to the limited autonomy space in face-to-face classrooms.

"Before the pandemic our classroom teaching was restricted by the lecture time, covering textbooks assigned by the department. I was not sure if I was listening to my students. During the full shift to online teaching and learning, I felt like I became closer to my students. We were working together to remove our stress and suggest together the activities and materials that reinforce learning... when you give students time to think, decide, and share their opinions freely, you will be astonished by their progress. After returning to the real classroom, I felt more confident and capable of varying my teaching resources and strategies. I know how to utilize both online teaching strategies and in-class teaching strategies to help my students. I feel that online and in-class teaching are complementing and cannot set apart from now on." (T2/interview)

3.2.2. Evidence of PA Practices for the Pedagogic Interaction: Challenges and Merits

Teachers agree that after returning to campus, 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.

"There are obvious limitations of not knowing your students personally when you teach online, and furthermore, not being able to know the level of their engagement in various learning activities and so on." (T1/reflective log)

"I still find my students have more harmony and engagement online than in-class lectures. Through text messages in chat rooms, they can easily convey their thoughts, which is difficult for some students in regular classrooms. They can watch the video recordings of lectures many times to learn." (T2/reflective log)

"There is not much difference but in a face-to-face class, there is Physical in-

volvement with teacher and peers, more Person to person conversation, and more Classroom management. I find my relationship with my students the same before the pandemic and now.” (T3/interview)

“They don’t differ much indeed, yet the nature of the interaction differs due to the lack of face-to-face body language understanding. Video classes are not permitted here because the majority of female Saudi students do not accept the appearance of videos for cultural reasons.” (T4/interview)

T4 finds that in-class learning is a more fertile learning environment for practicing the target language than in VLE due to the following reasons.

“Personally, I may not know whether a student is following or not, but when in a classroom, I can see this. Practicing English is more helpful when it occurs in face-to-face classrooms.” (T4/interview)

3.2.3. Evidence of PA Practices for the Deontic Interaction: Challenges and Merits

Not even a single teacher found significant differences between their PA deontic practices in VLE and on campus. However, they did highlight some challenges and advantages of each teaching mod, such as the efforts and flexibility of timing.

T1 reveals that VLE and in-class PA practices *“do not differ much from in-class practices, but I would rather say online teaching requires a double effort to engage all students in the learning process.” (T1/interview)*

“In the case of flexibility in deciding the right time for both parties, this was not possible at all in conventional classes.” (T2/interview)

“My practice on campus is almost the same online, but I feel that class management is well-practiced in face-to-face classes where you can see students and make sure that their assessment is valid because they do the exams in front of me.” (T4/reflective log)

4. Discussion

By introducing PA as a form of critical pedagogical practice, this study contributes to the critical pedagogical approach to language teaching. The study aimed to identify evidence of PA practices implemented by four English language teachers in their virtual classrooms during the early period of COVID and on-campus after return, as well as to compare the challenges and merits of their PA practices. According to the findings, during the pandemic, teachers did manage to apply various PA practices that represented the three PA dimensions: didactic, pedagogic, and deontic interactions, whether during the fully online classes or in-campus classes.

The findings also 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 evidence of practicing PA during the full online shift, teachers practice PA in online classes to different levels. Teachers 1, 2, and 3 were found to implement

PA more extensively than the novice teacher (T4) due to their higher experience. Bailey and Lee (2020) acknowledged the role of teacher experience in facilitating online teaching. Also, online environments were found to provide a fertile space for learners to practice critical thinking. Asynchronous tools, such as breakout rooms and BB forums, facilitate the evaluation and negotiation of ideas. 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 (e.g., Andriivna et al., 2020; Fitria, 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021). This finding suggests that the features of VLE that increase the levels of students' autonomy and critical thinking should continue after the pandemic ends.

These findings ensure that it is possible to implement the PA practices of didactic interaction efficiently during the pandemic. Unlike Lu and Hu's (2021) finding, this demonstrates that PA does not minimize the role of teachers in online environments. This is because the teacher monitors and evaluates learning and teaching processes. Another finding is that online teaching does not hinder pedagogic interaction (e.g. rapport and humor), a point that was also mentioned by Medina (2021). Although teachers faced some challenges during full online teaching, such as poor internet connection, teachers were able to overcome these problems by using other resources such as recorded classes. This suggests that deontic interactions were apparent in the participants' experiences.

When it came to comparing in-class and online teaching and learning, the teachers were in favor 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 did not see a difference between deontic interactions in online and in-class contexts. However, the time flexibility that asynchronous tools provide was one aspect of deontic interaction that they valued highly in fully online teaching. Some researchers have acknowledged the issue of time flexibility (e.g. 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 VLE 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.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it utilizes the practices of PA in order 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 (see Valdez, 2020). 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 blended 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 era. 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 pose some challenges for EFL teachers, especially for novice teachers. The component of each dimension requires teacher training in order 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 have to teach during emergencies.

5. Conclusion

This case study introduces the concept of PA and its dimensions (didactic, pedagogic and deontic) to EFL critical pedagogy. It examines 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 blended mode.

This study identifies various PA practices representing the three dimensions of PA in VLE during the early stage of COVID. A prevailing finding was that the VLE 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 was evidence of practices that represented the three dimensions of PA. Comparing the full online teaching experience and in-campus teaching experience and considering the PA practices, the participants valued the features of PA practices that occurred online and on-campus; however, they revealed that physical interaction remains a very significant aspect of pedagogic and deontic interactions. It was found that critical thinking that had an impact on the students' level of autonomy and increased motivation was more prominent in the VLEs mode of teaching as compared with the in-campus mode. The study expands 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.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the participants for their participation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Afonso, J. S., Martins, P. S., Barbosa, G. F., Ferreira, L., & Girao, M. (2018). Pedagogical Mediation Using the Virtual Learning Environment and the New Generation: A Search for Improved Performance in Medical Education. *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism*, 6, 115-122. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6039819>
- Alhawsawi, S., & Jawhar, S. S. (2021). Negotiating Pedagogical Positions in Higher Education during COVID-19 Pandemic: Teacher's Narratives. *Helijon*, 7, e07158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helijon.2021.e07158>
- 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>
- Al-Samiri, R. A. (2021). English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Positive Outcomes. *Arab World English Journal*, No. 1, 147-159. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/covid.11>
- Alsuhailani, Z. (2019). Perceptions and Practices of EFL Pre-Service Teachers about Reflective Teaching. *Arab World English Journal*, 10, 62-73. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no4.5>
- 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>
- Appleby, R. (2009). The Spatial Politics of Gender in EAP Classroom Practice. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 8, 100-110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2008.09.004>
- Auerbach, E. (1991). Literacy and Ideology. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 12, 71-85. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002154>
- Bailey, D. R., & Lee, A. R. (2020). Learning from Experience in the Midst of Covid-19: Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies in Online Teaching. *Computer Assisted Language Learning Electronic Journal (CALL-EJ)*, 21, 176-196. <http://callej.org/archives.html>
- Barry, C. (2011). English Language Teaching in Brunei: A View through a Critical Lens.

- RELC Journal*, 42, 203-220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688211401255>
- Benesch, S. (1999). 'Thinking Critically, Thinking Dialogically. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 573-580. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587682>
- Bora, S. F. (2020). Performative Didactics: Tapping into Learners' Attitudes towards Text- and Performance-Based Approaches in Foreign Language Learning. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 14, 150-163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2018.1538225>
- Canagarajah, S. (1996). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2005). Critical Pedagogy in L2 Learning and Teaching. In T. Van Els (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 931-949). Taylor and Francis.
- 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>
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. Sage.
- 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>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum.
- Gil-Madrona, P., Hinojosa, L. M., Pérez-Segura, J. J., Sáez-Sánchez, M. B., & Zamora Poblete, G. (2020). Scale of Pedagogical Authority Meanings in the Classroom (ESAPA) for Ibero-America Built on the Opinions of Teaching Students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 93, Article ID: 103079. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103079>
- Giroux, H. (2004). Critical Pedagogy: Revitalizing and Democratizing Teacher Education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 31, 31-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478408>
- 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: Jurnal 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 Recognitionals for Student Reference. *Classroom Discourse*, 9, 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2017.1407947>
- Jawhar, S. S. (2018). The Use of L1 as a Source of Humour to Facilitate Interaction in EFL Classrooms. *Arab World English Journal*, 9, 294-310. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no3.20>
- Johnson, S. M., & Randolph, L. J. (2015). Critical Pedagogy for Intercultural Communicative Competence: Getting Started. *Language Educator*, 10, 36-39.

- 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>
<https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/2201>
- Kuo, J. (2009). Critical Literacy and a Picture-Book-Based Activity in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 10, 483-494. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-009-9048-6>
- Kutala, C. D. (2021). Didactic-Pedagogic Approach to Real Teaching of Portuguese Second Language in Angola. *International Journal of Science, Technology and Society*, 9, 209-215. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijsts.20210905.11>
- Maican, M.-A., & Cocoradă, 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>
- Mambu, J. E. (2011) English for Advocacy Purposes: Critical Pedagogy's Contribution to Indonesia. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 8, 135-173. <http://journal.asiatefl.org>
- McCullough, D. O. (2020). *Distinct from the School Experience. The Development of Pedagogical Authority through Teacher Programs at the American Museum of Natural History 1880-1962*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- McLaren, P. (2015). *Life in Schools: Critical Pedagogy in the Foundation of Education*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315633640>
- Medina, S. A. L. (2021). An Online English Teaching Experience during Covid-19 Pandemic: Preliminary Findings. *Lingüística y Literatura*, 42, 203-220. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.lyl.n80a13>
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2004). *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524834>
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410600790>
- 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. In *Proceedings of the Fifth Workshop on Teaching NLP* (pp. 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/feduc.2021.690646>
- Valdez, P. M. (2012). Actualizing Critical English Language Teaching in the Classroom: A Philippine Experience. *The Asia Pacific Education Researcher*, 21, 279-285. <http://ejournals.ph/form/cite.php?id=4394>
- Valdez, P. N. (2020). Research in Critical Pedagogy: Implications for English Language Classrooms in Asia. *PASAA*, 60, 222-236. https://www.culi.chula.ac.th/Publicationonline/current_volume_p1.php?journal_id=74
- 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>
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

- YobouÃ, A., & Michel, M. (2018). A Pedagogic and Didactic Use of Representations and Learning Styles for Learner Engagement: A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Mediation. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 17, 82-95. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.17.3.7>
- Zamora, G., & Zerón, A. (2010). Caracterización y sentido actual de la autoridad pedagógica en escuelas chilenas de sectores de pobreza. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 68, 99-116. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23766275>
- Zamora-Poblete, G., Gil-Madrona, P., Méndez-Hinojosa, L. M., Galvis-Leal, P., & Tadeo-Morales, J. (2020). Meanings of Pedagogical Authority in Future Teachers in Spain and Latin America. Understandings in Education Students from Chile, Colombia, Venezuela and Spain. *Culture and Education*, 32, 242-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11356405.2020.1741873>