

Teaching Presence During the COVID–19 Pandemic: Practices of EAP Teachers in a Thai University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While a number of studies have explored the challenges faced by teachers, little has been known about how they navigated the teaching presence in online remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The present investigation explores how two English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers in a university in Thailand facilitated online language teaching and supported students' language learning in an online environment. Findings from the online classroom observations and interviews revealed that classroom pedagogical skills, knowledge of the online teaching and learning platforms, and teaching presence played a crucial role in an emergency remote and online teaching environment. Despite the lack of training for online language teaching, teachers' ability to strategize the transition to online teaching and their strong sense of resourcefulness and focus on the use of online platforms allowed them to mitigate the issues and face the challenges of the sudden shift to online teaching. The authors discussed the limitations and offered suggestions and implications for future studies.

INTRODUCTION

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 in late December 2019 has challenged the teaching practices among language teachers and other academic teachers around the world. For one, teachers may lack the skills and experience in online language teaching (Ulla & Perales, 2021), making them unprepared for the sudden transition of their teaching practice from classroom language teaching to online and remote teaching. Second, teachers may not have the technological skills and the means to move their physical classroom online, given that a number of them do not have electronic devices, internet connectivity, and even electricity (Nhu et al., 2019). Lastly, schools and universities may not have an available learning management system (LMS) where online classes can be conducted, and language learning can be supported (Ulla & Perales, 2021). When teachers faced these issues in their online language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, their teaching presence, teaching practice, and students' language learning support could be affected. Apparently, "none of the teachers was sure about the effectiveness of such large-scale online language instruction. Worries and stress lingered on the teachers' minds" (Gao & Zhang, 2020, p. 2). Teachers worried not only about their online pedagogical and technological skills but also the delivery of their language instruction, language teaching and learning materials, and language assessments. These issues and challenges can be considered valid since teachers may not be trained to emergency online and remote language teaching and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers in a university in Thailand were of no exemption.

This chapter aims to explore and understand EAP teachers as regards their teaching practices and how they address and cope with the issues and challenges in a university in Thailand during the sudden transition to online and remote language teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this chapter presents a qualitative empirical study on EAP teachers' teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2000) and the kind of language learning support they extended to their online language learners. It is hoped that this chapter advances the discussion of teaching presence, a concept introduced by Garrison et al. (2000) in a community of inquiry framework, in the context of an emergency online language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISTANCE EDUCATION, E-LEARNING, ONLINE TEACHING, AND EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING

Since the technology was first incorporated into education, the notion of teaching and learning without a face-to-face classroom has been referred to as distance education (Conrad, 2006). As suggested by King et al. (2001), distance education

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