



Engaging with Global Englishes through Peer-Assisted Learning: A Controlled Mixed-Methods Study of Burmese International Students as Peer Mentors at a Thai University

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Abstract

This study situates Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) within the Global Englishes paradigm by addressing gaps in research on how international peer mentors experience English use, linguistic identity, and legitimacy in multilingual English-medium higher education contexts. Using a controlled mixed-methods design, data were collected from 108 Burmese international undergraduate students at a Thai university, including an experimental group serving as peer mentors in a 10-week PAL program and a no-exposure control group. Data sources included English proficiency pre-test and post-test scores, a structured questionnaire measuring Global Englishes awareness and attitudes, and semi-structured interviews with 13 mentors. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative data were examined thematically. The findings indicate that English proficiency was minimal and largely predicted by baseline ability; however, PAL participation was strongly associated with increased confidence, a more positive linguistic identity, and greater acceptance of English variation. Global Englishes awareness was most strongly linked to sustained peer interaction rather than test-based language gains. These results support the reconceptualizing of PAL as a sociocultural space in which international peer mentors enact and internalize Global Englishes principles through authentic academic interaction.

Keywords: *Peer-Assisted Learning, Global Englishes, Burmese Students, International Peer Mentors*

1. Introduction

The use of English as the primary academic medium in Thai higher education has reshaped how English is used and learned in multilingual university contexts. In particular, Burmese students engage in peer-assisted learning (henceforth PAL), which emphasizes communicative effectiveness, multilingual negotiation, and functional academic participation rather than adherence to native-speaker norms (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025b). As English is now predominantly used as a lingua franca among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, particularly in academic and professional contexts, traditional native-speaker norms and Standard English models no longer accurately represent how English functions in real communicative situations (Cavalheiro, 2012; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). In response to the global spread of English, the Global Englishes (henceforth GE) paradigm has emerged as a critical framework that rejects native speaker authority, recognizes the legitimacy of diverse English uses, and prioritizes intelligibility, adaptability, and effective communication over adherence to standardized norms in global interactions (Ishikawa, 2021). Despite the growing recognition of GE in linguistic theory, English language education in Thailand continues to be largely shaped by native-speaker norms, with limited and uneven integration of GE principles into curricula, teacher training, and institutional practices, particularly in higher education contexts (Pholying, 2025). Despite the global spread of English, many higher education and English-medium instruction contexts continue to rely on standardized and Inner-Circle English norms rooted in monolingual and native-speaker ideologies, which implicitly position multilingual English users in the Expanding Circle as linguistically deficient or underdeveloped (Ishikawa, 2021). From an English as a Foreign Language perspective, users of English as an additional language are frequently positioned as outsiders or perpetual learners whose language use is evaluated against native-speaker norms, rather than as legitimate users with equal communicative rights.



This positioning is explicitly challenged by English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) scholarship (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011, as discussed in Cavalheiro, 2012).

One pedagogical approach that has been shown to operationalize GE principles in English-medium higher education contexts is PAL. Structured PAL programs create sustained opportunities for multilingual peer interaction, negotiation of meaning, and communicative adaptability among linguistically diverse students (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025b). PAL is conceptualized as a student-centered, peer-driven pedagogical model that promotes collaborative learning, reciprocal knowledge construction, and sustained peer interaction through structured and scaffolded academic support environments (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025a). Rather than relying solely on teacher-led instruction, PAL positions students as active participants in the learning process by engaging them in collaborative dialogue, scaffolded peer support, and shared problem-solving within a social constructivist framework grounded in the zone of proximal development (Bacon et al., 2021). In multilingual PAL contexts, participants engage in meaningful and authentic communication by drawing on their linguistic backgrounds and cultural experiences to negotiate understanding, reduce cultural barriers, and foster collaborative learning and integration (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025; Cifuentes & Murphy, 2000; Leask, 2009; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009).

Existing research on PAL has consistently shown that structured PAL environments support improvements in academic performance while also fostering greater confidence, motivation, and engagement through sustained peer interaction and collaborative learning processes (Bacon et al., 2021). However, much of this literature has focused on the outcomes of mentees, often local students, while paying comparatively little attention to the experiences and developmental trajectories of peer mentors themselves. Despite the documented benefits of PAL, existing research has largely focused on academic performance outcomes and has paid limited attention to how language barriers, cultural differences, and students' adjustment experiences shape peer mentoring processes within extended curriculum programs and multilingual higher education contexts (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2021). Despite extensive research on the academic and social benefits of PAL, there remains limited empirical understanding of how serving as a peer mentor influences international students' cultural integration, leadership growth, and confidence within English-mediated academic environments (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025).

In Thai higher education, where international programs host students from across the ASEAN region, Burmese international students represent a significant and linguistically diverse population. Many of these students use English as a functional academic language to participate in coursework and PAL, with their English use shaped by transnational educational trajectories, multilingual environments, and the institutional demands of English-medium instruction (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025b). Students acting as peer mentors are positioned as co-constructors of knowledge in non-hierarchical learning environments, thereby decentralizing traditional instructor authority and redefining expertise as socially negotiated rather than institutionally assigned (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025a). Participation as peer mentors in PAL contexts provides non-native English-speaking students with sustained opportunities to use English for academic support purposes, contributing to increased confidence, greater engagement in academic communication, and more positive perceptions of their own English use (Bacon & Maneerutt, 2024).

To date, empirical research examining GE through PAL has largely relied on qualitative or descriptive designs, with limited use of controlled experimental frameworks that allow for systematic comparison across different levels of exposure. Moreover, few studies have adopted mixed-methods approaches that integrate quantitative measures of change with in-depth qualitative insights into participant experiences. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing both theoretical and pedagogical understanding of how GE can be meaningfully enacted within peer-mediated learning environments.

The present study responds to these needs by investigating how Burmese international students, serving as peer mentors in a Thai university PAL center, engage with and develop their understanding of GE. Employing a controlled mixed-methods design, the study compares mentors with high exposure, low exposure, and no exposure to intercultural PAL sessions to examine the impact of mentoring participation on



linguistic attitudes, intercultural awareness, and English use. By foregrounding the perspectives of international peer mentors rather than mentees, this research repositions multilingual students as active agents in shaping English-medium academic spaces.

Through its integration of GE, PAL, and sociocultural perspectives on learning, this study contributes empirical evidence to ongoing debates about English legitimacy, linguistic equity, and inclusive internationalization in higher education. In doing so, it aims to demonstrate how structured peer mentoring can function not only as academic support but also as a transformative site for engaging with English as a global, plural, and socially situated language.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

The present study aims to examine how participation in PAL influences Burmese international students' engagement with GE when they serve as peer mentors in a Thai university context. While existing research has predominantly focused on mentee outcomes, there remains limited empirical understanding of how international peer mentors themselves experience English use, linguistic identity, and communicative development within multilingual higher education environments. Addressing this gap, the study foregrounds mentors' perspectives and developmental trajectories as multilingual users of English operating within structured intercultural learning environments.

Using a controlled mixed-methods design, this study seeks to generate empirically grounded insights into how varying levels of exposure to PAL shape mentors' linguistic attitudes, confidence, and communicative practices. In doing so, it contributes to emerging GE research by examining how engagement with English as a plural and socially situated resource is enacted through sustained peer interaction rather than formal instruction.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

- 1) examine how Burmese international student mentors perceive and reflect on their use of English and English variation within intercultural PAL sessions, with particular attention to how they conceptualize linguistic legitimacy in multilingual interaction;
- 2) investigate the extent to which participation in PAL influences mentors' confidence, linguistic identity, and attitudes toward the legitimacy of diverse English varieties, thereby extending understanding of identity development with Global Englishes contexts;
- 3) compare changes in Global Englishes awareness and intercultural orientation across mentors with different levels of exposure to PAL, including a no-exposure control group, to provide a more rigorous empirical basis for evaluating PAL's impact; and
- 4) explore how mentoring interactions function as sociocultural learning spaces in which mentors negotiate meaning, adapt their communicative strategies, and enact Global Englishes principles in practice.

Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How do Burmese international students serving as peer mentors perceive and experience their use of English and English variation during Peer-Assisted Learning sessions?
- 2) In what ways does participation in PAL influence mentors' confidence, linguistic identity, and attitudes toward the legitimacy of diverse English varieties within the Global Englishes?
- 3) Are there significant differences in Global Englishes awareness and related linguistic attitudes among mentors with high exposure, low exposure, and no exposure to PAL?
- 4) How do Burmese peer mentors describe the role of intercultural mentoring interactions in shaping their communicative practices and engagement with Global Englishes?



Together, these objectives and research questions align the study's theoretical focus on GE with its controlled mixed-methods design, enabling both comparative analysis and in-depth exploration of mentors' lived experiences within PAL environments.

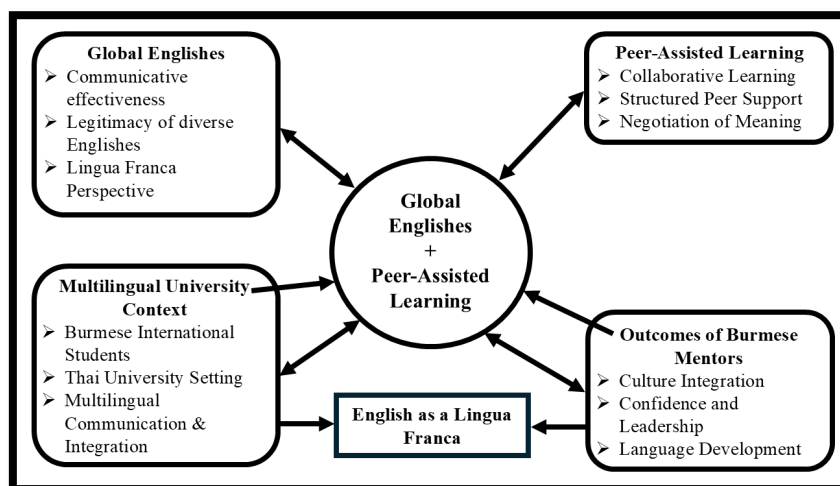


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework guiding this study, which integrates the GE paradigm, PAL, and sociocultural perspectives on learning. GE provides a theoretical framework that conceptualizes English as a plural and adaptable communicative resource shaped by multilingual speakers, rejecting fixed native-speaker norms and recognizing diverse English practices as socially situated and context-predependent (Ishikawa, 2021). PAL is conceptualized as a structured, peer-driven pedagogical approach that facilitates sustained peer interaction through collaborative dialogue, reciprocal mentoring, and shared meaning-making within participatory action research cycles (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025a). The framework is further grounded in sociocultural learning theory, which conceptualizes learning and cognitive development as socially constructed processes that emerge through participation in culturally organized activities. Within this perspective, higher mental functions develop first through social interaction and are subsequently internalized at the individual level, with language and other cultural tools functioning as central mediational means that shape thinking, learning, and meaning-making (Gauvain, 2008; Kozulin, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987; Wang, 2007).

Within this framework, intercultural PAL sessions serve as the primary learning context in which Burmese international students enact their roles as peer mentors. Engagement in these sessions is theorized to influence mentors' linguistic attitudes and identities, levels of intercultural engagement, and mentoring processes and development. These interrelated dimensions reflect both affective and interactional aspects of learning, capturing how mentors negotiate meaning, adapt their English use, and reflect on language legitimacy during authentic academic interactions. Collectively, the framework positions Burmese international students not as peripheral language learners, but as active agents whose participation in PAL mediates their engagement with GE and supports their development as confident, legitimate users of English within a Thai university context.



3. Materials and Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a controlled mixed-methods research design to examine how participation in PAL influences Burmese international students' engagement with GE while serving as peer mentors in a Thai university context. The study was conducted over a 10-week period, corresponding to a full cycle of PAL participation, and included both an experimental group and a no-exposure control group to enable comparative analysis.

Quantitative data were collected and analyzed using an English proficiency pre-test and post-test, along with a structured questionnaire administered to both groups. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 participants from the experimental group to provide qualitative insights into mentors' experiences and reflections on English use during PAL sessions. This design enabled systematic comparison of outcomes associated with PAL participation while also capturing participants' perspectives through in-depth qualitative inquiry.

3.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted at RSU Global! at Rangsit University, which serves as the university's official PAL center. The center provides structured, peer-led learning environments designed to support academic development and intercultural engagement through regular mentoring interactions conducted in English.

The participants consisted of 108 Burmese international undergraduate students enrolled in international programs at Rangsit University. Of these, 53 students formed the experimental group, actively serving as peer mentors in PAL sessions over a ten-week period, while 55 students comprised the control group, who did not participate in PAL mentoring during the study period. Participants were drawn from a range of academic disciplines, including business, communication, science, technology, and related fields, reflecting the multidisciplinary composition of the university's international student population.

The sample size was determined based on the available population of Burmese international students enrolled in international programs at the university during the study period, ensuring that the sample was representative of the target population within this specific institutional context. The total sample of 108 participants, with a balanced distribution between experimental and control groups, is considered appropriate for quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics and regression techniques, which are robust for moderate sample sizes and allow for meaningful group comparisons.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants met the institutional English proficiency requirements for enrollment in international programs and used English as the primary medium of academic communication. Attendance records and program participation logs were used to verify sustained involvement in PAL sessions for the experimental group, ensuring meaningful exposure to mentoring activities.

In addition, 13 participants from the experimental group were selected for semi-structured interviews to provide in-depth qualitative insights into their experiences as peer mentors. This number was sufficient to achieve data saturation, as recurring themes and patterns were consistently observed across participants' responses, allowing for reliable thematic analysis.

3.3 Description of PAL Sessions

PAL sessions were structured, collaborative learning environments in which Burmese international students served as peer mentors, supporting academic interaction in English. Sessions were conducted on a regular basis over a ten-week period and typically lasted a minimum of 30 minutes. Activities focused on discussion-based tasks, academic support, and peer-guided problem solving, with mentors facilitating interaction rather than providing direct instruction.



PAL sessions were designed to create a low-anxiety, supportive environment that encouraged authentic communication across linguistic and cultural differences. Rather than emphasizing explicit language instruction, the sessions prioritized meaning-focused interaction, collaborative engagement, and communicative effectiveness. These features provided mentors with sustained opportunities to use English in authentic academic contexts and to engage with diverse English practices during peer interaction.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed three research instruments to collect quantitative and qualitative data: an English proficiency pre-test and post-test, a structured questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 English pre-test and post-test

An English proficiency pre-test and post-test were administered to examine changes in participants' English performance over the 10-week study period. The pre-test was conducted prior to participation in PAL sessions, and the post-test was administered at the conclusion of the program.

The test instrument was designed to assess general academic English proficiency relevant to students enrolled in international programs. It consisted of multiple-choice items measuring key language components, including grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The test was aligned with the institutional English proficiency standards required for admission into international programs at the university, ensuring its relevance to participants' academic language use.

Each test contained 50 items, with one point awarded for each correct response, resulting in a maximum score of 50. Scores were interpreted as indicators of overall English proficiency rather than mastery of specific subskills, as the primary purpose of the instrument was to provide a general measure of language performance across time.

The pre-test and post-test were parallel in structure and level of difficulty to ensure comparability of results. Test items were reviewed by subject specialists in English language teaching to ensure content validity, clarity, and alignment with the intended proficiency level. The instrument was not designed to measure instructional gains from explicit language teaching, but rather to capture general stability or change in English proficiency within a communicative, interaction-based learning environment.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was used to measure participants' attitudes toward English use, English variation, and related dimensions associated with engagement in GE. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was administered online at the end of the study period. No personally identifying information was collected to ensure participant anonymity.

3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 participants from the experimental group to gain in-depth insight into their experiences serving as peer mentors in PAL sessions. The interviews focused on participants' reflections on English use, communicative confidence, and engagement with linguistic diversity during mentoring interactions. All interviews were conducted after the completion of the PAL program and were used to complement and contextualize the quantitative findings.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the questionnaire was established through a review by three experts in English language education and applied linguistics using the Item Objective Congruence (henceforth IOC) method. All questionnaire items were judged to be appropriate and aligned with the research objectives.

Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through a pilot study involving 45 undergraduate students who were not included in the main study. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.970, indicating excellent reliability. The English proficiency pre-test and post-test



were reviewed by subject specialists to ensure alignment with the intended proficiency level and consistency across test administration.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and the English pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize participants' responses and English performance across the experimental and control groups.

To examine differences associated with PAL participation, comparative analyses were conducted between the experimental and control groups using pre-test and post-test data. Changes in English performance were examined by comparing score distributions across time, allowing for interpretation of stability or change associated with participation in PAL mentoring.

Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring patterns related to participants' experiences with English use, communicative confidence, and engagement with linguistic diversity during PAL sessions. The qualitative findings were used to contextualize and support interpretation of the quantitative results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and participation in the study was voluntary. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. All data were anonymized and stored securely in encrypted digital files accessible only to the research team. The data will be retained for three years following completion of the study before permanent deletion in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings in direct relation to the study's research questions and objectives. Quantitative results from English pre-test and post-test scores and questionnaire data are integrated with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. In line with the study's theoretical framework, findings are interpreted through the GE paradigm and PAL, which conceptualize English as a plural, socially situated resource and learning as emerging through sustained peer interaction rather than adherence to native-speaker norms (Bacon & Torremucha, 2025b, 2025a; Ishikawa, 2021; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011).

4.1 Research Question 1

How do Burmese international students serving as peer mentors perceive their use of English and English variation during Peer-Assisted Learning sessions?

Findings from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews indicate that Burmese peer mentors viewed English as a flexible, functional communicative resource rather than a fixed system. Participants emphasized intelligibility and mutual understanding over correctness, with one mentor stating that there was no single correct form of English.

Quantitative results support this orientation, with mentors reporting high agreement regarding acceptance of English variation and flexible English use ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.83$). Mentors further described variation in accent, pronunciation, and interactional style as a normal feature of PAL interaction rather than a deficiency. These differences were managed through strategies such as clarification, rephrasing, and negotiated meaning-making.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1

Measure	n	Mean	SD
Acceptance of English variation and flexible English use	50	4.11	0.83

4.1.1 Research Question 1 Discussion

These findings directly address the first objective by demonstrating that mentors conceptualize English as plural and context-dependent. This aligns with GE and ELF scholarship, which rejects native-speaker authority and emphasizes communicative effectiveness (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011; Ishikawa, 2021). Importantly, the results suggest that this understanding emerges through interaction within PAL rather than formal instruction. PAL therefore functions as a practical environment in which mentors experience and internalize the legitimacy of diverse English uses.

4.2 Research Question 2

In what ways does participation in PAL influence mentors' confidence, linguistic identity, and attitudes toward the legitimacy of Global Englishes?

Findings indicate that participation in PAL was associated with increased confidence, stronger linguistic identity, and more positive attitudes toward English variation. Participants described a shift from initial anxiety to greater confidence in academic and intercultural communication. Interview data suggest that mentors developed pride in their own English use and their cultural background.

Quantitative results reflect this pattern, with high levels of confidence and identity development reported ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.89$).

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 2

Measure	n	Mean	SD
English confidence and linguistic identity development	50	4.13	0.89

4.2.1 Research Question 2 Discussion

These findings address the second objective by showing that PAL supports identity development and confidence among multilingual English users. This challenges deficit-based perspectives that position non-native speakers as linguistically inferior (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2011). Instead, consistent with GE principles, mentors came to view their English as legitimate and effective. The findings highlight the role of PAL as a sociocultural space in which learners reposition themselves as competent users of English rather than deficient learners.

4.3 Research Question 3

Are there significant differences in Global Englishes awareness and related linguistic attitudes among mentors with high exposure, low exposure, and no exposure to PAL?

Descriptive results indicate strong endorsement of GE-oriented attitudes across participants, with high levels of awareness and openness to English variation ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.82$). Additional findings show high openness to linguistic and cultural diversity ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.55$) and strong confidence and adaptability ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.76$).

Regression analysis indicates that GE awareness was most strongly associated with peer interaction ($b = 0.61$, $p < .001$), with an additional significant association with confidence and adaptability ($b = 0.15$, $p = .037$). Interview data reinforce these findings, with participants attributing their understanding of English legitimacy to sustained interaction rather than formal instruction.

**Table 3** Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 3

Measure	n	Mean	SD
Global Englishes awareness and openness to variation	50	4.16	0.82

4.3.1 Research Question 3 Discussion

These findings support the third objective by demonstrating that engagement with GE is closely associated with sustained peer interaction rather than formal instructional input. Although precise comparisons across levels of PAL exposure were limited due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire data, the consistently high levels of GE awareness observed across participants suggest that interaction within multilingual peer environments plays a central role in shaping linguistic attitudes. This indicates that exposure to diverse English users, even within a relatively short timeframe, can contribute to the development of more flexible and inclusive understandings of English.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce GE and ELF scholarship, which emphasizes that awareness of English as a global language emerges through communicative practice and interaction rather than through explicit instruction alone (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). The strong association between GE awareness and peer interaction further suggests that experiential engagement with linguistic diversity is a key mechanism through which learners come to recognize the legitimacy of different English varieties.

At the same time, the inability to directly compare high-, low-, and no-exposure groups highlights an important methodological limitation. Future research should employ matched or longitudinal designs to more precisely examine how varying levels of participation in PAL influence the development of GE awareness over time. Despite this limitation, the findings provide meaningful evidence that interaction-based learning environments play a critical role in fostering awareness of English as a plural and socially situated language.

4.4 Research Question 4

How do Burmese peer mentors describe the role of intercultural mentoring interactions in shaping their communicative practices and engagement with Global Englishes?

Findings indicate that intercultural mentoring interactions supported communicative adaptation and pragmatic awareness. Participants reported increased sensitivity to cultural differences and adopted strategies such as rephrasing, repetition, and clarification. Mentors emphasized the importance of mutual understanding over linguistic accuracy.

Quantitative results support these observations, with high levels of engagement in intercultural interaction ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.88$).

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 4

Measure	n	Mean	SD
Intercultural interaction and communicative adjustment	50	4.12	0.88

4.4.1 Research Question 4 Discussion

These findings address the fourth objective by demonstrating that PAL sessions function as sociocultural learning spaces in which communicative competence develops through interaction. This aligns with sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning through socially mediated activity (Vygotsky, 1978; Gauvain, 2008). Mentors prioritized intelligibility and adaptability, reflecting a shift toward Global Englishes-informed communication practices. The findings suggest that intercultural interaction is central to the development of communicative competence in multilingual contexts.



4.5 English Proficiency Outcomes and Attendance Context

Results indicate that English proficiency remained largely stable across both experimental and control groups. Both groups demonstrated only small and comparable gains from pre-test to post-test.

Regression analysis shows that post-test performance was primarily predicted by pre-test scores, indicating that baseline proficiency was the strongest determinant of outcomes. PAL participation was not a significant predictor of proficiency gains.

Table 5 English Proficiency Outcomes and Attendance Context

Group	n	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
Experimental (PAL mentors)	53	42.28	43.02	+0.74
Control (No PAL exposure)	55	41.00	41.78	+0.78

4.5.1 English Proficiency Outcomes and Attendance Context Discussion

These findings provide important context for interpreting the study's overall results. The absence of significant proficiency gains is consistent with the communicative, meaning-focused design of PAL sessions, which do not emphasize explicit language instruction. The findings suggest that standardized tests may not capture the types of development promoted through PAL. Instead, the primary impact appears to be attitudinal and interactional, including increased confidence, identity development, and engagement with Global Englishes.

4.6 Integrated Discussion

Building on the findings across all research questions, this section synthesizes the key patterns that emerge from the study in relation to its objectives and theoretical framework. Taken together, the results indicate that the primary impact of PAL was attitudinal and interactional rather than proficiency-based. While English test scores remained stable and were largely explained by baseline ability, mentors demonstrated meaningful development in how they conceptualized English legitimacy, their confidence in using English, and their roles as multilingual communicators. This pattern suggests that communicative, interaction-based learning environments may support forms of development that are not fully captured by standardized measures of language proficiency.

These findings are consistent with Global Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca scholarship, which emphasize that successful communication in multilingual contexts depends on intelligibility, adaptability, and meaning negotiation rather than adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011; Ishikawa, 2021). Across the study, mentors consistently framed English as a flexible and socially situated resource, prioritizing mutual understanding over correctness. Importantly, this orientation appeared to develop through sustained peer interaction rather than formal instruction, reinforcing the view that engagement with diverse English practices is best fostered through authentic communicative experience.

At the same time, the findings extend existing PAL research by shifting attention from mentee outcomes to the developmental trajectories of peer mentors themselves. While prior studies have emphasized academic performance gains (Bacon et al., 2021), this study demonstrates that mentors experience significant changes in confidence, linguistic identity, and communicative orientation. The combination of stable proficiency scores and strong attitudinal development suggests the need to reconsider how language development is conceptualized and assessed in multilingual higher education, particularly in contexts where English functions as a lingua franca.

From a sociocultural perspective, the findings reinforce the view that learning emerges through participation in socially mediated interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Gauvain, 2008). PAL sessions created structured opportunities for dialogue, meaning negotiation, and adaptive communication, allowing mentors to develop their communicative practices in response to diverse interlocutors. Through this process, English



was not treated as a fixed system to be mastered, but as a dynamic resource shaped through interaction and context.

Taken together, these findings highlight the role of PAL as a sociocultural learning space in which Global Englishes principles are enacted in practice. In relation to the study's objectives, PAL supported mentors' understanding of English variation, strengthened their confidence and linguistic identity, fostered awareness of English as a global language, and enabled the development of adaptive communicative strategies through intercultural interaction.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that English-medium instruction in Thai higher education and similar internationalized contexts should move beyond an exclusive focus on standardized proficiency outcomes. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on interaction-based learning environments that support communicative adaptability, intercultural engagement, and confidence in using English. Such approaches more accurately reflect the realities of English as a global lingua franca and better prepare students for participation in diverse academic and professional contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated how Burmese international students serving as peer mentors negotiate English use within a PAL context, with particular attention to confidence, linguistic identity, and engagement with GE. Guided by a controlled mixed-methods design, the study addressed four key objectives related to mentors' perceptions of English variation, identity development, GE awareness, and communicative practices within intercultural peer interaction.

The findings indicate that no short-term differences in English proficiency were observed between the experimental and control groups, with post-test scores largely predicted by baseline ability. This outcome reflects the communicative and meaning-focused design of the PAL program and suggests that standardized measures of proficiency may not capture the types of development that occur within interaction-based learning environments.

In contrast, the results provide consistent evidence across all research objectives that participation in PAL supports attitudinal and interactional development. Mentors increasingly viewed English as a flexible and socially situated resource, reported greater confidence in their English use, and demonstrated stronger acceptance of diverse English varieties. In addition, findings show that GE awareness was most strongly associated with sustained peer interaction and communicative engagement rather than formal instruction.

Taken together, these findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that PAL functions not only as an academic support mechanism, but also as a sociocultural space in which multilingual students develop confidence, negotiate linguistic identity, and enact GE principles through authentic interaction. By foregrounding the experiences of peer mentors, this study extends existing PAL research and highlights the importance of interaction-based pedagogies in multilingual higher education contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that English-medium instruction in Thai higher education and similar internationalized settings should move beyond an exclusive focus on standardized proficiency outcomes. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on learning environments that promote communicative adaptability, intercultural engagement, and confidence in using English as a global lingua franca.

Future research should build on these findings by employing longitudinal designs and incorporating alternative measures of language development that capture social, interactional, and identity-related dimensions of learning. Such approaches will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how peer-assisted learning supports the development of multilingual students in global academic contexts.



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