Thai EFL Students' Efficacy of Business English Presentation Skills through Peer-Assisted Learning in an Online Platform

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Abstract

This mixed-method study investigates the efficacy of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) in enhancing business English presentation skills among Thai EFL students within an online learning platform, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the impact of PAL on students' performance and confidence levels before and after the intervention. A 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire and pre- and post-tests were administered to 65 first-year students majoring in Business English at a public university in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The findings revealed significant improvements in students' presentation skills and confidence. Before the intervention, the students had low mean scores in presentation experience ($\overline{x}$ = 2.72), process understanding ($\overline{x}$ = 2.85), essential presentation skills ($\overline{x}$ = 2.49), and presentation delivery ($\overline{x}$ = 2.46). Despite valuing these skills ($\overline{x}$ = 4.22), their confidence ($\overline{x}$ = 2.94) and emotional readiness ($\overline{x}$ = 3.51 and $\overline{x}$ = 3.32) were modest. Following the PAL intervention, students showed significant improvements in business English presentation skills and confidence, with mean scores rising from 2.85 to 3.98 for presentation process understanding, 2.49 to 4.16 for essential skills, and 2.46 to 3.76 for delivery ability. Confidence-related scores also increased from 2.94 to 3.57 for speaking confidently and 3.51 to 3.94 for emotional control, while all changes were statistically significant (p < 0.001). Qualitative feedback further highlighted the benefits of collaborative learning, though challenges such as coordinating group work online were noted. Overall, the study concludes that PAL is an

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effective strategy for enhancing business English presentation skills in an online context. It also provides valuable insights for curriculum design and instructional approaches in language education.

Keywords: business English, online learning, peer-assisted learning, presentation skills

Introduction

In the globalized world, effective business communication, particularly in English, has become a crucial skill for professionals in various fields (Focus Language Audit, 2024). University graduates proficient in English presentation skills are often more competitive in the job market, as these skills are essential for career advancement (Pandey et al., 2022). The course *"English for Business Presentation,"* taught at a public university in Chiang Mai, Thailand, aims to equip hands-on students with the ability to use business-specific language, including vocabulary and idioms, to communicate effectively in professional contexts. Active learning and hands-on practice are core to the course design, as these methods have been shown to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Felder & Brent, 2009). However, the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges, particularly in providing opportunities for students to practice these skills interactively with peers (Anderson, 2004). Therefore, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) may be able to serve as an effective scaffolding strategy to support language development for learners.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is an instructional strategy that involves students working in pairs or groups to support each other's learning. It fosters cooperative learning, which not only improves academic performance but also helps develop interpersonal skills necessary for professional success (Ross & Cumming, 2013). PAL has been shown to be particularly effective in language learning contexts, as it allows students to practice speaking and presenting in a low-stress, collaborative environment (Gong, 2023). Despite its proven benefits in various educational settings, there is limited research on the implementation of PAL in online learning platforms, especially for Thai EFL students in business English courses. Previous studies have primarily focused on in-person learning environments, leaving a gap in understanding how PAL can be adapted and optimized for online education (Zhou, 2021).

This teaching approach has been widely implemented in second and foreign language education to promote learner autonomy, scaffold oral production, and enhance collaborative learning (Topping, 2005; Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 2014). In many studies, PAL has been applied through peer feedback, group discussions, and speaking tasks, often within face-to-face classroom settings. For example, Min (2005) demonstrated that peer revision activities significantly improved EFL students' writing quality, provided that students received explicit training in giving feedback. Sato and Ballinger (2016) highlighted the role of structured peer interaction in developing speaking

fluency but noted that without teacher guidance, the linguistic depth of peer exchanges often remained limited. Despite these promising outcomes, there remains a lack of consensus on best practices for implementing PAL in online environments, especially for skill-specific tasks like business English presentations.

Hence, this research aims to investigate the efficacy of PAL in improving Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills through an online platform. Specifically, it examines the impact of PAL on students' performance and confidence levels before and after the intervention. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on effective teaching strategies for English presentation skills in an online learning environment, providing insights that can enhance curriculum design and instructional approaches in business English education.

Literature Review

The effectiveness of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) in enhancing students' learning outcomes has been widely recognized across various educational contexts. PAL is a collaborative learning approach where students work in pairs or groups to support each other's learning, thus fostering a shared sense of responsibility and collaboration (Ross & Cumming, 2013). This method is particularly beneficial in language learning environments, as it encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and communication skills among learners (Felder & Brent, 2009).

1. Active Learning and Cooperative Learning

Active learning is an instructional approach that involves engaging students in activities that require them to actively process information and reflect on their learning. Unlike traditional lecture-based methods, active learning emphasizes student participation through activities such as problem-solving, discussions, and group work, which have been shown to improve retention and understanding of course material (Felder & Brent, 2009). Bonwell and Eison (1991) highlighted that active learning focuses on the development of students' skills and higher-order thinking rather than just the transfer of information. In language learning, active learning activities can include tasks such as think-pair-share, concept tests, and think-aloud pair problem solving (Petress, 2008).

Cooperative learning, a subset of active learning, involves students working together in groups to achieve common goals. This approach not only enhances academic learning but also develops interpersonal skills and fosters a sense of shared achievement (Felder & Brent, 2007). Cooperative learning has been shown to be particularly effective in improving language skills, as it provides a supportive environment where students can practice communication and receive feedback from peers (Cooperative H. C. T. I., 2009).

2. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)

Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL), a structured form of cooperative learning, involves students supporting one another to comprehend and master academic content. Within language education, PAL has emerged as a pedagogically valuable method for enhancing learners' linguistic competencies by facilitating interaction with peers at comparable or slightly higher proficiency levels (Ross & Cumming, 2013). Typical PAL practices, such as peer tutoring, collaborative discussions, and feedback exchanges, not only foster language development but also contribute to increased learner confidence and reduced anxiety (Gong, 2023).

The utility of PAL in English language instruction has been well documented, particularly in contexts requiring productive skills. For example, Wattanamongkolsuk, Khundejamorn, and Buranapong (2017) found that incorporating PAL strategies in grammar instruction led to improved comprehension and language performance, largely due to the opportunities for peer mentoring and formative feedback. In a similar context, Konchiab and Munpanya (2021) investigated peer assistance in oral presentations among Thai EFL learners, reporting positive outcomes in learners' confidence and ability to self-monitor their performance.

Extending beyond traditional classroom setups, Lan, Sung, and Chang (2007) critically examined the shortcomings of conventional collaborative approaches in EFL reading programs and introduced a mobile-supported PAL system (MPAL). Their two-phase study demonstrated that MPAL not only enhanced reading motivation but also promoted more effective peer collaboration among young learners. This contrast between conventional and technology-enhanced PAL highlights the importance of digital tools in maximizing interaction.

Recent studies in Southeast Asia have shifted toward integrating online modalities into PAL. Tsai and Piamsai (2025) emphasized the value of peer assessment and role-play in improving Thai high school students' speaking fluency. Likewise, Chantaraphat and Jaturapitakkul (2023) affirmed that peer tutoring enhanced undergraduates' spoken English and reduced speaking anxiety. These two studies collectively support the notion that PAL promotes communicative competence by fostering supportive, low-pressure environments.

In the area of writing, Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo (2024) compared peer feedback in online and face-to-face settings. Their study reveals that while online interaction encouraged emotional engagement, it did not significantly enhance writing outcomes, emphasizing the need for explicit feedback training. Similarly, Waluyo and Panmei (2024) found that students using Facebook for peer review were active participants, though inconsistencies in feedback quality persisted. Last but not least, the PAL center, grounded in seamless learning principles, improved students' academic writing (Devere, Satienchayakorn & Prakaiborisuth, 2021). Overall, while PAL shows strong potential across skills and modalities, its impact is possible upon scaffolding, peer training, and technological integration.

3. Challenges and Opportunities of PAL in Online Learning

While Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) has been shown to be effective in traditional classroom contexts, its application in online learning environments introduces both challenges and possibilities. Anderson (2004) noted that interaction is fundamental to effective online education and facilitates learner autonomy and deeper engagement. However, online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction, which is a core component of PAL. Alcoy and Atthasit (2024), in a study involving 433 Thai university students, found that while online learning offered convenience and flexibility, it lacked the social interaction that learners valued in face-to-face settings. Students reported feeling more isolated online and more self-conscious during in-person sessions, ultimately expressing a preference for hybrid models.

In contrast, some studies highlight specific benefits of online language learning. Poolperm and Boonmoh (2024), for example, found that Thai EFL learners experienced greater anxiety in face-to-face environments, citing nervousness and vocabulary limitations. This suggests that online formats may alleviate certain affective barriers, though confidence remained a challenge across both modes.

Furthermore, structured online PAL has demonstrated promise. Gong (2023) showed that peer-assisted strategies using online English news resources enhanced ESL learners' literacy and intercultural awareness. Similarly, Lan (2007) developed a mobile-based PAL system that successfully supported collaborative learning among EFL students, even in remote settings. These findings suggest that while the absence of physical presence may constrain spontaneous interaction, technology-mediated PAL, if purposefully designed, can foster effective peer engagement and skill development. The key lies in scaffolding and ensuring meaningful, consistent peer interaction in virtual spaces.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the impact of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) on Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills
2. To compare students' performance and confidence levels before and after the implementation of PAL
3. To identify the challenges and benefits of using PAL in an online platform for teaching business English presentation skills

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) significantly improves Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills.

2. Students will demonstrate higher confidence in giving business English presentations after participating in PAL.

3. The use of PAL in an online platform will provide a supportive learning environment that enhances students' engagement and reduces anxiety.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) on Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills. The quantitative aspect involved pre- and post-assessment of students' presentation skills and confidence levels, while the qualitative component explored students' experiences and perceptions through open-ended questions and interviews. This approach allowed for a detailed examination of the effectiveness of PAL in an online learning environment, aligning with the research objectives and hypotheses (Ross & Cumming, 2013).

2. Participants

The study included 65 first-year students majoring in Business English at a public university in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on students enrolled in the *"English for Business Presentation"* course during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inclusion criteria were: (1) being a first-year Business English major student, and (2) having completed a listening and speaking course at the university level. All participants provided informed consent and were informed about the research procedures.

3. Research Instruments

3.1 Questionnaire: A 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was developed to assess students' confidence and performance in business English presentations before and after the PAL intervention. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items divided into three sections: (a) students' prior experience and skills in English presentations, (b) their confidence levels, and (c) their perception of PAL's effectiveness. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in English language teaching using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and piloted with 5 students to ensure reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 (Felder & Brent, 2009).

3.2 Pre- and Post-tests: Performance in business English presentations was measured using pre- and post-tests conducted at the beginning and end of the PAL intervention. Students were evaluated on various aspects of their presentation skills, including content organization, language use, pronunciation, and overall delivery. Each presentation was rated by three evaluators using a standardized rubric to ensure consistency in scoring (Felder & Brent, 2009).

3.3 Open-ended Questions and Interviews: To gain deeper insights into students' experiences with PAL, open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of volunteering participants. These qualitative tools were designed to capture students' reflections on the benefits and challenges of PAL, their engagement levels, and any changes in their confidence and skills throughout the course (Ross & Cumming, 2013).

4. Research Procedure

The study was conducted over six weeks, with data collection occurring in three main stages:
1. Stage 1: Preparation and Introduction (Week 1): During the first week, students were introduced to the PAL approach and grouped into pairs or small groups of five based on their English proficiency levels (high, medium, and low). Group assignments were made using a norm-referenced approach, considering the students' previous GPA in English courses.

2. Stage 2: PAL Implementation (Weeks 2-5): The PAL sessions included four presentation assignments, where students worked in pairs and groups to deliver business English presentations. The first two assignments involved pair work with varying levels of peer support, while the last two were group presentations. The tasks required students to present sales figures using visuals and product descriptions, focusing on structuring their presentations effectively and managing audience interactions (Felder & Brent, 2007). Feedback was given to students according to the set criteria at the end of every presentation to ensure they improved in the next one.

3. Stage 3: Evaluation and Reflection (Week 6): In the final week, students completed the post-test and questionnaire to evaluate their progress. Qualitative data were collected through open-ended responses and interviews to capture detailed feedback on the PAL experience (Ross & Cumming, 2013).

5. Data Analysis

For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations (SD), were employed to assess the levels of presentation performance. Performance levels were categorized as follows: Highest (4.51 – 5.00), High (3.51 – 4.50), Moderate (2.51 – 3.50), Low (1.51 – 2.50), and Lowest (1.00 – 1.50). A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare students' presentation skills before and after the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) intervention, providing insights into the effectiveness of the approach. For the qualitative analysis, students' responses to five open-ended questions were examined through categorization and coding. This method helped identify recurring themes and patterns in students' experiences and perceptions of the PAL activities, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of both the benefits and challenges associated with the learning approach (Petress, 2008).

6. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for educational research. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing student responses, and all data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses, focusing on the impact of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) on Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills. The results display the means, standard deviations, and t-test scores of the questionnaires administered before and after the PAL intervention, aimed at enhancing participants' presentation skills in Business English contexts. Table 1 provides insights into the participants' initial opinions and experiences related to giving presentations in Business English.

**Table 1**

Results before PAL Intervention

Item	Statement	M	SD
1	Before studying, students had experience giving a presentation in English.	2.72	0.64
2	Before studying, students learned the process of presenting in English, such as giving an introduction, leading to the content, summarizing, and using presentation media.	2.85	0.73
3	Before studying, students knew important skills in business English presentations.	2.49	0.86
4	Before studying, students could deliver a business English presentation.	2.46	1.01
5	Before studying, students considered English for Business Presentation essential for work.	4.22	0.81
6	Before studying, students confidently spoke, described, and explained without hesitation or shyness.	2.94	0.75
7	Before studying, students could proficiently analyze situations to solve problems without hesitation or support from others.	2.94	0.75
8	Before studying, students could control their emotions, remaining calm, composed, and confident, unaffected by environmental factors, and being self-reliant.	3.51	0.83
9	Before studying, students had a good personality and accepted new situations without fear and were willing to listen to others.	3.32	0.81
10	Before studying, students had their own ideas and dared to do new and different things without fear of criticism.	2.72	0.65

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation

Figure 1

Results before PAL Intervention
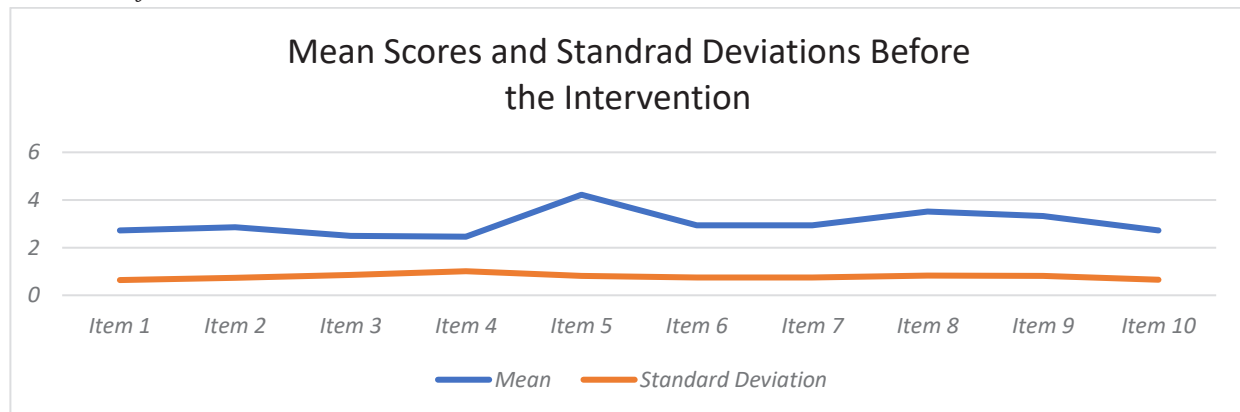
Before the implementation of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), students demonstrated lower levels of confidence and proficiency in business English presentation skills. The data revealed several key observations about the students' initial performance and perceptions:

First, the mean scores for students' experience in giving presentations and their understanding of the presentation process in English were relatively low, with the mean values of 2.72 and 2.85, respectively. This suggests that many students lacked prior exposure and familiarity with the structured approach required for effective business presentations.

Additionally, the students' knowledge of essential business English presentation skills and their ability to deliver a presentation were notably limited, as reflected by low mean scores of 2.49 and 2.46. These results indicate that before the PAL intervention, students were not well-equipped with the necessary skills to perform confidently and competently in business presentation settings.

Despite recognizing the importance of business English presentation skills for their professional success (mean = 4.22), students' confidence in their speaking abilities and problem-solving skills was moderate, with both areas having mean scores of 2.94. This points to a discrepancy between the value students placed on these skills and their self-assessed capability to execute them effectively.

Furthermore, while students showed slightly higher scores in emotional control, self-reliance, and willingness to accept new situations (mean = 3.51 and 3.32), these figures suggest that although students exhibited some resilience and openness, their overall confidence and preparedness for business presentations required further development. These insights underline the necessity for targeted interventions, such as PAL, to enhance students' proficiency and self-assurance in business English presentations.

Table 2

Results after PAL Intervention

Item	Statement	M (After)	SD (After)	*t*-value	*p*-value
1	After studying, students knew the process of presenting in English, such as self-introduction, leading to content, summarizing, and using supporting media for presentations.	3.98	0.75	-8.25	< 0.001
2	After studying, students knew important skills of Business English Presentation.	4.16	0.76	-9.1	< 0.001
3	After studying, students could give a business English presentation.	3.76	0.63	-7.45	< 0.001
4	After studying, students consider English for business presentations necessary for work.	4.4	0.8	-5.22	< 0.001
5	After studying, students confidently spoke, described, and explained without hesitation or shyness.	3.57	0.76	-6.8	< 0.001
6	After studying, students were proficient in analyzing situations to solve specific problems without hesitation, relying on their own thoughts or waiting for support from others.	3.51	0.85	-4.67	< 0.001
7	After studying, students could control their emotions, remain calm and confident, and were not affected by environmental factors, and were self-reliant.	3.94	0.85	-5.88	< 0.001
8	After studying, students had a positive personality, accepted new situations without fear, and were willing to listen to others.	3.8	0.73	-5.7	< 0.001
9	After studying, students had their own ideas and dared to do new and different things without fear of criticism.	3.8	0.73	-6.15	< 0.001
10	After studying, students could give a presentation in English more proficiently.	3.81	0.8	-6	< 0.001

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation

Figure 2

Results before PAL Intervention
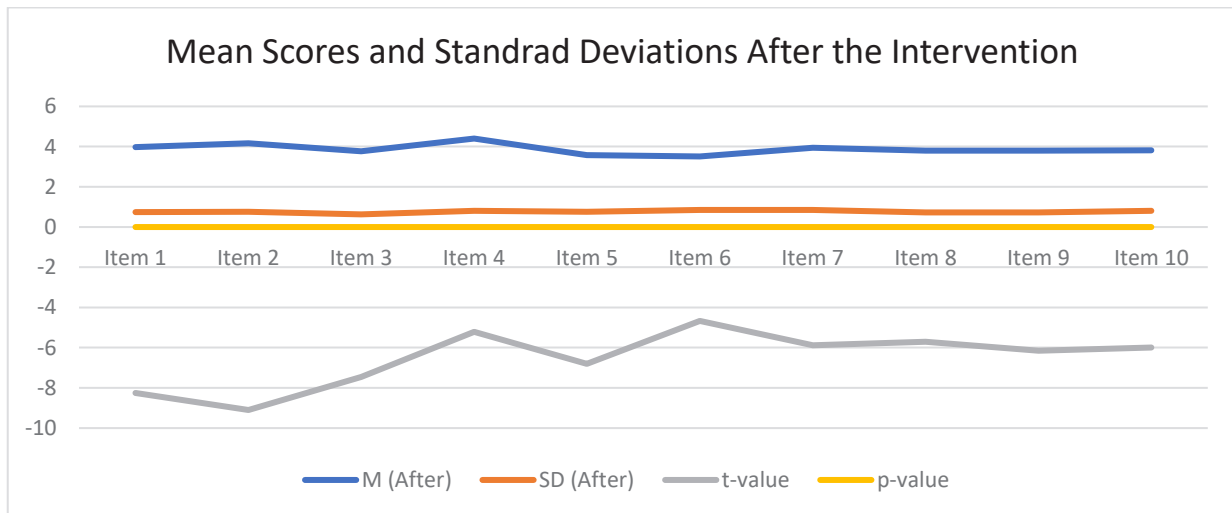
The results presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 indicate significant improvements in students' business English presentation skills and confidence levels following the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) intervention. The mean scores for all evaluated areas increased after the intervention, demonstrating that students gained a better understanding of the presentation process, enhanced their knowledge of essential business English presentation skills, and improved their overall ability to deliver presentations.

Specifically, the mean score for students' understanding of the presentation process increased from 2.85 to 3.98, reflecting their enhanced ability to structure presentations effectively using elements such as self-introduction, content organization, and the use of supporting media. Similarly, the mean score for knowledge of important business English presentation skills rose from 2.49 to 4.16, indicating that students significantly developed their skills in this area. The mean score for the ability to deliver business English presentations improved from 2.46 to 3.76, which shows a substantial enhancement in students' presentation delivery capabilities.

Moreover, the increase in mean scores for confidence-related items suggests that PAL contributed positively to students' self-assurance in presenting. For example, the mean score for speaking confidently and explaining without hesitation increased from 2.94 to 3.57. The students also reported improved emotional control and self-reliance, with mean scores rising from 3.51 to 3.94.

All T-test results showed statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$) between the pre- and post-intervention scores, confirming that the observed improvements were not due to chance but were a direct result of the PAL intervention. This supports the hypothesis that PAL provides a supportive and effective learning environment that enhances students' presentation skills and

confidence in an online business English context. The results emphasize the value of incorporating PAL into language education as a strategy to foster both academic and personal growth among students.

Analysis of Student Feedback

1. Main Themes Identified:

1.1 Learning and Working with Peers

Most students felt positively about meeting new friends and collaborating with peers, which made them feel supported in their work. They thought working together promoted unity and responsibility for each individual's role within the group. Some students reported that *"We collaborated in both thinking and doing, and I had the opportunity to get to know classmates I had never spoken to before" (S1),* and "My friends cooperated very well during the activities. *There should be more lessons that include peer-assisted learning activities like this (S5)."*

1.2 Challenges in Collaboration

A common issue was conflicting schedules among peers, making it difficult to meet and work together, as one student stated, *"The problem is that our free time rarely matches (S2)."* Some students felt that certain peers were not fully cooperative or engaged, which posed challenges to group work; *"The problem I encountered was that the teammate I worked with was not enthusiastic or engaged with the task. They didn't help with writing the script, although I assigned them to gather some information. They showed no interest in practicing, even though I tried to support them. They also ignored the messages I sent (S6)."*

1.3 Impact of Online Learning

Some students felt that online learning made communication and collaboration more difficult compared to face-to-face learning, which led some to prefer on-site activities. Relationships among students in online classes were sometimes less strong, leading to hesitation in giving feedback or advice to peers. A student reported, *"We had never met before, so it was difficult to work together. We weren't close enough to comfortably give each other advice (S7)."*

1.4 Benefits of Learning Activities

Most students recognized the benefits of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) activities, especially in enhancing communication and presentation skills in English. These activities helped build confidence and encouraged more critical thinking and exchange of ideas among students, as they suggested that *"friends can help with practicing reading and improving understanding in English. You can always ask questions and consult with each other (S8). We can help each other practice speaking and pronunciation. For any sentences that our friends or we ourselves are not fluent in, we can give each other feedback and continue to improve together (S3)."*

1.5 Additional Suggestions

Some students suggested that these activities should start from the early stages of the course to allow more time for skill and relationship development within the group. Students felt that working in pairs or small groups was more effective than larger group work, where task division could be unequal; *"The activity that the teacher assigned is very good because it's a pair activity, which I think is better than working in a big group. Sometimes in larger groups, there can be unfair situations; some people do a lot, some do very little, and some do nothing at all. I feel that this isn't really fair for those who are dedicated and end up having to deal with group members like that (S4)."*
Note: S = Student

2. Impact of PAL on Presentation Skills (Objective 1 and Hypothesis 1)

The first objective aimed to evaluate the impact of PAL on students' business English presentation skills. The results from the paired-sample t-test indicated a significant improvement in students' presentation performance after the PAL intervention. The mean scores of the post-test were significantly higher than the pre-test scores, confirming that PAL effectively enhanced students' abilities in delivering business English presentations. This finding supports Hypothesis 1, which assumed that PAL would significantly improve the presentation skills of Thai EFL students.

3. Comparison of Performance and Confidence Levels Before and After PAL (Objective 2 and Hypothesis 2)

The second objective sought to compare students' performance and confidence levels before and after the PAL sessions. The data revealed that students not only showed improved performance but also reported increased confidence in their ability to present in English. The paired-sample t-test results demonstrated statistically significant gains in both performance and confidence, with students expressing greater self-assurance in managing their presentations. This outcome aligns with Hypothesis 2, which suggested that students would exhibit higher confidence in giving business English presentations following their participation in PAL.

4. Challenges and Benefits of Using PAL in an Online Platform (Objective 3 and Hypothesis 3)

The third objective was to identify the challenges and benefits of using PAL in an online setting for teaching business English presentation skills. Qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses highlighted several key themes. Students reported that PAL provided a supportive and collaborative environment, which enhanced their engagement and reduced anxiety during presentations. They appreciated the peer support and the opportunity to receive constructive feedback. However, some challenges were noted, such as difficulties coordinating group work online and occasional disparities in group member participation. Despite these challenges, the overall feedback was positive, supporting Hypothesis 3, which predicted that PAL would create a supportive learning environment that fosters engagement and reduces anxiety.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing business English presentation skills among Thai EFL students, particularly in an online learning environment. The significant improvements observed in students' presentation skills and confidence levels align with existing literature on the benefits of cooperative and peer-assisted learning approaches.

1. Enhancement of Presentation Skills

The increase in students' presentation skills after the PAL intervention supports the idea that collaborative learning environments foster active engagement and skill acquisition. This aligns with Felder and Brent (2009), who argue that active learning, which includes peer collaboration, significantly enhances student learning outcomes by promoting participation and deeper understanding of the material. The structured nature of PAL, which involved peer feedback and group work, allowed students to practice and refine their presentation skills in a supportive setting. This mirrors the findings of Ross and Cumming (2013), who noted that PAL encourages skill development through peer interaction, making it particularly effective for language learning.

2. Boost in Confidence Levels

The boost in students' confidence levels post-intervention is also consistent with previous research indicating that PAL can reduce anxiety and increase self-efficacy in academic settings. According to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, learning is a social process, and students gain confidence and knowledge through interaction with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The results of this study are in line with Zhou (2021), who found that peer-assisted learning significantly improved ESL learners' confidence in higher-order thinking tasks. In the context of this research, students reported feeling more assured in their ability to present in English, which is crucial for their professional development.

3. Challenges in Online Learning Environments

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also highlighted challenges associated with implementing PAL in an online format, such as coordinating group work and managing peer participation. Anderson (2004) discusses that while online learning offers flexibility, it can also pose difficulties in maintaining the same level of interaction and collaboration as face-to-face learning. Moreover, virtual classrooms are considered novel to teachers and students, as in 2002, Ariffin, Darus & Abdul Halim examined instructors' strategies to foster interaction in online ESL classes, using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) framework. Observing six virtual English language classes over six weeks, the study focused on three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Findings revealed that these domains were interrelated and crucial, especially as both students and instructors were new to virtual classrooms. Positive emotional climates, sensitivity to learners' needs, engaging instructional formats, and emphasis on

higher-order thinking skills were linked to better student achievement. The study aims to inform pedagogical techniques for enhancing interactions in online learning environments (Ariffin, Darus & Halim, 2022).

The feedback from students in this study echoed these concerns, suggesting that while PAL is beneficial, careful consideration must be given to the structure and support provided in online settings to ensure effective collaboration.

4. Contribution to the Thai EFL Landscape

The study can contribute to Thai EFL in both a practical and pedagogical way. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) can significantly improve students' business English presentation skills and confidence in an online setting. It also provides evidence-based support for more student-centered, collaborative teaching approaches. This is particularly relevant in Thailand, where EFL instruction often relies on traditional, teacher-led methods, and students may lack real-life communication practice. The study shows how structured peer interaction can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment, helping Thai learners develop both language competence and soft skills essential for professional contexts. It also offers guidance for adapting communicative teaching strategies to digital platforms.

Conclusion

This research examined the impact of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) on Thai EFL students' business English presentation skills in an online learning environment. The findings indicate that PAL significantly improved students' presentation skills, confidence, and engagement, aligning with the study's objectives and supporting the research hypotheses.

The comparison of pre- and post-intervention results demonstrated marked improvements in students' ability to structure and deliver business English presentations. Initially, students exhibited low to moderate skills and confidence levels in giving presentations, as shown by the lower mean scores before the PAL intervention. However, after participating in PAL, there was a notable increase in their understanding of presentation processes, the application of business English skills, and overall delivery performance. The higher mean scores post-intervention confirm that PAL effectively enhances these critical skills, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Additionally, the research highlighted that PAL not only improved technical presentation skills but also significantly boosted students' confidence. The increased mean scores in post-intervention assessments for confidence, emotional control, and willingness to accept new challenges indicate that students felt more assured and capable in their presentation abilities, validating Hypothesis 2.

Moreover, the qualitative feedback from students suggested that PAL created a supportive and collaborative learning environment that fostered engagement and reduced anxiety. Despite some challenges related to coordinating group work online, students generally found the PAL approach beneficial for learning, aligning with Hypothesis 3. The use of PAL provided a platform for peer support, feedback, and collaborative learning, which are critical elements for skill development in an online setting.

Overall, the study concludes that PAL is a valuable and effective instructional strategy for improving business English presentation skills among Thai EFL students in an online learning context. It not only enhances technical skills but also supports the development of confidence and interpersonal abilities. These findings suggest that incorporating PAL into language learning curricula can provide significant benefits, particularly in online or blended learning environments. Future research could explore further adaptations of PAL to address the challenges of online group coordination and to maximize its benefits across different learning contexts.

Recommendations

1. Implication

The implications of this research are significant for educators seeking to enhance business English skills through collaborative learning strategies. Integrating PAL into the curriculum can provide a practical approach to developing not only technical skills but also soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. Instructors should consider incorporating structured peer-assisted activities that include clear guidelines and support mechanisms, particularly in online or hybrid learning environments. Last but not least, additional examination of the different impacts on low- and high-proficiency students in PAL groups could provide pedagogical insights.

2. Further Studies

Future research could explore strategies to overcome the challenges of PAL in online settings, such as using digital tools that facilitate better communication and collaboration among students. Additionally, further studies could investigate the long-term impact of PAL on students' professional skills beyond the classroom, as well as its applicability across different disciplines and cultural contexts. Besides PAL, peer teaching is also crucial to strengthen an ESL classroom as Sunggingwati (2018) revealed in her study "Cooperative learning in peer teaching: A case study in an EFL context" that cooperative learning in group formats enhanced teaching preparation, material mastery, peer interaction, confidence, and learning from others, suggesting that having more group formats and time could further boost students' confidence and effectiveness in teaching. Moreover, future research could explore skill retention through longitudinal studies and compare peer-assisted learning (PAL) with teacher-led approaches. Enhancing online PAL with collaborative tools such as Kahoot, Padlet, Miro, and Jamboard would also increase its effectiveness.

3. Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalizability of its findings. First, the relatively small sample size limits the statistical power of the results and reduces their applicability to broader TESOL contexts (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The study was also conducted within a single university setting, which may not reflect the dynamics of other institutional environments, particularly those with different teaching cultures, resources, or student demographics (Duff, 2008). Moreover, the data relied primarily on learner self-reports through surveys. Participants may have responded in ways they believed aligned with researcher expectations (Dörnyei, 2007). Another important consideration is the variation among learners in terms of digital literacy, language proficiency, and willingness to collaborate online. These individual differences likely influenced the perceived and actual effectiveness of peer-assisted learning (PAL) in the online environment (Hampel & Stickler, 2015). However, inter-rater reliability was not evaluated for the assessors of the presenters during the business English presentations. As a result, there is a possibility of variability in the assessments due to the subjectivity of the rater, which could impact the consistency and reliability of the evaluation outcomes.

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