

Developing Students' Global Citizenship through Feminist Pedagogy in Thai EFL classroom: A Higher Education Context

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Abstract

This study explores how feminist pedagogy fosters global citizenship (GC) among Thai postgraduate students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. While global citizenship education (GCE) is increasingly emphasized in higher education, it often remains shaped by Western-centric and neoliberal paradigms. Moreover, there is limited empirical research examining how feminist pedagogy can be applied to develop global citizenship in non-Western EFL contexts, particularly in Southeast Asia. Feminist pedagogy rooted in empowerment, dialogue, and reflexivity offers a transformative alternative that promotes ethical awareness and social justice. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from three MA students through student–teacher dialogues, reflective journals, and classroom observations over a 15-week course. Thematic analysis revealed that feminist pedagogy enhanced students' cognitive awareness, affective openness, and behavioral engagement—the three core dimensions of GC. Students developed confidence to express their voices, critically analyzed inequality, and engaged in collaborative advocacy projects addressing gender and social bias. These findings demonstrate that feminist pedagogy can encourage more inclusive and participatory EFL classroom interactions that connect language learning with ethical and civic engagement. The study contributes to contextualizing critical GCE within Southeast Asian higher education.

Keywords: feminist pedagogy, global citizenship, EFL education, student activism, higher education in Thailand

1. Introduction

Higher education worldwide increasingly recognizes global citizenship (GC) as a crucial educational goal (Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2024; Massaro, 2022), yet the ways in which it is enacted and contextualized remain inconsistent and limited in scope. While higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering global awareness, intercultural competence, and social responsibility, many global citizenship education (GCE) initiatives remain confined within Western-centric and neoliberal paradigms, emphasizing employability, market competitiveness, and mobility rather than ethical, critical, and transformative engagement with global injustices (Aktas et al., 2016; Bosio, 2023; Horey et al., 2018; Robertson, 2021).

Recent scholars have called for a critical and socially engaged reorientation of GCE grounded in feminist, decolonial, and care-centered pedagogies (Bosio, 2023; Eybers & Muller, 2023). Bosio (2023) advocates a model of critical global citizenship education that integrates decolonialism, caring ethics, and ecological consciousness to cultivate empathy, inclusivity, and social justice. Similarly, Eybers and Muller (2023) highlight the need for epistemologies that empower students to question whose knowledge is privileged and to value relational ethics and social transformation. These critical frameworks have primarily emerged in Western and East Asian higher education. As a result, there is a significant research gap in understanding how GCE can be localized in Southeast Asian contexts such as Thailand, where cultural hierarchies, gender norms, and collectivist values shape classroom dynamics (Young, 2021). Moreover, although feminist pedagogy shares conceptual affinities with critical GCE—both emphasizing empowerment, dialogue, reflexivity, and transformation—there remains a lack of empirical research linking feminist pedagogy explicitly with the development of global citizenship, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. As Horey et al. (2018) note, most studies on GCE focus on students' perceptions or policy frameworks rather than pedagogical interventions that lead to attitudinal or behavioral change. Ghosh and Jing (2020) further argue that internationalization efforts, though extensive, often fail to engage critically with intersectional inequities such as gender, race, and class that underpin global interactions. This suggests an urgent need for pedagogical frameworks that foreground social justice, inclusivity, and voice within localized learning environments.

In Thailand's higher education context, English classrooms serve as fertile spaces for cultivating intercultural awareness and ethical consciousness, as English functions not only as a linguistic tool but also as a gateway to diverse worldviews, values, and knowledge (Imsa-ard, 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Phongsirikul & Thongrin, 2019; Wichanee & Thongrin, 2024). However, Thai EFL education has traditionally emphasized linguistic competence and cultural conformity rather than critical reflection on global and local inequalities (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2023; Wichanee & Thongrin, 2024). Integrating feminist pedagogy

centering on dialogue, mutual respect, and questioning of patriarchal and ethnocentric structures can fill this pedagogical void by promoting students' awareness of power relations and encouraging active participation in social change (Crawford & Jackson-Best, 2017; Hayden & Crockett, 2020; Naskali & Keskitalo-Foley, 2019). This study, therefore, seeks to address this theoretical and contextual gap by exploring how feminist pedagogy can be employed to develop students' global citizenship in Thai EFL classrooms.

By situating feminist pedagogy within the framework of global citizenship education, this research aims to extend current understandings of transformative pedagogy in non-Western, linguistically diverse contexts. It also contributes to the ongoing global discourse that calls for decolonizing and democratizing education, aligning with Bosio's (2023) vision of higher education as a site for cultivating "critical global citizens" who engage ethically with issues of gender, culture, and justice. In doing so, the study aspires to provide a context-sensitive pedagogical model for fostering global citizenship through feminist principles of care, collaboration, and critical consciousness in Thai higher education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Citizenship in Higher Education

Global citizenship (GC) has evolved into a key educational objective in higher education, emphasizing learners' capacities to think critically, empathize across cultural boundaries, and act responsibly within interconnected societies (Aktas et al., 2016; Bosio, 2023; Ghosh & Jing, 2020). Definitions of GC vary across paradigms. The neoliberal perspective views GC through employability, mobility, and global competence—skills essential for success in the internationalized economy (Sakamoto & Roger, 2022). The humanistic perspective highlights empathy, solidarity, and respect for diversity as the foundation of peaceful coexistence (Eybers & Muller, 2023; Ghosh & Jing, 2020). Meanwhile, the critical-transformative perspective frames GC as a commitment to decolonization, sustainability, and social justice, challenging learners to examine systems of privilege and inequality (Aktas et al., 2016; Bosio, 2023). Rather than competing frameworks, these orientations can be viewed as a developmental continuum in which awareness and competence precede ethical engagement and activism.

Across frameworks, three interrelated dimensions characterize GC. The cognitive dimension involves awareness of global interdependence, cultural diversity, and systemic inequities (Horey et al., 2018; Thomas & Banki, 2021). The affective or socio-emotional dimension reflects empathy, openness, and concern for others (Bosio, 2023; Eybers & Muller, 2023). The behavioral dimension manifests through civic participation, collaboration, and advocacy for justice (Robertson, 2021; Sakamoto & Roger, 2022). Together, these form the foundation of what Bosio (2023) terms the critical global citizen—a learner who not only comprehends global issues but also acts toward transformative change. Yet, as Ghosh and Jing (2020) note, realizing this ideal requires pedagogical innovation that bridges knowledge, emotion, and action—especially in non-Western contexts where global citizenship is often taught as abstract or linguistic rather than transformative.

Grounded in the three dimensions of GC, Gaitán-Aguilar et al. (2024) extend this framework to three main research approaches relevant to higher education: intercultural competence, identification with a global community, and civic engagement. Intercultural competence is widely recognized as a cornerstone of internationalization in higher education, encompassing students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities to interact effectively across cultures. While study abroad programs have been shown to enhance cultural intelligence and emotional stability (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Tracy-Ventura et al., 2016), emerging evidence suggests that "internationalization at home"—through intercultural group work, reflective dialogue, and structured training—can be equally or even more impactful (Peifer et al., 2021; Liang & Schartner, 2022). Intercultural competence not only fosters global awareness but also predicts cross-cultural adaptation, international orientation, and empathy (Ward et al., 2009; Yakunina et al., 2012). Therefore, higher education must move beyond mobility-focused approaches to integrate intercultural learning within the curriculum, promoting sustainable, inclusive, and critically informed global citizenship. Identification with a global community reflects students' sense of belonging to a broader human collective and their commitment to shared global responsibility (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). This identification is shaped by both institutional and personal factors—particularly universities' normative environments that emphasize global awareness and social responsibility (Blake et al., 2015; Assis et al., 2018). Students who perceive their institutions as globally oriented demonstrate stronger identification with global citizenship, leading to prosocial values such as empathy, justice, and moral action (Lee et al., 2017; Reysen et al., 2013). These findings underscore the crucial role of higher education as a moral and socializing agent in fostering students' global belonging through curriculum design, institutional culture, and pedagogical practices. Finally, civic engagement connects global learning to both local and international action. Study abroad and globally oriented curricula increase students' awareness of interdependence and inspire their participation in civic initiatives (Jon & Fry, 2021; Horn & Fry, 2013). Likewise, "internationalization at home" strategies—such as service learning and courses addressing global issues—cultivate civic responsibility, informed advocacy, and community involvement (Brunell, 2013; Lorenzini, 2013). However, civic engagement remains context- and discipline-dependent, often flourishing within social science programs but underrepresented elsewhere (Viola, 2021). To advance global citizenship education, universities should embed civic participation opportunities across disciplines, enabling all students to translate global awareness into ethical and socially responsible action. The interconnectedness among the three dimensions and the three main research approaches is illustrated in Figure 1.

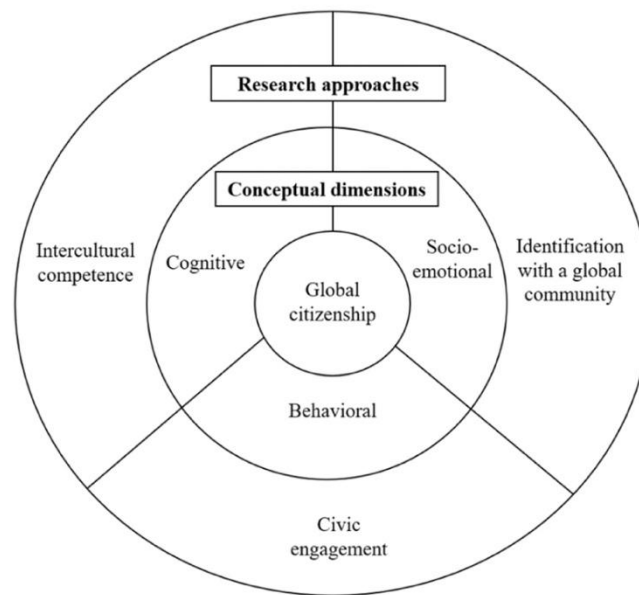


Figure 1. Global Citizenship in Higher Education

2.2 Feminist Pedagogy in Higher Education

Feminist pedagogy offers a concrete approach to realizing GC's critical and transformative goals. It reconceptualizes education as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge through shared authority, reflection, and empowerment (Hooks, 1994; Luke & Gore, 1992). By challenging hierarchical, objectivist traditions that privilege certain voices, feminist pedagogy democratizes the classroom, positioning both teacher and students as learners. It values experiential knowledge, embraces reflexivity, and links the personal to the political by connecting individual experiences to broader social structures (Gore, 1992; Naskali & Keskitalo-Foley, 2017).

Core principles of feminist pedagogy including empowerment, critical reflection, and community building parallel the affective or socio-emotional and behavioral dimensions of GC (Palmieri & MacLean, 2022; Shrewsbury, 1993). It invites students to interrogate inequality, examine power relations, and act toward equity and justice (Williams & Ferber, 2008). The approach also cultivates dialogic empathy and collaborative inquiry, key traits of globally minded learners. In doing so, feminist pedagogy provides the ethical and practical grounding for GC development in higher education.

This study adopts postmodern feminism as its epistemological foundation. Postmodern feminism views truth as socially constructed, contextual, and multiple (Lerner & Sinacore, 2012; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). It rejects essentialist identities and universal truths, advocating instead for situated, plural, and co-created knowledge (Leavy, 2007). Applied to the Thai EFL context where English classrooms often emphasize linguistic correctness and deference, this perspective reframes language learning as a space for dialogue, reflection, and civic responsibility. Students learn to see English not merely as a tool for global communication but as a medium for ethical action and advocacy.

Thus, feminist pedagogy offers both a philosophical rationale and pedagogical strategy for developing global citizenship. By fostering student agency, voice, and activism through critical engagement, it enables learners to connect local experiences to global implications. This study therefore explores how feminist pedagogy can transform EFL classrooms into inclusive, reflective, and socially engaged spaces that cultivate global citizens capable of ethical participation in an interconnected world.

3. Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to explore the role of feminist pedagogy in fostering students' GC within a Thai EFL classroom and how students perceive and experience learning in such an environment. Through qualitative case study data, the study intends to provide insights into the transformative potential of feminist pedagogy in English language education. To achieve these aims, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does feminist pedagogy promote students' GC in a Thai EFL classroom?
- 2) What are the students' perceptions and experiences of learning through feminist pedagogical approaches?

4. Method

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how feminist pedagogy fosters GC among Thai EFL postgraduate students. A case study approach is particularly suited for examining complex educational and sociocultural phenomena in authentic classroom settings through multiple data sources, allowing for an in-depth understanding of learning dynamics (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Three postgraduate students were selected as individual cases within a feminist-informed English language classroom. Rather than testing hypotheses, the study sought to document and interpret the learning processes and developmental shifts that emerged as feminist principles were integrated into classroom practice. The inquiry was interpretive and developmental in nature, focusing on how pedagogical interventions shaped students' agency, awareness, and activism over time.

Data were collected from three sources including student–teacher dialogues about learning experiences, reflective journals, and classroom observations which were triangulated to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

4.2 Participants

Three first-year MA students in Applied Linguistics participated in the study (See Table 1) representing the entire cohort rather than a selected sample. This aligns with qualitative case study principles that prioritize depth over breadth, enabling rich, contextualized insights. Additionally, consistent with feminist methodology, the small cohort allowed close attention to participants' voices, lived experiences, and situated knowledge. All participants had completed undergraduate degrees in English-related fields and were employed in various professional contexts, including private sector administration and freelance language work. Participation was voluntary, and ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board prior to data collection. To understand participants' backgrounds, they were asked about their previous experiences attending workshops related to intercultural communication, critical thinking, and gender studies, as well as their familiarity with feminist pedagogy.

Table 1. Student Participant Profile

No.	Pseudonyms	Gender	Have you ever attended any workshops or training related to intercultural communication, critical thinking, or gender studies?	Have you ever heard of or learned about feminist pedagogy before participating in this course?
1	Pimpanit	Female	No	No
2	Sukrit	Male	No	No
3	Manisa	Female	No	No

4.3 Research Instruments

The study employed qualitative instruments to examine how feminist pedagogy cultivates the core characteristics of GC namely, cognitive awareness, affective openness, and behavioral engagement. Data were collected from three primary sources: student–teacher dialogues, reflective journals, and classroom observations.

Student–teacher dialogues were conducted at the end of each class session over fifteen weeks. These informal, conversational exchanges focused on students' evolving learning experiences rather than following a structured interview protocol. Because the researcher also served as the course instructor, this approach minimized potential pressure on students to provide socially desirable responses. In addition, students were asked to write a reflective journal describing their perceptions, personal growth, and classroom experiences. Complementing these sources, classroom observations were conducted throughout the semester to capture students' behavioral development, classroom atmosphere, and teacher–student interactions.

4.4 Research Procedures

This study followed the four phases of action research: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning phase, research instruments were developed, and course content, activities, and assessments were partially designed in advance while allowing space for co-construction with students, consistent with feminist pedagogy's emphasis on shared authority and learner agency. The acting phase constituted the primary data collection period and was guided by key principles of feminist methodology, including empowerment, community building, critical reflection, and the political nature of knowledge construction (Palmieri & MacLean, 2022; Parpart et al., 2002; Shrewsbury, 1993), alongside postmodern feminist perspectives (Lerner & Sinacore, 2012; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). The course was implemented over 15 weeks in three stages. First, students collaborated with the instructor to co-design selected topics (e.g., gender, language, and workplace equity) as presented in Appendix, while core course concepts remained predetermined. Second, students engaged in participatory learning activities such as case analyses, student-led discussions, critical storytelling, and reflective journaling. The OSEE framework (Observe–State–Explore–Evaluate) (Deardorff, 2012, 2022) was applied as a general analytical guide to support students' critical examination of intercultural and social issues, without being treated as a step-by-step instructional procedure. Third, students developed advocacy-oriented group projects presented in a "CHANGE Exhibition," translating their reflections into collaborative social action. Data were collected throughout this phase using three main sources. First, informal student–teacher dialogues were conducted at the end of each class session. These conversations were not audio-recorded to maintain a natural and low-pressure environment; instead, key points were documented in field notes immediately after each session. Second, reflective journals were collected twice (mid-course and end-of-course). Students were guided by open-ended prompts encouraging them to reflect on their learning experiences, perceptions of classroom practices, and awareness of social issues. Third, classroom observations were recorded

systematically in structured field notes focusing on student participation, interaction patterns, and the overall classroom atmosphere. The observing phase took place at the end of the course. Students submitted final reflective essays, and a small-group discussion was conducted to further explore their perceptions and experiences of feminist pedagogy. Notes from this discussion were documented and incorporated into the dataset. In the reflecting phase, all data sources were analyzed to examine how students developed awareness, agency, and engagement with social issues. This phase also involved critical reflection by the instructor-researcher on the pedagogical process and its outcomes. By foregrounding students' voices and experiences, the study maintained the feminist commitment to knowledge co-construction while identifying areas for future pedagogical refinement.

4.5 Data Analysis

In this study, global citizenship was not measured through a standardized instrument. Instead, its development was inferred through thematic analysis aligned with the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of global citizenship. Qualitative data from journals, informal conversations, and observation notes were coded thematically following the procedures outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001) and Creswell (2011).

The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, all qualitative data were transcribed and read repeatedly to achieve familiarization. During this stage, initial notes were made to capture meaningful units related to students' experiences, perceptions, and actions. Second, open coding was conducted by assigning labels to significant excerpts (e.g., expressions of confidence, awareness of inequality, collaborative behavior). Third, similar codes were grouped into categories, which were then organized into broader themes reflecting patterns across the dataset. In the next stage, these themes were mapped onto the three dimensions of global citizenship including cognitive (awareness and critical understanding), affective (empathy and openness), and behavioral (participation and action) to interpret how feminist pedagogical practices contributed to students' development.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers engaged in debriefing sessions with two experts knowledgeable in feminist pedagogy and the Thai EFL educational context. These consultations helped clarify ambiguities and confirmed the reliability of the data interpretation.

5. Results

5.1 Research Question 1: How does feminist pedagogy promote students' GC in a Thai EFL classroom?

Considering all data sources including reflective journals, informal conversations, and observation notes, it was found that the implementation of feminist pedagogy appeared to support the development of students' GC across cognitive, affective, and behavioral. However, the most significant developments emerged within the behavioral dimension, which reflects deeper aspects of activism and social responsibility, followed by the cognitive and affective dimensions, respectively. The key themes that emerged include *Empowerment through Voice, Inclusion, and Dialogic Engagement, From Critical Awareness to Everyday Activism, and Collective Empowerment and Democratic Collaboration*.

5.1.1 Empowerment through Voice, Inclusion, and Dialogic Engagement

All participants grew increasingly confident in articulating their opinions and challenging unfairness. At the beginning of the course, interactions reflected a conventional academic hierarchy. Students often waited for the lecturer's direction, hesitating to contribute unless called upon. However, as the semester ran for two weeks, the gap between teacher and students began to narrow. Students gradually perceived the classroom as a collaborative space rather than a lecture room. Through dialogic discussions, peer sharing, and the lecturer's active listening, they began to see their voices as meaningful contributions to collective learning. Pimpanit shared during a conversation:

At first, I believed the teacher was the only one who had the right answers. Since I didn't know much about the topics being discussed, I felt hesitant to share my ideas. But after several discussions, I began to feel that we were truly learning together. The teacher listened attentively, even when I shared something personal about my family. I felt safe and comfortable because there was no judgment. You helped me connect my personal experience to the theories we were studying, and that made me realize that what I had gone through was not just an individual story but part of a larger social issue contributing to theoretical frameworks we were learning.

Also, Pimpanit wrote in her reflective journal:

When I talked about gender roles in my workplace, I expected it would be ignored. But the teacher asked questions that linked my experience with what we were reading about feminism. It felt powerful because my story was treated as an important case that could contribute to the topic we were discussing, not just an example.

As the class environment became more inclusive, students' confidence to express their opinions especially on sensitive issues grew noticeably. They began to challenge ideas, pose alternative interpretations, and articulate feelings that were previously left unspoken. Manisa mentioned in casual talk:

Sometimes I shared my thoughts in Thai first before trying to explain them in English. You encouraged me, saying it was okay to think deeply first and then find the right words. That gave me confidence. Now I can express myself more clearly, even on difficult topics like inequality or discrimination. When everyone in the class listened attentively and without judgment, I felt safe to share things I had never spoken about before like

my experience of being sexually harassed. That moment made me realize the importance of being a good listener too. Most importantly, because the class felt safe and respectful, I sometimes felt comfortable enough to disagree with my friends or even with you, knowing that my opinions would still be accepted.

Similarly, Sukrit wrote in his journal:

I used to think my background wasn't important for English class. But when we talked about gender stereotypes, I realized my story could explain how culture shapes communication. Everyone listened. It made me proud and confident to speak.

Observation notes reflected these sentiments. All participants were visibly more fluent and engaged when discussing relatable social issues such as gender bias in the workplace and communication gaps across generations. They initiated debates, asked follow-up questions, and responded actively to one another—behaviors rarely seen during early sessions. Obviously, all of them spoke English more fluently and naturally while they were sharing what they were really into. The classroom dynamic evolved into a dialogic exchange, characterized by trust, curiosity, and mutual respect.

5.1.2 From Critical Awareness to Everyday Activism

Students not only recognized inequality but also began connecting classroom learning with real-world advocacy. From the early weeks of the course, students were encouraged to connect theoretical concepts to their lived realities. Through critical dialogue, they explored how cultural values, language practices, and institutional systems often reproduce inequality. During one activity, students shared personal stories about moments when they felt “othered” — excluded, silenced, or stereotyped — in educational or workplace contexts. The teacher invited all students to analyze those experiences through feminist and intercultural frameworks, helping them see how seemingly individual incidents were rooted in larger social mechanisms such as ethnocentrism, patriarchy, and cultural bias. Pimpanit and Sukrit eagerly shared during the reflective talk:

When we talked about ethnocentrism, I began to see how we sometimes look down on other cultures without realizing it. I used to think Thai ways were always more polite, but now I understand that's also a kind of superiority. It made me more careful and open-minded. (Pimpanit)

I had never really thought about why I felt uncomfortable when my male boss said, ‘Women are better at support roles.’ Before this class, I just accepted it as normal. But when we discussed patriarchal mechanisms, I realized it's not just an innocent comment—it reflects a mindset that limits what women can do. That discussion made me think about how I could challenge this mindset in my workplace. The first step I took was simply sharing my thoughts with my colleagues. (Sukrit)

Additionally, Manisa mentioned in her reflective journal:

Sometimes, I feel that I think too much now because I always ask questions — like, why textbooks in history mostly talk about male heroes? I used to read them without questioning, but now I see how power shapes what is written and what is missing.

These reflections reflect the gradual shift from unawareness to critical consciousness. Classroom observation notes showed that students often paused to relate new concepts to examples in Thai media, workplace hierarchies, or family expectations, indicating that awareness was becoming habitual. The teacher's role was crucial in guiding these realizations — not through lecturing, but by posing open-ended questions that invited self-examination and linking individual narratives to theoretical frameworks. This dialogic approach helped students perceive connections between abstract theories and their lived experiences. They began to identify inequality not as distant or accidental, but as embedded in systems of representation, communication, and education.

As awareness deepened, participation in change followed naturally. Students started discussing how they could contribute to more inclusive environments both in their academic and professional lives. They began initiating discussions on improving classroom practices, suggesting fairer group work dynamics, and challenging gendered assumptions in case studies. During casual talk, Pimpanit shared:

After our discussion on fairness, I started to notice small things at work — like how women are expected to serve coffee in meetings. I raised it casually one day, and my colleagues laughed, but at least they started thinking about it.

Manisa also stated in her journal:

Now when I see something unfair, I don't just ignore it. Even if it's small, I ask why it happens. I learned that asking questions is already a form of activism.

Such remarks show that students' learning transcended the classroom, influencing their awareness and actions in real contexts. The transformation from passive acknowledgment to active questioning reflected the core of feminist pedagogy linking self-awareness to social responsibility.

Observation notes from later sessions indicated that discussions became livelier and more self-directed. Students often referenced examples from Thai culture or media that illustrated bias and inequality, showing their growing ability to apply theoretical lenses critically. During one memorable class, Sukrit compared gender representation in textbooks to the way female workers are portrayed in advertising,

sparkling a rich discussion on symbolic power and the normalization of inequality.

Through these experiences, students began to view activism not as grand protest but as a continual practice of questioning, reflecting, and making small interventions in everyday life. Their reflections suggest that awareness leads naturally to participation in change when learners are empowered to see themselves as capable contributors to justice and equity. Sukrit said in the discussion:

I learned that change doesn't have to be big. It starts from awareness — from thinking differently and asking others to think, too. Now, I feel like part of a process that keeps going.

Manisa wrote in her reflective journal:

Social advocacy or social change doesn't only mean joining street demonstrations or protests. To me, it starts with recognizing problems around us and taking intentional action to raise awareness or reduce those problems within our own communities. Even small efforts can lead to meaningful change.

5.1.3 Collective Empowerment and Democratic Collaboration

Students showed the sense of shared responsibility and collaboration. This is an essential outcome of feminist pedagogy that repositions the classroom as a democratic space for shared decision-making and co-created knowledge. During classroom sessions, students increasingly initiated group-led discussions and peer consultations. By mid-semester, they began organizing short breakout meetings before class to summarize key concepts and prepare discussion questions. One classroom observation noted that students took the initiative to rearrange their seating into small circles and began exchanging ideas about how to make the topic of workplace gender bias more engaging for everyone. In the small talk after class, Sukrit and Manisa expressed how their sense of influence and shared responsibility evolved over time:

At the beginning, I just focused on completing assignments, but later I realized we could actually change the class together. When we worked as a team to improve participation, our teacher listened and even adjusted the activities. It made me feel that our opinions mattered. (Sukrit)

Before this class, I thought decisions about learning always belonged to teachers. But here, we were asked what topics we wanted to explore, and we worked together to connect them to social issues. I learned that collaboration can make learning more meaningful. (Manisa)

This sense of collective empowerment reached its peak during the *CHANGE Exhibition*, where students worked in small groups to design advocacy projects addressing issues such as gender inequality in the workplace, generational gaps in communication, and bias in media representation. The exhibition setting, where students collectively campaigned for inclusive change, exemplified the behavioral manifestation of collective agency. Pimpanit reflected in her journal:

When we prepared our project, it didn't feel like a class task anymore—it felt like we were doing something real. We shared responsibilities, encouraged one another, and believed that what we presented could inspire others to think differently.

5.2 Research Question 2: What are the students' perceptions and experiences of learning through feminist pedagogical approaches?

The final group discussion, together with students' reflective journals and classroom observation notes, revealed that learners perceived the feminist pedagogical approach as transformative, empowering, and personally meaningful. Their experiences reflected a gradual transition from passive learning to active participation, highlighting how dialogic, inclusive, and critical engagement reshaped their understanding of themselves and their roles as learners and citizens. Three overarching themes emerged from the data: (1) empowerment through equal voice and dialogic learning, (2) personal growth and critical awareness, and (3) challenges and concerns for improvement.

5.2.1 Empowerment through Equal Voice and Dialogic Learning

A major theme emerging from both conversations and reflective journals was students' sense of empowerment and inclusion within a learning environment that valued their voices. The feminist classroom design encouraged learners to speak without fear of being judged. This approach helped dissolve traditional hierarchies between teacher and students, promoting co-construction of knowledge. Sukrit reflected on this shift in the journal:

This class was different from others because I didn't feel judged when I shared my opinion. The teacher listened carefully and responded thoughtfully, even when my story was personal. I felt that my experience was respected, and it made me want to participate more.

Similarly, Manisa noted during the conversation:

At first, I was afraid to speak up because I thought my ideas might be wrong. But when I saw how everyone's experiences were valued, I became more confident. We were not just learning from the teacher—we were learning from each other.

Classroom observations supported these reflections. As the semester progressed, students increasingly initiated group discussions and took ownership of learning tasks. The teacher's facilitative role—asking open-ended questions, acknowledging lived experiences, and guiding reflection through theory—was pivotal in creating a space where students felt heard and respected.

5.2.2 Personal Growth and Critical Awareness

Students also reported significant cognitive and affective development through engagement with feminist pedagogical activities, particularly when analyzing issues related to gender, inequality, and intercultural communication. Students reflected that they had not previously recognized how social structures influence personal and professional experiences. Pimpanit remarked:

I used to think gender bias was just about men and women being treated differently. But when we analyzed examples of Thai women being overlooked in management, I realized it's more about how society and institutions make it normal through policies and stereotypes.

Similarly, in the reflective journal, Manisa connected classroom discussions to her workplace:

After the topic on workplace inequality, I started noticing how decisions in my company often exclude younger staff. I began to suggest ideas during meetings, and it surprised me that others listened. The class made me believe that change can start with awareness.

These insights demonstrate that feminist pedagogy helped students connect personal experience to structural analysis, an essence of critical pedagogy. The use of case analyses, reflective storytelling, and the OSEE (Observe–State–Explore–Evaluate) framework enabled students to deconstruct assumptions, understand others' perspectives, and locate local issues within global patterns of inequality. Moreover, the CHANGE Exhibition served as a culminating event where students actively prepared and acted purposefully toward social change. Classroom observation notes described the event as “vibrant and student-led, with learners demonstrating confidence, teamwork, and ownership of their ideas.” Throughout the process, students collaborated extensively—integrating research, storytelling, and creative media to communicate their advocacy messages effectively. Pimpanit and Sukrit reflected during the discussion:

When we prepared our project, it didn't feel like a class task anymore—it felt like we were doing something real. We shared responsibilities, encouraged one another, and believed that what we presented could inspire others to think differently. (Pimpanit)

Working together on the campaign made me realize how much we can do when we combine our voices. We learned to listen, negotiate, and support each other's ideas. (Sukrit)

5.2.3 Challenges and Concerns for Improvement

While students generally responded positively to the feminist pedagogical approach, they also expressed concerns about emotional and practical challenges encountered during the course. Some described moments of discomfort when discussing sensitive topics such as gender roles or discrimination. Manisa noted:

Some discussions were quite intense because they touched on my personal experiences. It was difficult to speak up at first. It all came down to trust. I wasn't sure if others would judge me, especially since some things I had done and been done in the past seemed unethical or embarrassing. But fortunately, you and my classmates created a comfortable environment where I felt safe to share something sensitive. I realized that the people in this class really mattered.

Also, Pimpanit highlighted challenges related to topic scope:

I really enjoyed the discussions with you and my classmates, but there were a couple of times when I felt a bit disconnected because the topics were unfamiliar to me. When I couldn't fully relate to the discussion, I was worried that my comments might offend others. Still, I appreciated how you tried to include me by giving examples and guiding the conversation, which helped me share something meaningful and show respect to my friends who were speaking.”

These accounts indicate that engagement in feminist pedagogy was not immediate or uniform across participants. Some students initially experienced emotional hesitation, uncertainty, and difficulty relating to unfamiliar or sensitive topics, which limited their participation at certain points in the course. This suggests that the effectiveness of feminist pedagogy is contingent upon students' prior experiences, emotional readiness, and familiarity with the subject matter. Furthermore, these moments of discomfort and partial disengagement highlight that creating a dialogic and inclusive classroom does not automatically eliminate power dynamics or fear of judgment. Instead, trust and openness needed to be gradually developed over time. While feminist pedagogy facilitated meaningful learning experiences, its impact appeared uneven and required continuous facilitation, emotional support, and contextual adaptation to fully engage all learners.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm and extend previous research by demonstrating how feminist pedagogy can foster students' GC through the recognition of their voices, experiences, and agency as legitimate sources of knowledge. Rather than merely increasing participation, the findings suggest a shift in how students positioned themselves—from passive learners to active contributors who connected personal experiences to broader social issues. These results corroborate the central claim of Hooks (1994), Gore (1992), and Shrewsbury (1993) that education becomes liberatory when learners' lived experiences are acknowledged as valuable and politically meaningful. For example, participants' reflections on workplace gender bias and classroom discussions of inequality illustrate how personal narratives were reinterpreted as part of larger structural issues. This shift reflects Bosio's (2023) notion of the critical global citizen who moves from

awareness to ethical engagement.

The findings confirm several foundational principles in both feminist pedagogy and GCE. Democratizing the classroom through shared authority and dialogic interaction fostered empowerment, empathy, and participation, which align with the affective and behavioral dimensions of GC (Luke & Gore, 1992; Palmieri & MacLean, 2022). However, rather than viewing these outcomes as isolated results, this study suggests that these dimensions developed through continuous interaction between dialogue, reflection, and lived experience. Similarly, students' ability to analyze inequality and cultural dynamics reflects the cognitive dimension of GC (Aktas et al., 2016; Horey et al., 2018). Importantly, these developments were not immediate but emerged progressively as students engaged in repeated dialogic practices throughout the course.

This study further extends these frameworks by demonstrating that such transformation can occur even within traditionally hierarchical and linguistically constrained contexts, such as Thai EFL higher education. While prior research (Hooks, 1994; Gore, 1992; Williams & Ferber, 2008) has largely focused on Western contexts, this study shows that students initially hesitated to express critical opinions due to norms of respect and non-confrontation, but gradually became more open as trust was established. This indicates that feminist pedagogy is not culturally fixed but adaptable when implemented with sensitivity to local norms. Rather than simply adopting Western pedagogical models, the findings highlight the importance of negotiating between global critical frameworks and local cultural expectations.

A central contribution of this study lies in showing how recognizing students' lived experiences as epistemically valuable deepens both agency and global consciousness. When students connected their personal or workplace experiences such as gender bias or intergenerational conflict to global issues, they not only developed critical understanding but also reframed their experiences as valid knowledge contributing to academic inquiry. This supports Shrewsbury's (1993) notion that empowerment emerges when learners see themselves as creators of knowledge and Gore's (1992) view that such recognition enables political awareness. At the same time, the data suggest that increased linguistic confidence was closely tied to emotional engagement with the topic. For instance, students spoke more fluently and spontaneously when discussing issues they personally related to, indicating that language development was intertwined with critical engagement rather than occurring independently. This aligns with Bosio (2023), Eybers, and Muller (2023) and Utami et al. (2025), who argue that GCE is most effective when learning engages both intellect and emotion.

The teacher's role emerged as a crucial factor in facilitating this transformation. Rather than acting as a knowledge transmitter, the teacher functioned as a mediator who connected students' personal experiences with theoretical concepts. This aligns with feminist pedagogy, where teachers act as facilitators and co-learners (Crawford & Jackson-Best, 2017; Hooks, 1994). The findings suggest that the teacher's role was not only pedagogical but also relational, as creating a safe and non-judgmental environment enabled students to share sensitive experiences and engage more deeply. This supports Waghid's (2023) argument that critical GCE requires moving beyond surface-level harmony toward critical engagement. However, unlike prior studies that emphasize broad pedagogical principles, this study highlights specific practices—such as open-ended questioning and validation of student experiences—as key mechanisms for fostering engagement.

Finally, while empowerment and collective agency emerged most prominently, the findings indicate that transformation occurred gradually and unevenly. This can be explained by the nature of feminist pedagogy, where transformation unfolds progressively as learners navigate new roles in co-constructive and reflective learning environments. At the beginning of the course, students often expressed uncertainty about how much authority or influence they could exercise in shaping classroom processes—a hesitation consistent with findings by Crawford and Jackson-Best (2017), who note that shifts from hierarchical to participatory dynamics may initially challenge learners' confidence. Over time, however, students demonstrated growing autonomy, responsibility, and willingness to act collaboratively, reinforcing Jääskelä et al.'s (2020) assertion that agency develops through iterative participation. Nonetheless, the study also indicates that sustaining such empowerment requires broader institutional support and curricular continuity beyond a single course, echoing Ackerly and True's (2020) and Osipian's (2016) argument that meaningful activism and social transformation depend on systemic reinforcement rather than isolated pedagogical efforts.

7. Conclusion

In this study, feminist pedagogy was found to enhance students' GC across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Empirically, students developed greater confidence in expressing their voices, engaged more actively in dialogic learning, and demonstrated increased critical awareness of inequality in their personal and professional contexts. Importantly, these shifts translated into behavioral changes, as students began to question unfair practices, initiate discussions, and participate in collaborative advocacy projects such as the CHANGE Exhibition.

Building on these findings, the study supports and extends the theoretical propositions of feminist pedagogy and GCE. It demonstrates that linking personal experiences to broader social issues, fostering critical reflection, and creating inclusive, dialogic spaces can effectively cultivate critical global citizens. Moreover, the results highlight that local, experiential learning can serve as a meaningful pathway to global consciousness, even within culturally hierarchical and multilingual contexts.

8. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study was conducted within a single Thai higher education institution and involved a very small cohort of only three students, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include diverse institutional and cultural contexts to assess the broader applicability of feminist pedagogy in GCE. Second,

this study lies in the researcher's dual role as both instructor and data collector. This position offered valuable insider insight and fostered strong rapport with students, yet it also posed potential bias in data interpretation and participant responses. As feminist pedagogy requires pedagogical and ethical expertise particularly when English serves as the medium of instruction, the instructor was appropriately trained to uphold its epistemological principles. To minimize bias, the researchers employed reflexive journaling, triangulated multiple data sources (dialogues, reflective journals, and classroom observations), and emphasized voluntary, non-evaluative participation. Future research could involve an independent observer familiar with feminist pedagogy to enhance objectivity and confirmability. Finally, while this study identified the teacher's facilitative role as pivotal, further research should examine teacher preparation, emotional labor, and institutional support structures necessary for implementing feminist and critical pedagogies in EFL settings. Expanding inquiry to teacher education programs may help identify strategies for cultivating educators capable of fostering both language proficiency and global civic consciousness.

Declaration of AI Use

The authors used ChatGPT (a generative AI tool) during the preparation of this study specifically for language editing, grammar correction, and structural refinement. Following the AI-assisted edits, the authors critically reviewed and revised all content to ensure accuracy and take full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript, including its intellectual integrity and the correct use of citations.

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Author contributions

Asst. Prof. Dr. Atichat Rungswang conceptualized the study, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted and discussed the key findings, and led the drafting and revision of the manuscript. Asst. Prof. Dr. Jenjira Jitpaiboon contributed to data collection and analysis, supported the triangulation of findings, and assisted in drafting and editing the manuscript. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jonathan Newton provided scholarly guidance, contributed to the refinement of the theoretical framework, and critically reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix

Consensus topics and Points of Discussion

Topics	Points of discussion
Multiple perspectives on definitions of culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How "culture" has been defined across disciplines (anthropology, sociology, communication studies). - Culture as dynamic, socially constructed, and context-dependent. - How our own cultural assumptions shape perception and communication. - The link between cultural understanding and respect for diversity.
Cultural value dimensions in local and global contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hofstede's and Hall's value dimensions (individualism vs collectivism, power distance, etc.). - Value clashes in global workplaces (e.g., hierarchy, time orientation, gender roles). - How understanding value dimensions can reduce intercultural misunderstanding.
Ethnocentrism: Generating a notion of "otherness"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meaning of ethnocentrism and its manifestations in everyday life. - How "us vs. them" thinking emerges through language, media, and education. - The impact of othering in intercultural interactions and professional settings. - Ways to shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett's model).
Gender bias in intercultural communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gendered expectations in professional or intercultural encounters. - Language and gender bias: examples from workplace or media discourse. - The importance of inclusive language and communication equity.
Biased intergroup: Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How stereotypes are formed and reinforced through cultural narratives. - How stereotypes are formed and reinforced through cultural narratives. - Real-world examples of prejudice in educational, workplace, or social settings.
Patriarchal society and sexism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding patriarchy as a social system, not just individual bias. - How patriarchal norms affect communication, representation, and leadership. - The role of education and media in reproducing or challenging sexist ideologies.
Feminism and feminist perspectives in communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical waves and goals of feminism. - Feminist theories and their relevance to intercultural communication. - Feminism beyond gender: intersectionality, race, and class.
Global citizenship and transformative education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What it means to be a global citizen in today's interconnected world. - Education as a space for empowerment and social responsibility. - Designing actions for local or global change (e.g., advocacy campaigns, community projects).