

From Theory to Practice in Language Assessment: Perspectives From Thai Preservice English Teachers

Atthasit Ketkumbonk

Department of Western Languages and Linguistics, Mahasarakham University, Maha Sarakham, Thailand

Apisak Sukying*

Department of Western Languages and Linguistics, Mahasarakham University, Maha Sarakham, Thailand

Changyong Min

Department of Foreign Languages, Shanxi Normal University, Taiyuan, China

Abstract—This multiple-case study investigated the implementation of language assessment knowledge and the patterns of assessment practices among Thai preservice English teachers in their teaching practicum. Twelve participants were recruited using purposive sampling from a public university in northeastern Thailand. Data were collected across classroom observations, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews, guided by Taylor’s (2013) Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) framework. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. These findings indicated that preservice teachers had a fundamental knowledge of language assessment principles but that contextual realities rather than theoretical understandings underpinned their practices. Other factors that influenced the teachers included the constraints of the classroom, such as time, class size, and diversity of learners, institutional requirements, sociocultural norms like “no-fail” policies and high-stakes testing, and mentor teachers’ guidance. Five patterns of adaptation were found: negotiating practical constraints, sociocultural value-driven flexibility, negotiating personal beliefs against institutional expectations, mentor teacher influence, and responsiveness to diverse classroom practices and students’ preferences. These findings have essential implications for designing context-specific teacher education programs that effectively bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. The study highlights the importance of preparing preservice teachers with the theoretical knowledge needed to understand assessment and the reflective and adaptive capacities they will have to utilize authentic assessment decisions in practice.

Index Terms—language assessment knowledge, assessment practice, language assessment literacy, preservice teachers, teaching practicum

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a vital component of language teachers’ professional competence. Teachers can use this to design and implement practical assessments to meaningfully judge how their learners actually achieve, revise their teaching methods and make informed educational decisions (Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Weng & Shen, 2022). Assessments also function as learning benchmarks; they provide students with direction regarding their academic goals and preparation for high-stakes assessments (Lan & Fan, 2019; Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2014). However, these outcomes depend on teachers’ assessment literacy and their capacity to devise tools that fit their purposes, interpret results accurately, and use results to enhance teaching and learning (Giraldo, 2021).

Since the inception of language assessment literacy (LAL) as a concept in language education, this competency has seemed essential to the ability of teachers to maneuver the complexities of language assessment. LAL, coined by Stiggins (1995) and later refined by Davies (2008), encompasses the knowledge, skills, and principles needed for responsible and effective assessment. The LAL framework outlined by Taylor (2013) has established a reference point for language education, focusing on five essential areas: technical skills, sociocultural values, language pedagogy, local practices, and personal beliefs and attitudes. This framework emphasizes that language assessment is context-sensitive and that assessment practices must be tailored to meet the needs of varied educational contexts and stakeholders.

However, research has largely focused on in-service teachers, restricting our understanding of preservice teachers’ construction and application of assessment literacy. These include studies on LAL perceptions (Koh et al., 2017; Thongiam, 2017), scale development (Lan & Fan, 2019; Nikmard & Zohre, 2020), and competency-building strategies (Baker & Riches, 2017). Despite the limited attention that has been focused on preservice teachers, especially in the Thai context, much of the extant research is based on self-reported measures, which may not represent actual practices (Brown, 2004).

* Corresponding Author. Email: apisak.s@msu.ac.th

This highlights the necessity of an extensive investigation of preservice teachers' LAL development, considering their practices during the teaching practicum stage, which is an integral part of the training process. This study will address these gaps by examining Thai preservice English teachers' LAL development, focusing on their practices during their teaching practicum. Using a longitudinal approach, it examines Thai preservice English teachers' implementation of LAK in their classroom practices. To answer these research objectives, the multiple-case study research design was adopted. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do Thai preservice English implement language assessment knowledge?
2. What are the patterns of their language assessment practices during their teaching practicum?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Language Assessment Literacy

Language assessment literacy (LAL) is derived from the notion of assessment literacy (AL) in general education (Mohammadi & Sanavi, 2020). AL is the knowledge of educational assessment and the skills to use that knowledge to measure students' learning (Stiggin, 1995). LAL is based on Brindley (2001), who applied the concept of assessment literacy from general to language education. In that sense, LAL represents language teachers' skills, knowledge and principles for designing and implementing proper language assessment.

Since then, LAL concepts have been reconceptualized for different temporal and context-bound performative assessment practices. These constructs characterize LAL as incorporating three constructs: skills (know-how'), knowledge and principles. These skills include item writing, statistics, test analysis and the utilization of software programs for test delivery, analysis and reportage (Davies, 2008). This means having a background, theory, and context of measurement and language description. It can include the rigorous study of various models of language learning, teaching and testing, including communicative language testing, performance testing, and sociocultural theory. Finally, principles relate to the appropriate use of tests, fairness, and impact, including issues of ethics and professionalism.

Earlier conceptualizations of LAL have emphasized psychometric principles and focused on traditional language testing knowledge and skills. Yet, the assessment has involved the sociocultural context of assessment practices. The training focused on ensuring and improving formative practices that promote teaching and learning and democratic and critical practices (Tajeddin et al., 2022). LAL is now a more arresting perspective that covers wider aspects (historical, sociopolitical, and ethical) and one in which all teachers must seek to be sensitive to the societal and individual footprint of assessment (Inbar-Lourie, 2013).

Although LAL stakeholders differ in their needs and backgrounds (Taylor, 2013), her spider web model highlighted eight essential building blocks of LAL: theoretical knowledge, technical knowledge, background principles and concepts, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practices, beliefs and attitudes, scoring and decision-making. These components are classified into five literacy levels (see Figure 1), from illiteracy to multidimensional literacy (Pill & Harding, 2013). Because EFL teachers are considered intermediate stakeholders, their LAL must focus on practical classroom-based assessment rather than sophisticated theoretical measurement concepts.



Figure 1. LAL Profiles of Classroom Teachers (Taylor, 2013, p. 410)

Technical knowledge is crucial for developing, implementing, and analyzing sound and valid assessments: numerical skills, proper test development, assessment appropriateness, and digital assessment literacy. Incorporating aspects of cultural, social and regulatory elements, sociocultural values also contribute to assessment practices (Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Giraldo & Murcia, 2019; Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Tao, 2014).

In language pedagogy, assessment is integrated with teaching and learning so that assessment types can complement the instructional strategies, feedback system, and learning progress. This, in turn, entails a firm knowledge of pedagogies, processes of learning and assessment methods (Baker & Riches, 2017; Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Lan & Fan, 2019; Tao, 2014). Furthermore, the local observations underline the importance of contextualizing classroom assessments that foster relevance and effectiveness with specific student groups (Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Rahimi et al., 2019). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes also influence assessing and interpreting student performance. These beliefs inform assessment design, implementation and grading practices, highlighting the

importance of reflective practices to promote fair and effective assessment (Bøhn & Tzagari, 2022; Kremmel & Harding, 2019).

In brief, the EFL teacher's involvement in language assessment demands technical skills, sociocultural sensitization, pedagogical knowledge, localized assessment practices, and a reflective attitude. Because they stand as intermediates, their LAL should be applied in a practical classroom approach instead of fixing on a theoretical assessment model. To meet these needs, this study builds on Taylor's (2013) LAL framework, which synthesizes these five fundamental elements to underpin successful language assessment practices.

B. The Roles of Language Assessment Literacy in EFL Contexts

Assessment is an essential part of education, as it has both formative and summative purposes and entails the systematic collection of information to guide decision-making (Brown, 2004; Ketkumbonk & Sukying, 2024). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, assessments serve similarly as gatekeeping devices, shaping students' academic paths and future job prospects (Watson Todd et al., 2021). As preservice English teachers in Thailand have internal national educational policies to conform to, they also have to answer to these external demands from international standardized proficiency reference systems, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and recognized proficiency exams such as of TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. In Thailand, these standardized tests have a considerable influence on the language curriculum and what is taught (Fulcher, 2012; Ketkumbonk & Sukying, 2024; Watson Todd et al., 2021; Wudthayagorn, 2021), with test-related foci often informing pedagogical priorities and the nature of what is taught.

In light of these complexities, there is a need for Thai preservice English teachers to develop high levels of language assessment literacy (LAL) to design assessments in effective ways, interpret the results precisely, and align assessments with instruction in ways that enhance student learning. A holistic LAL framework allows teachers to understand educational decisions, support student advancement, and keep pace with changing 21st-century requirements and needs for language assessment (Viengsang & Wasanasomsithi, 2022). Thus, teacher education programs should emphasize the vital knowledge, skills, and principles of assessment that can support preservice teachers' ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities of current language assessment practices.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Participants and Context

The study involved 12 Thai preservice English teachers from the four-year English teacher education program at Rajabhat University in Thailand. All 12 participants engaged in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, providing qualitative insights into the LA practices during the teaching practicum. The selection process was guided by two key criteria: (1) the participants' educational levels during the practicum, which ensured diversity in classroom contexts, and (2) their performance on the LAK test, categorized into high, medium, and low proficiency levels. This stratified selection approach allowed for the inclusion of participants with varying levels of expertise and exposure to different teaching conditions.

During the 2023 academic year, the 12 participants were engaged in a teaching internship at schools within the Sakon Nakhon Educational Service area, spanning two semesters. Their English proficiency, assessed by the university's English proficiency test, ranged from A1 to B2 according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Additionally, they completed the Language Assessment Knowledge (LAK) test to determine their levels of language assessment knowledge. Regarding their background in assessment, all participants had completed two required courses as part of their curriculum, i.e., "Assessment and Evaluation" and "Language Assessment and Evaluation." Both courses prioritized the theories and principles of assessments rather than practice designing and using assessment tools in the actual classroom. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and their demographic information was kept confidential.

B. Research Techniques

Interviews

Interviews were used to explore Thai preservice English teachers' practices related to language assessment in EFL classrooms. The interview questions were constructed based on Taylor's (2013) framework across five key dimensions: language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practice, and personal beliefs/attitudes, and experts verified the questions used in the interviews. The interview aims to explore how Thai preservice English teachers implement language assessment during their teaching practicum and to identify emerging patterns in their assessment practices. The interviews were conducted twice. The first interview was conducted at the beginning of the semester, and the second one was conducted after the end of the semester. Each interview was approximately 50-60 minutes.

Focus groups

Focus groups were used to gain further insights into the Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment practices in their classrooms. In focus group interviews, participants can listen to their peers, reflect on their own experiences, and have time to plan their answers. This collaborative setting can help them feel less nervous because they

are not alone and can learn from what other says. The focus groups were conducted twice. The first focus group was conducted at the beginning of the semester, and the second time was conducted at the end of the semester. The questions for the focus group were constructed based on Taylor's (2013) framework and were screened by experts. Two focus groups were formed: one for primary school teachers and one for secondary school teachers. Each focus group was 50-60 minutes.

Observation

The observation was used to examine how Thai preservice English teachers teach, test, and assess their students inside their classrooms and identify recurring patterns in their language assessment practices within real classroom settings. Non-participant observation captured the natural teaching, learning and assessment process without interference and interruptions (Cohen et al., 2000). To observe the class, the teachers were required to record the videos of their teaching and submit them to the researcher to avoid hesitation and to keep privacy during teaching. The researcher knew positionality and needed nationalistic data to ensure validity and trustworthiness (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The data obtained from observations were triangulated with the data from the other data collection instruments to improve credibility. The observation was conducted twice. The first observation was conducted at the beginning of the semester, and the second was conducted at the end.

C. Data Collection Procedures

Twelve participants were selected for the semi-structured interviews and received the information sheets and consent forms. The selected preservice teachers could decline if they did not wish to participate. Out of the 12 participants chosen for interviews. Observations were conducted in the participants' classes to see their language assessment practices. All the class teaching of the EFL teacher students was videotaped and used for observation. The observation was conducted at the beginning and end of the semester to capture their actual performance in language assessment in their classroom. Non-participant observations were performed to avoid anxiety among the participants. The participants were asked to record the video of their teaching in the class and then send it to the researcher. After the observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted immediately to gain insight into Thai preservice English teachers' practices. The data from focus groups, semi-structured interviews and other instruments used in the class were triangulated to reveal how Thai preservice English teachers practice assessments in their classrooms. After the end of the semester, the focus group and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same 12 Thai preservice English teachers regarding their language assessment practices changes over time.

D. Data Analysis

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, a systematic approach was adopted to analyze qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations with 12 Thai preservice English teachers. The analysis involved transcribing the data into English, using caution to preserve the original meaning. A total of two coders carried out the coding: the researcher and an external coding expert who possessed considerable experience in the area of English language teaching and qualitative analysis. Both coders were trained on the coding framework to ensure a mutual understanding, which adhered to the five dimensions of Taylor's (2013) Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) framework. Two coders analyzed the data separately for coding. The self-assigned codes were subsequently cross-verified for consistency. Differences between coders were resolved through discussion.

The final codes were shared with participants for member-checking to further establish the credibility of the findings. Member-checking also validated the findings since the participants were allowed to verify the analysis. Inter-coder reliability was also quantitatively validated, with Cohen's Kappa revealing ratings exceeding 0.97 across each theme. A thematic analysis was then conducted to find patterns and themes in the data. One set of codes related to general themes that characterized Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment practices. Iterative analysis helped refine its themes to align with Taylor's framework and arrive at themes grounded in the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Implementation of Language Assessment Among Thai Preservice English Teachers

The findings of this study demonstrate the sociocultural and institutional nature of Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge in action as they moved from theory to practice during their teaching practicum. The analysis delineates five trends demonstrating how these preservice teachers implemented language assessment within classroom contexts. To facilitate the organization and presentation of this analysis, the material is coded by participant and data source; that is, whether the excerpt is an "i" (interview), "f" (focus group) or "o" (observation).

(a). The Contextual Limitation and Adaptation of Assessment Practices

Preservice teachers adapted their assessment approaches based on contextual expectations, including class size, student proficiency, and time issues. Because of these limitations, many wishing to explore interactive, communicative assessment practices fell back on more straightforward approaches. This theme illustrates how preservice teachers navigated these challenges while attempting to implement effective practices for language assessment.

Aing had shifted her focus to less complex, group-based assessments. She expressed, *“I realized that clinging to communicative assessment was not feasible given the large class sizes and mixed levels of proficiency, so I began using less complex, group-based forms of assessment”* (i).

Due to her restricted class time, June focused on grammar and sentence writing, stating, *“With a big class and just 50 minutes, paper-based assessments were more manageable”* (i).

Zac, a tutor for entrance exams, depended on standard quizzes: *“These assessments were directly aligned with entrance exam formats”* (i).

Preservice teachers blended means to implement their assessment strategies where practical constraints dictated the final assessment, as highlighted by Aing, June and Zac, demonstrating a balanced, pragmatic approach that enables preservice teachers to uniquely cater to their institutions’ and students’ needs. Such adjustments in favor of more manageable techniques are made in response to real-world constraints similarly resonates with findings in Giraldo and Murcia’s (2019) and Watson Todd et al.’s (2021) studies, in which the teachers shifted their assessment strategies to the contemporary condition in the actual classroom, indicating that natural teaching circumstances require flexible, contextual assessment strategies. Additional limitations faced by these Thai preservice teachers, including large class sizes, time limitations, and school policies, further solidified the value of traditional assessment methods (e.g., quizzes or worksheets) over more interactive or communicative techniques. This study highlights that teachers must make pragmatic adjustments to the theoretical approaches, implementing the methods they can in their classrooms.

(b). *Impact of Sociocultural Values on Flexibility and Standards of Assessment*

National testing norms, school policies, and community expectations reflected broader sociocultural influences that affected assessment flexibility. Adherence to sociocultural values such as no-fail policies and high-stakes exams led those preservice teachers to change their teaching practices even when it directly conflicted with their values about instruction.

A no-fail policy at her school influenced Dolly to say, *“I had to ensure all students passed, even if that required adjusting scores”* (i). Because of students’ restricted capacities, Paul simplified tasks to work with curriculum standards: *“I focused on writing words and matching rather than oral tests”* (f). Taew had prepared students for O-NET designed grammar-based quizzes, explaining: *“There were such grammar drills that were needed to have students reach O-NET criteria”* (o).

Dolly wrote that she graded students so that everyone passed her class, even if their performance did not meet the academic standards by any such measure. This aligns with Rea-Dickins (2001), who reported that assessment policies in specific educational systems promote leniency in marking when strict pass-fail criteria exist. Likewise, Karl adapted his assessment to align with his school’s preference for more traditional, paper-based tasks. This highlights how certain types of assessments (e.g., writing tasks) were valued more than others, such as quizzes, in Karl’s school and thus influenced how Karl assessed his students. Karl’s decision to adhere to his school’s preferred methods demonstrates how school culture and sociocultural values shape assessment practices. In a climate with norms and procedures, teachers may feel pressured to be in step with their environment, even if they were taught different approaches in their preparation programs. This finding chimed with Borg’s (2001) work, which demonstrated that school expectations shape teacher practice more than their theoretical learning. When implementing assessments, school culture tends to trump teachers’ theoretical knowledge: Teachers often mirror the norms and preferences established within their teaching environments.

High-stakes exams also shaped teachers’ practices in a big way. According to Tsagari and Vogt (2017), teachers who work in exam-driven settings orient their teaching towards the content of the testing itself. Taew’s emphasis on vocabulary and grammar exercises to prepare students for the O-NET exam reflects this trend. Thus, this finding also aligned with Brown and Bailey’s (2008) study, which showed that high-stakes exams tend to narrow assessment and lead teachers to use traditional, easy-to-score formats such as multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank formats. Preservice teachers in Thailand have also depended on such strategies to comply with the demands of the exam as well as school expectations.

As for these findings, Thai preservice teachers were well-versed in interactive and formative assessment methods. However, they were still too often swayed by the high-stakes exam, school grading policy, and local preference for traditional assessments, as evident in their practices. Such experiences are essential for teacher training programs in providing tools to balance theory with the challenges and who the students actually are in various arenas.

(c). *Connecting Personal Conviction and Institutional Obligation*

Many preservice teachers found themselves stuck between their beliefs around effective, equitable assessments and the realities of their school environments. This theme encompasses how teachers negotiated their personal beliefs with institutional demands whereby, in many cases, teachers found ways to bring their values back into regimented assessment practices.

Karl navigated his preference for communicative assessments with the expectations of the school around writing tasks, explaining, *“I value assessments that truly show learning, but the school favors more paper-based assessments, so I used writing tasks that didn’t look like paper-based assessments but reflected how people use language in real-world contexts but still align with the school’s focus on writing tasks”* (i).

Paul developed a lot of individualized tasks for his students with disabilities, including *“alphabet handwriting in Thai and English”* (i). Likewise, Zac criminalized exam preparation with student engagement, mentioning that *“My students performed better with game-like tasks, but I needed to keep them working”* (i).

These cases highlight preservice teachers' struggle to balance personal beliefs with institutional requirements in modifying school practices that align with their practice but do not lose the spirit of their instructional philosophies. Karl provides a clear example. Though Karl believes in assessments that reveal "real learning," his school's preferred paper format led him to incorporate writing tasks that met the school's requirements despite aligning with his philosophy. Paul had an analogous balancing conundrum. His goals were to create equitable assessments for students with diverse abilities, especially students with learning disabilities (LD). Paul created specialized quizzes for these students to focus on their goals. This adaptation demonstrates how Paul maintained his values of equity in practice while navigating the challenges of creating differentiated assessments, especially in a context with limited resources and support from within the school.

Additionally, Zac was tasked with tutoring high school students. He employed game-based tasks in his lessons to assess and motivate students during tutoring sessions. These results are consistent with the findings of Dashti (2019), who stated that teachers have been altering their assessment practices to reconcile between personal beliefs and institutional pressure. In the same way, Karl, Paul, and Zac shaped their practices to the constraints of their schools. They also reflect how preservice teachers adjust their ideals to practical realities.

These examples from the experiences of Karl, Paul and Zac show how preservice teachers routinely negotiate their ideas about assessment with the expectations and constraints of their school contexts. This underscores the substantial impact of institutional culture and assets on teachers' enactment of educational values in classroom settings.

(d). Mentor Teachers' Roles in Shaping Assessment Validation and Processes

Mentor teachers were a key influence on preservice teachers' approaches to assessment validation, replacing formal methods, such as statistical analysis. Rather than applying sophisticated methods to test the reliability or validity of their assessments, preservice teachers relied on their mentors to review the quality and appropriateness of their tools.

Aing relied on her mentor to assess quality, stating, "I relied on my mentor's guidance for assessment quality" (i). Smile also adjusted hers based on the recommendations of her mentor, explaining, "I used paper-based worksheets because that's what my mentor liked." (i). Additionally, Paul depended on his mentor's recommendations to uphold school standards, saying, "I had checked the quality myself, and then my mentor verified that it was not a problem" (i).

Through these excerpts, they highlight how mentors often served a key role in shaping assessment practices, informing preservice teachers' decisions and, in some cases, restricting experimentation with different assessment strategies. Aing acknowledged that she was unaware of statistical methods for validating scoring rubrics. She further explained that much of that was based on her mentor's support of the quality of her assessments. Aing's experience mirrors a wider trend among preservice teachers, who tend to rely on mentor feedback as a key measure of successful assessment validation, and demonstrates how mentors' influence frequently emerges as a surrogate for validation efforts. This agrees with Borg's (2001) findings highlighting mentor teachers' significant role in assessing novice teachers to establish practical but sometimes limited classroom practices.

Likewise, Smile stated that her mentor's preferences influenced her chosen assessment format, leading her to do paper-based worksheets instead of assessing her students through other means. This reliance on the verbally traditional approach of our mentor documents how mentors influence the quality and structure of the preservice teachers' assessment process, limiting its scope of methods. Paul elaborated on this mentor-driven approach. While he would tailor different assessments to the specific needs of his learning-disabled students, quality control for him was still heavily reliant on his mentor's feedback rather than statistical processes or formal validation techniques. This example illustrates that preservice teachers use practices that tailor assessments. However, they still rely on approving mentors to validate the quality of their efforts, possibly maintaining previous practices over innovative approaches.

These results underscore the strong role of mentors in developing assessment practices, especially when objective validation processes are not in place, and highlight a need to provide more in-depth training in assessment to be a more independent subject of direction, assessing the quality of their assessments offering them tools to evaluate their assessments to validate them from their mentor.

(e). Assessment Design Considerations Due to Local Practices and Student Preference

Assessment design was strongly influenced by local practices and student preferences, especially among medium- and low-ability preservice teachers. These teachers typically integrated formative assessments with students' preferred learning styles to enhance engagement and learning effectiveness. This matched the needs of trainees who often embedded visual and interactive learning to increase access to knowledge whilst motivating students. This method emphasizes the importance of student-centered assessment practices in creating a positive learning environment.

Drawing was also a feature of Aing; she engaged students with visuals, encouraging them to do matching and drawing activities. She said, "My students responded better when I provided visual aids for assessments, so I provided them with drawings and asked for matching" (i). Smile reported that the preferences of her mentor led her to limit how she assessed her students, "I used paper-based worksheets because that is what my mentor preferred" (i). Paul added, "I created test writing tasks for LD students when they had a target goal of learning the Thai and English alphabets" (i).

These cases illustrate how preservice teachers adapted assessments to align with local practices and student interests, enabling them to establish inclusivity and motivating assessment practices. Namtan utilized such visual aids as drawings and matching activities to engage students. This observation agrees with the finding by Nascimento et al. (2023), who suggested that student-centered assessments increase motivation. Teachers regularly modify assessments according to

individual needs. Paul made sure to modify standards for students with learning disabilities, which demonstrated his understanding of equality and a need to address diverse needs. However, mentor preferences limit innovation at times. This left Smile with no option but to use traditional worksheets because that was what her mentor expected. Her mentor's suggestion, she said, limited her ability to consider more interactive approaches that might engage students better. However, while this provided continuity, it limited Smile's diversity of assessment methods.

These examples illustrate the preservice teachers' responsiveness to their school's educational norms and their students' particular preferences. The strategies for adapting assessments to their own levels of engagement, both needs and preferences, were crucial for creating a more inclusive and motivating classroom environment and ensuring that preservice teachers maintained a balance between their instructional goals and local expectations. Such flexibility is consistent with previous literature regarding student-centered assessment practices, demonstrating that preservice teachers often prioritize pragmatic adjustments that promote engagement and inclusivity; however, these changes may be limited by institutional expectations or mentor influence.

B. Thai Preservice English Teachers' Language Assessment Practices in Teaching Practicum: Patterns

The thematic analysis of language assessment practices among Thai preservice English teachers during their teaching practicum reveals intricate patterns and adjustments in response to diverse factors. This analysis provides insights into how theory-driven assessment approaches shifted towards more pragmatic, context-specific strategies.

Pattern 1: Turn from theory-driven to pragmatic, context-specific assessment

The findings highlighted the transition from theory-based assessment approaches to practical, contextualized assessment strategies as preservice teachers would face the constraints of a classroom setting. While the number of Thai preservice English teachers willing to enter the practicum might have still been high, these teachers had nevertheless entered the practicum intending to apply best practices learned during coursework or training. However, the realities of managing a classroom with students at all different levels made language assessment adjustment necessary. These examples would again characterize a pattern for the preservice Thai English teachers, confirming the pragmatic adaptive practices of assessment in response to the constraints of classrooms and the institution, suggesting the move towards practical context-sensitive strategies rather than underpinned by theory.

Aing had changed her methodology to be simpler, group or team-based assessments. She explained, "*When faced with large classes and students with different ability levels, I discovered that following communicative assessment strictly was problematic, so I began resorting to simpler, group-based assessment*" (i).

June kept paper-based quizzes to control her large class because she said, "*It's practical given my time limits and class size*" (i).

Dewey had freedom in her school: "*With the freedom I had, I could try using interactive apps for assessments*" (o).

The analyses of the results identified the transition from theoretical constructs to context-dependent, practical evaluations as the most striking theme. For many teachers, like Aing and June, the focus on classroom dynamics, like diverse levels of proficiency and class sizes, meant staying true to more familiar and manageable assessment forms. The shift from theory to practical solutions is telling as preservice teachers learn to adapt their practices to abide by the constraints of the classroom.

This corroborates Giraldo and Murcia (2019) and Watson Todd et al. (2021), who claim that teachers' assessment training must be adaptable to their needs, especially when resources are scarce. Aing's and June's experience represents a shift from the idealistic view that a small group of teachers should manage language assessment practices, which is seen as idealistic, to manageable assessment, meaning assessment that can be achievable. This makes intuitive sense, indicating that merely academic ideals may not always suffice in difficult educational environments. The institutional context played a critical role in shaping assessment decisions, as preservice teachers could try out various assessment methods.

Additionally, preservice teachers could experiment with innovative approaches, whereas tight institutional structures limited their assessment choices, just like Dewey, who had freedom in her school. This freedom enabled her to incorporate app-based assessments, improving student engagement and allowing her to take a contemporary approach that may have been unfeasible under different situations. This supports the findings of Al-bahlani (2019), Cheng et al. (2004) and Dashti (2019), arguing the influence of institutional context on preservice teachers' variation of assessment strategies. Institutional flexibility blesses teachers with room for more engaging, student-centered assessments, whereas restrictive institutional culture often begets more traditional approaches.

Pattern 2: Negotiation between personal beliefs and institutional constraints

The results showed that teachers often tried to negotiate their existing beliefs about assessment with institutional frameworks in which they had to operate. They abridged their practices to conform to school expectations, high-stakes testing, or curriculum alignment, indicating a negotiation between their beliefs and practical demands. The following excerpts provide evidence to support this argument that Thai preservice teachers managed to keep the balance between their ideals for assessment as a future practitioner and the reality of assessment presented in their school, showing how their assessment practices were shaped by institutional constraints.

On the other hand, Karl expressed that he developed task-based assessments that aligned with his beliefs about the person he wanted to become but felt constrained by paper-based formats: "*Writing tasks aligned with my philosophy but that were school standards*" (i). Paul created quizzes for students with learning disabilities: "*Fair assessments should*

reflect different abilities” (f). Taew matched O-NET requirements, saying, “*Examination preparation required a focus on grammar and vocabulary*” (f).

Preservice teachers, really high- or medium-ability teachers, appreciated authentic, student-centered assessments but resisted institutional requirements for test-oriented or standardized methods. Teachers will create assessments that fit the administrative expectations while at the same time trying to hold on to their pedagogical beliefs. Evidence of this claim could be found in the case of Karl and Paul. It shows a compromise between maintaining this territory of the teaching philosophy and catering to what the school has expected from preservice teachers, as well as a flexibility to accommodate different activities of classes. However, the same pressure with high-stakes O-NET preparation hit Taew, too. She could only teach and test grammar and vocabulary for doing well on the exams.

These cases demonstrate the difficulty of aligning personal values with institutional imperatives, mirroring the current findings on teachers’ autonomy and pressure associated with standardized testing in education. This tension, illustrated by Karl, Paul and Taew’s experiences, reflects teachers’ difficulties maintaining student-centered assessment practices within high-stakes regimes.

Pattern 3: Limitations of time and resources for validation of assessment

Practical issues influenced teachers’ validation practices, such as time constraints and limited resources. However, many teachers faced problems when the necessity of formal method validation collided with their functional capabilities; teachers used either mentor feedback or simply their sense of what such a thing ought to be. The data show the negative effects this limitation caused, such as that formal assessment techniques were underutilized (relying on mentor guidance instead), among others, suggesting that the statements made in these examples further support the abovementioned claim.

June ranked time-saving quizzes above complex assessments, stating, “*I have large class sizes which limit my ability to validate thoroughly*” (i). Informal checks served as oral assessments, and Namtan said, “*Statistical validation was replaced with oversight from the mentor*” (i). Piano stayed close to her mentor’s feedback, stating, “*Without as much as an opportunity for reliability and/or validity analysis of items as I would have liked, I relied heavily on mentor feedback*” (i).

Time and resource constraints are typically determinants of assessment practice quality, especially validation. The participants do not have the financial means to carry out thorough statistical validation for most subjects and must rely on the mentor’s guidance to ensure assessment validity. In support of this statement, June employed a more pragmatic approach: she used the quizzes instead of other more complex assessments, such as communicative assessments. This was due to high-class sizes. The same was true for Namtam, who also addressed time constraints. Therefore, she chose to rely on the mentor’s feedback rather than on statistical validation. Additionally, Smile acknowledged that she had depended solely on feedback from the mentor to verify her assessment tools. This argument underscores an apparent gulf between best assessment practices and real-world constraints.

This finding aligns with Al-bahlani (2019), Imsa-ard and Tangkiengsirisin (2023), who found that time constraints often limit classroom statistical validation. The pragmatic conditions of preservice English teachers in Thailand expose systematic issues of how assessment practices can be limited by available time and resources, which, in turn, makes it difficult to implement verification and typically put rigorous testing design in place.

Pattern 4 Needs and preference-based approach to language assessment design

The findings revealed that Thai preservice English teachers often adjusted their assessment in accordance with student preferences, suggesting a student-centered approach. Several used visual aids, games, and different tasks to keep students engaged and proficient-considerate. These are the examples of this statement.

To engage students, June combined drawing and coloring in assessments, saying, “*Coloring made assessments more enjoyable*” (i). Reflecting on how she engages her students in assessment, Namtan says, “*My students responded better to assessments with visual aids, so I included drawings and matching activities*” (i). Her mentor was also influential in the assessment decisions she made, with Smile stating, “*I used paper-based worksheets because that was what my mentor liked*” (i).

These examples make the case that teachers focused on engaging and accessible for their students, tailoring assessments to students’ needs and preferences to create a more inclusive classroom atmosphere. Thai preservice English teachers were willing to differentiate assessments based on students’ needs and interests. The finding points to a more flexible, student-centered approach. However, mentors connected the maintenance of language assessments with classroom borders, often leading to reinforcing language assessment. June and Namtam’s excerpts exemplify this. Namtan and colleagues share how they adapt to the student’s needs. These included drawings and matching activities. June tries to make it fun by incorporating drawing and coloring into their assessment. It shows their openness to student feedback. On the other hand, Smile lamented external input into decision-making around assessment, especially for low-ability preservice English teachers.

The above cases exemplify the reciprocal influence of students and mentors on choices made in the assessment of the English language along lines identified in the literature on the impact of the mentor on preservice teacher training. These include student-centered adjustments that encourage engagement, as in the case of June’s and Namtam’s calls home, while the influence of a mentor like Smile can lead to an even stronger connection with traditional language assessment practices. This resulted in limited exploration of innovative methods among Thai preservice English teachers.

Pattern 5: Conformity with institutional demand and high-stakes testing

Another pattern that emerges from this study is conformity with institutional demand and high-stakes testing. The results show a strong influence of enhanced pressure from the institution, including high-stakes testing such as O-NET, on preservice teachers' assessment choices. Due to exam preparation concerns, most preservice groups prioritize exam-aligned tasks and prefer simpler formats. The following examples from the interviews demonstrate the significant influence of school culture and institutional demands on the preservice group: Aing focused on the example of structured assessments based on the curriculum, reporting "*Tasks aligned with specific curriculum indicators*" (f). Park reported several instances of exam-style quizzes focusing on O-NET preparation: "*Quizzes simulated the exam format students would face*" (i). Taew described the O-NET preparation: "*Standardized test prep focused on grammar and vocabulary*" (f). Thus, the thematic analysis based on multiple examples confirms that language assessment practices among Thai preservice English teachers were shaped by school culture and high-stakes testing.

Although the findings remind us of the urgent list mentioned by Tzagari and Vogt (2017), the thematic analysis emphasizes the need for teacher education programs to focus on the limitations of practice-based assessment, methods of statistical validation, and contextualized assessment. The necessary approach should prepare preservice teachers for balancing theory with force-majeure in diverse educational contexts. The findings concur with the previous studies on the influence of the high-stakes setting and practice-based assessment on language assessment practices. It was argued by Borg (2001) and Dashti (2019) that high-stakes settings limit teachers' ability to use a variety of assessment types. Similarly, Imsa-ard and Tangkiengsirisin (2023) argued that the statistical validation of language assessment knowledge leads to the diversity of assessment practice. However, practice limitations force preservice teachers to mitigate the application of assessment knowledge. Therefore, the voices of Aing, Park and Taew call for more context-sensitive training in language assessment to ensure the preservice teachers will be able to use theoretical knowledge in practical settings.

V. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the implementation of language assessment knowledge (LAK) among Thai preservice English teachers and determined their assessment practice patterns in their teaching practicum. The results showed that preservice teachers had a foundational understanding of language assessment principles. However, LAK was mediated more by the realities of the contexts in which they found themselves than by theoretical knowledge. Practical constraints, institutional expectations, sociocultural norms, and mentor guidance were the key forces shaping their classroom assessment practices.

Five distinct patterns identified from the analysis demonstrated an interaction between theoretical understanding and classroom practice. For instance, assessment methods varied according to contextual constraints such as time, class size, and student diversity; sociocultural expectations (e.g., high-stakes testing, "no-fail" policies) encouraged flexibility in assessment standards; personal beliefs clashed with institutional requirements, leading to compromises in assessment design; the role of mentor teachers played a key role, but sometimes reinforced traditional or examination-oriented assessment practices; and teachers incorporated local classroom practices and student preferences into their assessment to ensure engagement and relevance. Together, these findings highlight the need for context-sensitive teacher education that knits theory with classroom practice. The study also emphasizes the importance of preparing preservice teachers to provide authentic assessment experiences that will prepare them to make informed, reflective, and adaptive decisions in real-world teaching environments.

The findings of this study add significance to English language teacher education, emphasizing the urgent need to expand LAK among preservice English teachers in Thailand. The study provides evidence-based recommendations for improving teacher preparation programs by exposing critical gaps in assessment literacy. One significant implication is the need for the inclusion of context-sensitive workshops on test and task design to build preservice teachers' competence in the evaluation, selection, and adaptation of different assessment tools to meet instructional purposes as well as the needs of learners (Walters, 2010). Moreover, hands-on experiences integrated into language assessment courses and professional development sessions held during the teaching practicum could provide opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of and engage with assessment principles (Scarino, 2017; Thong-iam, 2017). The study costs targeted training for the mentor teachers, who provide significant guidance and modeling of assessment practices in the practicum, to establish a system to ensure widespread use.

From a policy perspective, the study suggests a movement towards a more integrated, standards-based, assessment-driven approach in Thai education systems. Policymakers are urged to support diverse assessment methods beyond conventional testing to provide a more accurate picture of students' communicative skills and learning development. Structural reforms (e.g., smaller classes and reducing administrative burdens) might also support more diverse and student-centered approaches to assessment practices. Together, these changes can potentially result in more fair and effective English teaching and learning throughout Thailand.

Certain limitations should be acknowledged, and recommendations for future research are proposed to build on these findings. First, the study employed Taylor's (2013) Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) Model B framework, which was chosen because the participants were teachers. Future research could consider applying different LAL frameworks to explore practices among a broader range of stakeholders, such as curriculum developers, policymakers, or administrators. Second, although Taylor's (2013) LAL framework is widely recognized for its comprehensive language assessment components, future studies could further investigate preservice English teachers' practices in diverse contexts

using this framework. Additionally, this study was conducted over one semester, offering only a snapshot of preservice teachers' LA practices. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach, tracking participants over an entire academic year or longer to capture how their knowledge, beliefs, and practices evolve. Future research could also employ a quantitative or mixed-methods design with a larger sample to achieve more generalizable and statistically reliable results. Finally, alternative research designs, such as multiple-case studies or exploratory sequential designs, could provide further insights into the discrepancies in language assessment literacy perspectives among participants.

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Atthasit Ketkumbonk is a PhD candidate in the English Language Teaching Program at Mahasarakham University in Thailand, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She holds a B.A. in Business English from Khonkaen University. He earned his M.A. in Applied Linguistics in English language teaching from King Mongkut university technology of Thonburi, Thailand. His research interests include Language assessment, Phonetics, Teacher Education, and Material design. He is a full-time lecturer in the Department of English Instruction, the Faculty of Education, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. atthasit00016@gmail.com

Apisak Sukying (PhD) is an assistant professor and the Director of the PhD Program in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. He earned his PhD in TESOL from the University of Sydney, Australia. His interests include L2 vocabulary acquisition and development, L2 vocabulary assessment, SLA, learner strategies, and academic writing. His email is apisak.s@msu.ac.th

Changyong Min (PhD) is a university lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at Shanxi Normal University, China. Changyong Min completed his PhD in ELT at Mahasarakham University, Thailand. His research interests are vocabulary knowledge and development, L2 writing and reading, academic writing, and language assessment. His email is chrismcy@qq.com