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Assessing the Assessors: Language Assessment Knowledge and Beliefs in Thai Preservice English Teachers

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Abstract. This study investigates the evolution of language assessment knowledge (LAK) and language assessment (LA) beliefs among 54 Thai preservice English teachers from a public university in northeastern Thailand during their teaching practicum. The participants were selected using convenience sampling. While language assessment literacy (LAL) remains a developing area with varied levels across different contexts, this research addresses the gap by examining changes in LAK and beliefs over time. Using parallel LAK tests and a detailed LA beliefs questionnaire based on Taylor's (2013) framework, assessments were conducted at the beginning (T1) and end (T2) of the semester. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a slight improvement in LAK, with mean scores increasing from 31.3 (56.9%) at T1 to 33.19 (60.34%) at T2, indicating a medium level of LAL, though the change was not statistically significant. Despite the modest improvement in technical skills, there was a notable decline in applying local assessment practices. However, the preservice English teachers consistently rated the importance of language assessment highly, with a significant growth in their personal beliefs and attitudes. The study also identified a small but statistically significant correlation between LAK and LA beliefs, highlighting the context-bound nature of assessment practices. These findings highlight the need for context-sensitive training in teacher education programs to better prepare preservice teachers for real-world challenges, emphasizing the importance of integrating theoretical knowledge with practical applications. Further research is recommended to explore these dynamics over a longer period and across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Language assessment literacy, language assessment knowledge, preservice English teachers, beliefs and practices

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1. Introduction

Assessment is fundamental to both teaching and learning, occupying a significant portion—ranging from 30% to 50%—of educational activities among teaching professionals (Giraldo, 2021; Stiggins, 1999). The outcomes of assessments benefit both teachers and students. Assessment results provide critical data for teachers to gauge and report students' achievements and progress (Lan & Fan, 2019). This data also helps refine teaching strategies and select methods tailored to students' needs. For students, assessments enhance learning, aid in decision-making regarding their language proficiency, and prepare them for national examinations (Yamtin & Wongwanich, 2014). Accordingly, teachers should have appropriate language assessment literacy to provide sound language assessment practices.

Modern assessment approaches emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication strategies (Tao, 2014). One prominent method is 'Critical Language Assessment Literacy,' which views assessment as a social practice concerned with its uses and consequences in educational and social contexts (Tajeddin et al., 2022). That means assessment practices have become more challenging as EFL teachers need to design, validate and use a variety of assessment tools to assess students. Consequently, they must possess robust language assessment literacy (LAL) and proficiency to design, administer, collect, and interpret assessment data, making fair decisions about students within various socio-political, cultural, and educational contexts (Inbar-Lourie, 2013). LAL encompasses teachers' awareness of applied linguistic theory, language acquisition concepts, pedagogy, assessment, and contextual language use.

Extensive research has focused on language assessment literacy, which can be categorized into several themes. The first theme investigates English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perception of LAL (Al-Bahlani, 2019; Kremmel & Harding, 2020; Vogt et al., 2022). The second theme focuses on developing and validating scales and evaluation inventories to assess LAL levels in specific contexts (Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Lan & Fan, 2019; Nikmard & Zohre, 2020). The third theme aims to develop EFL teachers' LAL competency (Cui et al., 2022; Kılıçkaya, 2021; Prastikawati et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2022). The fourth theme examines the adoption of LAL in classroom practices (Aria et al., 2021; Tsagari, 2021). The fifth theme conducts need or gap analyses on EFL teachers' LAL (Ballidağ & İnan-karagül, 2021; Clores & Reganit, 2020). The final theme explores courses designed to develop EFL teachers' LAL (Prastikawati et al., 2024; Sevgi, 2019; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018).

Despite numerous studies on language assessment literacy (LAL), empirical research on EFL teachers' language assessment knowledge and beliefs remains limited. Language assessment is dynamic and context-bound. Thus, teachers in different contexts possess different assessment beliefs and practices (Tsagari et al., 2022). Scholars have called for more research on beliefs in diverse contexts to better understand LAL among EFL teachers (Inbar-Lourie, 2017; Scarino, 2013). Language assessment knowledge and beliefs are critical as they influence how teachers design and implement assessment tools in classroom contexts and impact students' learning outcomes (Dashti, 2019). Teachers with strong assessment

knowledge are more likely to create fair, valid, and reliable assessments that support learning and foster positive attitudes toward language learning (Fulcher, 2012). Studies on language assessment knowledge and beliefs have been conducted (Banitz, 2022; Dashti, 2019; Giraldo, 2018; Tao, 2014; Tsagari et al., 2022; Valizadeh, 2019). The results revealed that teachers' beliefs about language assessment were influenced by their experiences, backgrounds, and contextual factors, significantly impacting their decisions and classroom practices (Borg, 2001). Although research has been conducted on beliefs about language assessment and practices (Banitz, 2022; Dashti, 2019; Giraldo, 2018; Tao, 2014; Tsagari et al., 2022; Valizadeh, 2019), these studies primarily involved in-service teachers and were conducted outside Thai contexts. The empirical studies focusing on the comprehensive investigation into preservice teachers' beliefs and knowledge of language assessment, focusing on their practices during the teaching practicum phase, were still needed.

In Thailand, research on language assessment has investigated teacher beliefs and knowledge, revealing moderate levels of language assessment literacy (LAL) and showing that contextual factors such as assessment culture, institutional policy, class sizes and work conditions influence these beliefs and practices (Imsa-ard, 2023; Khongput, 2014; Narathakoon et al., 2020; Thong-Iam & Subphadoongchone, 2019). However, these studies primarily focused on in-service teachers and employed cross-sectional designs, which failed to capture the changes in assessment beliefs and knowledge over time. Therefore, this longitudinal study aims to investigate the evolving landscape of Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge and beliefs. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How does Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK) evolve during their teaching practicum?
2. How do Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment (LA) beliefs change throughout their teaching practicum?
3. What is the relationship between the LAK and the LA beliefs of Thai preservice English teachers?

By examining the current LAK levels and LA beliefs of preservice teachers and their development over time, this study could shed light on the role of LAL in teaching and learning. Such an investigation may provide valuable insights into how preservice teachers' beliefs and practices develop, ultimately contributing to more effective language assessment practices in educational settings.

2. Language assessment literacy

Language assessment literacy (LAL) stems from the broader concept of assessment literacy (AL) in general education, developed by the National Council on Measurement in Education and the National Education Association. Brinley (2001) adapted this concept for language education, defining LAL as the essential skills, knowledge, and principles that language teachers require to design and implement effective assessments. These constructs include practical skills (e.g., item writing, statistical analysis, and technology use), theoretical knowledge (e.g.,

measurement theory, language structures, and context setting), and ethical principles (e.g., fairness and impact).

Initially, LAL focused on psychometric aspects and traditional testing (Inbar-Lourie, 2008). However, recent trends emphasize the social context of assessments, including formative assessments and democratic, critical practices (Bonh & Tsagari, 2021; Fulcher, 2012; Yan & Fan, 2017). This shift highlights the evolving and dynamic nature of LAL in contemporary educational settings.

Taylor (2013) categorizes LAL stakeholders into three levels: core stakeholders (test makers and researchers), intermediate stakeholders (language teachers and course instructors), and peripheral stakeholders (policymakers and the public). Each group requires different LAL components, ranging from extensive technical knowledge to practical classroom applications. Pill and Harding (2013) further refined LAL into five levels of literacy, from illiteracy to multidimensional literacy, encompassing philosophical, historical, and social dimensions.

Critical components of LAL include technical skills, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, and personal beliefs and attitudes. Technical skills encompass proficiency in statistical analysis, test design, bias identification, and digital literacy (Bonh & Tsagari, 2021; Harding, 2019; Kremmel & Rahimi, 2019). Language pedagogy involves integrating assessment with teaching and learning, utilizing both summative and formative assessments, and providing constructive feedback (Bohn & Tsagari, 2021; Lan & Fan, 2019). Sociocultural values require understanding cultural, linguistic, and individual diversity in assessment practices and aligning assessments with local curricula and regulations (Bohn & Tsagari, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019). Personal beliefs and attitudes recognize the influence of stakeholders' beliefs on assessment practices and address potential conflicts (Bohn & Tsagari, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019).

As illustrated in Figure 1, Taylor's (2013) model demonstrates that EFL teachers, as intermediate stakeholders, need practical LAL for classroom-based assessments, focusing on language pedagogy, technical skills, sociocultural values, local practices, and personal beliefs. Despite its comprehensive framework, further elaboration on LAL dimensions is necessary (Bonh & Tsagari, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019). This study aims to better understand LAL by focusing on four key knowledge areas to design a practical LAK test for educational settings. Accordingly, the tests were developed.

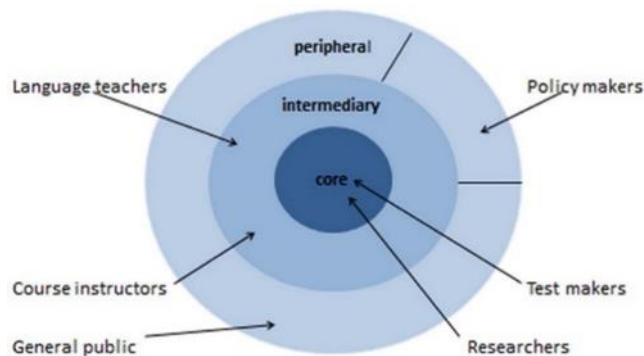


Figure 1: Levels of LAL Differentiated according to Stakeholder Consistency from Taylor (2013)

3. Teacher Beliefs on Language Assessment

Teacher beliefs have been a focus of scholarly efforts to understand their complexity and impact on teaching practices. Initially, Pajares (1987) defined “belief” broadly, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, values, perspectives, practical knowledge, and implicit assumptions teachers hold and use to inform their teaching. Borg (2001) refined this definition, viewing beliefs as cognitive constructs encompassing what teachers know, believe, and think and are personally held mental constructs.

Wood and Kafir (2012) and Scarino (2013) further specified language assessment beliefs as interpretations of language assessment stemming from teachers’ experiences. These beliefs are shaped by personal attitudes and knowledge, influencing their conceptualizations, interpretations, and decisions in classroom assessment practices (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Scholars have used terms like “conceptions” to describe what teachers believe to be true or false and their actions in classroom practices. These beliefs result from the interaction of knowledge, values, and personal theories, providing a framework for teachers’ overall perception and awareness of assessment (Imsa-ard & Tangkiengsirisin, 2023; Latif & Wasin, 2022; Prastikawati, 2022; Tsagari et al., 2022).

Language assessment beliefs are critical as they influence how teachers design and implement assessment tools in classroom contexts and impact students’ learning outcomes (Dashti, 2019). Beliefs of assessment can also drive decisions regarding formative or summative practices, influencing educational outcomes (Xu & Brown, 2016). Language assessment beliefs can align with or diverge from prevailing educational or curricular expectations (Cheng & Fox, 2017). They consist of four main philosophies: classical philosophy, progressivism, reconstructionism, and post-modernism. Classical philosophy emphasizes traditional methods, focusing on vocabulary and grammar through drills and objective tests. Progressivism emphasizes learner-led approaches, aligning assessment with students’ interests and ongoing processes. Reconstructionism adopts standards-based assessment, aligning with curricular goals like CEFR benchmarks. Post-modernism, or eclecticism, advocates for daily, individualized assessments tailored to students’ varying proficiency levels and interests.

Several factors influence language assessment beliefs, including internal, contextual, and external factors (Dashti, 2019). Internal factors are personal, such as teachers' experiences, training, and assessment knowledge. Contextual factors include school assessment culture, students' and parents' beliefs, classroom management, and teaching environment. External factors involve high-stakes tests, mandates, and proposed frameworks. Research shows that context and background significantly affect teachers' language assessment beliefs. For example, Tao (2014) found that Cambodian EFL instructors' beliefs were impacted by large class sizes, teaching loads, and departmental policies. Crusan et al. (2016) highlighted how working conditions and linguistic backgrounds influenced teachers' writing assessment beliefs. Sevimeh-Sahin (2021) revealed that training prioritizing traditional tests led teachers to equate assessment with traditional testing. Tsagari et al. (2022) found that the context-specific needs for assessment literacy training varied between German and Greek teachers, emphasizing the importance of alternative assessment methods.

In summary, language assessment beliefs are teachers' conceptions of assessment shaped by their experiences, knowledge, and attitudes. These beliefs guide their classroom assessment practices, determining what they should or should not do. The four main philosophies of language assessment—classical theories, progressivism, reconstructionism, and post-modernism—along with contextual, background, and training influences, play crucial roles in shaping these beliefs.

4. Teaching Practicum in Thailand

The teaching practicum is a crucial component of teacher education, providing preservice teachers with hands-on experience before they become in-service teachers. During the practicum, preservice teachers observe classes, assist experienced teachers, and practice teaching. This period allows them to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings, receive student feedback, and develop their teaching skills. Additionally, the practicum helps preservice teachers cultivate soft skills and build professional networks (Imsa-ard et al., 2021; Namsaeng, 2022). Teaching practicum also contributes to developing teachers' beliefs and knowledge of assessment as it provides a practical environment where theoretical knowledge about assessment can be applied in real contexts (Yan et al., 2018). Through hands-on experience, preservice teachers are expected to learn to design, administer, and interpret assessments, gaining insight into their practicality, challenges, and impact on students. Additionally, these experiences often refine their beliefs about assessments, aligning them more closely with evidence-based practices (Yan et al., 2018).

In Thailand, fourth-year teacher students must complete a two-semester teaching practicum before graduation. The objectives are to enable students to teach subjects related to their major, conduct classroom research, develop teaching materials, and participate in educational seminars. They must plan lessons, teach 8-12 hours weekly, and evaluate and improve courses. Preservice teachers also create curriculum outlines and submit lesson plans weekly. Their progress is

supervised monthly by university educators and school mentors. (Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University's Center of Teaching Professional Internship, 2020).

In conclusion, the teaching practicum aims to equip Thai preservice English teachers with practical teaching experience and research skills to enhance student learning. It requires them to engage in academic and non-academic tasks, integrating them fully into the school community and preparing them for the multifaceted responsibilities of the teaching profession. Teaching practicum might also contribute to developing language assessment knowledge and beliefs as it exposes preservice teachers to real-world assessment practices.

5. Research methodology

5.1 Participants and Context

The study involved 54 Thai preservice English teachers from the four-year English teacher education program at Rajabhat University in Thailand. They were selected by convenience sampling strategy. The participant group comprised 11 males and 43 females, aged between 21 and 22. All participants were fourth-year students majoring in English Instruction.

During the 2023 academic year, the participants were engaged in a teaching internship at schools within the Sakon Nakhon Educational Service area, spanning two semesters. Each participant had a minimum of 15 years of formal English education but had no immersion experience in native English-speaking countries. 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. The first course, "Assessment and Evaluation," was held in the second semester of their second year and covered broad areas of educational assessment, providing foundational knowledge on various assessment principles and practices. The second course, "Language Assessment and Evaluation," took place in the first semester of their third year and focused explicitly on language assessment techniques, tools, and evaluation methods tailored to English language teaching. 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 for all participants, and their demographic information was kept confidential. This ensured that their identities were protected throughout the study.

5.2 Research instruments

5.2.1 LAK Pretest and LAK post-test

The LAK pretest and posttest were parallel tests designed to assess the language assessment knowledge of Thai preservice English teachers. These tests were

developed based on Taylor's (2013) framework and a synthesis of existing LAK tests. The tests included 55 objective items, such as multiple-choice, true-false, matching, reordering, and case-based multiple-choice questions, consisting of four aspects regarding language assessment knowledge, including technical skills, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, and local practices (see Appendix 1). Part 1: Technical skills include 20 test items. They involved knowledge about numerical skills, knowledge of test appropriateness, test development and digital assessment literacy. Part 2: Sociocultural values include eight test items relevant to the knowledge of the national curriculum, educational standards, and local regulations. Part 3: Language pedagogy includes eight test items about the knowledge of instructional strategies, knowledge of giving feedback and feedforward, and assessing students in language skills and linguistic elements. Part 4: Local practices include 19 test items regarding the knowledge about the school and the variety in classroom contexts.

To ensure content validity, the test content was derived from a comprehensive review of literature, students' textbooks, and relevant documents from assessment course books in the teacher education program. The item objective congruence (IOC) index was used to verify the tests content validity, with individual items scoring between 0.2 and 0.8 and an overall IOC mean of 0.81. The items scoring lower than 0.5 were elaborated to ensure acceptability based on the panel of experts' comments. The individual items LAK post-test also scored between 0.2 and 0.8 and an overall IOC mean of 0.94, indicating that the tests measured the intended content (Douglas, 2010). The LAK tests were evaluated for face validity to ensure that they accurately measured respondents' language assessment knowledge. A panel of five experts in language assessment and teacher education reviewed the items and provided feedback on their relevance, clarity, and comprehensibility. Adjustments were made for items scoring below 0.5 based on their recommendations, including simplifying complex terminology and clarifying ambiguous phrases.

Further, the difficulty and discrimination indices of the test items were computed to ensure their effectiveness. The difficulty index (p) ranged from 0.20 to 0.80, and the discrimination index (r) ranged from 0.20 to 1. Items meeting these criteria were retained, resulting in 55 acceptable test items after a trial with 81 fourth-year Thai preservice English teachers from another Rajabhat university. This indicates that the LAK tests were easy to understand and appropriately addressed the intended constructs, further supporting their face validity. Additionally, the reliability of the tests was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.8, while the LAK posttest was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.84, demonstrating high reliability. In brief, the statistical results indicated that the LAK pretest and posttest met stringent criteria for usability, acceptability, reliability, and validity criteria.

5.2.2 Language Assessment (LA) Belief Questionnaire

The LA questionnaire was created to investigate the language assessment beliefs of Thai preservice English teachers. It comprised 86 items, including a five-point Likert scale, checklists, and open-ended questions, all developed according to

Taylor's (2013) framework (see Appendix 2). The questionnaire was designed to evaluate beliefs across five key dimensions: language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practice, and personal beliefs/attitudes, which involve teachers' world views on language assessment and technical skills, with each dimension represented by five items. The questionnaire is organized into two main sections: Part 1 gathers personal information, while Part 2 contains 86 questions that explore five aspects of assessment literacy. The technical skills aspect includes 13 items; sociocultural values cover 10 items; language pedagogy is addressed with 42 items; local practices include 10 items; and personal beliefs and attitudes are assessed with 11 items. The last part of personal beliefs and attitudes was open-ended. The participants were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with the language assessment statements, using a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the language assessment statements.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was evaluated using the item objective congruence (IOC) index, with individual items scoring between 0.5 and 0.8 and an overall IOC mean of 0.87, indicating that the items effectively measured the intended content (Douglas, 2010). The questionnaire was trialed with 81 fourth-year Thai preservice English teachers from another Rajabhat university. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.93, demonstrating high reliability (Douglas, 2010). Overall, the statistical results indicated that the LA questionnaire met stringent criteria for usability, acceptability, reliability, and validity criteria.

5.3 Data Collection

Before collecting data, the objectives, research procedures, and examples were thoroughly explained to the participants. Subsequently, all 54 Thai preservice English teachers completed the LA questionnaire and LAK test, distributed online. To ensure timely responses, the participants and their school heads were sent reminder emails during the data collection.

The initial data from the LAK test and LA questionnaire were analyzed to assess the respondents' beliefs about language assessment literacy (LAL) and their language assessment knowledge before the teaching practicum. At the semester's end, the participants retook the questionnaire and test. This follow-up assessment enabled the evaluation of any changes in their beliefs about language assessment and their LAK levels.

5.4 Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics, including the mean (\bar{x}), percentage (%), and standard deviation (S.D.), were used to assess the levels of language assessment knowledge (LAK) and language assessment beliefs among Thai preservice English teachers. As suggested by Pallant (2005), the five-point Likert scale was interpreted with scores of 1.00-1.50 indicating "strongly disagree," 1.51-2.50 indicating "disagree," 2.51-3.50 indicating "neutral," 3.51-4.50 indicating "agree," and 4.51 or above indicating "strongly agree". Content analysis was used to analyze data from the open-ended items in the questionnaire. To evaluate changes in LAK and language assessment beliefs over the semester, paired t-tests, a statistical method suitable for analyzing data where the same group is measured twice, ensuring any observed difference, were employed.

Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to explore the relationship between LAK and language assessment beliefs, guaranteeing a thorough data analysis.

6. Results

6.1 Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK)

This study assessed Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK). To capture their progress, parallel tests were administered at the beginning and the end of the academic semester. As shown in Table 1, the preservice teachers' performance on the LAK test revealed exciting trends over time. At the outset (T1), the teachers achieved an average score of 31.3 (56.9%) with a standard deviation of 2.47. By the semester's end (T2), their average score had increased to 33.19 (60.34%), with a slightly higher standard deviation of 2.62.

When breaking down specific aspects of LAK at T1, local practice emerged as the most substantial area, with an average score of 5.39 (74.13%) and a standard deviation of 1.99. This was followed by language pedagogy, with an average of 11.48 (60.42%) and a standard deviation of 2.73, and sociocultural values, scoring 4.13 (51.63%) with a standard deviation of 0.23. Technical skills lagged, with the lowest average score of 10.3 (51.5%) and a standard deviation of 3.36.

Interestingly, by T2, the preservice English teachers had improved across most LAK aspects, except for local practice, which saw a sharp decline from 74.13% to 47.88%. The highest performance at T2 was in language pedagogy, with an average score of 12.56 (66.11%) and a standard deviation of 2.84. At the same time, local practice dropped to the lowest score, averaging 3.83 (47.88%) with a standard deviation of 2.02. Technical skills improved to an average of 12.39 (61.95%), with a standard deviation of 3.87, and sociocultural values increased to 4.41 (55.13%), with a standard deviation of 1.75. Overall, the preservice English teachers demonstrated an improved average score of 33.19 (60.34%) at T2, with a standard deviation of 2.62, indicating better performance than T1. However, despite this general improvement, one aspect of the LAK showed lower scores at T2 than at T1.

Table 1. LAK Pretest and Posttest Results (n = 54)

LAK Aspects (Scores)	LAK (T1)			LAK (T2)			<i>t</i> - <i>value</i>	<i>p</i> - <i>value</i>
	Mean	%	S.D.	Mean	%	S.D.		
Technical Skills (20)	10.3	51.5	3.36	12.39	61.95	3.8	3.17	.002**
Language Pedagogy (19)	11.48	60.42	2.73	12.56	66.11	2.84	1.52	.133
Local Practice (8)	5.39	74.13	1.99	3.83	47.88	2.02	3.96	.000***
Sociocultural Values (8)	4.13	51.63	0.23	4.41	55.13	1.75	.79	.433
Total (55)	31.3	56.9	2.47	33.19	60.34	2.62	1.52	.142

Note: T1=Pretest scores, T2 = Posttest scores, **p < .01, ***p < .001

As shown in Table 1, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to assess the progress in LAK among Thai preservice English teachers over time. Although the overall results indicated no significant improvement between the two-time points, the

analysis revealed noteworthy findings. The participants showed a significant improvement in technical skills ($t = 3.17, p < .01$). Specifically, there was a statistically significant increase in local practice scores between T1 and T2 ($t = 3.96, p < .001$). These results suggest that Thai preservice English teachers are actively adjusting and enhancing their LAK in response to the evolving demands of their teaching contexts and environments.

6.2 Thai preservice English teachers' LA beliefs during their teaching practicum

This section presents the evolving beliefs of Thai preservice English teachers regarding language assessment (LA) during their teaching practicum in schools.

Table 2 shows Thai preservice English teachers' LA beliefs during their practicum. The analysis revealed a noticeable progression in the preservice teachers' beliefs. At T1, they strongly agreed with the importance of language assessment, with an average rating of 4.44 (88.8%) and a standard deviation of 0.30. By T2, this agreement had increased to 4.55 (91%), with a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.51, indicating a growing conviction in their LA beliefs.

Delving deeper, the preservice teachers emphasized technical skills in language assessment. At T1, this aspect was rated with an impressive 91.8% agreement ($M = 4.59, S.D. = 0.26$), which rose to 93.8% ($M = 4.69, S.D. = 0.44$) by T2. Similarly, their beliefs for local practices of LA also showed a strong agreement of 91.6% ($M = 4.58, S.D. = 0.23$), which increased slightly to 93.2% at T2 ($M = 4.66, S.D. = 0.35$).

Preservice English teachers consistently believed that language assessments are pivotal in effective classroom practices. Expressly, 89.4% of the respondents at T1 agreed that sociocultural values are essential for contextualized assessment practices ($M = 4.47, S.D. = 0.25$). This agreement increased marginally to 91.4% ($M = 4.57, S.D. = 0.46$) at T2, emphasizing the importance of cultural considerations in assessment.

Interestingly, despite the overall high agreement with various aspects of LA, language pedagogy was rated the lowest in terms of agreement at both time points. Nevertheless, there was a noteworthy increase from 85% at T1 ($M = 4.25, S.D. = 0.30$) to 87.6% at T2 ($M = 4.38, S.D. = 0.64$), suggesting a gradual recognition of its importance. Regarding personal beliefs and attitudes, the preservice teachers rated their agreement at 85.8% at T1 ($M = 4.29, S.D. = 0.47$), which grew to 88.6% at T2 ($M = 4.43, S.D. = 0.68$).

These findings suggest that Thai preservice English teachers not only recognize the necessity of language assessment but also demonstrate an evolving and increasingly refined understanding of its role in education over time.

Table 2. Thai Preservice English Teachers' LA Beliefs (n = 54)

LA Beliefs	LA Beliefs (T1)			LA Beliefs (T2)			<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
	Mean	%	S.D.	Mean	%	S.D.		
Technical skills (13)	4.59	91.8	0.26	4.69	93.8	0.44	1.954	.056
Sociocultural values (10)	4.47	89.4	0.25	4.57	91.4	0.46	1.148	.256
Language pedagogy (42)	4.25	85	0.30	4.38	87.6	0.64	1.884	.065
Local practices (10)	4.58	91.6	0.23	4.66	93.2	0.35	1.048	.299
Personal beliefs and attitudes (11)	4.29	85.8	0.47	4.43	88.6	0.68	2.012	.049*
Total (86)	4.44	88.8	0.30	4.55	91	0.51	1.609	.145

Note: T1=At the outset of semester, T2=At the end of semester, * $p < .05$

A paired *t*-test was conducted to assess whether there was a significant change in Thai preservice English teachers' beliefs regarding language assessment (LA) during their teaching practicum. The analysis results provide robust evidence of an evolution in these beliefs, particularly in how these teachers adapted their LA practices in the classroom over time.

The findings indicate that while Thai preservice English teachers adjusted various aspects of their language assessment practices during the practicum, not all changes were statistically significant. However, there was a noteworthy and significant shift in their beliefs related to personal attitudes toward LA in classroom practice ($t = 2.012, p = .049$). This suggests that while preservice teachers initially faced challenges in implementing specific classroom assessment practice approaches as planned, they started to conceptualize their views regarding classroom assessment practices.

While other aspects of language assessment did not exhibit significant changes, the overall results emphasize a meaningful trend: Thai preservice English teachers progressively refined and adjusted their language assessment beliefs and practices throughout their practicum. This progression highlights the dynamic nature of teacher development and the importance of practical experience in shaping effective and context-bound classroom practices.

6.3 The relationship between Thai preservice English teachers' LAK and LA beliefs

A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis investigated the relationship between language assessment knowledge (LAK) and language assessment (LA) beliefs among Thai preservice English teachers. Additionally, both data sets were converted into percentages to examine the relationship at different time points, providing an in-depth understanding of how these variables interact over time.

The analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between LAK and LA beliefs, albeit with a slight correlation, at the .05 significance level. This finding suggests that while the connection between these two constructs is present, it may not be extreme. Notably, this relationship was consistently observed at T1, reinforcing that early exposure to language assessment concepts may play a crucial role in shaping beliefs.

Interestingly, the data also uncovered negative relationships between certain aspects of LAK and LA beliefs. However, these negative correlations were not statistically significant, as indicated in Table 3. This suggests that while some preservice teachers may experience a disconnect between their knowledge and beliefs, this discrepancy is not widespread or conclusive enough to draw definitive conclusions.

These findings underscore the complexity and context-dependent nature of the relationship between LAK and LA beliefs. The results indicate the need for further investigations to better understand the factors influencing this relationship and how it may vary across different educational contexts.

Table 3: The relationship between LAK and LA beliefs

Aspects	T1 (LA beliefs)	T2 (LA beliefs)	Overall Beliefs
T1 (LAK)	.02*	.08	.06
T2 (LAK)	-.090	.07	-.01
Overall LAK	-.05	0.92	.03*

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

7. Discussion

7.1 The language assessment knowledge (LAK) of Thai preservice English teachers during their teaching training

This study explored Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK) throughout their teaching practicum. The analysis revealed that these preservice teachers initially demonstrated an average performance, with scores ranging between 55% and 60% on the LAK assessments. This result aligns with other studies (Bonh & Tsagari, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Lan & Fan, 2019; Nikmard & Zohre, 2020; Ölmezer-Özturk & Aydin, 2018; Tajeddin et al., 2022). Their language assessment knowledge gradually improved throughout the practicum, indicating a positive trajectory in their learning and understanding of language assessment principles.

This progressive enhancement in LAK can be interpreted through a behaviourist lens, emphasizing the role of drills, practice, and repetition in learning (Richards & Rogers, 2014). According to behaviourist perspectives, repetitions of exposure to specific tasks and concepts reinforce learning, leading to the development of skills and a deeper internalization of knowledge. In this context, the preservice teachers' regular engagement with language assessment tasks and ongoing practice and feedback during their practicum likely contributed to their improved performance. As they continuously applied their knowledge in real classroom settings, they gained practical experience, further strengthening their understanding of language assessment. This suggests that structured, repetitive training played a crucial role in enhancing Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge, highlighting the importance of practical, hands-on experience in teacher education programs.

The study revealed a significant decline in Thai preservice English teachers' understanding and application of local assessment practices despite improving their language assessment knowledge (LAK). The context-bound, dynamic nature of language assessment may account for this decline, where the specific

educational environment heavily influences effectiveness (Yan et al., 2017). This could be attributed to the fact that the assessment courses in their teacher education programs primarily focused on theories and principles of assessment, with limited emphasis on practical application. As a result, the participants may have lacked the skills to effectively translate theoretical knowledge into real-world practice. This gap might make preservice teachers find implementing assessment practices in school settings particularly challenging. Moreover, high-stakes testing and mandates often pressure Thai preservice teachers to focus on standardized practices, limiting their ability to adapt assessments to local needs. The varying assessment cultures within schools further complicate this, as preservice teachers may struggle to reconcile their training with real-world demands, leading to decreased confidence in applying local practices. These findings highlight the need for teacher education programs to emphasize contextualized training, equipping preservice teachers with the skills to effectively guide and adapt to diverse classroom settings.

The study revealed that a significant increase in technical skills of language assessment knowledge among Thai preservice English teachers may be due to hands-on practice in classroom settings. Technical skills in language assessment, such as statistical analysis, test design, bias identification, and digital literacy, are crucial for creating valid and reliable assessments (Bonh & Tsagari, 2021; Kremmel & Harding, 2019). Through repeated drills and practical application during their teaching practicum, preservice teachers improved their proficiency in these areas. This real-world experience equipped Thai preservice English teachers with the practical skills of digital literacy, test designs and statistical knowledge in language assessment. The study also argued that teaching practicum enriched their theoretical understanding of language assessment in dynamic, context-sensitive language classrooms.

7.2 The language assessment (LA) beliefs of Thai preservice English teachers during their teaching practicum

The study revealed that Thai preservice English teachers strongly agreed with language assessment practices throughout their teaching practicum, underscoring the importance of language assessment within this group. These findings align with previous research (Bui, 2023; Imsa-ard & Tangkiengsirisin, 2023; Tsagari et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2022), which highlighted the central role of language assessment in teacher development. Despite this strong agreement, the study found that changes in the teachers' language assessment beliefs during their practicum were not statistically significant over time.

This belief stability may result from the context-bound nature of language assessment, which requires a deep understanding of various dimensions, including language pedagogy, technical skills, sociocultural values, local practices, and personal beliefs (Brown, 2014). For Thai preservice teachers, technical skills and local practices are particularly emphasized, as they are essential for validating assessment tools, aligning assessments with school requirements, and conducting action research—key components of their practicum experience. Meanwhile, language pedagogy received the lowest rate, highlighting a lack of emphasis during practice. Interestingly, while personal beliefs and attitudes toward language assessment showed significant change

post-practicum, other dimensions, such as technical skills, sociocultural values, and local practices, remained unchanged. This suggests that the teaching context and practicum experiences play a crucial role in shaping these future teachers' beliefs, as supported by previous studies (Borg, 2006; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Sevimeh-Sahin, 2021).

Consistent with previous studies (Cheng & Fox, 2017; Dashti, 2019; Tao, 2014; Tsagari et al., 2022), language assessment beliefs can align with or diverge from prevailing educational or curricular expectations and consist of four main philosophies: classical philosophy, progressivism, reconstructionism, and post-modernism. Classical philosophy emphasizes traditional methods, focusing on vocabulary and grammar through drills and objective tests. Progressivism focuses on learner-led approaches, aligning assessment with students' interests and ongoing processes. Reconstructionism adopts standards-based assessment, aligning with curricular goals like school benchmarks. Post-modernism, or eclecticism, advocates for daily, individualized assessments tailored to students' varying proficiency levels and interests.

Several factors influence language assessment beliefs, including internal, contextual, and external factors (Dashti, 2019). Internal factors are personal, such as teachers' experiences, training, and assessment knowledge. Contextual factors include school assessment culture, students' and parents' beliefs, classroom management, and teaching environment. External aspects involve high-stakes tests and obligations. Research also suggests that context and background significantly affect teachers' language assessment beliefs. For example, large class sizes, teaching loads, and departmental policies impacted Thai preservice English teachers' beliefs. The context-specific needs for assessment literacy training varied among Thai preservice English teachers, emphasizing the importance of alternative assessment methods.

7.3 The relationship between LAK and LA beliefs of Thai preservice English teachers

The analysis of the findings revealed a relatively small relationship between Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK) and their language assessment (LA) beliefs. This small relationship indicates that language assessment practices are relatively dependent on classroom settings, which are influenced by localized practices and sociocultural values.

According to the findings presented in Table 3, the study showed a negative yet statistically insignificant relationship between some dimensions of the LAK and LA beliefs among Thai preservice English teachers. The negligible relationship between Thai preservice English teachers' LAK and their LA beliefs can be expounded by several factors. Sociocultural and institutional influences, such as the "no-fail policy" and emphasis on high-stakes exams, typically shape teachers' beliefs more than formal knowledge. Moreover, the gap between assessment theory and practice may obscure the translation of assessment knowledge into actionable beliefs because many preservice teachers lack practical experience implementing assessment principles. Additionally, contextual challenges, such as large class sizes and limited resources, are essential for shaping beliefs of

knowledge. Principally, the complexity of language assessment literacy, including technical skills, knowledge, and principles, together with potential limitations in measurement tools, may further hinder the relationship between knowledge and beliefs. For example, language assessment in classroom settings can be influenced by widely held beliefs of learners and teachers. In this regard, preservice English teachers may struggle to adjust their assessment practices with local practices and sociocultural values held by teachers and learners. To this end, preservice English teachers attend to refine and adapt their classroom language assessment to meet diverse student needs, local practices and sociocultural values. These practices may not fully align with Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment training and learning before teaching practicum.

The small relationship between preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge and their language assessment beliefs can be accounted for by contextual factors. Classroom language assessment practices and sociocultural values in language assessment consistently vary from one school to another. In schools that focus on test-oriented achievements or follow specific assessment methods, language assessment practices may reduce preservice English teachers' self-efficacy, confidence and ability to effectively implement language assessment knowledge and beliefs in classroom practices.

Consistent with previous findings that language assessment beliefs and assessment knowledge are interconnected (Brown, 2014; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Mykhaylova, 2022; Sevimeel-Sahin, 2021), the present results demonstrated that Thai preservice English teachers realized the significance of language assessment knowledge. However, teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes toward assessment may not significantly vary with their level of LAK. Nguyen (2016) further supported this by asserting that preservice teachers' beliefs about assessment often differ from their actual knowledge and classroom practices, indicating that beliefs may not accurately predict understanding or behaviour. In brief, the present study argues that the link between language assessment knowledge and language assessment beliefs exists in Thai preservice English teachers. The findings also reveal the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of language assessment.

8. Conclusion

The study demonstrated that Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge (LAK) indicated gradual improvement during teaching practicum, increasing from 56.9% at the start of the semester to 60.34% by the end. However, the results also revealed that while there was overall progress, certain aspects of their language assessment knowledge did not develop uniformly. Moreover, the study revealed consistent beliefs in language assessment practices, with a statistically insignificant change during their teaching practicum. Although there was only one significant change in personal beliefs and attitudes, other dimensions, such as technical skills, sociocultural values, and local practices, did not exhibit statistically significant changes. Despite ongoing practical experience, this belief stability suggests that preservice teachers' beliefs are deeply rooted and

influenced by the context in which they are trained, aligning with broader educational philosophies and practices.

Additionally, the results revealed a relatively small but statistically significant relationship between Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge and their beliefs in language assessment. This finding suggests that although there exists a relationship between Thai preservice English teachers' language assessment knowledge and their LA beliefs, language assessment practices depend on actual classroom settings. This suggests that while some preservice teachers may experience a disconnect between their LAK and LA beliefs, this is not widespread. In brief, the study indicates the relationship between LAK and beliefs among preservice English teachers in Thai EFL contexts.

9. Implication

The findings of this study have significant implications for teacher education programs, particularly in the context of language assessment literacy (LAL). The gradual improvement in language assessment knowledge (LAK) among Thai preservice English teachers suggests that practical, hands-on experience is crucial in enhancing their technical skills. However, the decline in understanding and applying local practices highlights the need for more context-sensitive training. Teacher education programs should emphasize aligning assessment practices with specific school contexts and cultural expectations. By incorporating more localized and contextually relevant training, preservice teachers can be better equipped to navigate the complexities of real-world teaching environments.

Moreover, the stability of beliefs in areas such as technical skills, sociocultural values, and local practices, despite ongoing practical experience, indicates that these beliefs are deeply rooted and influenced by the context in which preservice teachers are trained. This underscores the importance of addressing language assessment's theoretical foundations and practical applications in teacher education. Programs should focus on developing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of context in shaping language assessment beliefs and practices.

LAL can be instilled via the course contents in the teacher education. Preservice teachers develop their knowledge, beliefs and confidence regarding assessment from the coursework (Ozturk, 2021; Puspawati et al., 2024). However, preservice teachers gain a tacit understanding of assessment literacy via actual practices (Güngör & Güngör, 2024). One possible strategy to enhance LAL is collaboration. The teacher trainers may allow preservice teachers to design the task and conduct the professional learning community (PLC) as a channel to work collaboratively. Initially, trainers should focus on building trainees' theoretical understanding during the training sessions. Following this, trainees should actively participate in co-designing authentic assessment tasks and creating rubric scores. Next, the trainees should implement these assessment tasks in the classroom. Monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings can be organized to address challenges and foster collaboration to provide a platform to discuss and resolve any issues. Moreover, teacher trainers may consider using a project-based approach to the assessment courses. The curriculum may enable preservice

teachers to do the test/task development project at school to implement the assessment theories into practice. Moreover, reflection can also be adopted. Preservice teachers reflect on themselves and seek opinions from others who are facing similar challenges but in different contexts (Tian et al., 2022). This could help them build confidence and gain the ability to handle assessment dilemmas. Reflection might also enable preservice teachers to better understand the connection between assessments and teaching objectives.

10. Limitations and suggestions for future research

While this study provides valuable insights into developing language assessment knowledge and beliefs among Thai preservice English teachers, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a specific context, involving a relatively small sample size from a single educational setting. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations. Additionally, the study employed self-reported measures to assess language assessment beliefs, which may be subject to biases or inaccuracies.

Another limitation is the study's design, which captured changes over a semester. Although the study aimed to examine the development of LAK and beliefs over time, a longitudinal, longer-term study would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these constructs evolve throughout the entire teacher education program and into the early years of teaching.

Future research should consider expanding the scope of the study to include a more extensive and diverse sample of preservice teachers from different educational contexts. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a broader perspective on the development of language assessment knowledge and beliefs. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track the evolution of these constructs over several years would offer more profound insights into how preservice teachers' experiences and professional growth influence their language assessment practices.

Moreover, future research could explore the impact of specific interventions, such as targeted training programs or workshops, on the development of language assessment literacy and beliefs. Investigating the effectiveness of these interventions in different contexts would help identify best practices for teacher education programs. Finally, qualitative studies could delve into the lived experiences of preservice teachers during their practicum. Qualitative approaches such as multiple-case studies might provide a richer understanding of how preservice teachers develop their language assessment knowledge and beliefs.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Language Assessment Knowledge (LAK) Test Part 1: Test type and function (Item 1-10)

Direction: Select the correct word from the list to complete each statement about test types and functions. The first item was completed as an example.

Placement test	Diagnosis test	Formative assessment	Summative assessment	Subjective test	Standardized test
Objective test	Achievement test	Progress test	Integrated test	Discrete point test	

Example:

Discrete point test is a series of separate used to assess one mini point of language ability at a time.

1. _____ is a test where everyone gets the same questions and the _____ answers are marked in the same way for everyone.
 2. _____ a set of items or questions that have specific correct answers
-

Part 2: Stages of test design (Item 6-10)

Directions: Reorder the stage of test design into correct order by writing the number (1-7) in front of each stage. Stage 2 was completed as the example.

- Example:** 7 Communicate the test results to the students or parent.
6. _____ Make conclusions about students' language performances.
 7. _____ Pilot the test tasks with the representative sample.
 8. _____ Revise the test tasks before the real use.
 9. _____ Implement the test tasks to the real target students.

Appendix 2

Language Assessment Questionnaire

Part 1: Participant Information

1. What kind of school do you teach?
 - primary school
 - secondary school
 - extended educational opportunity school
2. An average number of students:
3. How many hours are you teaching this semester?
 - Less than ten
 - 8 -12
 - 12-16
 - 16-20

4. Number of English classes you are teaching: _____
5. What is your English proficiency level?
 A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2

Part 2: Teacher Beliefs of Language Assessment

Please indicate the extent you agree in using the assessment issue described by each of the statements below by ticking one of the choices next to each statement according to the following five-point Likert scale.

2.1 Technical skills					
Directions: Mark the 5 -1 to indicate the extent you agree with each issue:					
5 = strongly agree 4 = agree 3 = moderately agree 2 = disagree 1 = strongly disagree					
To what extent do you agree with technical skills in constructing, administering and validating assessment tools?	5	4	3	2	1
1. In classroom language assessment, we need to ask the mentor teacher to cross-check our assessment tasks before using them.					
2. Teachers need to understand the course objectives when practicing assessment.					
3. Teachers need to manage the physical environment before administering the test.					
4. Using formative assessments is essential.					
5. Using summative assessments is essential.					