



Language Assessment Ecology of a Localized Task-based Classroom: The Case of Korean EFL Pre-service Teachers *

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ABSTRACT

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This mixed-methods study explores Chong and Isaacs' (2023) notion of Language Assessment Ecology in the context of Korean EFL pre-service English teacher education while implementing localized task-based language teaching and assessment. In particular, this study examined engagement, learner, and contextual factors that mediate pre-service teachers' engagement with language tasks and classroom assessment. Data included pre- and post-semester questionnaires and focus group interviews on their perceived speaking proficiency and engagement with task-based language classroom. According to the quantitative data from the questionnaires, the pre-service teachers reported that the one-semester-long learning helped them gain confidence and lower anxiety of English speaking, although not enough for speaking proficiency development. The comments from the questionnaires and the focus group interview data revealed the complex dimensions of being a language learner and a pre-service teacher enacted in response to the multi-layers of language assessment ecology. The meaningful language tasks and classroom assessment practices played a positive role in developing the pre-service teachers' speaking proficiency. However, the participants reported the challenges in professional identity shift and language learning practices influenced by their previous assessment experiences. Based on the findings, I discuss the importance and implications of understanding the ecosystems to advance pre-service English teacher education.

KEYWORDS

language assessment ecology, task-based language teaching and assessment, classroom assessment, pre-service teacher education

1. Introduction

Pre-service English teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings are required to develop language proficiency and pedagogical skills while constructing teacher identity during their journeys of professional development. Of various dimensions of English proficiency, speaking is particularly important for pre-service primary school teachers to develop, as they need to teach English in English once they become in-service teachers. An increasing amount of discussions and research on appropriate methods for pre-service language teacher education is available (Ahn 2015, 2023, Hoang and Wyatt 2021, Van Loi and Hang 2021). Of them, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been increasingly implemented in the context of EFL pre-service teachers (Bryfonski 2024, Li and Zou 2022). TBLT is now a widely recognized language teaching method (Ellis et al. 2020, Long 2016). A large body of TBLT research demonstrates that meaningful tasks reflective of real-life language needs generate meaning-oriented and authentic interaction which creates language learning opportunities in various educational contexts. Nonetheless, what remains relatively unknown is how participants engage with task-based classroom assessment practices in the context of pre-service teachers in Korea. In contrast to standardized high-stakes language tests, classroom assessment needs to consider classroom contexts (e.g., learners, curriculum) closely when designing and implementing assessment materials (Green 2016). When implementing task-based classroom assessment, immediate classroom contexts and wider sociocultural contexts may influence how participants engage with language learning and respond to assessment practices. The complex ecology of pre-service language teachers needs to be understood to develop appropriate curricula for pre-service teacher education. This study implemented a localized TBLT for EFL Korean pre-service English teachers. These pre-service teachers self-assessed speaking proficiency as their weakest area compared to other aspects of English proficiency. Given that they need to develop speaking proficiency to teach English in English for both the Teacher Employment Test and in-service teaching, this study focused on implementing TBLT for speaking tasks. Language tasks that are meaningful for developing pre-service language teachers' speaking proficiency were included in curriculum and various classroom assessment practices were implemented. In particular, this study explicates how pre-service language teachers interact with contextual and learner factors as they make effective use of pedagogical and assessment tasks. As a conceptual framework, Chong and Isaacs' (2023) notion of Language Assessment Ecology was employed to examine the multifaceted interactions that occur in the ecology of pre-service teacher education. Drawing on an ecological perspective of assessment, I argue for the importance of considering immediate classroom contexts and wider sociocultural factors when implementing learning-oriented assessment practices.

2. An Ecological Perspective of Localized Task-based Language Assessment

Educational assessment has typically been categorized into binary types, such as criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests or formative and summative (Miller et al. 2013). Moving away from the dominant focus on large-scale standardized assessment, the roles of low-stakes classroom assessment in classroom contexts have been increasingly emphasized and discussed (Carless 2007, Davison and Leung 2009, Green 2016). An increasing body of literature on learning-oriented classroom assessment, covering various dimensions of language proficiency, such as interactional competence (May et al. 2020) and motivation (Bui and Nguyen 2022, Gan et al. 2018), attests the shift in the paradigm of language assessment. Classroom assessment refers to instructional activities led by teachers, aiming at eliciting learners' performance on language tasks to shed light on their language proficiency development. This information is then utilized by teachers to adjust and refine their teaching (Lewkowicz and Leung 2021). Green (2016) argued that learning-oriented classroom assessment includes all forms of assessment

intended to promote learning. Carless (2007) discussed three principles of learning-oriented assessment as following: (1) assessment tasks as learning tasks to promote appropriate learning; (2) learners' active involvement with assessment activities; and (3) providing appropriate feedback to learners that they can use to feed forward into their future learning process. Carless emphasized that these three components need to be conceptualized as a whole process rather than discrete elements.

Recently, discussions on classroom assessment have been renewed to encompass expanded roles and concepts of assessment in the process of learning. Existing frameworks of classroom assessment, while valuable, can be somewhat confined to the immediate context of classrooms and schools. The concept of Language Assessment Ecology (LAE), introduced by Chong and Isaacs (2023), seeks to address this limitation. The concept of LAE emphasizes the significance of considering a wider spectrum of contexts while recognizing learners as active agents. According to Chong and Isaacs, the central principle of classroom assessment involves recognizing the complex dimensions of contexts in which assessment takes place. In other words, depending on the specific classroom contexts, assessment practices may vary significantly and learner differences need to be considered during the design and implementation of classroom assessment.

As seen in Table 1, Chong and Isaacs (2023) propose that LAE comprises three dimensions: engagement dimension, learner dimension, and contextual dimension. These dimensions are influenced by various theoretical frameworks. Firstly, the engagement dimension refers to learners' purposeful and meaningful involvement with classroom assessment. This entails cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement, informed by Ellis' (2010) conceptualization of learner engagement in second language acquisition (SLA). Secondly, the learner dimension is defined as learners' psychology that affects their engagement with classroom assessment. Drawing from Dörnyei and Ryan's (2015) discussion on language learner psychology and individual differences in SLA, the learner dimension includes language beliefs, motivation, emotions, language learning styles and strategies. Lastly, the contextual dimension is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory which delineates various environmental factors affecting an individual's development across multiple nested levels, as summarized in Table 2. Each system represents a different layer of setting that collectively provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamic interactions that shape an individual's growth and development. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Chong and Isaacs propose five layers of the contextual dimension focusing on assessment: textual (e.g., assessment materials), instructional (e.g., implementing assessment tasks), interpersonal (e.g., relationships between learners and teachers), sociocultural (e.g., cultural and societal settings), and temporal (e.g., temporal changes for a learner). In essence, LAE conceptualizes classroom assessment as a moment-by-moment process enacted by learners' agents of learning, where various contextual factors interact. Chong and Isaacs' (2023) LAE could serve as a comprehensive conceptual framework for systematically examining language learners' engagement with classroom assessment practices.

Table 1. Dimensions of Language Assessment Ecology (Chong and Isaacs 2023)

Type	Components
Engagement dimension	1) Cognitive component: Learners' understanding of the purpose and instructions of assessment tasks 2) Behavioral component: Learners' actions prompted by classroom assessment 3) Affective component: Learners' emotional responses triggered by classroom assessment
Learner dimension	Learners' language beliefs, Motivation, Emotions, Language learning styles and strategies
Contextual dimension	Textual (e.g., assessment materials), Instructional (e.g., implementing assessment tasks), Interpersonal (e.g., relationships between learners and teachers), Sociocultural (e.g., cultural and societal settings), and Temporal (e.g., temporal changes that occur for a learner) component

Table 2. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory

Level	Definition	Examples
Microsystem	The innermost setting that provides the immediate environments where the focal individual lives and interacts directly	Immediate classroom environments where language learners interact with peers and teachers, which influences the learners' daily language learning experiences
Mesosystem	The interconnection between different microsystems involving the focal individual, which influence the individual's development	Learners' prior language learning experiences that affect their classroom learning, (involving more social groups, other than classroom settings)
Exosystem	The external environments where the focal individual is excluded from the interaction, which indirectly influence the individual's development	School's language curriculum and assessment policy
Macrosystem	Overarching cultural, societal, and political settings that shape the individual's development	The dominant influence of standardized assessment on learning and the ideology attached to English in a particular country (existence and nature of external stresses, belief systems of the larger society)
Chronosystem	The temporal settings and changes that occur over the individual's lifespan	The transition from secondary to tertiary-level language curriculum

Given the focus on TBLT in this study, assessment in a task-based classroom naturally reflects the characteristics of TBLT. This involves real-life communicative assessment tasks designed to elicit authentic interaction. However, challenges in applying the original principles of TBLT in EFL contexts, as reported in previous TBLT research in Asian EFL contexts (Kim et al. 2017, Sato 2010), include limited speaking opportunities in large classes and students unfamiliar with interactive speaking tasks. Consequently, task-based instruction needs to be designed and modified to align with the specific characteristics of instructional contexts. McDonough (2015) refers to such modified task-based instruction as *localized TBLT*. In terms of assessment, localized TBLT may involve context-specific assessment practices. One of the various functions of task-based language assessment (TBLA) is the use of assessment tasks for classroom assessment (Norris 2016). The aforementioned Carless' (2007) principles of classroom assessment are well reflected in the ways assessment is applied in TBLT. However, how participants interact with language tasks and classroom assessment practices in a localized task-based classroom, especially in the context of pre-service teacher education in Korea, remains relatively unknown. Understanding the language assessment ecology of task-based classroom can be informative for educators and researchers interested in implementing localized TBLT for pre-service teacher curriculum. This study adopts Chong and Isaacs' (2023) LAE as a conceptual lens to examine the unique contextual and learner factors of pre-service teachers in Korea in the process of implementing TBLT and TBLA.

3. Pre-service English Teacher Education

Pre-service language teachers in an EFL context find themselves in a unique position regarding their professional development. Particularly in their early years as EFL pre-service teachers, their English proficiency continues to develop alongside other pedagogical skills. Challenges arising from such contexts have been extensively documented in previous research. Ahn's (2018) study on Korean pre-service teachers' identity development revealed that factors ranging from individual elements (e.g., English proficiency) to broader

sociocultural elements (e.g., the Teacher Employment Test in Korea, prevalent English teaching methods in Korea) influenced the construction of in-service teacher identity. Research on pre-service teacher education emphasizes the pivotal role that experiences during this phase play in constructing teacher identity and facilitating professional development (Gu 2013). In a separate study by Ahn (2023) focusing on in-service teachers, their perceptions and experiences of pre-service teacher education were examined. In-service teachers reflected that pre-service teacher training and experiences were instrumental in shaping their professional identity, with microteaching in English being particularly meaningful. However, they also suggested that pre-service teacher education should better reflect real-life communicative competence in English. Reports of EFL pre-service teachers experiencing English anxiety are prevalent in other contexts. For example, Machida (2015) investigated the English anxiety of Japanese EFL in-service primary school English teachers. Beyond English itself, Nazari and Molana (2023) explored assessment-related emotions language teachers may experience. This line of research highlights the complex ecology of pre- and in-service EFL teachers globally, where their professional development is interwoven with sociocultural experiences and language backgrounds. Hoang and Wyatt (2021) examined how Vietnamese EFL pre-service language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (i.e., judgements of their abilities to design and execute pedagogical actions) develops and influences their L2 proficiency. The study found strong correlations between pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and L2 proficiency, with these relationships being stronger than those observed for in-service teachers. This underscores the importance of pre-service language teachers' L2 proficiency as a key factor for constructing various dimensions of language teacher identity and self-efficacy beliefs.

The consensus in the literature on pre-service teacher education emphasizes the importance of developing effective methods to support the development of pre-service teachers' speaking proficiency and pedagogical skills in response to situational and contextual factors. There is a particular emphasis on developing a curriculum that reflects real-life language needs and provides assistance into the development of communicative competence. To address these research issues, various methods have been employed to enhance pre-service teachers' English proficiency. TBLT has recently emerged in pre-service teacher education literature (Bryfonski 2024, Li and Zou 2022). Li and Zou (2022) implemented TBLT for pre-service teachers in China and examined their perceptions of TBLT. While the pre-service teachers exhibited slightly positive attitudes toward TBLT, they still lacked understanding and knowledge of TBLT due to various individual and contextual factors. These reserved perceptions toward TBLT in Asian EFL contexts suggest the need for modified and localized TBLT implementation. The complexity of implementing TBLT among pre- and in-service teachers is discussed (Ogilvie and Dunn 2010). While there is research on the applicability of TBLT in various educational contexts, what remains relatively unknown is the ecology of implementing TBLT and TBLA for Korean EFL pre-service teachers. To develop meaningful curricula for pre-service teachers, it is crucial to understand how classroom assessment operates and mediates in enhancing their English proficiency. A comprehensive understanding of how classroom assessment occurs in a dynamic classroom environment influenced by various contextual factors is essential for advancing pre-service teacher education.

In response to the research gaps, the purposes of this study are two-folds. Firstly, it explores the potential of localized TBLT in pre-service teacher education. Secondly, this study investigates the ecology of task-based classroom assessment among pre-service teachers in their second year of curriculum. The study explores the concept of LAE to examine the complex and dynamic learning ecology of pre-service language teacher during classroom assessment. It is important to note that while this study focuses on the roles of classroom assessment, task-based teaching practices are not considered secondary. Examining the ways in which pre-service English teachers interact with contextual and learner variables in their engagement with TBLT and TBLA would shed light on the advancement in teacher education. The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) How do Korean EFL pre-service teachers perceive their speaking proficiency development through the practices of task-based language teaching and assessment?
- 2) What engagement, contextual and learner factors impact Korean EFL pre-service language teachers' engagement with task-based language teaching and assessment?

4. Method

4.1 Classroom Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a university of education in Korea. Participants were second year pre-service teachers whose first language is Korean. The intact class met for two hours per week during a 16-week semester. The researcher was the course instructor who had taught this class previously and familiar with a task-based language classroom through teaching and research. The class was taught both in Korean and English. This course was required for the participants. Prior to this class, the participants took a general English conversation class during their first year. The primary difference from the previous course is that they were required to teach a lesson in English for the first time in this class. Essentially, the current course was designed to strengthen English speaking fluency and use English to teach English classes for primary school students. According to a pre-semester questionnaire, the participants expressed a high level of anxiety regarding English speaking. Nonetheless, they indicated the highest interest in improving their English speaking proficiency, which would prepare them for their future roles as in-service teachers. The participants also expressed a high degree of interest in everyday English conversations in real-life contexts (e.g., travel). The participants were informed that their responses to the questionnaires and semi-structured focus group interviews do not affect their final course grades. Participation into the study was voluntary. Most of the students did not have a standardized English proficiency test score. Based on their self-assessment of English proficiency from the pre-semester questionnaire, they diagnosed their English levels as low-intermediate on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. Each class included the students from the same major, consisting of 27 to 30 students per class. The participants were from three majors (English Education, Computer Education, and Music Education). 65 participants who completed all questionnaires and agreed to participate in the study were included for this study. They had at least 10 years of required English classes at primary, junior, and high school before the university.

4.2 Pedagogical Tasks and Assessment Practices

Table 3 lists pedagogical tasks and assessment practices implemented throughout the semester, along with corresponding assessment practices and grading methods. The primary curricular objectives of the class included: (1) strengthening English speaking fluency and (2) utilizing English for teaching English classes for primary school students. Before conducting this research, informal needs analysis data were collected to identify real-life language tasks suitable for the pre-service teacher curriculum. A range of pedagogical tasks served as central instruments driving the development of speaking proficiency. As explained below, some tasks were completed in class and others were implemented as an individual assignment. Regardless, various forms of assessment were employed. Each task was carefully designed to align with the course goals and to elicit meaningful language use. They served distinct purposes and sequenced in terms of interactivity and complexity. Some speaking tasks

required paired interactions, while other speaking tasks required monologic speaking to accommodate participants' different learning styles.

Table 3. Pedagogical Tasks and Assessment Practices

Week	Tasks	Assessment Practices	Grading method
Week 2	Making a self-introduction video & Writing a reflection paper	Pre-semester questionnaire & Self-assessment	Participation credit
Weeks 3 to 10	Weekly 1-minute speaking log as a fluency-building activity	Self-assessment	Participation credit
Weeks 3 to 10	Open role-play tasks on various real-life situations	Instructor's Feedback	Participation credit
Weeks 5 to 8	Small group discussions	Instructor's Feedback	Participation credit
Week 7	Midterm	In-class discussion of the exam results	Scale
Weeks 8 to 10	Making a 3-minutes English vlog	Peer assessment	Scale
Weeks 11 to 15	Microteaching	Peer assessment & Individual feedback session	Scale
Week 16	Final	Post-semester questionnaire	Scale

The initial speaking task involved creating a 1-minute self-introduction video and writing a reflection paper, assigned as an individual task. The participants were instructed to introduce themselves using the prompt, "How do you want other people to remember you?". At the same time, they were asked to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses while completing this assignment in the form of a reflection paper.

Weekly speaking logs were designed to build pre-service teachers' speaking fluency, which were implemented from Weeks 3 to 10. Every week, the participants engaged in in-class discussion on various topics. For this, various activities (e.g., Bingo game, paired discussion) were utilized to foster interactive speaking among participants. For all interactive speaking tasks, the participants self-selected their partners. Upon discussion, they recorded their responses for 1 minute individually. The speaking topics progressed from cognitively familiar topics (e.g., favorite places to travel) in the early weeks (Weeks 3 to 6) to somewhat cognitively complex topics (e.g., teaching philosophy as a pre-service teacher) in Weeks 7 to 10. Two topic choices were provided for each speaking log to allow participants flexibility in selection. Rather than assigning individual scores, participation credits were given as long as the participants completed the weekly speaking log. This approach was intentional, aiming to alleviate speaking anxiety and foster speaking fluency. During this task, the participants sought advice from the instructor on English expressions. As the semester progressed, they monitored their fluency levels and self-assessed their progress.

Open role-play tasks were designed to elicit meaningful language use in class. Reflective of the course objectives, the role-play tasks included both real-life situations (e.g., hotel check-in, ordering food) and classroom interactions (e.g., giving instructions, addressing students' inquiries). After learning necessary key expressions for each situation, the participants started with guided paired role-play tasks using context-specific role-play cards. Figure 1 depicts an example role-play card illustrating interaction between a teacher and a student. In these open role-plays, instead of prescribing interactional outcomes, the scenarios of the role-play situations were designed to invite spontaneous conversation among the participants. For example, as shown in Figure 1, a teacher does not expect to address a student's pronunciation problem. Rather, they respond naturally to such inquiries from a student. Once the participants were familiar with a basic role-play scenario, they were tasked with designing additional role-play scenarios that included additional reasoning demands (e.g., incorporating a situation to complain during

hotel check-in). The instructor provided necessary feedback on their role-play scripts. During classes, the participants acted out these role-play scenarios in front of their peers. In the early weeks of the semester, the participants engaged in role-play situations focusing on everyday conversations. Subsequently, situations involving various classroom interaction were introduced to prepare for microteaching.

Teacher	Student
1. Greetings & Routine Questions	1. Greetings & Respond to the teacher's questions
2. Check attendance	2. Tell the teacher than the student next to you didn't show up yet
3. Review the last lesson (key expressions from the last class: Q: What do you want to be? A: I want to be a pilot.)	3. Say that you remember the key expressions learned from the last class, but have trouble pronouncing the word 'Pilot'
4. Correct students who struggle with the pronunciation of 'pilot' and encourage the students. Check students' understanding.	4. Respond to your teacher's encouragement and questions
5. Introduce today's expression (What is your plan for the summer vacation?), ask students about their vacation plans, and respond to student responses	5. Answer the teacher's question. Tell the teacher your vacation plan is to learn how to swim.
6. Ask students if they have questions and respond to their questions	6. Ask your teacher about vacation plans.

Figure 1. Example Role-play Cards

Between Weeks 8 and 10, the participants completed a 3-minute English vlog task as an individual assignment. This task was designed to utilize video-editing applications and apply real-life expressions learned in class. The participants chose self-selected topics, ranging from introducing a favorite restaurant to presenting part-time jobs. After completing the vlog, each participant was assigned five peers' vlogs for peer assessment, focusing on areas for improvement and positive aspects related to language and content of their peers' English vlogs.

As the final task, the participants completed microteaching, presenting a section of a lesson plan for about 20 minutes. This task was conducted in groups of 2 or 3 participants, serving as a culmination of previous tasks in terms of final outcomes and speaking proficiency. They were asked to choose real-life communicative situations aligned with chapters used in primary schools, targeting learners in 5th and 6th grades. Regarding classroom interaction, they were instructed to utilize various classroom English expressions (e.g., introducing the lessons, giving an instruction, providing corrective feedback, encouragement). During microteaching, the peers were required to provide written peer feedback and justify their evaluations, focusing on areas of improvement and positive aspects based on guidelines provided in advance. This approach was adopted to address concerns that a numeric scale for peer assessment might negatively impact presenters' motivation. Although their peer feedback was not factored into the final course grade, the activities associated with peer assessment were considered as class participations. In addition to peer feedback, the instructor conducted individual feedback sessions with the presenters to provide concrete feedback on their microteaching using a checklist (see Table 4).

As explained above, the principles of classroom assessment were applied in the implementation of a task-based classroom. Rather than conceptualizing assessment as one-time and discrete activities, various pedagogical tasks were designed to align with the participants' interests and their speaking proficiency levels. Given that the participants expressed a high degree of anxiety toward English speaking, not all speaking tasks were designed to involve interactive speaking. Some tasks (e.g., English vlog) involved planning and monologic speaking. In other words, the principles of TBLT were modified and adapted for Korean EFL pre-service teachers. In addition, various

forms of feedback were incorporated, including self-assessment through a reflection paper, peer feedback, feedback sessions with an instructor. In addition to these tasks, a midterm and a final were included. The midterm comprised a receptive written test, covering various real-life expressions learned in the class and English expressions necessary for classroom interaction. The final exam involved an individual speaking test simulating the speaking log task and microteaching.

Table 4. Checklist for Microteaching

Areas	Checklist Questions
Structure and content of a lesson plan	Did pre-teachers present course objectives clearly?
	Did pre-teachers use appropriate materials to motivate students in relation to course objectives?
	To what extent were language activities appropriate for teaching key expressions and for targeted learners?
	To what extent were language activities coherent?
The use of English	To what extent was the use of English appropriate for targeted learners?
	To what extent did pre-service teachers use diverse expressions for various purposes (e.g., encouragement, giving an instruction)?
	To what extent was the use of English clearly delivered?
Interaction with students	Was the pre-teachers' voice articular and clear enough?
	To what extent did the pre-service teachers make eye contact with students and use an appropriate amount of gesture?
	To what extent did the pre-service teachers engage with students in an authentic manner?

4.3 Data Collection and Instruments

This study employs a convergent mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018), integrating the results of quantitative and qualitative methods. The data were collected through pre- and post-semester questionnaires (see Appendix A) and semi-structured focus group interviews (see Appendix B for example questions). The pre-semester questionnaire was administered via Google Forms during the first week of the semester, followed by the post-semester questionnaire after the final exam. The pre-semester questionnaire included open-ended items that ask from students' perceptions, interests, attitudes toward learning English, and self-assessment of four English skills on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The post-semester questionnaire encompassed items designed to gauge participants' experiences and engagements in the class. These items included questions about the level of effort exerted in the class participation, the degree to which the class alleviated anxiety regarding English speaking, the extent of confidence gained in English speaking, whether the class experience contributed to improving English speaking proficiency, whether the instructor's feedback facilitated improvement in English speaking proficiency, and the degree to which pedagogical and assessment tasks reflected real-life communicative situations. The participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the post-semester questionnaire. In addition, the open-ended questions to elicit further responses from the participants with regard to their experiences and engagement in the task-based classroom were included in the post-semester questionnaire.

For the focus group interview, nine students voluntarily participated. The focus group interviews were conducted after the semester completed. Three separate sessions were conducted for about 1 hour. The questions focused on the participants' experiences in the class and their engagement with the pedagogical and assessment

tasks. At the same time, the questions were not explicitly framed to elicit specific responses. The responses for the questionnaires and the focus group interviews were all conducted in Korean.

4.4 Data Analysis

For the quantitative data from the questionnaires, descriptive statistics were employed. The Cronbach alpha for the post-semester questionnaire was 0.85, which indicates that the questionnaire was acceptably reliable. For the focus group interview data, the audio-recorded data were transcribed and content analysis was used. The researcher went over the data numerous times to identify emerging themes and patterns in relation to the research questions. As recurring themes were identified, the data were categorized informed by the conceptual framework of this study (i.e., LAE). As there was no second coder, the researcher ensured intra-coder reliability by coding a randomly-selected subset of the data multiple times, with time intervals in between. After identifying discrepant cases, the remaining data were re-coded until there was no disagreement. If necessary, additional data, such as participants' reflection papers, were considered to analyze and interpret the data. The responses written in Korean were translated into English.

5. Results

The quantitative and qualitative findings are organized according to the three dimensions (engagement, contextual, learner) of Language Assessment Ecology discussed in the literature review.

5.1 Engagement Dimension

Given that the most immediate setting in which the participants interacted was the task-based language classroom, they reported active engagement with both pedagogical and assessment activities. Table 5 provides the descriptive statistics for questionnaire items related to participants' engagement in the classroom. The means and standard deviations for the participants' majors are also included. Generally, the means for all items were relatively high, with each item averaging above 4 out of 5. This finding suggests that the participants demonstrated high levels of efforts and commitment to classroom interaction. They perceived the pedagogical and assessment activities as highly beneficial for improving their speaking proficiency, particularly appreciating the instructor's feedback on their learning. These patterns remained consistent regardless of the participants' majors, as the means for each item across different majors were mostly similar.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Items on Engagement

Questions	M (SD) (All Majors)	M (SD) (English)	M (SD) (Computer)	M (SD) (Music)
The level of effort exerted in class participation	4.53 (0.65)	4.42 (0.69)	4.61 (0.61)	4.57 (0.68)
The degree to which the class contributed to improving English speaking	4.47 (0.63)	4.47 (0.77)	4.39 (0.61)	4.52 (0.51)
The degree to which instructor's feedback facilitated improvement in English speaking	4.76 (0.57)	4.63 (0.76)	4.83 (0.38)	4.81 (0.51)
The helpfulness and relevance pedagogical and assessment tasks in relation to real-life communicative situations	4.81 (0.44)	4.74 (0.45)	4.83 (0.51)	4.86 (0.36)

Table 6. Engagement Dimensions

Type	Example comments from the questionnaires
Cognitive engagement (learners' perceptions of the usefulness of the assessment)	<p>-“After the microteaching activity, the professor and each team had a feedback session, which gave us a chance to think about what we should consider when teaching English in the future.” (P41 English)</p> <p>-“Microteaching was the most helpful. I've done a lot of classroom demonstrations in Korean for different subjects, but this was my first time doing it in English, and it felt new and unfamiliar. However, as I was preparing for the teaching demonstration, I asked myself, "Will these expressions help me teach the class?" and these concerns helped me grow. Also, the speaking proficiency can only be improved if it is done continuously, and the speaking logs were a great way to see my progress, and at the end of the semester, I could see that my ability to construct sentences had improved significantly.” (P49 English)</p> <p>-“I am used to reading, analyzing and solving problems in English, but speaking in English was difficult, but I gained confidence and learned various classroom English expressions. The most helpful activity was microteaching. It was my first time to do a lesson demonstration in English, and I got information about English lessons from observing and giving feedback on other groups' various teaching demonstrations, and I became more confident about English lessons. I worked hard on other assignments, but I especially put a lot of effort into the lesson demonstration, where I coordinated with my group members and thought about a good lesson.” (P55 English)</p>
Affective engagement (learners' emotional responses triggered by classroom assessment)	<p>-“I don't think my English has improved a lot, but I found that English is more fun than I expected.” (P18 Computer)</p> <p>-“It was great to be able to speak my thoughts in English once a week in this class, especially when I am not able to use English very often. When I recorded my speaking log, it was harder than I thought to speak my thoughts in English and sound like a native speaker, but the professor taught me various English expressions, which helped me a lot.” (P4 Computer)</p> <p>-“I think that all assignments during the semester were tasks that could improve my English speaking skills. I gained a lot of confidence in speaking English by doing the assignments such as introductions, Speaking Log, English vlogs, and microteaching. Especially in the Speaking Log, I improved my English speaking skills a lot because there were different topics every week.” (P12 Computer)</p>
Behavioral engagement (learners' actions prompted by classroom assessment)	<p>-“I think I made a lot of effort to use everyday expressions, especially for the English vlog task. I watched a lot of videos on YouTube, such as foreigners' cooking vlogs and international students' vlogs, and wrote down the expressions I could use and their meanings. During the teaching demonstration, I realized that it was not easy to actually use English in the class, but after reviewing the professor's careful feedback, I think I will be able to improve my English demonstration next time. Overall, I was very satisfied with the class and it made me want to study English more, so I will make a plan to study English during my vacation.” (P4 Computer)</p> <p>-“I think that speaking with a partner in class made me feel more comfortable with English speaking and made me want to speak more naturally. In order to speak fluently, I practiced a lot when doing various speaking tasks and tried to make sure that what I was trying to say was completely my own expression.” (P26 Music)</p>

The quantitative findings were further elaborated in the open-ended responses from the post-semester questionnaire, revealing the three components of engagement dimension (cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement). Table 6 provides examples of comments from the questionnaire. In terms of the cognitive engagement (i.e., learners' understanding of the purpose and instruction of assessment tasks), some participants

clearly articulated the usefulness of the pedagogical and assessment experiences. They considered the instructor's feedback and peer-assessment as valuable learning opportunities (P41, P49, P55). Regarding affective engagement (i.e., learners' emotional responses triggered by classroom assessment), the participants mentioned their active engagement with various language tasks, expressing different experiences and preferences toward tasks that are motivating and meaningful for them. Notably, they found weekly speaking logs and microteaching to be particularly useful (P49, P4). Participation in the weekly speaking logs served as a self-assessment tool and encouraged them to push themselves to the next level (P26). Some participants, initially less interested in English, found English enjoyable by the end of the semester (P18). Both quantitative and qualitative findings confirm the participants' high motivation toward completing the pedagogical tasks and engaging with the assessment practices. Finally, in terms of the behavioral engagement, which refers to learners' uptake of an instructor's feedback, one participant (P4) expressed various actions taken to prepare for the tasks and outlined plans to continue studying English in the future.

The questionnaire responses were further explored through the focus group interviews. Notably, one participant explicitly praised the diverse teaching and assessment practices employed in the class. As shown in Excerpt 1, she appreciated the inclusion of various assessment tasks that accommodated different language learning styles.

Excerpt 1

What I liked about the class was the methods of assessment were diverse. Some people are good at speaking English and other people are good at memorizing expressions, and there are various learner characteristics. In this class, we took a word test, and completed various tasks, such as making a self-introductions video, and we also used English on the spot in class. We were able to try various things. This makes me think that I could do well on various assessment tasks. I was less worried, tried various things, and reflected on my English, memorized words. This helped me. (P51 English, Focus group interview)

A student from the focus group interview mentioned the verbal and personalized feedback from the instructor, as seen in Excerpt 2. She found the oral feedback from the instructor to be memorable.

Excerpt 2

Usually, professors give feedback in writing, but in this class the professor held feedback sessions to provide oral feedback. For me, it's better to have them tell you in person on what you need to work on or what you're good at, and I remembered that for a long time. (P56 English, Focus group interview)

While many participants found the feedback sessions with the instructor helpful, a suggestion was made (Excerpt 3) to enhance their effectiveness by adding additional feedback sessions.

Excerpt 3

I think one of the ways to complement that would be to have two feedback sessions, if time permits, one at the beginning before the class and one at the end of the class. This way, you can see how much growth the student has made, so that you can be more objective in terms of how your teaching method is working. (P59 Music, Focus group interview)

The participants generally rated the relevance and real-life connection of the pedagogical and assessment tasks highly. However, some participants expressed unfamiliarity with the task, such as making English vlogs (Excerpt 4).

Excerpt 4

The English vlog was very foreign to me and a new challenge. It was a refreshing challenge, but hard to complete it. The process of filming and creating the English vlog was challenging, but I learned a lot by looking up real-life expressions to complete the vlog. (P23 Music, Focus group interview)

5.2 Learner Dimension

The pre-service teachers expressed diverse dimensions of learner psychology related to English learning and their engagement with the pedagogical tasks and classroom assessment. According to the quantitative results from the questionnaire (see Table 7), the participants responded positively in terms of anxiety relief ($M=4.22$) and increased confidence ($M=4.12$) in English speaking through the experiences in the class. Depending on the participants' majors, the means for each item were mostly similar across majors, with slight variations in standard deviations.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Items on L2 Emotions

Questions	M (SD) (All Majors)	M (SD) (English)	M (SD) (Computer)	M (SD) (Music)
The extent to which the class alleviated anxiety regarding English speaking	4.22 (0.92)	4.11 (1.10)	4.39 (0.50)	4.19 (1.03)
The extent of confidence gained in English speaking through the pedagogical and assessment tasks	4.12 (0.99)	4.00 (1.15)	4.28 (0.75)	4.10 (1.04)

In Chong and Isaacs's (2023) Language Assessment Ecology, various components of the learner dimension were discussed, including L2 beliefs, emotions, motivation, learning styles and strategies. The open-ended questionnaire items regarding the participants' interests and attitudes toward English revealed the multi-layered learner dimensions. Table 8 lists example comments from the questionnaire. Firstly, the pre-service teachers' beliefs about English varied. Some participants viewed English as a necessary means for global communication (P60). However, others did not consider English as a necessary resource for a teacher (P16). Changes in beliefs about English being a powerful tool for self-expression and connecting with friends across countries after taking English classes at the university were also reported (P61, P62). Regarding L2 emotions, the participants mentioned heightened anxiety and lack of confidence in English speaking, along with deep emotions (e.g., fear, shame, trauma) regardless of their language proficiency levels. For example, a student (P64) who achieved success in English in the exam still reported a lack of confidence and distressing emotion. Some participants reported a changed perspective on the required skills for speaking after taking the task-based class (P16).

Table 8. Learner Dimensions

Type	Example comments from the questionnaire
L2 beliefs	<p>-“I think English is the most widely spoken language in the world right now. Unlike in the past, society and the economy are looking for globalized human resources who value exchanges and communication skills with the outside world. I am definitely interested in studying English to improve my English skills to the point where I can communicate smoothly.” (P60 Music)</p> <p>-“I used to be good at English. But I forgot all about it now. I'm very interested in learning English, but it's hard to get started because I don't think it'll be of much use to a teacher.” (P16 Computer)</p> <p>-“I didn't really study English as a means of communication or to enrich my life, but simply to get good grades in my exams, so I simply memorized the topics, content, and grammar elements of the passages. Therefore, when I am asked, "What English expressions can I use in this situation?", I am really confused. This is because even though I learned how to interpret English into Korean, I was never asked to practice speaking English. However, after coming to university, I met friends who grew up in different environments and realized how powerful it is to be able to naturally express my thoughts and arguments in English. I realized the need to study English.” (P61 Computer)</p> <p>-“Before I started interacting with foreigners more frequently, I used to think that learning English was simply a requirement to get good grades and get a good job, but now I see it as a valuable skill that allows me to connect with friends across borders.” (P62 English)</p>
L2 emotions	<p>-“I always felt ashamed of myself because my English is very poor, and I don't know how to go about it. But, I'm interested in studying English. I don't think it would make sense to study like what I did in high school, so I don't know the right way to go about it is. So, my interest level does not go very high, so I don't put it into practice, or if I do, it doesn't last long.” (P63 Computer)</p> <p>-“I'm interested in English, but when I think of English, fear seems to come first. I have been studying English with a focus on university entrance exams and have achieved some success, but the failures I have experienced in this process have left me with a deep trauma and I am not confident in English. In addition, the fear of making mistakes and being wrong seems to have caused me to lose a lot of confidence in English.” (P64 Computer)</p> <p>-“In high school, I had a friend from the US and we had the opportunity to go to a public speaking competition together. After my friend laughed so hard and told me that my pronunciation was funny, I was devastated and lost confidence. I wanted to fix it, but didn't feel like trying because I didn't have any use for it.” (P2 Computer)</p> <p>-“I was afraid to speak English because I was afraid of using the wrong expressions, but I think the speaking log task helped me to get rid of my anxiety. Also, microteaching and using English expressions that are actually used in the classroom was very helpful.” (P17 Computer)</p>
L2 proficiency	<p>-“I find English difficult, so I don't think my grammar is very good. I'm not good at solving English problems in the university entrance exam either, but I'm not afraid of speaking and using English in my daily life. I don't speak it well, but I try to speak it somehow. My interest in studying English is not high. I don't know if I'm already intimidated or not, but it's not easy to break through that barrier. I don't know exactly how to study English. (P6 Computer)</p> <p>-“I thought I needed to have perfect grammar and sentence structure in order to speak English, but I realized that the most efficient way to learn is by speaking a lot after taking this class. I think I was afraid of speaking too much to begin with.” (P16 Computer)</p>

Further examination of the participants' reflection papers revealed comments related to their previous assessment experiences and their influence on their language learning styles and beliefs toward English. In Excerpt 5, a participant shared how she prepared for a speaking test as part of performance assessment by memorizing a script to achieve a good grade. Excerpt 6 demonstrates another participant's experience of English speaking mainly done in the context of performance assessment rather than authentic English communication, which led to her belief that English is a subject rather than a means of communication.

Excerpt 5

Of course, there was a speaking test as performance assessment at school, but a script was mainly written in advance, memorized, and presented. When I came to university, I took an English communication class last year, but it was similar in that I had to write a script perfectly in advance and memorize it because it would be reflected in my grade. (P50 English, Reflection paper)

Excerpt 6

During my middle and high school years, I had very little exposure to speaking English other than performance assessment. As I studied grammar and reading comprehension to get better marks, my interest in the language naturally waned. I began to think of English as a subject, not a language. (P51 English, Reflection paper)

Although the questionnaire results indicated that the class experience helped them relieve anxiety and gain confidence in English, some participants reported persistent anxiety when speaking English. Excerpts 7 and 8 illustrate the anxiety experienced by participants during the final speaking test. This test was administered individually, with participants asked to record their responses to a speaking prompt. Despite the final speaking test being similar to the weekly speaking log tasks in terms of prompts and formats, the participants still reported experiencing speaking anxieties at the end of the semester.

Excerpt 7

I thought I had gotten over my fear of speaking English by learning various classroom English expressions and recording weekly speaking logs. But, when I sat down for the final speaking test, I realized that my nervousness was still there. I think I had a hard time speaking because I felt like I couldn't do anything wrong, and I couldn't think of anything I wanted to say, probably because it wasn't face-to-face, and I was under a lot of pressure to record it all at once. (P5 Music, Post-semester questionnaire)

Excerpt 8

I thought I could do well, and I prepared a lot, even organizing what I was going to say and how I was going to express myself during the one-minute preparation time, but it was not easy when I pressed the recording button. I improved my speaking skills a lot, and I improved my expression and writing skills a lot, but there is a lot to improve in terms of confidence and pressure, so I gave the self-evaluation like above. However, before this semester's class, I thought that I was not good at speaking at all and that I had no talent, but now I have the idea that I can do it and that I just need to try harder. (P45 Computer, Post-semester questionnaire)

5.3 Contextual Dimension

Among the five layers of contextual dimension of Language Assessment Ecology (Chong and Isaacs 2023), this section focuses on the sociocultural and temporal aspects, as the others (e.g., instructional, interpersonal factors) were already addressed in the engagement and learner dimensions above.

The dominant sociocultural dimension that emerged from the data was the influence of the university entrance exam in Korea, known as the College Scholastic Ability Test, which is a large-scale assessment. Table 9 summarizes three sub-patterns: (1) The participants felt demotivated by the focus on studying for the university entrance exam despite their initial interest in learning English; (2) Their English learning styles were shaped by the requirements of the university entrance exam, leading to anxiety toward English speaking; (3) Many participants discontinued studying English after completing the university entrance exam. Although the university entrance exam was not directly addressed in the data collection procedures of this study, the participants frequently referenced its impact on their motivation, language learning styles, and interest in English. As shown in the comments in Table 9, the participants expressed a disconnection between English learning driven by the university entrance exam in Korea and communicative competence in real-life contexts. Although these comments were not directly related with their experiences with the task-based language classroom, the influence of the wider sociocultural factor in Korea was prominent in shaping their motivation to study English and their anxiety toward English speaking.

Table 9. Sociocultural Dimension

Type	Example comments from the questionnaires
Motivation	<p>–“I was very interested in learning English from a young age because I was fascinated by learning about other countries' languages. However, unlike my elementary and middle school classes where I learned English by speaking and communicating in English, I gradually lost interest in English and began to think that English was difficult because high school English classes were just about memorizing English passages so that students could get good scores on exams.” (P27 Music)</p> <p>–“I consider my English to be at a level where I can have a simple conversation. I have a high level of interest in learning English, but my level is not very high because I hate memorizing English words and phrases. I was very disappointed with English education during my high schools. So, I have made various efforts since I became an adult, such as English conversation classes, phone English conversation, and chatting with native friends, but my level is not very high because I don't keep doing it consistently.” (P65 Music)</p> <p>–“I used to like English a lot, but my conversational English is very poor because I used to solve too many problems for a test in middle and high schools. Although my love for English is not the same as before, I would like to continue to study English conversation.” (P13 Computer)</p>
English Learning styles	<p>–“I'm good at English reading to the extent that I can read the English university entrance exam and solve the questions for an exam smoothly. When I have to write, the sentences don't come to me immediately, and I have to think in Korean first and then write in English. When it comes to English conversations, I just spit out whatever comes to mind, which often leads to grammatical errors. I don't mind being wrong, but I think that's why I get it wrong more.” (P47 English)</p> <p>–“I've always done well in exams such as university entrance exams, but I've always been less confident in real-life English, such as conversations. Since I become a university student, I've tried using apps to practice conversational English, but it hasn't become a habit.” (P23 Music)</p> <p>–“I have studied English for the university entrance exam and feel that I have a good grasp of grammar, but I struggle with English communication. I am very interested in learning English, especially conversational English.” (P9 Computer)</p> <p>–“I think my English is terrible, I think my listening and speaking are lacking because I have only studied the university entrance exam, so I have a desire to be good at English.” (P40 English)</p>

	<p>- “The only study I’ve ever done that could be called English study is for the university entrance exam. When I studied for the exam, I got a good grade, but I don’t know if I should consider this as the valid measure of my English proficiency. I think the basis of language study is conversation, but my conversation skills are not as good as even elementary school students.” (P48 English)</p> <p>- “My ability to recognize and accurately understand the structure of unfamiliar and new sentences has been honed by studying for the university entrance exam, but my English proficiency is weak in the contextual meaning used in real English-speaking countries. I regretted that I hadn’t studied native, in-depth English used in English-speaking countries.” (P56 English)</p>
Discontinued Interest in English	<p>-“I’m pretty good at exam-type English. I don’t know much about actual communication. After finishing the university entrance exam, I lost interest in English.” (P36 Music)</p> <p>-“I have a moderate level of English that is enough for traveling abroad, and I have lost interest in studying English since I finished my university entrance exam.” (P41 English)</p>

Regarding the temporal dimension, the participants commented on the changes they experienced over time through their engagement with the task-based class. These temporal changes included a shift in identity from student to teacher. Table 10 presents various comments related to language teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs (e.g., judgements of pedagogical decisions to organize and execute lesson plans). Notably, the participants highlighted microteaching as the most beneficial task for gaining confidence in designing and executing lesson plans in English. Considering that the participants initially expressed anxiety toward English speaking at the beginning of the semester, their development in self-efficacy beliefs as pre-service teachers is a significant observation.

Table 10. Temporal Dimension

Dimension	Example comments from the questionnaires
Pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs	<p>-“By learning a variety of classroom English expressions and using them for microteaching, I gained a better understanding of the role of a teacher in an English classroom.” (P39 Music)</p> <p>-“I think the microteaching task was helpful. I knew that I had to do an English lesson demonstration for the Teacher Employment test in the future, but I had no idea how to prepare for it. But when I did it myself, I think I started to gain some idea. In fact, English has been a subject that I am confident. But during this class, I realized that using English for teaching and English conversation is quite different from solving problems for English tests. The feedback from the professor after the lesson was also helpful.” (P57 English)</p> <p>-“I created my own English lesson and tried it out. It was an English lesson that focused on everyday English, and I would like to apply when I become an in-service teacher.” (P28 Music)</p>

In the focus group interview, one participant provided additional insight into the shift in perspective towards English as a teacher. Excerpt 9 illustrates how the participant distinguished between language use as a teacher and a learner, citing a specific example (“speak up” vs. “can you speak up?”), which demonstrates an understanding of context-appropriate language use and increased sense of agency as a language user.

Excerpt 9

I think it’s a lot different when you’re a learner and when you’re teaching. When you’re a learner, you just need to make a little bit of sense when you’re speaking. But, there’s a lot of nuance when using English in the classroom.

When your student's voice is quiet, we need to use an expression of 'can you speak up' rather than 'speak up'. So I think I realized the importance of a little bit of nuanced language expressions and indirect expressions in English. Honestly, it's hard to say that I'm confident with teaching English right now, but I think I can do it if I take advanced courses in the third year and the practice in the fourth year. (P23 Music, Focus group interview)

At the same time, the participant expressed concerns about a direction of learning English in relation to their profession, as seen in Excerpt 10. Previously, as a student, this participant focused on external goals. But, now, as she transitions into becoming an English teacher for primary schools, she searches for a new direction into her English learning journey. This comment highlights the complexity of the ecology involved in being a pre-service English teacher.

Excerpt 10

I worked tirelessly in my studies toward an external goal required by society. Of course, I learned a lot in this process, which is now my flesh and blood. Unlike in the past when I was a student who had goals set for me from the outside, now I have to be able to set goals for myself. In particular, I am worried about the direction of my English studies due to the nature of my future job, which, unlike other subjects, does not require special specifications and requires me to teach English at a low level for elementary school students. Therefore, I am currently experiencing some confusion about what and how to learn English. (P56 English, Reflection paper)

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the implementation of a localized task-based classroom and appropriate assessment practices within the context of Korean EFL pre-service education. Employing the concept of Language Assessment Ecology (Chong and Isaacs 2023), this study examined the engagement, learner, and contextual factors influencing pre-service teachers' engagement with the class along and their perceived gains in speaking proficiency. While TBLT often discusses the roles of assessment explicitly (Norris 2016), previous research tends to focus more on task design and implementation rather than how task-based assessment takes place in a classroom context. Successful classroom assessment requires considering the characteristics of learners and educational contexts. To address such research issue, this study used the conceptual lens of Language Assessment Ecology to explicitly examine the roles of classroom assessment within a localized task-based classroom. In this study, the diverse types of information were gathered through the pre-semester questionnaires to understand the participants' interests, learning styles, and perceived English proficiency. Instead of using speaking tasks solely for formal assessment, the participants were encouraged to actively engage in various speaking tasks and evaluate their learning progress through self-assessment, peer assessment, and instructor's feedback. The study demonstrated a gradual and continuous process of implementing classroom assessment through various pedagogical tasks while considering various contextual and learner factors. Overall, it applied the ecological perspective to classroom assessment focusing on collecting, analyzing, and implementing task-based assessment practices.

Research Question 1 focused on the participants' perceived gains in speaking proficiency through task-based instruction and assessment. Overall, Korean EFL pre-service teachers expressed satisfaction toward their increased speaking proficiency and positively evaluated how the pedagogical tasks reflected real-life communicative situations. This was evidenced by both the questionnaires and the focus group interview data. When considering differences based on participants' majors, the questionnaire results did not show noticeable differences in means, despite slight variations in standard deviations. However, potential patterns emerged from the qualitative data. For

example, comments related to a lack of confidence and negative emotions were often mentioned by non-English major students. In addition, during the focus group interviews, non-English major students reported facing encountering challenges with specific speaking tasks, such as creating an English vlog and completing a final speaking test. Nonetheless, these findings are difficult to generalize, calling for further research on patterns depending on the participants' majors. Research Question 2 delved into the engagement, learner, contextual factors that mediated the participants' engagement with the pedagogical and assessment practices. The findings revealed the complex and dynamic learning ecology of Korean EFL pre-service teachers. Successful classroom assessment requires learners' active engagement with meaningful learning tasks that promote learning and learners can monitor their progress in relation to learning criteria in the process of receiving appropriate and individualized feedback (Carless 2007). The participants reported limited previous assessment experiences, primarily involving monologic speaking tests where memorizing a script was key, which led to a lack of opportunities for interactive English speaking. In addition, they expressed strong opinions toward the university entrance exam, resulting in diminished motivation and restricted language learning experiences. Despite these previous experiences, the participants demonstrated a keen awareness of the educational values of various assessment activities. For example, they viewed peer assessment not just as a grading tool, but as a valuable learning experience and an opportunity to learn from their peers.

According to the pre-semester questionnaire administered at the beginning of the semester, the participants expressed various emotions related to English speaking, including anxiety and shame, regardless of their perceived language proficiency levels. Although the participants reported that the task-based instruction and assessment practices helped alleviate anxiety and gain confidence in English speaking, concerns regarding the direction of English learning in relation to their professional development as pre-service teachers was expressed. Another significant factor is the wider sociocultural influence of the university entrance exam on the motivation, interests, and learning styles of Korean EFL pre-service teachers regarding English. Since many participants reported learning English as a subject rather than a language, focusing on receptive language skills to prepare for the university entrance exam, they expressed unfamiliarity with English speaking and completing real-life speaking tasks. Especially in the context of EFL pre-service teachers, as indicated in the data, they undergo a shift in identity from student to teacher. This added contextual dimension of Korean EFL pre-service teachers necessitates careful implementation of localized task-based instruction and assessment. Overall, a broader spectrum of contextual and learner factors needs to be further examined and understood to create meaningful educational environments where pre-service teachers themselves facilitate the use of pedagogical tasks and assessment.

The ecological assessment perspective employed in this study significantly contributed to understanding how pre-service teachers interacted with a localized task-based classroom. Following the principles of classroom assessment, this study conceptualized assessment as an ongoing process occurring continuously, allowing for moment-to-moment evaluation (Turner 2012). The pre-service teachers were viewed as active participants in their own learning, each with unique characteristics and learning needs. The concept of Language Assessment Ecology broadened the interpretation of "contexts" beyond immediate classroom contexts to include sociocultural and temporal factors. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the unique contextual and learner factors influencing pre-service English teachers in Korea. Additionally, this model provided a structured framework for categorizing and conceptualizing the learners' experiences in the task-based classroom. It is important to note that the engagement, learner, and contextual dimensions were not exclusive to each other. Rather, they interacted in a holistic manner. Therefore, considering these dimensions collectively is essential for the comprehensive understanding of the complex and dynamic ecology of pre-service teachers' experiences.

Limitations of the study should be acknowledged. Firstly, the voluntary nature of participation may have resulted in a bias toward participants who were highly motivated to learn English, potentially skewing the data towards more positive responses. Despite efforts to include the participants with varying levels of motivation, this possibility should be recognized. Secondly, the participants were largely familiar with studying English for the university entrance exam and receptive English skills. This might have influenced their experiences and perceptions of the task-based language classroom. Although this study designed a localized TBLT class to accommodate various English learning styles, further attention to the challenges faced by diverse learners is necessary. To this end, ways in which pre-service teachers' majors influence self-efficacy beliefs as English teachers need further examination. Pre-service primary school teachers in Korea are required to teach English in English regardless of their majors. This requirement can influence their perceived confidence in English speaking and self-efficacy as teachers and this area needs further research. Thirdly, the lack of experimental design and control over external factors that the participants had with regard to English learning limits the generalizability of the findings. Based on these limitations, future research is warranted. To further explain the findings of this study, ways in which a localized task-based language classroom influences language development, including fluency and complexity. In addition, the development and validation of various assessment materials (e.g., individualized rubrics, several feedback sessions) can enhance meaningful classroom assessment practices. The components of LAE also require further validation. Given the scope of this study, not all aspects of LAE were explicated with cross-validated data. Additional research is necessary to theoretically and empirically explain the multi-layered contextual and learner dimensions in the EFL pre-service teacher context.

The findings of this study offer several implications for pre-service teacher education. Firstly, it is crucial to recognize the diverse contextual variables that impact pre-service primary teachers' English proficiency. Understanding these variables is essential for providing appropriate support to help them improve English proficiency. The learners expressed concern toward English speaking in general, as well as teaching English in English. Continued support for English proficiency development in pre-service teacher education through various real-life speaking tasks is necessary. Balancing between English language support and content knowledge for English education might be a key to addressing this challenge. Secondly, this study highlights the importance of timely and personalized feedback in enhancing pre-service teachers' English proficiency. The participants found such feedback valuable. Therefore, deliberate assessment practices along with personalized feedback needs to be incorporated into pre-service teacher education curriculum. Given that participants' previous assessment experiences were quite limited, this study suggests the need for a broader range of assessment experiences to develop pre-service teachers' assessment literacy. Utilizing various assessment practices can enrich their understanding of assessment and its role in teaching and learning.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate interplay of engagement, learner, and contextual factors in the development of speaking proficiency among pre-service English teachers in a localized task-based classroom. By employing the framework of Language Assessment Ecology, valuable insights into the complex dynamics of task-based teaching and assessment practices were gained. The findings emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing the diverse variables to effectively support pre-service teachers in their professional development. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue exploring innovative approaches that can better prepare pre-service teachers for their future roles.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Level: Tertiary

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Name: _____ Major: _____

Note: Your responses to the questions below do not influence the course grade at all.

Self-assessment of English proficiency	
I am confident in English grammar.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
I am confident in reading in English.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
I am confident in listening in English.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
I am confident in English pronunciation.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
I am confident in speaking in English.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
I am confident in writing in English.	Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Confident
Please elaborate on your self-assessment of your English proficiency with concrete reasons.	

★ Please describe your interest in learning English. Please be specific.
★ Please list specific English learning strategies that have been helpful to you. Please be specific.
★ Please set a concrete goal that you aim to achieve in this class. (I will ask the same question at the end of the semester)

Post-semester self-reflection	
I think I put enough effort in class participation.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I think the class contributed to improving my English speaking.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I think the instructor's feedback facilitated improvement in English speaking.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I think the pedagogical and assessment tasks in this class were helpful and relevant in relation to real-life communicative situations.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I think this class alleviated my anxiety regarding English speaking.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I think I gained confidence in English speaking through the pedagogical and assessment tasks in this class.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
★ Please elaborate on your responses to any of the questions above using concrete examples (e.g., particularly helpful speaking tasks, challenges, your effort, class participation).	
★ Please provide feedback on this class (e.g., areas that can be changed).	

Appendix B: Example focus-group interview questions

1. Please reflect on your experiences in this class and provide concrete examples.
2. To what extent do you think your experiences in this class differed from or similar to your previous English learning experiences? Please provide concrete examples.
3. Can you describe the most helpful and challenging pedagogical activities? Also, please describe any difficulties or challenges that you encountered with completing these activities.
4. Reflecting on your experiences, what aspects of your English proficiency do you think have changed? (e.g., proficiency, attitude, motivation)
5. Do you have any plans to continue studying English after this semester?