

Assessment Competencies for Primary School English Teachers in China: Policy Evolution, Theoretical Foundations, and a Localized Framework

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i4/26511>

Published Online: 06 October 2025

Abstract

Since the early 21st century, primary school English education in China has shifted toward competence-based reform. The *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Assessment in the New Era* (Ministry of Education of China, 2020) and the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (2022 Edition) (Ministry of Education of China, 2022) highlight teachers' assessment competence as a key support for policy implementation. Yet existing studies show gaps: international models lack contextual adaptability, domestic research often focuses on single dimensions, and a systematic framework integrating knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) is absent. Strengthening assessment competence is not only essential for ensuring the success of curriculum reform but also for promoting fair, developmental, and competence-oriented learning outcomes for millions of primary school students. This paper, through policy text analysis and theoretical review, examines the evolution, foundations, and localization of assessment competence for primary school English teachers. Findings reveal three policy stages—basic tool orientation (2001–2012), preliminary competence definition (2012–2020), and competence orientation (2020–present)—reflecting a shift from single-skill emphasis to exam-oriented integration and then to developmental orientation. Grounded in Competence Theory and the Iceberg Model, a three-dimensional,

fourteen-element localized framework is proposed to provide clear benchmarks for teachers, practical guidance for professional training, and policy references for education authorities.

Keywords: Assessment Competencies, Primary School English Teachers, Policy Evolution, Knowledge–skills–Attitudes (KSA), Localized Framework

Introduction

As a core subject in China's compulsory education, English has undergone continuous revisions to its assessment system in line with broader curriculum reform. In this process, teachers' assessment competence has become increasingly central: it determines not only the accuracy of measuring students' performance but also the effectiveness of fostering their core competencies, such as language ability, cultural awareness, thinking skills, and learning capacity. Developing sound assessment competence is therefore a prerequisite for ensuring the success of curriculum reform and for addressing the long-standing imbalance between examination-driven practices and competency-oriented goals (Li & Zhang, 2024).

The *Outline of the Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (2001) emphasized that assessment should not only measure academic achievement but also support the development of students' potential, though it did not specify requirements for teachers' assessment competence. The *Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers* (2012) later identified "assessment competence" as part of professional competence but reduced it largely to technical skills such as test design, overlooking the roles of knowledge and attitudes. The *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Assessment* (2020) explicitly criticized the dominance of score-based evaluation and required teachers to adopt scientific assessment concepts and diversified methods, positioning assessment competence as central to reform.

The *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (2022 Edition) further advanced this agenda by integrating teaching, learning, and assessment. It called on teachers to focus on core competencies—language ability, cultural awareness, thinking skills, and learning capacity—and to embed assessment throughout instruction. Despite these policy aspirations, empirical studies show that many primary school English teachers continue to rely on summative tools such as unit tests and final examinations. Few teachers have received systematic training in assessment competence, and misconceptions persist, such as equating spontaneous classroom questioning with formative assessment (Liu & Li, 2020). At the same time, international frameworks tend to emphasize knowledge and skills but seldom incorporate China's specific policy requirement of core competence assessment or address the age-specific characteristics of language learning at the primary level (Zhou & Lin, 2025). The resulting tension between high policy expectations, limited teacher competence, and insufficiently localized models underscores the need for a context-specific framework.

Existing research on teacher assessment competence in China either borrows international models without adequate adaptation or focuses narrowly on single dimensions, leaving a gap in localized frameworks aligned with Chinese policy and the realities of primary education (Tan et al., 2023; Zhou & Lin, 2025). By grounding the analysis in policy evolution and competence theory, this paper aims to construct a three-dimensional framework of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The significance of this paper is twofold: theoretically, it enriches international debates on assessment competency by providing an example of

localization in a non-Western context; practically, it benefits multiple stakeholders. For teachers, it offers clearer benchmarks and strategies for improving classroom assessment; for teacher education institutions, it informs the design of professional development programs; for policymakers, it provides a framework to translate curriculum standards into measurable teacher competencies. Ultimately, the framework seeks to enhance students' learning experiences by ensuring that assessment serves as a tool for growth rather than merely a means of selection.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the overarching question:

How can a localized framework of assessment competence for primary school English teachers in China be constructed, drawing on the evolution of national policy requirements and supported by relevant theoretical perspectives?

To explore this, the paper considers three sub-questions:

1. How has policy on teachers' assessment competence evolved across different phases of curriculum reform, and what requirements have been emphasized in each phase?
2. What theoretical perspectives underpin the construction of teachers' assessment competence, and what elements of international models require localization in accordance with the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* (Ministry of Education of China, 2022)?
3. What dimensions and specific elements should be included in a localized framework of assessment competence for primary school English teachers in China?

Policy Evolution of Primary School English Teachers' Assessment Competence in China

Phase 1: Basic Tool Phase (2001–2012) – Assessment Competence as a Technical Skill

The Outline of the Basic Education Curriculum Reform (2001) marked the inclusion of English as a compulsory subject from Grade 3 onwards, emphasizing that assessment should not only measure academic achievement but also identify and support students' potential. Nevertheless, the policy discourse at this stage still positioned assessment primarily as a means of testing learning outcomes, and teachers' assessment competence was largely equated with the ability to use basic testing tools. Similarly, the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (2001 Edition) (Ministry of Education of China, 2001) highlighted the assessment of students' language knowledge and skills but made little reference to broader competencies such as cultural awareness or critical thinking. Requirements for teachers' assessment knowledge and attitudes were absent, and assessment was mainly reduced to vocabulary checks or written tests.

This "instrumental orientation" was also evident in teacher training and classroom practice. Before 2012, professional development for primary school English teachers in China focused heavily on technical aspects, such as exam paper design and score calculation, with limited attention to formative assessment (Liu & Li, 2020). Training was largely delivered in the form of theoretical lectures, offering little practical guidance for designing assessment tasks suitable for young learners. In practice, many teachers—especially in rural areas—directly equated assessment with summative examinations, assuming that the ability to produce test papers and grade them accurately represented assessment competence. Classroom questioning was often reduced to routine vocabulary checks, reflecting a limited

understanding of assessment's role in supporting learning motivation and development (Chen, 2024).

This narrow, skill-based conception also neglected important dimensions of assessment competence, such as purpose and ethics. Teachers generally lacked awareness of how formative assessment connects to student achievement, or how assessment practices should safeguard learners' self-esteem. Common practices included publicly ranking students or labeling them by test scores, which conflicted with later policy calls for developmental assessment and diverged from international perspectives such as "assessment for learning" (Wang, 2025).

Phase 2: Preliminary Definition Phase (2012–2020) – Assessment Competence as Knowledge and skill

The *Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial Implementation)* (Ministry of Education of China, 2012) systematically defined teachers' assessment competence for the first time, classifying it into the "incentive and assessment" field of the "professional competence" dimension. It required teachers to master diversified assessment methods and use assessment to improve teaching. At the same time, in the "educational and teaching knowledge" part of the "professional knowledge" dimension, it clearly stated that teachers need to understand the basic methods of primary school education assessment, marking the expansion of assessment competence from "Technical skill" to a two-dimensional structure of knowledge and skill.

However, there were significant limitations: the knowledge dimension only covered general assessment methods and did not refine assessment requirements for "language skills" and "cultural awareness" in combination with the English subject; in addition, "professional concepts and ethics" (corresponding to the "attitude" category) were not linked to assessment competence, lacking guidance on in-depth elements such as the "student-centered" assessment concept and assessment ethics.

Policy initiatives during this period reinforced the emphasis on assessment competence but failed to resolve these limitations. For example, *the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Construction of Teachers in the New Era* (Ministry of Education of China, 2018) stressed the need to improve teachers' assessment competence and to position teachers as "guides for student growth". However, when implemented at the local level, training often retained a strong skill-oriented bias. Programs for primary school English teachers in 2019 continued to focus on paper analysis, difficulty index calculation, and test design techniques, while modules on formative assessment or integration of assessment principles into language teaching remained marginal (Liu & Li, 2020). Assessment of training outcomes similarly emphasized test-paper construction rather than assessing teachers' conceptual understanding or assessment competency.

Consequently, teachers became increasingly proficient in technical tasks such as test design and grading but often lacked the ability to apply assessment knowledge to support competency-oriented instruction. Misunderstandings persisted, with many teachers unsure of how to align assessment with the development of students' language competence and

thinking skills (Shao & Chen, 2021). These shortcomings created practical barriers to the deeper reform agenda introduced after 2020.

Phase 3: Competence-Oriented Phase(2020–Present)–Assessment Competence as Knowledge, Skill, and Attitude

The *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Assessment in the New Era* (Ministry of Education of China, 2020) marked a turning point in the policy discourse on assessment competence. For the first time, it explicitly incorporated assessment concepts and values into competence requirements, calling on teachers to establish scientific assessment beliefs, adopt diversified methods, and strengthen formative assessment. It also rejected the “score-only” orientation, emphasizing assessment’s developmental role in supporting students’ holistic growth. Building on this, the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (2022 Edition) (Ministry of Education of China, 2020) advanced a model of “teaching–learning–assessment integration” and required teachers to focus on the four core competencies of English education—language ability, cultural awareness, thinking skills, and learning capacity. Teachers were expected to master both the knowledge and methods of competence-based assessment and to integrate them throughout classroom practice.

This policy phase can be characterized as competence-oriented and three-dimensional. In terms of knowledge, teachers were required to understand how to evaluate students’ performance on core competencies, such as assessing cultural awareness through cross-cultural role plays or critical thinking through problem-solving tasks in English. In terms of skills, emphasis was placed on consistency between teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as on the practical ability to design formative assessment tasks suited to young learners—for example, using matching card games to assess vocabulary mastery or learning portfolios to track progress. In terms of attitude, teachers were required to adopt a student-centered orientation, respect individual differences, and reject single-standard assessment.

Together, these policy texts signaled the consolidation of assessment competence as a comprehensive construct encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitude. They provide not only normative expectations but also a policy-driven rationale for developing a localized framework of assessment competence for primary school English teachers in China (Tan et al., 2023).

Summary and Implications of Policy Evolution

An examination of policy evolution across the three phases reveals three core characteristics of how primary school English teachers’ assessment competence has been conceptualized in China. First, the dimensional structure has expanded from a single skill in 2001 to the three-dimensional model of knowledge, skill, and attitude in 2022, reflecting a conceptual shift from instrumental operation to comprehensive literacy. Second, the policy orientation has shifted from an instrumental focus on testing academic performance to a developmental emphasis on fostering students’ core competencies, transforming the role of assessment from selection to education. Third, policy requirements have evolved from broad statements to more specific and operationalized indicators of core competence assessment, offering clearer guidance for classroom practice.

These characteristics not only mirror the broader trajectory of educational assessment reform in China but also define the policy parameters for constructing a localized framework of assessment competence. In particular, any framework must align with the core requirements articulated in the 2022 Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of China, 2022) and the Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Assessment in the New Era (Ministry of Education of China, 2020).

Theoretical Foundations of Assessment Competence

McClelland's Competence Theory (1973)

McClelland's *Testing for Competence Rather Than for Intelligence* (1973) revolutionized conceptions of professional competence by challenging the dominance of intelligence and ability testing. He argued that conventional measures could not adequately predict job performance and instead defined competence as "an individual's underlying characteristic that is causally related to effective or superior performance" (McClelland, 1973). This definition shifted attention from innate traits and academic qualifications to observable behaviors and underlying attributes that drive success. Competence, in his view, is multidimensional, encompassing not only knowledge and skills but also values, attitudes, and motivational factors. In educational contexts, this means that effective English teachers require not only subject knowledge but also practical assessment skills and positive professional attitudes that together enhance instructional quality.

Spencer & Spencer's Iceberg Competence Model (1993)

Building on McClelland's work, Spencer and Spencer (1993) proposed the Iceberg Competence Model (Figure 1). The model distinguishes between five categories: motivation, traits, self-concept (attitudes and beliefs), knowledge, and skills. Knowledge and skills, which are observable and trainable, form the visible portion "above the waterline." For example, teachers may acquire assessment knowledge and skills—such as formative assessment strategies and rubric design—through professional training (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In contrast, motivation, traits, and self-concept constitute the "submerged" components that are less visible but crucial for sustained performance. Empirical studies demonstrate the importance of these deep elements: teachers with high mastery goals foster stronger student support and engagement (Butler & Shibaz, 2008), while those with strong professional motivation are more likely to analyze assessment data critically (Mannaee & Ryan, 2018). Conversely, negative teacher attitudes toward feedback can undermine students' motivation and perceived competence, limiting the effectiveness of formative assessment even when knowledge and skills are sufficient (Morgan, 2001).

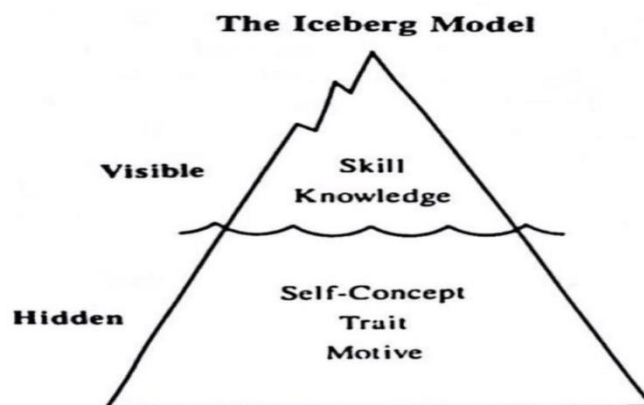


Figure 1: Spencer and Spencer's (1993) Iceberg model

Theoretical Adaptability and Localization

The relevance of McClelland's theory and the Iceberg Model to this paper lies in their ability to capture the multidimensional and hierarchical nature of teacher competence, which aligns with both Language Assessment Competency (LAC) research and Chinese policy requirements. First, they parallel the structure of LAC frameworks such as Davies' SKP and Inbar-Lourie's WWH, where principles and values regulate the application of knowledge and skills—akin to the “surface–deep” hierarchy in the Iceberg Model. Second, they resonate with Chinese policy texts, which emphasize subject knowledge, practical assessment skills, and student-centered attitudes (Ministry of Education of China, 2012; Ministry of Education of China, 2020; Ministry of Education of China, 2022). Third, they reveal the implicit drivers of assessment quality: LAC research has highlighted identity and ethical awareness as critical to teacher practice (Taylor, 2013; Looney et al., 2018), dimensions that are explicitly addressed by the Iceberg Model's deep-seated categories.

In sum, McClelland's Competence Theory and the Iceberg Model provide a solid theoretical foundation for constructing a framework of assessment competence. They not only integrate the multidimensionality, hierarchy, and dynamics emphasized in LAC but also bridge policy expectations with the practical needs of primary school English teachers in China.

Core Content and Limitations of International Assessment Competence Models

Xu & Brown's TALiP Framework (2016)

Xu and Brown's (2016) Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP) framework represents one of the most comprehensive attempts to conceptualize teacher assessment competence in a practice-oriented manner. Drawing on an extensive review of assessment literature and professional standards from 1985 to 2015, TALiP was designed to capture the multifaceted knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers require to conduct meaningful classroom assessment. Its pyramid structure situates knowledge as the foundation, upon which skills and attitudes are built, underscoring the principle that effective practice depends on both conceptual understanding and professional identity.

At the knowledge level, TALiP delineates seven types of assessment-related knowledge. These include: (1) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which allows teachers to link subject content with instructional strategies (Shulman, 1986); (2) knowledge of purposes, content, and methods, which enables the selection of appropriate formative or summative approaches

aligned with instructional goals (Black & Wiliam, 1998); (3) scoring knowledge, necessary for designing reliable rubrics and ensuring fairness; (4) feedback knowledge, emphasizing timely and constructive responses that foster student learning; (5) interpretation and communication of results, facilitating effective dialogue with students, parents, and administrators; (6) student involvement in assessment, encouraging practices such as peer and self-assessment that promote learner autonomy; and (7) assessment ethics, which require confidentiality, respect, and fairness in practice. Together, these categories provide a rich map of what teachers should know to implement principled and transparent assessment.

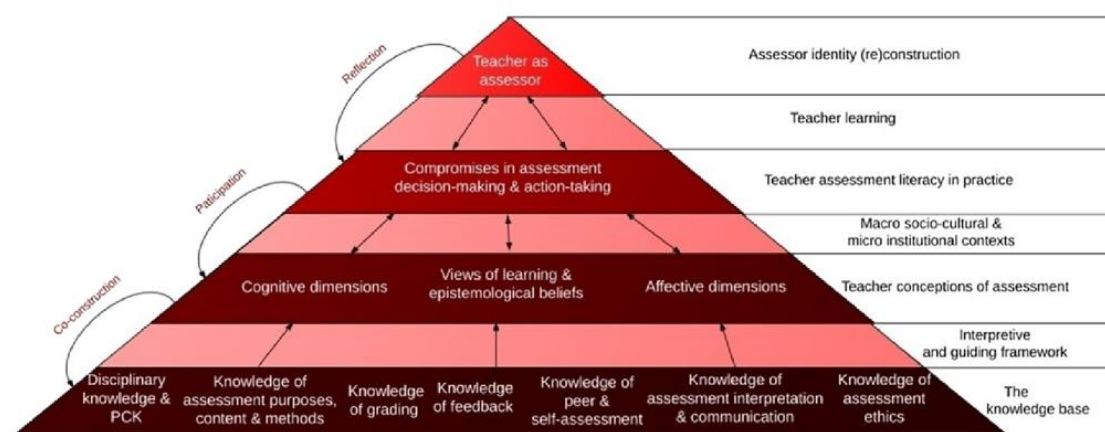


Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework of Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (Xu and Brown 2016)

In terms of skills, the framework stresses teachers' capacity to connect assessment, teaching, and learning in an integrated cycle. Rather than treating assessment as a discrete or terminal event, TALiP encourages ongoing classroom-based practices such as quizzes, group activities, or observational checklists that feed directly into instructional adjustment (Stiggins, 2010; Gratiana, 2024). This emphasis on dynamic assessment highlights the role of teachers not only as "test administrators" but as reflective practitioners capable of leveraging evidence for student development.

The attitudinal dimension adds an equally important layer. Xu and Brown (2016) argue that without self-directed awareness and strong assessor identity, teachers are unlikely to consistently apply their knowledge and skills in transformative ways. Self-directed awareness fosters critical reflection and innovation in assessment practices, while assessor identity anchors assessment as a core responsibility of teaching rather than a peripheral task.

Despite its theoretical comprehensiveness, TALiP faces notable limitations in the Chinese primary school English context. First, its skill descriptions are general and do not address the specific challenges of assessing young learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities, which require age-sensitive, engaging tasks. Second, TALiP was not designed with China's competency-based reform in mind and therefore does not explicitly integrate the four core competencies—language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability—outlined in the 2022 Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of China, 2022). Third, while assessment ethics are acknowledged, TALiP does not sufficiently consider the socio-cultural pressures of high-stakes testing in China, which can distort classroom practices.

In sum, TALiP provides a robust and widely recognized conceptual base for understanding teacher assessment literacy, but its generalist orientation and lack of attention to local curricular and learner-specific demands necessitate adaptation before it can serve as a practical framework for Chinese primary school English teachers.

Giraldo's Language Assessment Competence Framework (2018)

Building on earlier research in language assessment literacy (e.g., Brindley (2001); Davies (2008); Fulcher (2010, 2012); Inbar-Lourie (2008, 2013); Malone (2013); Scarino (2013)), Giraldo (2018) proposed a three-dimensional framework of knowledge, skills, and principles designed specifically for language teachers (see Figure 3). Its contribution lies in highlighting the language-specific and technical nature of assessment, offering a clearer account of what teachers need to know and do to design valid and meaningful assessment tasks.

The knowledge dimension stresses awareness of applied linguistics, assessment theory, and the local assessment context. This ensures that teachers understand not only constructs such as validity and reliability but also how contextual factors—curriculum requirements, institutional policies, and sociocultural expectations—shape assessment practices.

The skills dimension is the most distinctive aspect of the framework, encompassing four interrelated abilities that directly shape classroom practice. Teachers are expected to demonstrate instructional skills, integrating assessment into daily teaching so that evidence of learning informs pedagogical adjustment. They also require task design skills, creating valid and age-appropriate activities—such as role-plays, oral interviews, or picture-based writing prompts—that capture learners' communicative competence. In addition, measurement skills enable teachers to apply basic item analysis and interpret results responsibly, thereby supporting data-informed decisions without requiring advanced statistical expertise. Finally, Giraldo stresses the importance of technological skills, including the use of digital platforms and applications to deliver, score, and analyze assessments, anticipating the trend of data-driven education (Schildkamp et al., 2021). For example, teachers may use apps such as English Dubbing to monitor learners' pronunciation accuracy and fluency through automated feedback, enabling more targeted guidance (Shao & Chen, 2021). Collectively, these skills shift teachers' role from test administrators to reflective practitioners who employ assessment as an integral component of language learning.

The principles dimension emphasizes teachers' awareness of and actions toward critical issues in language assessment, such as fairness, ethics, and equity. This ensures that assessment is not only technically valid but also socially responsible, protecting learners from bias and fostering equitable opportunities.

Despite its contributions, Giraldo's framework has limitations in the Chinese primary school English context. First, the "principles" dimension overlaps conceptually with attitudes, making constructs such as fairness difficult to translate into observable competences. Second, the framework does not explicitly incorporate the core competencies—language ability, cultural awareness, thinking skills, and learning ability—highlighted in China's "English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)" (MOE, 2022). Third, it lacks detailed guidance for designing age-appropriate tasks that align with the motivational and cognitive characteristics of young learners.

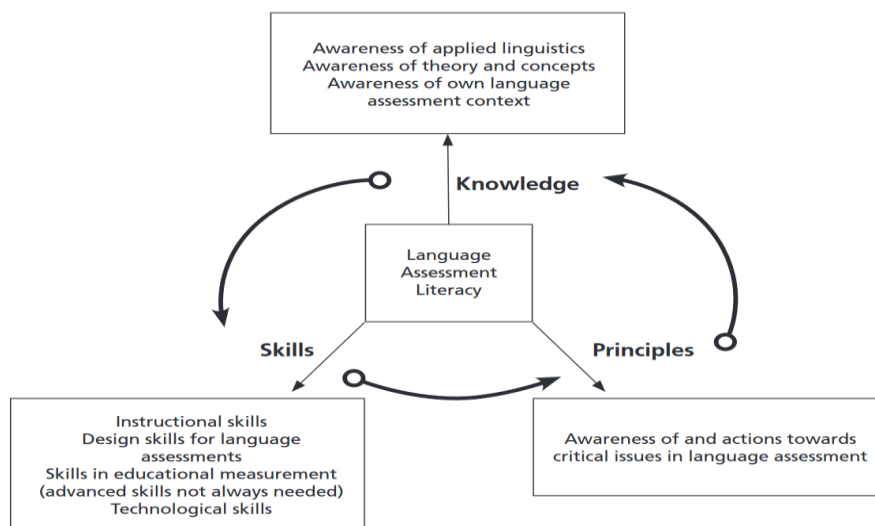


Figure 3: Giraldo's (2018) Language Assessment Competency Framework

In summary, Giraldo's framework makes an important contribution by specifying language-related knowledge and skills and by highlighting the role of technology, but its application in China requires localization and expansion to align with competency-based policy requirements and to address the practical challenges of primary school English education.

Taylor's Assessment Competencies Profile for Language Teachers (2013)

Through in-depth analysis of different stakeholders, Taylor (2013) constructed a language assessment literacy framework containing eight types of elements (see Figure 4). Among them, assessment theory knowledge provides a theoretical basis for teachers to carry out assessment, enabling them to understand the principles and application scope of different assessment methods; personal beliefs have a profound impact on teachers' assessment behaviors. For example, teachers' beliefs about students' development potential will affect the focus and methods of their assessment; cultural values are reflected in the fair treatment of students from different cultural backgrounds and the use of a diversified assessment perspective in assessment (Taylor, 2013).

The core contribution of this framework is that it lists "personal beliefs/attitudes" as an independent dimension for the first time, emphasizing its key driving role in teachers' assessment practices. Teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes directly shape their understanding and choice of assessment purposes and methods, as well as their specific behaviors in implementing assessment in the classroom (Zhou & Lin, 2025). For example, teachers who hold the belief that "assessment should promote students' all-round development" will pay more attention to students' learning process and efforts in the assessment process, rather than just focusing on the final test scores.

The framework's significance has been supported by empirical validation. Kremmel and Harding's (2019) large-scale international study of 1,086 stakeholders confirmed the centrality of attitudes: they found that personal beliefs correlated strongly ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) with fair assessment practices, and nearly 80% of respondents identified attitudes as the most decisive factor in ethical assessment behavior. This evidence strengthens Taylor's claim that

teacher competence cannot be reduced to technical proficiency alone but must account for dispositions and values.

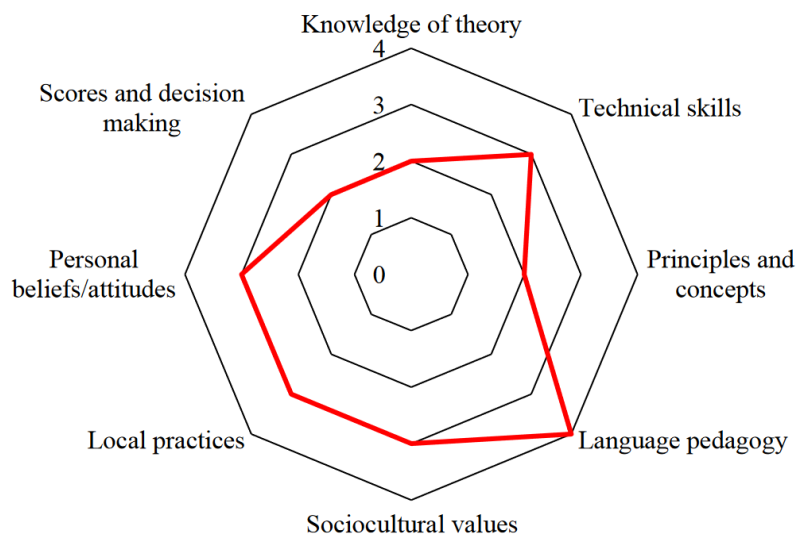


Figure 4: Assessment Competencies Profile for Language Teachers (Taylor, 2013)

Despite its pioneering role, the profile presents limitations when applied to primary school English education in China. First, the overlap among dimensions—for example, between “teaching methods” and “assessment principles”—creates ambiguity and reduces practical operability. Second, the framework lacks explicit alignment with competency-based assessment goals, such as cultural awareness and thinking skills outlined in China’s 2022 Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of China, 2022). Third, it provides little concrete guidance for young learner assessment, overlooking developmental and motivational considerations crucial for primary education.

In sum, Taylor’s framework enriched the field by elevating the importance of teachers’ attitude and beliefs in assessment competence, but its conceptual overlaps and lack of contextual specificity highlight the need for a more streamlined and localized model to guide Chinese primary school English teachers.

Localization Adaptation of International Models

Building on McClelland’s Competence Theory and Spencer and Spencer’s Iceberg Model, and considering the requirements of the 2022 Curriculum Standards (MOE, 2022), this paper adapts international frameworks to the Chinese primary English context across three dimensions:

In the knowledge dimension, the adaptation expands Xu and Brown’s (2016) TALiP framework by addressing gaps in core competence assessment and young learner applicability. Since the original framework does not explicitly include elements of core competence, this paper supplements assessment foci aligned with the 2022 *Curriculum Standards*, such as evaluating cultural awareness through narrating traditional Chinese festivals in English and assessing thinking skills through story continuation tasks. To account for the developmental characteristics of young learners, “subject and teaching content knowledge” is refined into subject boundary knowledge (e.g., the 1,200 core vocabulary items and basic grammar

prescribed by the curriculum) and age-appropriate pedagogical knowledge (e.g., using manipulative-based strategies to introduce plural forms). At the same time, English-specific features are strengthened by defining assessment focal points for listening, speaking, reading, and writing (e.g., emphasizing sound-linking recognition in listening), thus preventing assessment from being reduced to a generic academic test.

In the skills dimension, drawing on Giraldo's (2018) Language Assessment Competence Framework, priority is given to ensuring alignment between teaching, learning, and assessment, supplemented by localized practices. In accordance with the "teaching–learning–assessment integration" principle of the 2022 *Curriculum Standards*, task design skills are strengthened to ensure consistency between instructional objectives and assessment activities (e.g., using descriptions of daily routines to assess mastery of the simple present tense). For younger learners, game-based and visualized tasks—such as word card matching or learning growth trees—are introduced to increase engagement and motivation. In addition, technological skills are localized, with explicit strategies for the use of digital tools, such as employing the English Dubbing application to assess oral English or Wenjuanxing (a Chinese online survey platform) to conduct online tests. These adaptations not only align with China's digital education strategy but also address the challenge of assessment efficiency in large-class contexts.

In the attitude dimension, integrating Taylor's (2013) emphasis on personal beliefs with Xu and Brown's (2016) focus on self-awareness, the adaptation clarifies motivational and value-oriented elements in line with policy orientation. Policy alignment awareness requires primary school English teachers to adopt student-centered, competence-oriented approaches and to reject the "only-score" mentality. Assessor identity awareness emphasizes embedding assessment design into lesson planning as a core professional responsibility. Finally, care for young learners is highlighted, advocating the use of motivational reinforcements such as positive verbal feedback or star stickers to sustain children's learning interest, consistent with the "interest first" principle of primary English education.

Construction of a Localized Framework for the Assessment Competence of Primary School English Teachers in China

Specific Content of the "Three-Dimensional and Fourteen-Element" Localized Framework

Drawing on McClelland's Competence Theory and Spencer and Spencer's Iceberg Model, as well as the contributions and limitations of international models (Xu & Brown, 2016; Giraldo, 2018; Taylor, 2013), this paper argues that the assessment competence of primary school English teachers (PSET) should be structured around the three dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitude. Combination with China's *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* (Ministry of Education of China, 2022) a "three-dimensional, fourteen-element" system was developed to capture the localized requirements of PSET' assessment competence. The content, theoretical foundation, and policy alignment of each element are as follows.

Knowledge Dimension

In Spencer and Spencer's (1993) model, knowledge represents the essential information base underpinning professional practice. The knowledge dimension in this paper is derived from the knowledge base of Xu & Brown's (2016) Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP)

framework, which is adapted to the context of primary school English teaching in China and aligned with the *2022 English Curriculum Standards* (Ministry of Education of China, 2022):

- (1) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK): entails mastery of curriculum-specified content and the ability to integrate it with age-appropriate instructional strategies (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022). For example, sensory-driven activities can be used to scaffold vocabulary learning for 8–12-year-olds.
- (2) Knowledge of Assessment Purposes, Content, and Methods: involves distinguishing formative from summative purposes, mapping content to core competencies, and applying age-appropriate approaches such as game-based tasks or portfolios (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022).
- (3) Scoring Knowledge: refers to proficiency in criterion-referenced rubrics (e.g., accuracy–fluency–completeness for oral English) and the ability to ensure scoring reliability and fairness (Xu & Brown, 2016; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011).
- (4) Feedback Knowledge: encompasses understanding feedback principles and applying strategies appropriate to learner age, such as symbolic feedback (stickers) for younger pupils and structured written comments for older learners (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022).
- (5) Knowledge of Assessment Interpretation and Communication: entails analyzing results from an English-specific perspective (e.g., linking listening errors to connected speech recognition) and communicating findings clearly to stakeholders without jargon (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022).
- (6) Knowledge of Student Participation in Assessment: reflects awareness of the value of self- and peer-assessment, and the use of age-appropriate strategies such as progress-tracking charts to develop learner autonomy (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022).
- (7) Assessment Ethics Knowledge: requires an understanding of ethical and legal standards, including privacy protection, equitable treatment, and accommodations for students with special needs, in line with the inclusive education mandate of the 2022 Standards (Xu & Brown, 2016; Ministry of Education of China, 2022).

Skill Dimension

Skills are defined by Spencer and Spencer (1993) as the abilities required to perform specific tasks. Based on Giraldo's (2018) framework, four skill elements are emphasized:

- (1) Teaching Skills: the capacity to design assessment-informed pedagogical strategies that enhance student learning outcomes.
- (2) Language Assessment Design Skills: the ability to construct varied and valid tasks targeting language competence and aligned with curricular objectives.
- (3) Educational Measurement Skills: competence in test development, statistical analysis (e.g., item difficulty, discrimination indices), and interpretation of results to inform teaching decisions.
- (4) Technical Skills: facility with digital platforms and data analysis tools for assessment purposes (Giraldo, 2018), such as using English Dubbing for oral fluency assessment or Wenjuanxing for online testing in large classes.

Attitude Dimension

Attitude correspond to self-concept in Spencer and Spencer's (1993) Iceberg Model, representing deep-seated orientations below the surface. Drawing on Xu and Brown (2016) and policy directives, three attitude elements are identified:

- (1) Self-Directed Awareness: the disposition to critically reflect on assessment practices, optimize strategies, and adapt to diverse instructional contexts (Xu & Brown, 2016).
- (2) Assessment Identity Awareness: recognition of the teacher's role as an "assessment designer," ensuring balanced attention to both skills and processes in English learning (Xu & Brown, 2016).
- (3) Policy Alignment Awareness: commitment to curriculum reform goals, including prioritizing competence over scores, adhering to student-centeredness, and contributing to the broader goal of fostering virtue through education (Ministry of Education of China, 2022).

Core Characteristics and Connection Value of the Element System

The "three-dimensional, fourteen-element" system constitutes a theoretically grounded and contextually adapted framework, with three defining features:

- (1) Theoretical anchoring: integrating McClelland's multidimensional competence theory with the Iceberg Model's surface-deep structure, thereby overcoming the superficial bias of some international models (e.g., Giraldo's limited treatment of attitude).
- (2) Policy alignment: ensuring that each element reflects the requirements of the 2022 Standards, including competence orientation, teaching-learning-assessment integration, digital education, and value-based goals.
- (3) Practical operability: translating abstract constructs into concrete strategies directly applicable to PSET' classroom contexts (e.g., age-appropriate feedback, large-class assessment strategies).

To present the structural logic and the interplay of the three dimensions more intuitively, Figure 5 depicts the localized 3D-14E framework. In this visualization, knowledge (seven elements) provides the cognitive foundation, skills (four elements) represent operational capacities, and attitude (three elements) constitute the motivational and value-driven orientation. Collectively, these dimensions form a coherent and practical framework of assessment competence tailored to the context of primary school English teachers in China.

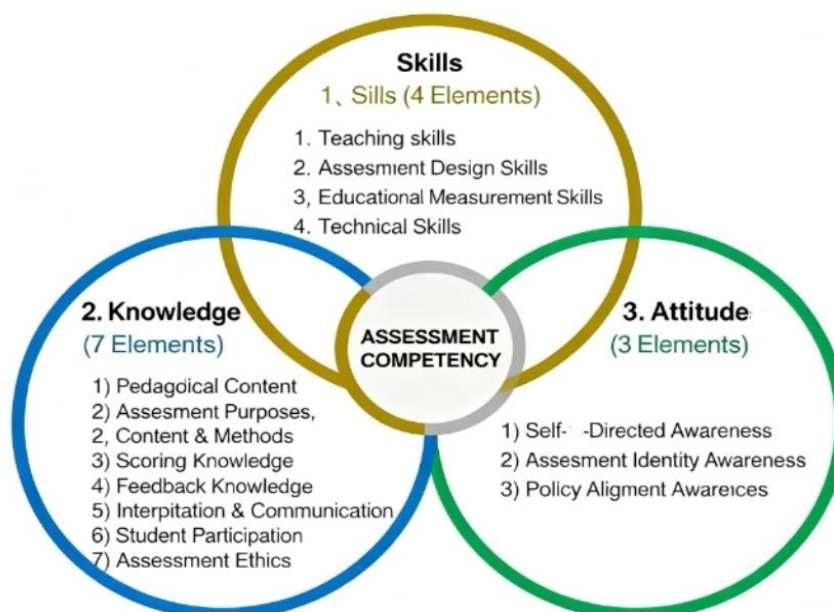


Figure 5: The localized three-dimensional, fourteen-element framework of assessment competency for primary school English teachers in China (3D-14E Framework).

Conclusions and Prospects

Conclusion

The evolution of primary school English teachers' assessment competence in China can be categorized into three phases: the Basic Tool Phase (2001–2012), the Preliminary Definition of Competence Phase (2012–2020), and the Competence-Oriented Phase (2020–present). Policy requirements over time exhibit three main characteristics: diversified dimensions, developmental orientation, and specificity. They have gradually evolved from focusing on single skills to a three-dimensional structure encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby delineating the core boundaries for the localized framework (Ministry of Education of China, 2001, 2012, 2020, 2022)

Theoretical foundations for the three-dimensional structure are provided by McClelland's Competence Theory (McClelland, 1973) and Spencer & Spencer's Iceberg Model (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Localization of international models necessitates the incorporation of three key elements aligned with the 2022 Curriculum Standards: core assessment knowledge in the knowledge dimension, teaching–learning–assessment consistency skills in the skill dimension, and policy alignment awareness in the attitude dimension (Xu & Brown, 2016; Giraldo, 2018).

The resulting "three-dimensional, fourteen-element" localized framework addresses cognitive, operational, and motivational levels. All elements are derived from policy interpretation and theoretical synthesis, balancing policy compliance (alignment with the 2022 Curriculum Standards), theoretical rigor (grounded in classic competence theories), and practical operability (elements can be concretely implemented). Collectively, these aspects form an interactive system, wherein deeper-level elements inform and support the implementation of surface-level practices.

Beyond theoretical construction, the significance of this paper lies in its multi-stakeholder benefits. For teachers, the framework provides a roadmap to enhance classroom assessment practice; for teacher education and training institutions, it offers a structured reference to design targeted professional development programs; for policymakers, it supplies measurable indicators to evaluate and guide reform implementation. Most importantly, by improving teachers' assessment competence, the framework ultimately benefits students—ensuring that assessment supports their holistic growth, fosters motivation, and aligns with the broader goals of competency-oriented education.

Limitations and Prospects

This paper constructs the framework based on policy text analysis and theoretical synthesis, but its structural validity and practical effectiveness have yet to be verified through large-scale empirical research. Future studies should empirically examine the necessity and practical applicability of these elements using mixed methods, such as surveys and in-depth interviews. For instance, exploratory factor analysis could assess whether the seven elements in the knowledge dimension form a coherent single factor (Xu & Brown, 2016).

Additionally, the current framework does not differentiate between the assessment competence of urban versus rural teachers or novice versus experienced teachers. Future research could refine the framework to include differentiated element lists tailored to specific groups. For example, low-tech assessment skills (e.g., conducting formative assessment without digital tools) could be emphasized for rural teachers (Harding & Kremmel, 2019), while foundational assessment knowledge could be prioritized for novice teachers, thereby enhancing the framework's applicability across diverse teaching context.

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