"I think I speak without hesitation": Learning-Oriented Assessment to Enhance English Oral Communication of Thai Pre-Service Teachers

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Article information	Abstract
	Learning-oriented assessments have been implemented in the English language classroom to maximize students' ability to acquire a language through their involvement in assessment processes. Nevertheless, empirical studies investigating the oral communication ability of students using learning-oriented assessments remain limited. This study aims to investigate the effects of a learning-oriented assessment on the English oral communication ability of Thai pre-service teachers and to explore their attitudes towards the model. Thus, the study employed a mixed-methods research design. The participants of the study were 60 first-year students divided into two groups: the control group (N = 30) and the experimental group (N = 30) were selected through convenience sampling. The data were collected for 10 weeks using an oral communication test, a questionnaire, and interview questions. The results of the test were analyzed using a paired sample t-test and an independent sample t-test. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In addition, the qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The quantitative results showed positively significant effects on the development of students' oral communication ability in the aspects of range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation, with a medium effect size. Additionally, the students positively reported the benefits of learning-oriented assessments as being helpful in improving their oral communication ability. Therefore, this study shows that learning-oriented assessments could serve as one of many alternative approaches to developing English oral communication ability.

INTRODUCTION

The growing importance of the English language in educational contexts is evident in Thailand. English proficiency is acknowledged as being key to success in education and the workplace (Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015). Despite the value vested in English, Thailand has failed to reach

global English standards, as reported in Education First (2023), where Thailand ranked 101 out of 113 countries. In addition, based on international TOEFL test mean scores, the Educational Test Service (ETS) showed Thailand ranking approximately 28th out of 30th in Asia in 2021 (Educational Testing Service, 2021). The reported mean score was 20 out of 30, which was one of the lowest in Asia. Moreover, according to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Thailand placed 30th out of 39 countries among top proficiency scores in 2022 (International English Language Testing System, 2022). In the speaking part, the mean score was 5.3 out of 9.0 – the lowest speaking score among 39 reported countries. While generalizations from the results should be made with caution, they might suggest that Thai learners struggled with all four skills of English, especially in oral communication ability. This implies that Thai students still need to improve their English ability, especially their oral communication ability to be successful in their education and future careers.

To address this need, a rigorous assessment is paramount to improve Thai learners' English ability. In Thailand, several institutions have emphasized summative assessments (Phongsirikul, 2018; Watson Todd, 2019; Watson Todd et al., 2021), which has lent little to no room for students to monitor and explore their strengths and weaknesses—that is, students lack real-time assessment results and feedback from teachers to track their own learning progress. While this is the case, several universities in various countries have adopted formative assessments, or assessments for learning, to promote meaningful learning such that the assessments reflect students' actual learning performances. Although these university contexts employ different assessment methods, it is crucial to articulate that the assessment methods both carry their benefits and shortcomings. To maximize the potentiality of formative assessments, it would be highly productive to integrate such assessments to help teachers and learners ensure more satisfying learning outcomes.

A viable choice among assessments for learning is that of learning-oriented assessment (henceforth, LOA). The conceptual framework of LOA plays an important role in the education field (Carless, 2015). It has been widely implemented in the field of English language teaching (e.g., Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016) as it helps the students maximize their ability to acquire a language through the involvement of assessments (Christison, 2018). Furthermore, teachers can also ensure progress in students' learning by utilizing various information from assessments. Therefore, LOAs are beneficial to both teachers and students in effectively ensuring that students' learning meet stated outcomes. Another important aspect of LOA is that students can monitor their own learning through feedback from themselves, their peers, and their teachers. Recent studies have showed the improvement of students' performance using LOA in reading (Viengsang & Wasanasomsithi, 2022), writing (Kim & Kim, 2017; Kim & Kim, 2021; Mak & Lee, 2014), and speaking (Hamp-Lyons, 2017; May et al., 2020; Wu & Miller, 2020). Even though LOA was implemented to enhance speaking skills through interaction, listening skills, which enable speakers to interact with interlocutors, were not highlighted. Consequently, research that highlights the implementation of LOA in integrated skills of speaking and listening, such as that of oral communication, remains scarce. This study finds this gap as an opportunity to examine the ways oral communication ability can be implemented in LOA. By doing so, the study can provide possible directions in incorporating LOA as an assessment tool in assessing oral communication ability.

In pursuing this direction, the study investigated the effects of LOA on pre-service teachers' oral communication ability and their attitudes towards the implementation of LOA in a public Thai university. Pre-service teachers were chosen as the main focus of the study since they are generally expected to speak English when teaching subjects such as science, social studies, and Thai. Under such expectation, the pre-service teachers are required to take a course aimed at improving their communication skills in English, consisting of written and oral communication. To assess their English ability, the teachers in this study need to take an in-house English proficiency test consisting of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Waluyo et al., 2024). The listening and reading parts consist of multiple-choice items, while the writing part involves composing a short essay related to academic and work environments. In addition, the speaking part requires test-takers to discuss two topics and answer questions based on academic and work contexts. More importantly, the in-house proficiency test is aligned with CEFR and has been validated for both validity and reliability prior to its implementation at the university under study. However, from the speaking section of the in-house proficiency test, it was found that the English oral communication ability of the pre-service teachers seemed to be at a lower-intermediate to intermediate level. Thus, in a holistic approach to teaching English oral communication, this study integrated LOA to examine both the performance development and perceptions of the pre-service teachers. In addition, such implementation may help teachers and educators in designing assessments that not only evaluate but also foster language learning, particularly in an EFL context like that of Thailand. Furthermore, exploring the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards LOA may help develop engagement and motivation in English language learning, ultimately improving both teaching practices and learning outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English oral communication ability

Oral communication forms the foundation of literacy. According to Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997), oral communication is a means of expressing one's thoughts and conveying meaning through spoken language. Importantly, Bailey (2005) illustrates that it is an aural/oral skill. They state that speaking is a productive skill that requires the production of utterances, one that is inextricably tied to listening—a receptive skill of oral communication. In other words, speaking includes both the act of hearing and the act of uttering through the use of language. Hence, oral communication is a combination of both speaking and listening (Brown & Lee, 2015). Rahman (2010) emphasizes oral communication as a skill that involves interaction. He also mentioned that oral communication ability comprises many elements such as the language used for communication, eye contact, body language, style, an understanding of the audience, the ability to adapt to the audience, active and reflexive listening skills, politeness, precision, conciseness, and so on. Using these elements in a conversation provides opportunities for listeners to create interactions. In addition, Sakulprasertsri (2014) defines oral communication ability as the capacity to effectively utilize spoken language in a variety of contexts while also adhering to shared sociocultural and pragmatic suppositions. Based on a review of these definitions, this study sees oral communication ability as the interaction of listening and

speaking skills that show the way to convey and express thoughts and ideas orally between a speaker and interlocutors in any circumstance effectively and appropriately.

Based on previous studies about oral communication, Thai university students have been struggling to achieve a communicative level of oral communication. Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009) indicated that the limited command of fundamental English vocabulary and grammar among Thai students, especially those with lower academic achievement, causes challenges in both sentence construction and conversational comprehension. Therefore, this could lead to miscommunications or misunderstandings. Moreover, Pinphet and Wasanasomsithi (2022) investigated the oral communication ability of university students using project-based blended learning with communication strategy instruction. Their findings revealed a significant improvement in students' oral communication abilities after the intervention. In addition, Phettongkam (2017) found that the three most frequently occurring types of errors found among Thai university students were misinformation, incorrect forms of words used, and incorrect word orders.

Even though there are a lot of alternative approaches to enhance oral communication ability, taking a holistic approach seems to be one that is effective for teaching oral communication because this approach allows teachers to teach systematically by following procedures and providing feedback for learning at the last step of the teaching in the model. It was first introduced by Goh and Burns (2012) as illustrated in Figure 1.
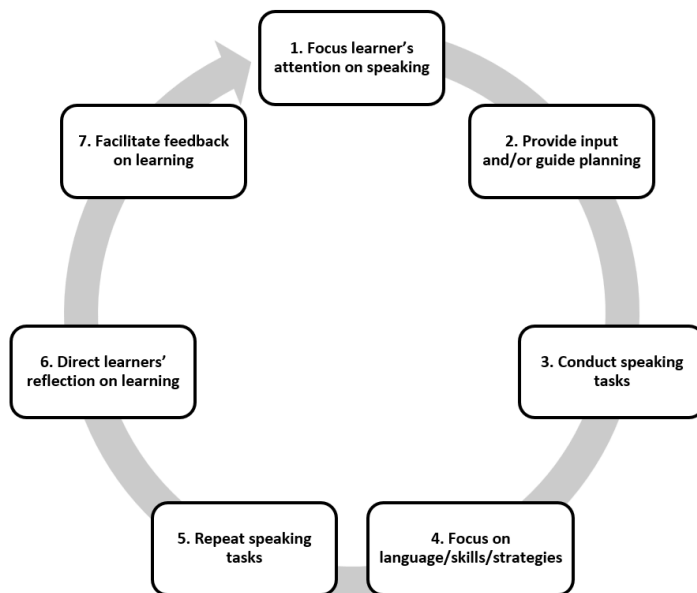

Figure 1 Teaching speaking cycle with a holistic approach (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 153)

The holistic approach consists of seven sequences. First, focusing a learner's attention on their speaking helps the learner develop their metacognitive skills. The teacher gives a prompt to the learners to set their goal of learning English oral communication and to prepare strategies to complete it. The second step is called 'providing input and/or guiding planning'. It involves providing various kinds of support including scaffolding with vocabulary, expressions, and

content to address learner problems during interactive conversations. In the third step of 'conducting speaking tasks', learners are given opportunities to conduct oral communication tasks which focus on fluency rather than accuracy. More importantly, this stage focuses on the meaning of communication. Next, the focus on language/skills/strategies aims to develop learners' accuracy and oral communication ability by introducing strategies as well as core skills for language use. Then, the step of 'repeating speaking or oral communication tasks' is to repeat the third stage to build learners' confidence by practicing selecting useful aspects from the fourth stage. After that, 'directing learners' reflection on learning' allows learners to evaluate what they have learned in the earlier stages. This can be done by the learners themselves, in pairs, or in small groups. Finally, the last step in the holistic approach focuses on the ways that teachers can provide students feedback on their performance to develop oral communication ability in the future.

This model enables students to develop their oral communication ability (Bangkom & Sukavatee, 2021). However, this model may not allow English language learners to develop their assessment expertise or involve students in the assessment process (i.e., the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as spot their room for improvement), as it only focuses on the development of their oral communication ability. To help enhance students' English oral communication and to develop expertise and involvement in assessment, students need to be able to monitor their own learning progress alongside the support and feedback they receive from peers and teachers regarding not only their improvements but also how they are in learning and producing the target language. Apart from the benefits of the model in developing oral communication ability, the emphasis on assessment remains limited. Thus, learning-oriented assessment was implemented in the instruction to ensure students' development of oral communication ability.

Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA)

According to Carless (2015), the LOA approach holds significant value in the field of education and has spread to the field of English language teaching (e.g., Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016). LOA assists students in maximizing their ability to acquire a language through the involvement of the assessment (Christison, 2018). In addition, students can have a productive learning experience by enhancing their involvement and motivation to achieve learning outcomes (Keppell & Carless, 2006). For teachers, it can help track progress in students' learning by utilizing the information from assessments. In other words, assessments can be used as evidence of students' learning based on what students can or cannot do in class as a reflection of learning outcomes. Consequently, it is beneficial to effectively ensure that students are meeting learning outcomes. More importantly, the students can monitor their own learning and performance through self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment through the utilization of both formative and summative assessments. In formative assessments, Santos and Ramírez-Ávila (2022) indicated that students would engage in their learning as a part of self-assessment. In comparison, Chien et al. (2020) suggested that learning experiences in the classroom were enhanced when students conducted peer-assessments. Teacher-assessments would also enhance students' English skills (Xu et al., 2021) through various constructive and corrective feedback. Moreover, summative assessments would play an important role when

teachers give scores to students' tasks. Consequently, LOA assists students in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and helps them see opportunities for improvement through their involvement in assessment.

Several LOA frameworks have been proposed in recent years. However, there are three prominent groups of researchers. The first framework is from Carless et al. (2006) and Carless (2015). It emphasizes the development of learning tasks and assessing tasks, as well as student involvement in assessing activities. The second is proposed by Purpura and Turner (2014) and Turner and Purpura (2016). It is primarily utilized for in-class observations and emphasizes the various, yet interrelated, dimensions of tasks, activities, and learners for which assessments can be conducted. The last framework (Jones & Saville, 2016) focuses on the design of learning and assessing tasks as well as the value of information gained from such tasks as evidence of summative and formative assessments. Additionally, this framework emphasizes the development and interaction of social, language, and professional skills Therefore, based on these considerations, LOA could be beneficial in various educational contexts. (Estaji & Safari, 2023; Viengsang & Wasanasomsithi, 2022). Furthermore, Zeng et al. (2018) highlights how LOA could be beneficial for teachers in helping them create differentiated instruction. That is, teachers could design and tailor their instruction to address the needs of students in groups and as individuals by allowing students to be involved in their learning by providing various support and practices. However, Estaji and Safari (2023) revealed that implementing LOA might be challenging when students' workload is taken into consideration. They explained that students might feel overwhelmed due to many assignments and heavy tasks. Therefore, they suggested that teachers should balance the activities they use with students.

Based on the three main frameworks of LOA, students participate in their learning by assessing their performances through identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as spotting their room for improvement. In so doing, LOAs create meaningful learning through self-assessment, peer-assessment, and instructor-assessment when doing tasks. Firstly, self-assessment helps promote autonomous learning (Little, 2005; Ratminingsih et al., 2017) because it allows students to engage and reflect on their learning (Santos & Ramírez-Ávila, 2022). Peer-assessments, in turn, helps students enhance their performance through engagement with their peers because they can learn through constructive reflection and increased time on assignments with more attention to work (Li et al., 2020). Lastly, teacher-assessment or 'teacher feedback' is the way that teachers can help students improve their language skills through constructive and corrective feedback (Konold et al., 2004; Sermsook et al., 2017).

Recent studies have showed student improvements in English language skills such as those in reading, writing, pronunciation, and speaking as a result of LOA implementation. Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi (2022) investigated the effects of a learning-oriented reading assessment model on Thai undergraduate students' reading ability. The results did not reveal statistically significant differences in test scores; however, qualitative data from learners' journals indicated that the model helped improve reading ability and other language skills. In addition, studies (Kim & Kim, 2017; Mak & Lee, 2014) highlighted that LOAs helped students improve their writing skill. In terms of enhancing pronunciation, Navaie (2018) investigated the impact of LOAs, specifically those from self-assessment and peer assessment techniques, on the

pronunciation learning of Iranian EFL learners. The findings yielded that LOAs had a positive effect on pronunciation learning and on knowledge retention. Furthermore, Almalki (2019) examined the use of LOAs for improving Saudi EFL learners' English speaking skills and critical thinking abilities, with results showing that learners' overall English language skills were significantly better when compared between pre-test and post-test . However, the study did not focus on teacher-assessments as well as aspects of listening skill. Thus, this present study aims to investigate the effects of LOA on Thai pre-service teachers' oral communication ability and their attitude towards the implementation of LOA.

The overview of learning-oriented oral communication assessment for this present research is illustrated in Figure 2. The sequences of oral communication instruction are based on the holistic approach proposed by Goh and Burns (2012) with the integration of LOA frameworks (Carless, 2015; Carless et al., 2006; Jones & Saville, 2016; Keppell & Carless, 2006; Purpura & Turner, 2014). In the first stage, the students in this study are required to prepare interactive and authentic oral communication tasks provided by a teacher. Moreover, they can also use their prior knowledge to prepare and set their goals for the tasks and communication. At this stage, the teacher designs a task for both instruction and assessment, while students can evaluate situations that may happen in the real world. In the second stage, the teacher provides them with language support, such as assistance on vocabulary and structures, as tools to prepare for communication. In the third stage, the students perform the tasks. In the fourth stage, the students monitor themselves by giving themselves feedback to develop their oral communication ability, which could be on areas such as range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation. The criteria used in this study was adapted from the rubric of the CEFR test (Council of Europe, 2018) because it shares the same test purpose assess non-native speakers of English in oral communication ability. In the fifth stage, the students conduct the tasks again. By re-conducting the tasks, they can practice assessing through monitoring and assessing their own performance. To conduct self-assessments, they need to learn to assess themselves using the aforementioned rubric. Moreover, comments and feedback from self-assessments can be applied to improve their oral communication ability. In the sixth stage, the students assess their performance again and give opportunities to their peers to provide feedback for their improvement. In the last stage, the teacher gives feedback to the students and provides opportunities to practice the tasks so that the students can prepare themselves for the real world. Therefore, they have an opportunity to interact, give, and receive feedback from peers and a teacher. To meet the objectives of the study, the following research questions were put forward:

1. What are the effects of learning-oriented assessment on the English oral communication ability of Thai pre-service teachers?

2. What is the attitude of Thai pre-service teachers towards learning-oriented assessment of English oral communication ability?
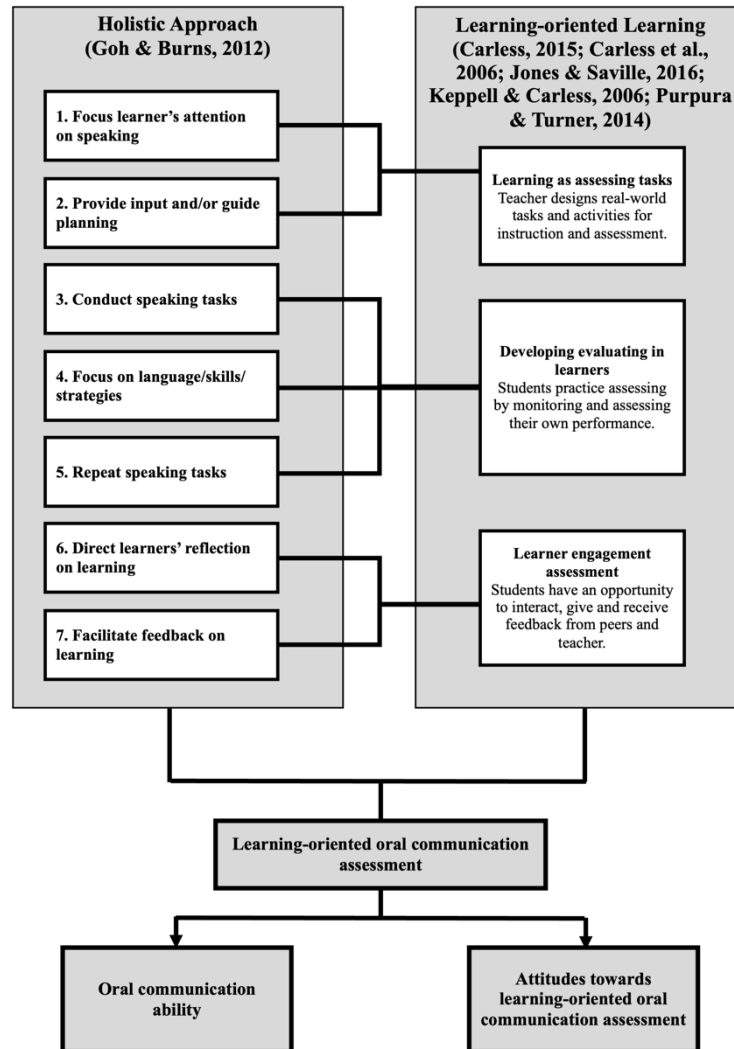
Figure 2 Research framework learning-oriented oral communication assessment model

METHOD

Research design

This current study employed a mixed-methods design to serve the objectives of the research. The method consists of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive answer to research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Therefore, this study collected data quantitatively to investigate the improvement of oral communication ability from pre-test and post-test scores, as well as the students' attitudes towards learning-oriented assessment from a questionnaire. The study also provided more detailed information drawn from the quantitative analysis, supplemented with qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews.

Setting and participants

The present study was carried out at a public university in the southern part of Thailand. The university requires pre-service teachers to study communicative English: written and oral communication. Therefore, the participants in this study were 60 non-English major students who enrolled in a course called 'Communicative Language for Teachers'. They were conveniently selected out of 370 students in the education program. Their English proficiency was lower-intermediate to intermediate based on the CEFR, as evaluated by an in-house examination. This was especially evident in the speaking part, despite their having learned English for over 10 years. The students were divided into two groups (the control and experimental groups). Both groups were comprised of non-English majors with lower-intermediate and intermediate levels of English proficiency, and they differed in age from 19 to 20 years. There were 30 students in each group. The experimental group studied using LOA as the treatment for 10 weeks, including taking a pre-test and a post-test; however, the control group studied traditionally through lecturing and doing tasks assigned by the teacher. Before collecting the data, the participants signed a written consent form in Thai and English to participate in the study. More importantly, the researchers stressed that this study did not affect their grades and that their participation was voluntary. Therefore, they could withdraw from the study as they wished. Moreover, the researchers assured the participants that their performance and the data collected from this study would remain confidential.

Instruments

In order to collect the data for the present study, the researchers developed three research instruments. To collect quantitative data, the researcher developed an oral communication test adapted from IELTS and a questionnaire on attitudes towards learning-oriented oral communication assessment. In addition, semi-structured interview questions were developed to collect qualitative data.

English Oral Communication Test

The English oral communication test was designed to investigate the effects of a learning-oriented oral communication assessment model. The test consisted of three parts: 1) general conversation; 2) a given topic; and 3) a discussion about the given topic. The oral communication test was adapted from the IELTS speaking part because the purpose of the test and the test components were related to the course learning outcomes. The topics were varied, such as those in education, history, hobbies, and business; they were based on students' interests. The test lasted approximately 20 minutes. The students were asked to record a video while the test was conducted. Moreover, the test was conducted twice, before and after the implementation of the learning-oriented oral communication assessment model.

In order to investigate the improvement of students' English oral communication ability, the researchers adapted a rubric score from the CEFR test (Council of Europe, 2018) because the test is used to assess non-native speakers of English in oral communication ability; the criteria include areas on range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation. Range

refers to the ability of learners to utilize content words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, to effectively communicate meanings and ideas in relation to assigned topics and situations. Next, accuracy refers to the degree to which learners can utilize grammatical structures. Fluency refers to the ability of students to make utterances with a fluid and seamless flow of language despite minor pauses or hesitations. Moreover, interaction refers to the degree to which learners are capable of utilizing diverse linguistic expressions to interact in a conversation. Coherence refers to the extent to which learners can effectively use cohesive strategies to connect individual ideas into a logical and unified series of responses. It reflects the ability to express thoughts in a clear and organized manner, ensuring that each utterance contributes to a coherent whole. Ultimately, pronunciation refers to the degree to which students are capable of producing utterances with high comprehensibility through the use of accurate pronunciation of words (sounds), sentence and word stress, and intonation.

The rubric in this study used a 4-point Likert Scale to avoid biases from the assessors. By eliminating a neutral midpoint, this scale encourages assessors to make more definitive judgments rather than opting for a neutral or indecisive judgment (Joshi et al., 2015), which can reduce ambiguity and central tendency bias, leading to more accurate assessments. Three experts in the field of English language teaching and assessment validated the test and the rubric to ensure its validity and quality by using an index of the item-objective congruence (IOC). The result of the validation was 0.86, which means the instrument is acceptable. In addition, as for the rubric's reliability, the results from two raters, including one of the researchers and a lecturer who used to teach this course for three years, were calculated using a Pearson correlation. The result was 0.97, which implied that the markings were consistent.

A questionnaire of attitudes towards learning-oriented oral communication assessment

The questionnaire was designed to investigate students' attitudes towards learning-oriented oral communication assessment. The researchers developed the questionnaire based on the activities of learning-oriented assessment, including self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment. The 4-point Likert Scale was designed to reduce the likelihood of neutral responses, encouraging participants to express a clear opinion on each item and helping to minimize central tendency bias (Joshi et al., 2015). The 4-point Likert Scale ranged from 4 (strongly agree), 3 (agree), 2 (disagree), to 1 (strongly disagree). They consisted of 10 items. To complete the questionnaires, the students took approximately 20 minutes. It was conducted after the implementation of the learning-oriented oral communication assessment on the last day of the course. The instrument was reviewed for validity by three experts in English language teaching and assessment to ensure its quality using the IOC. The result was 0.77, which is acceptable. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha reliability for the questionnaire was also acceptable at a 0.92 value.

Semi-structured interview questions

The participants were selected and divided into 3 groups: high, mid, and low performance groups based on the post-test scores. The objectives of the interview questions were to collect qualitative data in order to analyze the attitudes of the participants regarding learning-oriented

oral communication assessments and to provide a more comprehensive picture with the quantitative data. The interview process took approximately 20 minutes. It was conducted in either Thai or English to eliminate any barriers to communication. To ensure the instrument's quality, three experts in English language teaching and assessment were asked to evaluate the instrument's appropriateness. The examples of semi-structured interview questions were as follows:

1. In what ways does self-assessment help you improve your oral communication ability? How do you feel about self-assessment?

2. In what ways does peer-assessment help you improve your oral communication ability? How do you feel about peer-assessment?

3. What do you think about instructor-assessment for your oral communication tasks? How do you feel about instructor-assessment?

Data collection procedures

The data collection process for the English Oral Communication Test took 10 weeks in total. In week 1, the participants were informed on a voluntary basis about the research objectives, data collection procedures, participant rights, and participants' identity confidentiality before giving their consent to participate in this project. After that, the participants in both the control and experimental groups participated in the pre-test, which took approximately 20 minutes with video recording. In addition, the students were trained to assess themselves and their peers, respectively. For instance, they were informed that every two weeks they would need to give feedback to themselves based on aspects of range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation. Likewise, during peer-assessments, they were grouped and gave feedback to their peers. During this time, the teacher asked students to assess their peers anonymously.

Then, during weeks 2–9, the participants in the experimental group studied under the learning-oriented oral communication model, whereas the control group studied with traditional instruction with the provided materials in the course. For the experimental group, the teaching procedure followed the holistic approach by Goh and Burns (2012) with the integration of LOA frameworks (Carless, 2015; Carless et al., 2006; Jones & Saville, 2016; Keppell & Carless, 2006; Purpura & Turner, 2014), as shown in Figure 2.

On week 10, the participants were asked to take a post-test and to complete the questionnaire, which consists of 10 items, to investigate their attitudes. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Finally, six participants in the experimental group were selected and divided into three groups: two people with low performance (S1 and S2), two people with moderate performance (S3 and S4), and two people with high performance (S5 and S6). They were interviewed by the researchers to collect qualitative data as a follow-up to the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview was conducted both in Thai and English to avoid language barriers.

Data analysis

There were two types of data analysis since the researchers employed a mixed-methods research design. The two types of data were quantitative and qualitative. For quantitative data, the effects of learning-oriented oral communication assessment were collected from the pre- and post-tests. Then, they were analyzed using a paired-sample *t*-test to compare improvements within the control and experimental groups. Moreover, an independent *t*-test was utilized to analyze the difference in the mean of post-test scores between the control and experimental groups. In addition, attitudes towards the learning-oriented oral communication assessment were gathered from the questionnaire and represented in descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation (*SD*). To interpret the statistical data, it was calculated using class intervals: 1) high (3.19 and above), 2) medium (2.36–3.18), and 3) low (1.53–2.35). Furthermore, the qualitative data was collected using interview questions. The findings from the interview were analyzed using content analysis to gain insightful information and interpretation of the quantitative results. The qualitative data were organized based on linguistic competence and the affective domain to investigate students' attitudes. Then, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The effect size was analyzed using Cohen's d, which classifies effect sizes as small (*d* = 0.2), medium (*d* = 0.5), and large (*d* ≥ 0.8) (Cohen, 2013).

RESULTS

The effects of learning-oriented assessment on English oral communication ability

To address research question one, "What are the effects of learning-oriented assessment on the English oral communication ability of Thai pre-service teachers?" the findings from the pre-test and post-test within the control and experimental groups were quantitatively analyzed using a paired-sample t-test. The findings from the control group are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Oral communication test results of the control group using the paired-sample *t*-test (*N* = 30)

Criteria		M	SD	t	df	p	Effect size
Range	Pre-test	1.43	.57	-1.80	29	.08	.31
	Post-test	1.53	.57				
Accuracy	Pre-test	1.47	.57	2.11	29	.04*	.35
	Post-test	1.33	.48				
Fluency	Pre-test	1.97	.81	0.81	29	.43	.45
	Post-test	1.90	.66				
Interaction	Pre-test	1.90	.61	-1.68	29	.10	.43
	Post-test	2.03	.72				
Coherence	Pre-test	1.50	.68	-0.37	29	.71	.49
	Post-test	1.53	.51				
Pronunciation	Pre-test	1.60	.50	-1.00	29	.32	.18
	Post-test	1.63	.56				

*p < .05

Table 1 presents the results of paired-sample t-tests between pre- and post-test results on range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation. From all the six criteria,

significant differences were observed between the pre- and post-test results in the aspect of accuracy (t (df, N) = 2.11 (29, 30), p = .04). However, there were no significant differences between the pre- and post-test results in the aspects of range (t (df, N) = -1.80 (29, 30), p = .08), fluency (t (df, N) = .81 (29, 30), p = .43), interaction (t (df, N) = -1.68 (29, 30), p = .10), coherence (t (df, N) = -.37 (29, 30), p = .71), and pronunciation (t (df, N) = -1.00 (29, 30), p = .32).

In addition, the findings from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to compare the results from the tests in the experimental group. The findings are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Oral communication test results of the experimental group using the paired-sample t-test

Criteria		M	SD	t	df	p	Effect size
Range	Pre-test	1.47	.63	-7.88	29	.00*	.72
	Post-test	2.50	.68				
Accuracy	Pre-test	1.53	.68	-5.76	29	.00*	.76
	Post-test	2.33	.76				
Fluency	Pre-test	2.00	.87	-7.37	29	.00*	.72
	Post-test	2.97	.77				
Interaction	Pre-test	1.90	.61	-6.50	29	.00*	.76
	Post-test	2.80	.76				
Coherence	Pre-test	1.50	.68	-10.02	29	.00*	.58
	Post-test	2.57	.73				
Pronunciation	Pre-test	1.83	.79	-7.90	29	.00*	.74
	Post-test	2.90	.80				

*$p < .05$

As reported in Table 2, all criteria were significantly higher on the post-test than on the pre-test (p = .00). The participants outstandingly performed on the post-test in the criteria of fluency (M = 2.97, SD = .77), pronunciation (M = 2.90, SD = .80), interaction (M = 2.80, SD = .76), coherence (M = 2.57, SD = .73), range (M = 2.50, SD = .68), and accuracy (M = 2.33, SD = .76) respectively.

Furthermore, the results from the post-test in the control and experimental groups were analyzed using an independent t-test to investigate the differences in both groups. The test results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Oral communication test results of the control and experimental groups using the independent t-test

Criteria	Control group (N = 30)		Experimental group (N = 30)		t	df	p	Effect size
	M	SD	M	SD				
Range	1.53	.57	2.50	.68	-5.95	58	.00*	.63
Accuracy	1.33	.48	2.33	.76	-6.11	58	.00*	.63
Fluency	1.90	.66	2.97	.77	-5.78	58	.00*	.72
Interaction	2.03	.72	2.80	.76	-4.01	58	.00*	.74
Coherence	1.53	.51	2.57	.73	-6.38	58	.00*	.63
Pronunciation	1.63	.56	2.90	.80	-7.10	58	.00*	.69

*$p < .05$

As shown in Table 3, there were significant differences between the control and experimental groups on the post-test in all aspects, namely range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation (p = .00) with a medium effect size.

Therefore, the learning-oriented oral communication model could significantly enhance students' oral communication ability in all aspects, as shown in the statistical comparison of means within the experimental group and between the control and experimental groups.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews with the students in the focus group were conducted to build on the quantitative data. Interviewed students reported that the learning-oriented oral communication assessment helped them with their oral communication ability in the domain of linguistic competence. The themes that emerged are 1) the improvement of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and 2) confidence and fluency.

Improvement of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary

The excerpts from the interview with students revealed a positive language learning experience. In unison, they claimed that their language ability, particularly in the areas of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, had improved. Such progress was due to their involvement in their learning process which was indicated by their effort to be self-aware, and by the guidance of their teacher and peers. Self-awareness was a recurring trait that facilitated improvements. For instance, S1 shared an account of the immense work they put in enhancing language ability by, in the student's words, *"…try so hard to be aware of…."* Similarly, the commitment to self-improvement was also fueled by self-awareness. S5 and S6 shared *"…I also try to follow…"* and *"I corrected myself all the time…."*, respectively. These were actively reinforced through feedback which they received from their peers and teachers. For instance, S2's responses were driven by collaborative monitoring, i.e., the joint assistance of teacher and peers, of language performance. This boosted not only the confidence to interact but also to perform

> *"When I get feedback from my teacher, I try so hard to be aware of what I need to improve, like grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The feedback helps me a lot."* (S1)

> *"My classmates always help me to monitor myself when speaking. This way, it helps me a lot. I also try to follow what my friends told me and what my teacher told me. I think my grammar is getting better, and I am not scared to interact with my friends in the tasks."* (S5)

> *"I corrected myself all the time if I knew that I had made mistakes, especially in pronunciation. If I don't know I am making mistakes, my friends always help me if they know and notice the mistakes. My teacher also helps me with that, too. So, I try to perform tasks better when I need to re-perform. It makes me more fluent as well, I think."* (S6)

Confidence and fluency

Beyond a positive learning experience, the students articulated the way confidence materialized in their learning process. They produced more words to weave their ideas and to demonstrate coherent and cohesive language output. S3, for one, mentioned that *"I try to add some words to connect sentences…."* In addition, the students' confidence resulted in proactive involvement. S4 and S2 shared the ways they participated in class activities by sharing their opinions and their attempts to perform.

> *"When I get the ongoing feedback and comments from my friends and teacher, I try to add some words to connect sentences. Just to make my sentences flow and I speak more fluently. So, I suppose that my oral communication ability is getting better." (S3)*

> *"…every time when I do the activities or tasks in class, I think I am confident to discuss and give my opinion on the things I know to the class. I just want to answer if I know the answer. I think I speak without hesitation. My speech also flows." (S4)*

> *"Once I got feedback from my teacher or my classmates, I am not afraid to make mistakes. I just want to try to perform and speak to make it better for the tasks the second time." (S2)*

Consequently, the learning-oriented oral communication assessment not only enhanced the oral communication ability of the students but also positively developed their confidence in communication through their interactions with peers and the teacher.

Attitudes towards learning-oriented assessment

To address research question two, "What is the attitude of Thai pre-service teachers towards learning-oriented assessment of English oral communication ability?" the researchers collected the data after implementing the learning-oriented oral communication assessment via the questionnaire. The questionnaire was on a 4-point Likert Scale, ranging from 4 (strongly agree), 3 (agree), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree). To interpret the statistical data, it was calculated using class intervals: 1) high (3.19 and above), 2) medium (2.36–3.18), and 3) low (1.53–2.35). The results gained from the questionnaire are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics from a questionnaire of attitude toward learning-oriented oral communication assessment

Items	*M*	Level
The oral communication tasks in class are related to real world.	3.03	Medium
I learn a lot when I can monitor my own learning through self-assessment.	2.63	Medium
I like it when I have a chance to re-perform my oral communication tasks after self-assessment.	3.70	High
I don't like the feedback from my friends.	1.53	Low
My friends help me a lot when they give comments and feedback on my oral communication performance.	3.63	High

Items	M	Level
I prefer feedback from my teacher rather than the feedback from my friends	3.43	High
I can relate what I learn in class to the real world.	3.37	High
I can improve my oral communication ability from the teacher's feedback.	4.00	High
I am satisfied when my friends and my teacher support me with vocabulary and structures, phrases, and expressions before performing the tasks.	3.93	High
I am satisfied when my friends and my teacher support me with vocabulary and structures, phrases, and expressions through their feedback.	4.00	High

As reported in Table 4, the experimental group strongly agreed that teacher feedback improved their oral communication ability (M = 4.00). They appreciated peer and teacher support with vocabulary, structures, and expressions (M = 4.00 for feedback, M = 3.93 for pre-task support). Participants liked re-performing tasks after self-assessment (M = 3.70) and valued peer feedback (M = 3.63), though they preferred teacher feedback (M = 3.43). Students agreed that the assessment were related to their learning (M = 3.37) and had real-world applications (M = 3.03). Self-monitoring through self-assessment was less impactful (M = 2.63). Notably, students disagreed with disliking peer feedback (M = 1.53), indicating a positive attitude towards it.

In order to illustrate a clearer picture of the quantitative data, the semi-structured interviews were conducted through focus groups. The qualitative data gained would provide an explanation of the quantitative data. The themes were: 1) the relationship of speaking tasks and the real world; 2) self-learning opportunity through self-assessment; and 3) learning through interaction.

The relationship between speaking tasks and the real world

The relevance of task with learners' experiences was revealed in the interview data. Students expressed their liking of the tasks as they could be used in their everyday contexts. These relatable contexts include conversing with diverse individuals such as friends and foreigners, and with other people, and through different modalities like online conversation. The students' positive feedback, exemplified by S1's comment *"…I like the oral communication tasks…,"* indicated two benefits. First, it showed they enjoyed the activity. Second, it suggested the tasks provided a sense of familiarity by reflecting on real-life situations they might encounter. The latter was well established in S2 and S4 responses where they mentioned that *"I faced situations like the activities in class all the time…."*, and *"I can connect everything I learned in the classroom to the real world…."*.

> *"I think…I like the oral communication tasks. I like to have a conversation with my friends because I can have a conversation, and I can talk like this with foreigners in my hometown also." (S1)*

> *"I faced situations like the activities in class all the time. But I sometimes cannot have a conversation in English. But now, I think I can. And I really did it once." (S2)*

> *"I can connect everything I learned in the classroom to the real world. I learned a lot of phrases and how to pronounce words and sentences. I even used those when I talk to my friends online." (S4)*

Self-learning opportunity through self-assessment

Even though the quantitative results revealed that students perceived they learned by monitoring themselves through self-assessment (*M* = 2.63), the qualitative data showed a positive attitude towards self-assessment in learning-oriented assessment. They positively reported that self-assessment enabled them to learn on their own. Moreover, they mentioned that self-assessment allowed them to monitor their mistakes and helped them correct mistakes by themselves. The students' self-monitoring led them to learning autonomy. This means they were able to take control and navigate their own learning process by locating their mistakes, finding sources to correct, and, eventually, correcting their mistakes.

> *"I liked it when I could give myself time to think and monitor myself. I think I am more conscious when I speak. I think I can correct my mistakes on my own; just the mistakes, I know they were mistakes." (S2)*

> *"I always look up words and how to pronounce them in an online dictionary like the Cambridge one. Then, I like to copy and correct myself if I mispronounce any words." (S1)*

> *"I feel like every time I make mistakes, I want to correct them because I want to perform better. So, I try to spot the mistakes I made and correct them immediately when speaking." (S6)*

Learning through interaction

The learning-oriented oral communication assessment provided students with the opportunity to interact with their peers. The students positively reported that the interaction with peers and the teacher helped them develop their oral communication performance by receiving and providing feedback. This interaction was evident due to the teacher and peer support which created a safe and collaborative learning space for all. For instance, the teacher's constructive feedback and encouraging demeanor allowed students to be engaged. This was observed in S4's response, i.e., *"my teacher is very encouraging; he always guides me with his feedback"*. The peers contributed to co-creating a supportive space through the exchange of feedback. S4 articulated it well, *"…We help each other by giving feedback…"*. S6 shared the same experience that, *"I learned how to give constructive feedback from them…"*. On top of this shared support, trust in being a source of learning was also established as S6 added, *"…I believe they could learn something from me, too."* This indicated that through learning-oriented oral communication assessment learning through interaction generated a discursive process where someone gains, and another provides. Such an exchange of learning provided an opportunity to create a positive learning experience.

> *"My friends and my teacher always supported me and commented me constructively. So, we learned from each other. I like it a lot." (S1)*

"I always share what I learn with my friends. We help each other by giving feedback so that we can improve our oral communication ability. Moreover, my teacher is very encouraging; he always guides me with his feedback." (S4)

"It is so fun to work with different classmates for all activities in class. I learned how to give constructive feedback from them. I believe they could learn something from me, too." (S6)

Thus, the students in this present study indicated a positive attitude towards the learning-oriented assessment of oral communication ability. Reasons for this include the students having an opportunity to develop self-monitoring skills on their oral communication performance, the students having a chance to interact with peers and the opportunity for the teacher to involve students in the teacher's assessment process.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the effects of the learner-oriented assessment on the oral communication ability of pre-service teachers and their attitude towards LOA. Overall, the results revealed positive effects and attitudes towards LOA. Specifically, the study yielded positive effects of the learning-oriented oral communication assessment on students' oral communication performance based on the results comparing pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group (which were significantly different in all aspects, namely fluency, pronunciation, interaction, coherence, range, and accuracy, respectively). For the post-test mean score, the control group was minimally better in range, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation. However, their accuracy and fluency seemed to be lower.

The first key finding from this present study was the effectiveness of LOA in improving students' fluency through self-reflection and peer assessment. This is evident in students' self-assessment, revealing their perceived fluency, which goes to show that LOA opens an avenue for students to see through their learning improvement. This finding is consistent with Santos and Ramírez-Ávila's (2022) study where students' self-reflection enhances their learning experience. Self-reflection, in a similar vein, helps build confidence as students become expressive of their learning experiences such that they take part in their self-assessment process. Furthermore, learning-oriented assessment in peer-assessment contributed to students' fluency through interaction. Peer-assessment helped students interact with their peers to expand the opportunities to provide and receive feedback among peers—a finding evident from students' responses from their interviews. The continuous giving and receiving of feedback from peers are instrumental in keeping the learning process going, resulting in improved fluency. Such observation was found in the study by Chien et al. (2020) where peer-assessment in the context of a spherical video-based virtual reality significantly enhanced students' fluency. In essence, by giving spaces for self-reflection and peer-assessment through LOA, students are able to promote their autonomous learning (Ratminingsih et al., 2017) as they are aware of their mistakes (Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

On the other hand, learning-oriented assessment benefits can be diluted through the pedagogical choices of teachers. In the control group, the students had lower fluency on the post-test than on the pre-test. This was due to the teacher's textbook-based instruction, which provided limited involvement and restricted learning to the textbook. Consequently, students had little to no opportunity to assess their own progress. In such a case, teachers' instruction is crucial in enabling or disabling students' involvement. The latter can hamper meaningful learning as students' involvement is an essential part of productive learning experiences (Keppell & Carless, 2006). In other words, if students have more learning opportunities in class, such as through their assessments, they would be able to perform their oral communication more effectively.

Another salient finding is the way teacher assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment can drive students' positive attitudes towards learning-oriented assessment. Teacher assessment as part of LOA has proven important in students' learning. Particularly, the pre-service teachers in the present study rated that their oral communication ability significantly improved due to the teacher's feedback. Particularly, the teacher's encouragement and constructive feedback provided students with a positive experience. Xu et al. (2021), for one, articulated that teacher feedback helped enhance oral communication ability. This means that integrating teacher feedback could be beneficial to students who would like to have their learning guided and supported to maximize their learning experience in an oral communication class. Furthermore, when students are trained to assess their own and their peers' performances, they can proactively shape their learning experiences into more positive ones. Self-assessment and peer-assessment could also enhance students' autonomy. According to Little (2005) learners involved in their own learning assessment could develop autonomous capacities, which strengthened their abilities to manage their own learning. In addition, the students also reported a positive attitude towards peer-assessment saying that it could assist them with evaluating their own oral communication ability. Murillo-Zamorano and Montanero (2018) reported similar findings, while cautioning that a single session of peer-assessment would not be enough. Hence, the continuous and effective use of teacher assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment in learner-oriented assessment can significantly turn learning experiences into a positive and productive one.

In essence, the study situated learning-oriented assessment in oral communication as a viable and useful assessment option for improving students' speaking skills and in promoting a holistic approach. It also demonstrated how LOA can function as an empowering assessment tool by providing students a path to understanding their own mistakes such that they are able to correct them—and in so doing, ultimately be able to achieve learning autonomy. In the same vein, students were also able to share their feedback with their peers, making them not mere recipients but also providers of feedback. The learning-oriented oral communication model demonstrated significant benefits for university-level instruction. By integrating both formative and summative assessments, this approach empowers students to develop expertise in evaluating their own oral communication performances.

CONCLUSION

This present study aims to investigate the effects of a learning-oriented oral communication assessment and student attitudes towards the instructional model. After implementing the model, the students in the experimental group significantly gained higher scores on the post-test in areas of fluency, pronunciation, interaction, coherence, range, and accuracy, respectively. On the other hand, the students in the control group only minimally gained scores relative to the post-test. Therefore, the learning-oriented oral communication model could serve as one of many useful instructional models for improving oral communication that highlights both formative and summative assessment, as students could take part in the assessment process. The qualitative data also reported that the ongoing interaction students had with their peers and teachers through the process of giving and receiving feedback reasonably assisted them in their learning. Along with enhancing students' involvement, motivation, or learning outcomes, students would generally have productive learning experiences (Keppell & Carless, 2006).

Moreover, the students in this study reported positive attitudes towards the model. The students rated teacher feedback as the most beneficial dimension for improving their oral communication ability. With the support of qualitative data, the students positively reported that the teacher's constructive comments led to a positive attitude towards the learning experience in the learning-oriented oral communication class. Furthermore, they indicated that teacher and peer support of linguistic knowledge such as that of in vocabulary, phrases, and structures could enhance their oral communication performance. With this support, the students felt comfortable communicating orally with their peers. In addition, they were able to perform the oral communication tasks with greater confidence.

Implementing the holistic approach by Goh and Burns (2012) with the integration of LOA frameworks (Carless, 2015; Carless et al., 2006; Jones & Saville, 2016; Keppell & Carless, 2006; Purpura & Turner, 2014)could be impactful for teachers who are teaching an oral communication or speaking course because of the focus on students' learning development. Teachers could follow the instructional steps in Figure 2 to teach in their class because the focus of the model is to encourage students to engage in meaningful tasks aimed at developing their oral communication ability. More importantly, the model enables teachers to plan their lessons by following the steps of teaching oral communication systematically. Additionally, it provides opportunities for students to engage with assessment processes including that of self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment for formative assessment, a finding in line with recommendations made by Widiastuti et al. (2020) that teachers might utilize LOAs to enhance teaching and learning. When students are involved in classroom assessment processes, it enhances their learning experience and motivation to achieve learning outcomes (Keppell & Carless, 2006). In addition, the present study suggests that using feedback in class could promote active learning because it enhances the involvement of students in speaking activities. For peer-assessment, teachers should provide support and assistance for using peer assessment as an objective and authentic assessment (Mumpuni et al., 2022). To this end, teachers need to train, support, and follow up on students' assessing performance and learning performance to examine the ongoing improvement of students' oral communication performance.

Therefore, the learning-oriented oral communication assessment model should be implemented in an English oral communication class as the results of the study have shown positive effects on developing students' oral communication ability as well as having generated positive attitudes towards the instructional model. Nevertheless, there were a few limitations found in this present study. The first limitation was the small number of participants ($N = 60$) as there were only 30 students in the experimental group where the learning-oriented oral communication assessment model was implemented in the classroom. Hence, it is highly recommended that future studies employ the model with a larger population made up of various demographic backgrounds where sampling could reach a more reliable conclusion. The second limitation that might be considered in future research involves possibly employing a time-series design to gain more insightful information. Moreover, in addition to student attitudes, a qualitative exploration of teachers' perceptions should be undertaken. This would provide meaningful insights needed to adjust the model to serve various groups of students in different contexts of learning.

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