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Evidence-Informed Alignment in TESOL: A Five-Dimensional Framework Integrating Curriculum, Pedagogy, Interaction, Assessment, and Context



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Evidence-Informed Alignment in TESOL: A Five-Dimensional Framework Integrating Curriculum, Pedagogy, Interaction, Assessment, and Context

Abstract

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has traditionally examined pedagogy, classroom interaction, and assessment as distinct areas of inquiry. However, their educational significance depends largely on the relationships among them. This article develops an integrative conceptual framework for understanding how curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discourse and interaction, assessment, and context operate as interconnected dimensions of TESOL practice. Drawing on scholarship in classroom discourse, second language acquisition, communicative and task-based language teaching, sociocultural theory, language assessment, formative feedback, and constructive alignment, the article synthesises research across four analytical domains: interaction and participation, pedagogical approaches, assessment as evidence of learning, and evidence-informed educational adaptation.

The analysis argues that classroom interaction should be understood as a mediating dimension through which pedagogical intentions become learning opportunities, while assessment functions as an evidential dimension through which learner performance becomes interpretable. Neither interaction nor assessment alone provides sufficient evidence of language development. Instead, educational effectiveness depends on the alignment of intended outcomes, pedagogical activities, interactional opportunities, assessment practices, and contextual conditions. Building on this synthesis, the article proposes a Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework comprising curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discourse and interaction, assessment, and context. The framework conceptualises TESOL as a dynamic and recursive system in which evidence generated through learner performance informs subsequent pedagogical and curricular adaptation.

The article contributes a theoretically grounded framework that shifts attention from methodological allegiance towards evidence-informed alignment. Rather than asking which instructional approach is universally superior, the framework provides a basis for evaluating how educational dimensions operate together to create meaningful learning opportunities and support responsive language teaching.

Keywords: TESOL; classroom discourse; classroom interaction; language assessment; formative assessment; pedagogical alignment; evidence-informed teaching; communicative language teaching; task-based language teaching; second language acquisition; curriculum alignment; language education

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1. Introduction

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) encompasses a diverse range of pedagogical traditions, theoretical perspectives, classroom practices, and assessment approaches. Communicative, task-based, cognitive, sociocultural, form-focused, and content-oriented perspectives have each contributed important insights into language teaching and learning. While this diversity has enriched the field, it has also encouraged debates in which pedagogical approaches are sometimes treated as competing alternatives rather than as resources whose value depends upon their educational purposes, implementation conditions, and intended outcomes (Ellis, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). A growing body of scholarship consequently suggests that pedagogical effectiveness cannot be adequately understood through methodological allegiance alone.

A related challenge concerns fragmentation within TESOL scholarship itself. Pedagogical approaches, classroom interaction, and language assessment are frequently examined as distinct domains of inquiry. Research on methodology often focuses on instructional practices and learning outcomes; classroom discourse studies examine participation, questioning, feedback, and interactional organisation; assessment scholarship investigates the interpretation and use of performance evidence. Each domain provides valuable insights, yet their educational significance depends largely upon how they interact within actual teaching and learning systems.

Classroom interaction occupies a particularly important position within these relationships because pedagogical intentions are enacted through communicative activity. Teacher explanations, questioning, feedback, scaffolding, participation structures, peer interaction, and task engagement influence the opportunities learners have to notice, practise, negotiate, and use language. Interaction therefore mediates the relationship between pedagogical design and learner performance. At the same time, interaction should not be treated as direct evidence of language acquisition. Participation, learner uptake, or successful task completion may demonstrate the existence of learning opportunities without necessarily establishing durable changes in linguistic competence (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Walsh, 2011, 2013).

Assessment provides a complementary evidential dimension. Formative, summative, performance-based, communicative, and competency-based approaches generate evidence

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concerning learner performance, but the educational meaning of that evidence depends upon the constructs being assessed, the conditions under which performance occurs, and the purposes for which resulting interpretations are used (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Assessment therefore functions not simply as an endpoint of instruction but as a mechanism through which learner performance becomes interpretable and pedagogical decisions can be informed.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that TESOL effectiveness should be understood as a problem of alignment rather than methodology alone. Curriculum establishes intended learning outcomes; pedagogy creates learning opportunities; classroom discourse and interaction mediate participation and performance; assessment generates evidence concerning learner development; and contextual conditions influence the operation of the entire system. However, existing TESOL scholarship offers limited guidance concerning how these dimensions should be conceptualised in relation to one another.

This article addresses that gap by developing an integrative framework for evidence-informed TESOL. Building on scholarship in classroom interaction, second language acquisition, language assessment, formative feedback, and educational alignment, the article examines how interaction and assessment function as interconnected dimensions of language teaching and learning. The analysis subsequently proposes a Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework comprising curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discourse and interaction, assessment, and context. The framework conceptualises TESOL as a dynamic and recursive system in which evidence generated through learner performance informs subsequent pedagogical and curricular adaptation.

The central argument advanced is that TESOL effectiveness is best understood as evidence-informed alignment rather than methodological allegiance. Educational quality does not emerge from adherence to a universally superior instructional approach. Rather, it emerges from the coherence of relationships among educational purposes, pedagogical practices, interactional opportunities, assessment evidence, and contextual conditions. The contribution of the article is therefore not the proposal of another methodology, but the development of a framework through which pedagogical decisions can be evaluated according to how effectively these dimensions operate together within an integrated educational system.

2. Classroom Interaction and Discourse-Informed TESOL

Classroom interaction occupies a central position within TESOL because pedagogical intentions are ultimately enacted through communicative activity. Curriculum objectives and instructional plans establish what learners are expected to develop, but actual learning opportunities emerge through teacher talk, learner participation, questioning, feedback, scaffolding, collaboration, and other interactional processes. Contemporary research therefore treats classroom discourse not merely as a backdrop to instruction but as an important site in which teaching, learning, and participation are organised and observed (Walsh, 2011, 2013; Jenks & Sert, 2024).

At the same time, interactional activity should not automatically be treated as evidence of language acquisition. Participation, successful learner responses, and extended classroom discussion may indicate that opportunities for learning have been created, but they do not by themselves demonstrate durable linguistic development. A discourse-informed perspective consequently focuses on how interaction mediates the relationship between pedagogical design and learner performance rather than assuming that interaction alone guarantees learning (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Walsh, 2013).

2.1 Teacher Talk, Participation, and Interaction

Teacher talk remains one of the principal mechanisms through which classroom activity is organised. Teachers introduce topics, explain concepts, allocate turns, formulate questions, provide feedback, and structure opportunities for participation. Consequently, classroom discourse research has examined teacher language not only as a source of input but also as a pedagogical resource that shapes learner engagement and communicative opportunity (Walsh, 2002, 2011, 2013; Jenks & Sert, 2024).

The educational significance of teacher talk depends less on quantity than on function. Explanations, prompts, reformulations, wait-time, follow-up questions, and responses to learner contributions can either expand or restrict participation. Classroom discourse studies therefore emphasise the importance of interactional space: opportunities through which learners can contribute, elaborate, clarify meaning, and assume increasing responsibility for communicative activity (Walsh, 2011, 2013).

Learner participation forms the complementary dimension of this relationship. Participation includes responding to questions, initiating contributions, negotiating meaning, collaborating with peers, requesting clarification, and using language for communicative purposes.

However, participation should not be evaluated purely in terms of the amount of learner talk. A classroom may generate substantial learner speech while offering limited opportunities for meaningful language use, just as relatively brief contributions may involve considerable cognitive and communicative engagement. Participation is therefore best understood in relation to what learners are required to do with language rather than how much language they produce.

From an evidence-informed perspective, teacher talk and learner participation should be viewed relationally. Teachers create opportunities, learners respond to and shape those opportunities, and the resulting interaction generates evidence concerning engagement, understanding, and developing capability. Classroom interaction therefore functions as a mediating layer between pedagogical intention and learner performance.

2.2 Feedback, Scaffolding, and Learner Agency

Feedback and scaffolding provide important mechanisms through which interaction can support learning. Corrective feedback, clarification requests, elicitation, recasts, prompts, explanation, modelling, and guided questioning all represent ways in which teachers and peers respond to learner performance during classroom activity. Such responses can draw attention to linguistic form, encourage further participation, and support learners in extending existing capabilities (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

Research on corrective feedback highlights the importance of distinguishing uptake from acquisition. Learners may successfully modify an utterance following teacher feedback, but immediate uptake does not necessarily demonstrate long-term linguistic development. Feedback can create opportunities for noticing, reflection, and modification, yet its educational significance depends upon instructional purpose, learner characteristics, task conditions, and subsequent opportunities for use (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Scaffolding extends this interactional perspective by focusing on how assistance supports

learner participation. Teachers and peers may provide graduated support through questioning, explanation, modelling, examples, prompts, or reformulation. Effective scaffolding enables learners to undertake activities that may initially exceed their independent capabilities while gradually transferring responsibility towards them (Vygotsky, 1978).

These processes are closely related to learner agency. Learners are not passive recipients of instructional support. They may initiate questions, redirect discussion, request clarification, challenge interpretations, and contribute personal experiences. Agency therefore reflects the extent to which learners participate in shaping interaction rather than merely responding to it. Within TESOL, productive interaction depends not only on teacher guidance but also on opportunities for learners to assume increasing responsibility for meaning-making and communication.

2.3 Power, Participation, and Technology-Mediated Interaction

Classroom discourse also has a social and organisational dimension. Interaction establishes who speaks, who evaluates, who asks questions, and whose contributions are recognised as significant. Teacher authority remains necessary for organising learning activity, yet interactional patterns can either expand or constrain learner opportunities for participation. Classroom discourse therefore involves questions of access, legitimacy, and participation as well as questions of pedagogy.

These issues become particularly important in multilingual and culturally diverse learning environments. Learners bring different linguistic repertoires, educational experiences, identities, and expectations concerning classroom communication. A discourse-sensitive TESOL perspective consequently considers not only instructional effectiveness but also how participation opportunities are distributed and how learners are positioned within interaction.

Technology-mediated interaction adds a further dimension. Synchronous and asynchronous communication platforms, collaborative online environments, mobile applications, and digital learning systems extend opportunities for communication beyond the physical classroom. Research on technology-mediated language learning suggests that such environments can support participation and create additional opportunities for interaction, although outcomes remain dependent upon task design, learner engagement, teacher mediation, and contextual conditions (Kim & Namkung, 2024).

Technology should therefore be understood as a mediating condition rather than as a pedagogical solution in itself. Digital environments may create valuable communicative opportunities, but their educational significance depends upon how they are integrated within broader pedagogical and interactional arrangements.

2.4 Interaction as Learning Opportunity

The discussion above suggests that classroom interaction should be understood as a mediating dimension of TESOL practice. Curriculum establishes intended outcomes and pedagogy creates learning opportunities, but classroom discourse determines how those opportunities are enacted through participation, questioning, feedback, scaffolding, collaboration, and communicative activity. Interaction therefore connects pedagogical intention with learner performance.

At the same time, interaction should not be equated with acquisition. Participation, learner uptake, collaborative activity, and successful task completion indicate the existence of learning opportunities rather than definitive evidence of language development. Interpretation requires attention to instructional objectives, learner characteristics, linguistic targets, contextual conditions, and assessment evidence (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Walsh, 2013).

The section consequently supports a central proposition that underpins the remainder of the article: classroom discourse and interaction are not peripheral features of TESOL. They are key mechanisms through which pedagogical intentions become observable learning opportunities and through which learner performance becomes available for interpretation. This role positions interaction as a critical link between pedagogy and assessment within an evidence-informed system of language education.

Table 1 summarises the principal interactional processes discussed in this section and highlights both their pedagogical contributions and their limitations.

Table 1. Classroom Interaction Processes and Pedagogical Functions

Interaction process	Principal function	Potential pedagogical contribution	Important qualification
Teacher talk	Explanation, modelling, questioning, management, feedback	Provides structure, linguistic input, guidance, and opportunities for response	Excessive teacher control may restrict learner production
Learner participation	Production, response, collaboration, negotiation	Creates opportunities for language use and engagement	Quantity does not necessarily indicate quality
Questioning	Elicitation, comprehension checking, reasoning, discussion	Can stimulate participation and extended language use	Closed questions may restrict learner contribution
IRF sequences	Organisation of classroom exchanges	Supports monitoring and instructional management	Repetitive evaluation patterns may constrain interaction
Corrective feedback	Response to learner errors	May promote attention to form and subsequent modification	Effects depend on type, timing, context, and learner characteristics
Scaffolding	Temporary assistance	Supports performance and progressive development	Assistance should not replace learner agency
Peer interaction	Collaborative meaning-making and problem-solving	Expands opportunities for production and negotiation	Quality depends on task and participation conditions

The table reinforces a central argument of this article: interactional processes create learning opportunities, but their educational significance depends upon how they are related to instructional objectives, learner participation, and evidence of performance.

3. Pedagogical Approaches in TESOL

TESOL has developed through a succession of pedagogical traditions reflecting changing understandings of language, learning, communication, and educational purpose. Behaviourist, cognitive, communicative, interactionist, sociocultural, task-based, and content-oriented perspectives have each contributed important insights into language teaching and learning. Contemporary TESOL, however, is less concerned with selecting a universally superior methodology than with understanding how different pedagogical resources contribute to particular learning outcomes under particular conditions. The educational significance of a pedagogical approach therefore depends not only on its theoretical foundations but also on its relationship to learner needs, classroom interaction, assessment practices, and contextual demands.

3.1 Form-Focused and Cognitive Perspectives

Form-focused and cognitive perspectives emphasise the importance of attention, practice, processing, and the development of linguistic knowledge. Historically, form-focused traditions highlighted repetition, controlled practice, and accuracy, while cognitive approaches redirected attention towards noticing, memory, information processing, and the organisation of developing linguistic knowledge (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2019; Ortega, 2013).

The enduring contribution of these perspectives lies in their recognition that learners frequently benefit from opportunities to attend explicitly to linguistic form. Explanation, structured practice, retrieval, and focused feedback can support accuracy, consolidation, and awareness, particularly when learners are developing unfamiliar linguistic structures. However, explicit knowledge and successful performance on controlled tasks should not automatically be equated with communicative capability. Knowing about language and using language effectively are related but distinct achievements.

Consequently, contemporary TESOL rarely treats form-focused and cognitive approaches as complete instructional systems. Instead, they are best understood as pedagogical resources that can support particular learning objectives while operating alongside opportunities for meaningful communication and interaction.

3.2 Communicative and Interactionist Perspectives

Communicative and interactionist perspectives shifted attention from the mastery of isolated structures towards meaningful language use. Communicative approaches emphasise the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in social contexts, while interactionist perspectives focus on the role of communication, negotiation, feedback, and participation in creating opportunities for language development (Canale & Swain, 1980; Gass & Mackey, 2007).

The significance of these perspectives lies in their recognition that language learning occurs through engagement with meaning as well as form. Learners require opportunities to exchange information, express ideas, negotiate understanding, respond to communicative demands, and participate in authentic or semi-authentic interaction. Such activities can create conditions under which linguistic resources are mobilised for purposeful use rather than merely rehearsed in isolation.

At the same time, interaction should not be treated as evidence of learning in itself. Participation may create opportunities for development, but learning remains dependent upon factors such as learner readiness, task design, feedback, instructional support, and opportunities for subsequent use. Communicative and interactionist approaches therefore contribute an important principle to the present framework: learning opportunities emerge through interaction, yet interaction requires careful interpretation and cannot be equated directly with acquisition.

3.3 Sociocultural, Task-Based, and Integrated Approaches

Sociocultural, task-based, and integrated approaches share an emphasis on meaningful participation in activity. Sociocultural perspectives highlight the role of interaction, mediation, scaffolding, and collaboration in supporting development (Vygotsky, 1978). Task-based approaches organise learning around purposeful activities requiring learners to use language to achieve meaningful outcomes (Ellis, 2003). Content-based and integrated approaches connect language development with disciplinary, academic, or professional content, allowing learners to develop language through engagement with meaningful subject matter (Coyle et al., 2010).

Although these approaches differ in emphasis, they share the view that language development is strengthened when learners engage actively with tasks, problems, ideas, and communicative purposes. Participation, collaboration, and contextualised language use become important dimensions of learning rather than supplementary classroom activities. Recent research on technology-mediated task-based language teaching similarly demonstrates the growing importance of interactional and task-based environments while simultaneously highlighting variation across contexts, instructional designs, learner populations, and outcome measures (Kim & Namkung, 2024).

The contribution of these approaches is therefore not the claim that any one method is universally sufficient, but the recognition that learning opportunities are influenced by the quality of participation, mediation, task design, and contextual support available to learners.

3.4 From Alternative Methods to Complementary Functions

A recurring pattern across TESOL scholarship is that pedagogical approaches are often discussed as alternatives competing for methodological dominance. Yet the evidence reviewed in the broader literature suggests a different conclusion. Form-focused instruction may support accuracy and consolidation; communicative activities may create opportunities for meaningful language use; interaction may facilitate participation and feedback; sociocultural practices may support mediation and collaboration; task-based learning may organise purposeful activity; and integrated approaches may connect language with disciplinary knowledge. These functions are not necessarily contradictory.

The more productive question is therefore not which approach should replace all others, but how different pedagogical resources can contribute to clearly specified learning objectives. Educational effectiveness depends upon whether instructional practices are appropriate to intended outcomes, learner characteristics, contextual conditions, and available evidence. Pedagogical approaches are consequently best understood as complementary resources whose value emerges through their contribution to a coherent educational system rather than through methodological exclusivity.

This conclusion provides the bridge to the next section. If different pedagogical approaches can be understood in terms of the functions they perform, then the central challenge

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becomes one of coordination and coherence. Attention therefore shifts from methodological competition towards the problem of how curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, and assessment can be aligned within an evidence-informed TESOL system.

4. From Methodological Competition to Pedagogical Complementarity

The diversity of TESOL pedagogies has frequently generated methodological debates in which instructional approaches are positioned as competing alternatives. Behaviourist, communicative, cognitive, sociocultural, interactionist, task-based, and content-oriented traditions each emerged partly in response to perceived limitations of preceding approaches. While such debates have contributed to theoretical development, they often encourage the assumption that effective language teaching requires commitment to a particular method or pedagogical orientation. Contemporary TESOL research increasingly challenges this assumption, suggesting instead that instructional effectiveness depends on the relationship between pedagogical practices, learning objectives, learner characteristics, contextual conditions, and available evidence (Ellis, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

4.1 Beyond Method Wars

The historical development of TESOL demonstrates that no single pedagogical tradition adequately captures the complexity of language learning. Form-focused approaches highlight the importance of accuracy and controlled practice; communicative perspectives emphasise meaningful language use; interactionist approaches draw attention to negotiation and feedback; sociocultural perspectives foreground mediation and participation; and task-based approaches organise learning around purposeful activity. Each contributes valuable insights, yet none provides a universally sufficient explanation of effective language teaching.

The problem is therefore not the existence of multiple approaches but the assumption that one approach must displace all others. Educational effectiveness depends on whether instructional practices are appropriate to the capabilities learners are expected to develop. A pedagogical activity that supports one objective may be less suitable for another. Consequently, methodological debates are often more productive when framed in terms of instructional function rather than methodological identity.

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4.2 Evidence, Context, and Professional Judgement

A related implication concerns the interpretation of educational evidence. Research findings concerning instructional interventions are generated under specific conditions involving particular learners, settings, tasks, teachers, and assessment procedures. As a result, evidence rarely supports universal claims about pedagogical superiority. Instead, it supports more limited claims concerning what appears to work, for whom, under what conditions, and in relation to which outcomes (Ellis, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Context therefore becomes central rather than supplementary. Learner proficiency, educational traditions, institutional expectations, technological resources, assessment requirements, and available instructional time all influence how pedagogical practices operate in practice. Professional judgement is equally important because teachers must interpret evidence in relation to these contextual realities rather than applying research findings mechanically. Evidence-informed TESOL consequently requires the integration of research, contextual understanding, and educational purpose.

4.3 From Methodological Choice to Alignment

The preceding discussion suggests that TESOL should move beyond questions of methodological allegiance toward questions of alignment. Pedagogical choices become educationally meaningful when they are connected coherently to intended learning outcomes, learner needs, interactional opportunities, assessment practices, and contextual conditions. The relevant issue is therefore not whether a teacher adopts a communicative, task-based, form-focused, or sociocultural orientation, but how instructional decisions contribute to a coherent learning system.

This perspective is consistent with broader discussions of constructive alignment, which emphasise coherence among intended outcomes, learning activities, and assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). However, TESOL introduces additional complexities because language learning is enacted through interaction and participation. Learners do not simply encounter pedagogical activities; they experience them through classroom discourse, communication, feedback, collaboration, and negotiated meaning. Similarly, learning outcomes become educationally significant only when assessment generates evidence capable of supporting defensible interpretations of learner performance.

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The consequence is a shift from viewing TESOL as a collection of competing methodologies towards understanding it as an interconnected educational system. Curriculum establishes educational purposes, pedagogy creates learning opportunities, classroom interaction mediates participation, assessment generates evidence, and context conditions the operation of the entire process. Educational effectiveness therefore emerges not from methodological purity but from the coherence of relationships among these dimensions.

This shift provides the conceptual foundation for the remainder of the article. If interaction mediates learning and assessment provides evidence concerning learning, then the central question becomes how evidence generated through assessment can inform alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discourse, and context. The next section addresses this issue by examining assessment as an evidential dimension of TESOL practice.

5. Assessment as Evidence of Learning

Assessment occupies a central position within an evidence-informed conception of TESOL because it provides systematic means of generating, interpreting, and using evidence concerning learner performance. Although assessment is often positioned as the final stage of instruction, such a view underestimates its broader educational significance. Assessment can identify learner needs, monitor developing performance, document achievement, and inform subsequent pedagogical decisions. Consequently, assessment should be understood not merely as a mechanism for assigning grades but as an integral component of the learning process (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

The educational value of assessment derives from the relationship between evidence and interpretation. Learner performance provides observable evidence, but that evidence acquires meaning only when interpreted in relation to intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and educational purposes. The same performance may support different conclusions depending upon what capability is being assessed and how that evidence is subsequently used. Assessment therefore functions simultaneously as an evaluative process and as a source of information capable of informing future learning opportunities.

Within the framework developed in this article, assessment occupies a distinctive role because it provides the evidential link between learner performance and pedagogical

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adaptation. The following discussion examines how different assessment functions contribute to that role.

5.1 Purposes and Functions of Language Assessment

Assessment serves multiple educational purposes, each of which requires different forms of evidence. Diagnostic assessment identifies existing capabilities and learning needs; formative assessment supports ongoing learning and instructional adjustment; summative assessment documents achievement; and placement or proficiency assessment informs educational and institutional decisions (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

These purposes should not be treated as interchangeable. Assessment quality depends partly upon alignment between assessment design and intended use. An assessment designed to support immediate pedagogical adaptation may differ substantially from one intended to support certification or progression. Consequently, assessment should be evaluated not only according to how evidence is generated, but also according to the decisions that evidence is expected to support.

5.2 Formative and Summative Assessment

The distinction between formative and summative assessment is particularly important within an evidence-informed framework. Formative assessment seeks to generate information capable of supporting ongoing learning, whereas summative assessment documents achievement against specified outcomes or standards (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Formative assessment may occur through questioning, classroom observation, learner explanations, short tasks, peer interaction, drafts, quizzes, and feedback processes. Its educational significance lies not in the collection of information alone, but in whether that information contributes to pedagogical adaptation or learner improvement. Evidence becomes formative when it informs subsequent action by teachers or learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

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Summative assessment serves a complementary function. It provides evidence concerning achievement at a particular stage of learning and supports decisions concerning progression, completion, accountability, or certification. Effective TESOL systems require both formative and summative functions, but they should be interpreted according to their distinct educational purposes rather than treated as interchangeable indicators of learning.

5.3 Performance-Based and Communicative Assessment

Performance-based assessment is particularly relevant to language education because language ability involves the capacity to use linguistic resources in purposeful activity. Assessments requiring learners to speak, write, present, interact, solve problems, or complete communicative tasks can provide evidence concerning how language is used in practice rather than merely what learners know about language (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Communicative assessment extends this principle by emphasising meaningful language use. The rationale is that evidence concerning communicative ability should be generated through tasks that require learners to engage with communicative purposes rather than exclusively through decontextualised linguistic exercises. Such assessment therefore aligns naturally with communicative and task-based pedagogies.

However, authenticity alone does not guarantee assessment quality. Performance can be influenced by task familiarity, topic knowledge, interactional conditions, assessment criteria, and contextual factors. Performance-based assessment therefore requires careful design and interpretation if it is to support defensible educational conclusions.

Table 2 summarises the principal assessment functions discussed in this section and their relationship to evidence generation, interpretation, and pedagogical use.

Table 2. Assessment Functions and Evidence in TESOL

Assessment function	Primary purpose	Typical evidence	Pedagogical use	Important qualification
Diagnostic	Identify prior knowledge, strengths, and needs	Initial performance, responses, language samples	Establishes instructional priorities	Evidence should not be treated as a complete representation of proficiency
Formative	Monitor developing learning	Classroom tasks, questioning, drafts, observation, feedback	Supports immediate adaptation and further learning	Evidence becomes formative only when it informs subsequent action
Summative	Document achievement	Examinations, final tasks, portfolios, projects	Supports progression, certification, and accountability	High-stakes decisions require defensible interpretation
Performance-based	Demonstrate capability through activity	Speaking, writing, presentations, integrated tasks	Connects assessment with meaningful language use	Performance can be influenced by task and contextual conditions
Communicative	Evaluate purposeful language use	Interaction, discussion, negotiation, functional communication	Provides evidence of communicative capability	Authenticity alone does not guarantee assessment quality
Competency-based	Demonstrate specified capabilities	Observable performances against defined criteria	Links assessment to demonstrable outcomes	Competencies must be clearly defined and appropriately evidenced
Self- and peer assessment	Develop evaluative awareness and learner responsibility	Reflection, peer review, self-rating	Supports agency, metacognition, and learning regulation	Reliability and learner preparation require careful consideration

The table demonstrates that assessment functions differ according to purpose, evidence, pedagogical role, and interpretive limitation. As a result, assessment quality cannot be evaluated independently of the educational purposes it is intended to serve. Different forms of assessment generate different forms of evidence, and these differences influence how educational decisions can be justified.

5.4 Competency-Based Assessment and Demonstrable Capability

Competency-based assessment has gained increasing prominence within language education because of its emphasis on what learners can demonstrably do with language under specified conditions. Whereas traditional assessment approaches have often privileged the measurement of linguistic knowledge or achievement within a defined curriculum, competency-based approaches focus on observable capability and performance against explicit criteria. The central concern is not simply whether learners know particular linguistic forms, but whether they can apply relevant knowledge, skills, and communicative resources to accomplish meaningful tasks or functions (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

The appeal of competency-based assessment lies partly in its apparent transparency. Learning outcomes can be articulated in terms of capabilities that learners are expected to demonstrate, and assessment can then focus on evidence relevant to those capabilities. Such an orientation aligns with broader educational movements emphasising outcome-based learning, accountability, and the explicit specification of performance standards. Within TESOL, competency-based approaches have been employed in vocational language education, workplace communication programmes, migration contexts, professional certification systems, and standards-based language frameworks where evidence of practical language use is considered particularly important (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Competency, however, is not a self-evident construct. Any claim that a learner is competent presupposes decisions concerning what capability should be demonstrated, under what conditions performance should occur, what evidence is considered sufficient, and how performance should be interpreted. Competencies therefore do not exist independently of the assessment frameworks through which they are defined, evidenced, and evaluated.

Assessment judgements consequently depend upon explicit standards and interpretive criteria rather than direct observation alone (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

This consideration is particularly important in TESOL because language use varies considerably across social, academic, professional, and interpersonal contexts. Participating effectively in an academic seminar, contributing to a workplace meeting, writing a professional report, and engaging in informal conversation may require different combinations of linguistic, pragmatic, interactional, and strategic resources. Competency-based assessment should therefore avoid reducing language ability to a collection of isolated observable behaviours. Observable performance remains essential, but interpretation must acknowledge the complexity and contextual nature of communicative capability.

The relationship between competency-based assessment and performance-based assessment is consequently close but not identical. Performance-based assessment focuses primarily on the demonstration of ability through authentic or semi-authentic tasks, whereas competency-based assessment emphasises the judgement of performance against predefined standards or criteria. Performance provides the evidence, while competency frameworks provide the interpretive structure through which that evidence acquires meaning. Assessment therefore requires both opportunities for learners to demonstrate language use and transparent criteria through which the educational significance of that performance can be evaluated (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Rubrics, descriptors, can-do statements, and standards frameworks frequently support this process by specifying dimensions of performance relevant to the intended competency. Depending upon context, these dimensions may include linguistic accuracy, communicative effectiveness, interactional management, coherence, task achievement, intelligibility, strategic language use, or other capabilities associated with successful performance. Explicit criteria can increase transparency, support consistency of evaluation, and assist learners in understanding expectations associated with successful performance (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Competency-based assessment nevertheless presents important challenges. Complex communicative performances often resist reduction to discrete categories, and assessors may differ in their interpretations of the same performance. Furthermore, narrowly defined

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competencies can encourage fragmentation when broader communicative capability is divided into numerous isolated indicators. An assessment system that focuses exclusively on individual competencies may therefore fail to capture learners' ability to integrate linguistic resources in authentic communicative situations. Competency-based assessment is consequently strongest when competencies are interpreted as interconnected dimensions of language use rather than as independent behavioural units.

A further challenge concerns transferability. Evidence that a learner demonstrates competence in one context does not necessarily establish equivalent capability across all contexts. Assessment tasks must therefore be sufficiently representative of the domains of language use for which claims are being made. The credibility of competency-based assessment depends not merely upon clearly stated standards but upon the quality, relevance, and sufficiency of the evidence supporting judgements concerning competence.

Within an evidence-informed TESOL framework, competency-based assessment is therefore most valuable when it is aligned with clearly defined learning outcomes, meaningful performance conditions, transparent criteria, and defensible interpretive procedures. Competency should not be understood as a fixed attribute possessed by a learner, but as an evidential judgement supported by observed performance under specified conditions. Assessment consequently becomes a process of gathering and interpreting evidence concerning demonstrable capability rather than merely verifying the acquisition of discrete linguistic knowledge.

The broader significance of competency-based assessment lies in its contribution to the relationship among learning outcomes, performance, and evidence. By focusing attention on what learners can actually demonstrate, competency-based approaches reinforce the principle that assessment should provide evidence relevant to intended educational purposes. At the same time, they highlight the need for careful interpretation because performance evidence cannot be separated from the criteria, contexts, and inferential claims through which judgements of competence are constructed. These considerations lead directly to questions of validity, reliability, interpretation, and assessment consequences.

5.5 Validity, Reliability, Interpretation, and Consequences

The credibility of assessment depends not only on the tasks learners complete or the scores they receive, but also on the quality of the interpretations and decisions derived from assessment evidence. Questions concerning validity, reliability, interpretation, and consequences therefore occupy a central position within contemporary assessment theory. Assessment evidence acquires educational value only when there are defensible grounds for concluding that observed performance provides meaningful information about the construct that an assessment is intended to represent (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Modern conceptions of validity have moved beyond the view that validity is simply a technical property of a test. Instead, validity concerns the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the interpretations and actions supported by assessment evidence. In this sense, what requires validation is not the assessment instrument itself but the inferences and decisions made from assessment results (Messick, 1989).

This emphasis on interpretation has important implications for TESOL. A grammar assessment may generate useful evidence concerning learners' control of particular linguistic forms, but such evidence provides a weaker basis for broad claims concerning communicative competence across diverse contexts. Similarly, a speaking assessment may provide informative evidence concerning oral communication under specified conditions, yet interpretation remains contingent upon the relationship between the assessment task and the capability that the assessment is intended to represent. Validity therefore requires explicit attention to construct definition and evidential reasoning rather than simple reliance on scores or ratings.

Argument-based approaches to validation further reinforce this perspective by conceptualising assessment as a chain of interpretive inferences linking observed performance to claims about capability and subsequent decisions. Validation therefore requires evaluation of the assumptions underlying those inferences and examination of whether available evidence supports the intended interpretation and use of assessment outcomes (Kane, 2006, 2013). Before evidence can be interpreted meaningfully, educators must identify what capability is being assessed, how evidence is collected, and why the resulting conclusions are justified.

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Reliability addresses a related but distinct concern. Whereas validity focuses on interpretation and use, reliability concerns the consistency and dependability of assessment evidence (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Assessment outcomes may be influenced by factors unrelated to the intended construct, including variation in tasks, administration procedures, assessment contexts, assessor judgements, rating criteria, or learner circumstances. Excessive variability can weaken confidence in the conclusions drawn from assessment because it becomes difficult to determine whether observed differences reflect genuine differences in capability or inconsistencies in measurement.

Reliability is particularly important in performance-based assessment contexts where human judgement plays a significant role. Speaking assessments, presentations, portfolios, writing tasks, and integrated performance activities often require assessors to evaluate multidimensional performances rather than straightforward right-or-wrong responses. Clear criteria, assessor training, moderation procedures, and transparent scoring frameworks can therefore contribute to greater consistency while preserving the educational richness of performance evidence (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). At the same time, highly reliable measurement is of limited educational value if the assessment does not provide evidence that is relevant to the intended construct.

Validity and reliability should consequently be understood as complementary rather than competing concerns. Reliable assessment can strengthen confidence in observed findings, while validity determines whether those findings support meaningful interpretations and defensible decisions. Dependable measurement does not guarantee meaningful interpretation, just as meaningful constructs cannot be assessed credibly through highly inconsistent procedures (Messick, 1989).

Interpretation represents the process through which assessment evidence is transformed into educational judgement. Scores, ratings, observations, and descriptors do not speak for themselves. Teachers, assessors, programme leaders, and institutions must determine what those indicators signify in relation to curriculum goals, learning outcomes, learner development, and instructional decision-making. The same observed performance may support different interpretations depending upon the assessment purpose and the standards against which performance is evaluated (Kane, 2006, 2013).

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This interpretive dimension highlights the importance of context. Learner proficiency, educational background, prior learning experiences, task familiarity, institutional expectations, and assessment conditions may all influence performance. Assessment evidence should therefore be interpreted in relation to the circumstances under which it was generated rather than treated as a context-independent indicator of ability (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Assessment consequences provide a further dimension of quality. Decisions informed by assessment may influence educational progression, certification, placement, professional opportunities, learner motivation, and access to resources. Assessment can also shape curriculum implementation and pedagogical priorities by signalling which forms of knowledge and performance are valued. Consequently, assessment quality cannot be evaluated solely through technical indicators of measurement; educational consequences also require consideration (Messick, 1989).

An assessment intended to support low-stakes formative feedback may legitimately tolerate greater uncertainty than an assessment used for high-stakes certification or programme completion. The stronger the consequences attached to assessment, the stronger the evidential justification required for decisions based upon its results (Kane, 2013). Assessment systems should therefore seek proportionality between the significance of a decision and the quality of evidence used to support it.

Within an evidence-informed TESOL framework, validity, reliability, interpretation, and consequences should be understood as interconnected dimensions of assessment quality rather than isolated technical concerns. Assessment generates evidence concerning learner performance, but the educational significance of that evidence depends upon the credibility of its interpretation and the appropriateness of its use. Reliable procedures strengthen confidence in observed performance; validity supports meaningful interpretation; contextual awareness guides judgement; and consideration of consequences promotes responsible educational decision-making.

The broader implication is that assessment should not be understood merely as a mechanism for generating scores. It is a process through which evidence is collected, interpreted, justified, and used in support of pedagogical and educational decisions. This emphasis on the use of evidence provides the foundation for the next section, which

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examines how assessment feedback can inform pedagogical adaptation and subsequent learning opportunities.

These concepts form the theoretical foundation of assessment interpretation.

5.6 Assessment Feedback and Pedagogical Adaptation

Assessment acquires educational significance when the evidence it generates informs subsequent learning opportunities. Feedback functions as the principal mechanism through which assessment information can influence learners and teachers. Effective feedback clarifies performance expectations, identifies strengths and limitations, and provides direction for subsequent improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Within TESOL, feedback may address multiple dimensions of performance, including accuracy, fluency, interactional effectiveness, communicative success, task fulfilment, and strategic language use. Its value depends not simply on the information provided but on whether learners and teachers are able to use that information to support further learning. Assessment therefore contributes most effectively when evidence generates informed adaptation rather than merely documenting achievement.

5.7 Synthesis: Assessment as an Evidential Dimension of TESOL

The preceding discussion positions assessment as an evidential dimension of TESOL rather than merely a measurement activity. Assessment provides structured opportunities for generating evidence concerning learner performance, but the educational significance of that evidence depends upon the credibility of interpretation, the appropriateness of assessment use, and the actions that follow from resulting judgements. Competency-based assessment foregrounds demonstrable capability, validity concerns the defensibility of interpretations, reliability contributes to confidence in observed performance, and feedback supports adaptation and further learning.

This perspective reinforces a broader argument developed throughout the article. Classroom interaction generates opportunities for performance, while assessment generates evidence concerning that performance. Neither process alone is sufficient for understanding learning.

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Educational effectiveness requires interpretation, judgement, and responsiveness. Assessment consequently functions as the evidential bridge between learner performance and subsequent pedagogical decision-making.

The argument developed in this section leads directly to the next stage of the framework. If interaction provides opportunities for learning and assessment provides evidence concerning learning, then the central challenge becomes explaining how evidence can inform alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, and context. The next section therefore examines the role of assessment evidence in sustaining educational alignment within TESOL.

6. From Assessment Evidence to Pedagogical Alignment

The preceding analysis has examined classroom interaction as a mediating dimension of learning and assessment as an evidential dimension of learning. Together, these discussions suggest that TESOL effectiveness cannot be adequately understood through instructional methods, interactional practices, or assessment procedures considered independently. Rather, educational effectiveness emerges from the relationships among these dimensions and from the extent to which they operate coherently within a wider educational system. The concept of alignment provides a basis for understanding these relationships.

Alignment is particularly important in language education because intended outcomes, pedagogical activities, classroom participation, learner performance, and assessment evidence are closely interconnected. A curriculum may specify communicative outcomes, but learners can only develop those capabilities if pedagogy creates appropriate learning opportunities, classroom interaction supports meaningful participation, and assessment provides evidence consistent with intended objectives. Educational effectiveness therefore depends upon coherence across dimensions rather than excellence within any single dimension.

6.1 Curriculum-Pedagogy-Interaction-Assessment Alignment

Within educational theory, alignment is commonly associated with the relationship among intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment. Constructive alignment proposes that educational systems should establish coherence between what

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learners are expected to achieve, the activities through which learning occurs, and the procedures through which achievement is evaluated (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Such coherence increases the likelihood that learners encounter experiences appropriate to the capabilities they are expected to develop.

The relevance of alignment to TESOL extends beyond these three dimensions. Language learning is enacted through interaction and participation, meaning that classroom discourse occupies a critical position between pedagogical design and learner performance. Intended outcomes may specify communicative capability, critical discussion, collaborative problem-solving, or disciplinary language use, yet such capabilities only become observable when learners participate in interactional activities that allow them to demonstrate them. Classroom discourse therefore represents an essential mediating dimension of alignment rather than merely a pedagogical technique.

Assessment occupies a similarly important role because it provides evidence concerning what learners are able to demonstrate under specified conditions. When assessment corresponds appropriately to learning objectives and interactional opportunities, it strengthens the coherence of the educational system. When assessment measures capabilities unrelated to intended outcomes, alignment weakens and educational evidence becomes more difficult to interpret. Effective TESOL consequently requires alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, classroom interaction, and assessment rather than attention to only some of these dimensions.

6.2 Evidence-Informed Adaptation

If alignment establishes educational coherence, evidence-informed adaptation explains how that coherence is maintained over time. Educational systems operate under changing conditions. Learners develop unevenly, instructional activities produce variable outcomes, classroom interaction unfolds in unanticipated ways, and assessment reveals strengths and difficulties that may not have been evident during planning. Alignment cannot therefore be understood as a fixed achievement. It requires ongoing interpretation and adjustment in response to evidence generated through teaching and learning.

Assessment outcomes, classroom observations, interactional patterns, learner contributions,

and task performances all generate evidence concerning learning. However, evidence acquires educational significance only when interpreted in relation to intended outcomes, assessment criteria, and pedagogical purposes (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Kane, 2006, 2013).

Formative assessment traditions further reinforce this perspective by emphasising that evidence becomes educationally valuable when it informs subsequent teaching and learning activities rather than merely documenting achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989). Consequently, adaptation should be regarded as a normal feature of effective educational systems rather than a departure from planned instruction.

6.3 Context as a Conditioning Dimension

Alignment and adaptation do not occur independently of context. Learner characteristics, institutional conditions, technological resources, educational policies, sociocultural expectations, assessment requirements, and available instructional time all influence how curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, and assessment operate. Context should therefore be understood as a conditioning dimension rather than as an external variable added to an otherwise complete model.

The significance of context is evident throughout TESOL research. Findings generated under particular instructional conditions cannot automatically be generalised across all learning environments. Pedagogical practices that function effectively in one setting may require considerable modification elsewhere, while assessment evidence may require different interpretations depending upon learner populations, institutional expectations, and educational purposes. Context consequently influences both the interpretation of evidence and the feasibility of adaptation.

The implication is that effective TESOL cannot be evaluated independently of circumstance. Evidence-informed practice requires attention not only to what appears effective, but also to where, for whom, under what conditions, and for what purposes educational activity occurs.

6.4 Professional Judgement

Evidence-informed TESOL does not imply the mechanical application of research findings or

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assessment results. Research evidence can inform decisions, assessment can generate information concerning learner performance, and curriculum frameworks can establish educational priorities, but applying these resources requires professional judgement. Teachers and programme leaders must evaluate how evidence, learner needs, contextual conditions, and educational purposes relate to one another in specific situations.

Professional judgement becomes particularly important because educational evidence rarely provides unambiguous answers. Assessment results may indicate difficulty, but they do not automatically explain why difficulties have emerged or what responses are most appropriate. Similarly, classroom interaction may reveal issues concerning participation, task design, learner confidence, or instructional support, yet these possibilities require interpretation rather than simple observation. Effective adaptation consequently depends on educators' ability to make reasoned decisions informed by evidence rather than adherence to predetermined procedures.

Professional judgement therefore functions as the interpretive mechanism connecting evidence with action. It enables assessment evidence and interactional observations to inform meaningful pedagogical decisions rather than remaining isolated descriptions of learner performance.

6.5 Recursive Alignment

The discussion developed in this section suggests that alignment should be understood as recursive rather than linear. Educational systems do not operate through a simple sequence in which curriculum determines pedagogy, pedagogy produces learning, assessment measures outcomes, and the process concludes. Learning generates evidence; evidence informs interpretation; interpretation supports adaptation; and adaptation influences subsequent learning opportunities. Educational activity therefore unfolds through cycles of responsiveness and refinement (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

This recursive perspective is particularly appropriate to TESOL because language development is gradual, variable, and strongly influenced by participation, context, and feedback. Learners rarely develop uniformly across all dimensions of language ability, and instructional decisions frequently require revision in response to emerging evidence. Effective

TESOL therefore depends not on the rigid implementation of predetermined methods but on the capacity of the educational system to respond to information generated through learning and performance.

Taken together, the relationships among curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, assessment, adaptation, professional judgement, and context suggest the need for a more integrated conceptual account of TESOL practice. The next section develops such an account through a Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework that brings these dimensions together within a single model of evidence-informed language education.

7. An Integrative Five-Dimensional Framework for TESOL

The preceding analysis has argued that TESOL effectiveness cannot be adequately explained through isolated pedagogical methods, interactional practices, or assessment procedures. Curriculum establishes educational direction, pedagogy creates learning opportunities, classroom discourse mediates participation, assessment generates evidence concerning learner performance, and contextual conditions influence the operation of all educational activity. Considered separately, these dimensions provide only partial explanations of language teaching and learning. Considered together, they suggest the need for an integrated model capable of explaining how educational effectiveness emerges through their interaction.

This section proposes a Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework that synthesises the principal dimensions identified throughout the article. The framework extends traditional alignment-oriented approaches by positioning classroom discourse and interaction as an explicit mediating dimension and by recognising context as a conditioning dimension that influences the operation of the entire educational system. Consistent with the broader alignment tradition, effectiveness is understood as a function of coherence among educational dimensions rather than adherence to a particular methodology (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

7.1 The Five Dimensions

The framework comprises five interconnected dimensions through which TESOL practice can be understood and evaluated.

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Curriculum

Curriculum establishes educational purposes, learning outcomes, content priorities, progression pathways, and expectations concerning learner development. It defines the capabilities learners are expected to acquire and therefore provides the reference point against which educational decisions are ultimately evaluated.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy transforms intended outcomes into learning opportunities. Instructional approaches, task design, teacher guidance, scaffolding, collaborative activities, classroom organisation, and technology integration all operate within this dimension. Pedagogy therefore determines how learners encounter opportunities for language development.

Classroom Discourse and Interaction

Classroom interaction mediates the relationship between pedagogical design and learner performance. Participation, questioning, feedback, negotiation, collaboration, teacher talk, and communicative activity influence how learning opportunities are experienced in practice. Interaction consequently functions as the operational dimension through which curriculum and pedagogy are enacted (Walsh, 2011, 2013; Gass & Mackey, 2007).

Assessment

Assessment generates evidence concerning learner performance and development. Formative, summative, communicative, performance-based, and competency-oriented approaches provide information that supports interpretation, feedback, evaluation, and decision-making. Assessment therefore functions as the evidential dimension of the framework.

Context

Context represents the conditions within which all other dimensions operate. Learner characteristics, institutional conditions, educational policies, sociocultural expectations,

technological resources, and assessment constraints influence how curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, and assessment function. Context consequently conditions the operation of the entire system rather than occupying a single position within it.

7.2 Relationships Among the Five Dimensions

The framework does not conceptualise the five dimensions as independent components. Nor does it treat them as a fixed sequence of educational steps. Curriculum influences pedagogy, pedagogy shapes interaction, interaction generates learner performance, and assessment provides evidence concerning that performance. At the same time, assessment evidence can influence subsequent pedagogical decisions, interactional arrangements, and curriculum review. Context influences every relationship within the system.

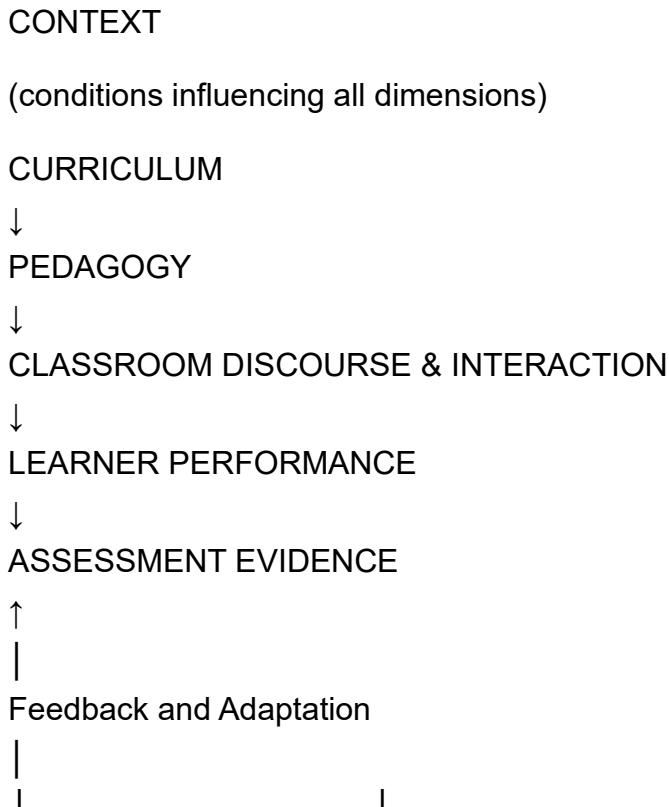
Educational effectiveness consequently emerges not from the independent quality of any one dimension but from the coherence of their relationships. A strong curriculum cannot compensate fully for poorly aligned assessment processes, just as innovative pedagogy cannot realise intended outcomes if learners are denied meaningful opportunities for participation and interaction. The framework therefore treats TESOL practice as a system of mutually dependent educational relationships rather than a collection of isolated instructional decisions.

7.3 The Dynamic Alignment Cycle

The relationships among the dimensions can be represented through a dynamic alignment cycle.

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Figure 1. The Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework



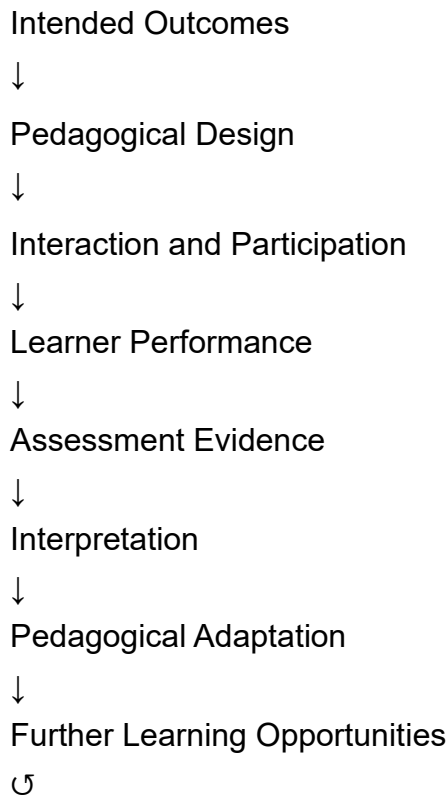
Note. The figure illustrates the principal dimensions of the framework and the relationships through which intended outcomes are translated into pedagogical activity, mediated through interaction, and represented through learner performance and assessment evidence.

Figure 1 highlights a central proposition of this article: educational effectiveness emerges through alignment among dimensions rather than through the independent implementation of instructional methods. Curriculum establishes direction, pedagogy creates opportunities, interaction mediates participation, assessment generates evidence, and feedback supports adaptation. Context conditions each stage of the process.

7.4 Recursive Evidence-Informed Alignment

While Figure 1 represents the structural dimensions of the framework, the educational significance of the framework becomes clearer when those dimensions are understood as recursive rather than linear. Learning does not conclude when performance has been assessed. Rather, evidence generated through learner performance can inform future curriculum enactment, pedagogical decisions, interactional arrangements, and assessment practices.

Figure 2. The Recursive Evidence-Informed TESOL Cycle



Note. Context operates continuously across the cycle, influencing how evidence is

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generated, interpreted, and used. The cycle is recursive because evidence from one stage informs subsequent educational decisions.

The cycle illustrates how alignment is maintained through responsiveness rather than static design. Evidence generated through interaction and assessment informs interpretation; interpretation supports adaptation; and adaptation creates further learning opportunities. Educational systems therefore learn from the evidence they generate.

7.5 Framework Propositions

The synthesis developed throughout this article supports five propositions that make the framework explicit and potentially open to empirical investigation.

Proposition 1. TESOL effectiveness is relational rather than method-dependent. Educational outcomes emerge from the interaction of multiple dimensions rather than from the universal superiority of a particular methodology.

Proposition 2. Classroom interaction mediates the relationship between pedagogical intention and learner performance. Learning opportunities are enacted through participation, discourse, feedback, scaffolding, and communicative activity rather than through pedagogical design alone.

Proposition 3. Assessment evidence requires interpretation in relation to intended constructs, educational purposes, and contextual conditions. Observable performance does not automatically determine educational meaning.

Proposition 4. Pedagogical effectiveness depends upon alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, classroom interaction, assessment, and context. The coherence of relationships among dimensions is more important than adherence to a single instructional tradition.

Proposition 5. Effective TESOL systems are recursive because evidence concerning learner performance can inform subsequent pedagogical, interactional, assessment, and curricular adaptation.

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Taken together, these propositions shift attention away from questions concerning which methodology should dominate TESOL and towards questions concerning how educational dimensions operate together within an integrated system. The framework therefore positions **evidence-informed alignment** rather than methodological allegiance as the central organising principle of TESOL practice.

8. Conclusion

This article addressed a central challenge within TESOL scholarship and practice: the tendency to examine pedagogy, classroom interaction, and assessment as separate domains despite their interdependence within actual educational settings. Methodological debates have often focused on the relative merits of particular instructional approaches, while classroom discourse research has examined participation and interactional processes, and assessment scholarship has investigated the generation and interpretation of evidence. Although each perspective provides valuable insights, none alone adequately explains how learning opportunities are created, how learner performance becomes observable, how evidence is interpreted, or how educational decisions are subsequently adapted. The present study therefore sought to develop a more integrated account of TESOL practice by bringing these dimensions together within a single conceptual framework.

The analysis demonstrated that classroom interaction occupies a crucial mediating position between pedagogical design and learner performance. Teacher talk, questioning, feedback, scaffolding, participation structures, peer interaction, and technology-mediated communication influence the opportunities learners have to engage with language and demonstrate developing capabilities. At the same time, interactional activity should not be equated automatically with language acquisition. Participation and performance provide evidence of learning opportunities, but educational interpretation requires additional consideration of instructional objectives, contextual conditions, assessment evidence, and learner development.

The article also argued that assessment should be understood as an evidential dimension of TESOL rather than simply a mechanism for assigning scores or documenting achievement. Formative, summative, performance-based, communicative, and competency-based approaches generate different forms of evidence, each requiring interpretation in relation to

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intended constructs, educational purposes, and contextual conditions. Assessment consequently functions not only as an evaluative process but also as a source of information capable of informing pedagogical adaptation and future learning opportunities.

Building upon these relationships, the article proposed a Five-Dimensional TESOL Alignment Framework comprising curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discourse and interaction, assessment, and context. The framework extends conventional alignment-oriented models by positioning interaction as an explicit mediating dimension and context as a conditioning dimension influencing the operation of the entire system. Curriculum establishes educational direction; pedagogy creates learning opportunities; interaction mediates participation and performance; assessment generates evidence; and context shapes how all dimensions operate. The framework therefore conceptualises TESOL effectiveness as a systemic and relational phenomenon rather than as the consequence of methodological allegiance.

A further contribution of the framework is its emphasis on recursive, evidence-informed adaptation. Educational activity is not represented as a linear sequence progressing from instruction to assessment and ending with evaluation. Rather, evidence generated through learner performance informs interpretation, feedback, pedagogical adaptation, and subsequent learning opportunities. Effective TESOL systems therefore maintain alignment through responsiveness and adjustment rather than through rigid adherence to predetermined instructional procedures. This recursive perspective provides a basis for understanding how educational coherence can be sustained within dynamic and contextually variable learning environments.

Several implications follow from this perspective. For teachers, the framework emphasises the importance of aligning instructional practices with learning objectives, interactional opportunities, and assessment evidence. For assessment designers and programme leaders, it highlights the need to ensure coherence among intended outcomes, learning activities, and evidence-generating processes. For researchers, it offers a conceptual model through which relationships among curriculum, pedagogy, interaction, assessment, and context can be examined more systematically. The framework's propositions provide a foundation for investigating how alignment operates across different TESOL settings and how evidence-informed adaptation contributes to learner development.

The article should also be understood within its limitations. The framework represents a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirical test of causal relationships. Although derived from established scholarship across multiple research traditions, its explanatory value ultimately depends upon further investigation within diverse educational contexts. Future research should therefore examine the framework's propositions through classroom-based, programme-level, and longitudinal studies capable of exploring how alignment, interaction, assessment, and adaptation operate in practice.

Ultimately, the central argument advanced is that effective TESOL is best understood not as adherence to a universal teaching method, but as the continuous alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, classroom interaction, assessment, and context through the informed interpretation of educational evidence. When these dimensions operate coherently within a recursive system of adaptation and feedback, TESOL moves beyond methodological competition towards a more responsive, evidence-informed, and educationally sustainable model of language teaching and learning.

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