English Language Lecturers' Views on Dynamic Assessment and Its Potential in Higher Education: Challenging the Current Assessment Status Quo

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English Language Lecturers' Views on Dynamic Assessment and Its Potential in Higher Education: Challenging the Current Assessment Status Quo

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Declarations

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

I confirm that this dissertation is all my own work.

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Abstract

English language testing and assessment are one of the key functions of the UK Higher Education institutions from the early process of non-native English speaking student recruitment (when admissions officers and course leaders look at the English language score of the applicant as one of the entry requirements) to the time of in-sessional and pre-sessional English language provision (when English language lecturers take different measures to enhance the English language abilities of the student and prepare them for their subject area studies). There have recently been critiques of assessment practice in Higher Education (see, for example, Knight 2002, Ball et al. 2012 and Hamilton 2014). This begs the question as to the possibility of potential alternatives for the current assessment regime. One of the alternatives suggested in the literature is ‘dynamic assessment’ which has origins in Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and the concept of ZPD. However, the perceptions of native English-speaking lecturers teaching English language of this potential alternative and its implementation in the HE are under-researched. As it is essential to delve into the perceptions and viewpoints of teachers to promote change in what teachers do (Borg Al-Busaidi 2012: 283) and as teachers are increasingly required to act as agents of change (Priestley et al. 2012: 191), to address the above-mentioned gap in the literature, an interpretive qualitative study was carried out in the UK context. Ten lecturers teaching English language at different UK Higher Education institutions took part in a semi-structured interview. The interview data were analysed by utilising the procedures of grounded theory. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data, which showed that, despite ambivalent feelings and concerns about the challenges of implementing dynamic assessment, there were clearly some lecturers who were philosophically inclined and open to the potential of dynamic assessment for enabling more personalised learning. Implications for educational practice are also offered in the concluding chapter, including liberalisation of university policies, redistribution of teaching and assessment hours, reconceptualisation of ‘fairness’ and providing professional development for academics.
Chapter 1
Introduction

One of the important aspects of Higher Education is the assessments run by HE institutions and academics, as the future of HE students is at stake by the decisions made on the results of these assessments. This necessitates designing assessments which are fit for purpose and revealing what the students can do in the future. However, there have been critiques of the assessments run at HE institutions; for example, Ball et al. (2012) write:

The National Student Survey, despite its limitations, has made more visible what researchers in the field have known for many years: assessment in our universities is far from perfect. From student satisfaction surveys to Select Committee reports, there is firm evidence that assessment is not successfully meeting the needs of students, employers, politicians or the public in general… Students have also noticed how assessment fails to meet their needs, particularly in relation to relevance to the world of work. (Ball et al. 2012: 7)

In a similar vein, Knight (2002) argues that

it is important to insist that benchmarks, specifications, criteria and learning outcomes do not and cannot make summative assessment reliable, may limit its validity and certainly compound its costs. For example, educational criteria are necessarily imprecise unless they refer to highly determined, even trivial achievements, as with the lower levels of the English National Vocational Qualifications. Trainers may be able to develop and use precise-looking criteria, but educators work with fuzzy learning outcomes. Even ‘precise’ criteria are fuzzy to the extent: (i) that their meanings emerge in local communities of practice; and (ii) in the context of specific tasks (Wolf, 1997). It is hardly surprising, then, that difficulties are reported in getting agreement on criteria and their application in a subject (Greatorex, 1999) and in a school (Price & Rust, 1999). (Knight 2002: 280)

These issues made me think of potential alternative assessments, particularly in English language learning and teaching in HE which is my area of expertise and interest. Reading the literature on English language assessment and being interested in the works of Lev Vygotsky and his socio-cultural theory, I came across the approach of ‘dynamic assessment’ which seemed to have potential to replace the current assessment regime in HE in English language classes. However, as one of the ways to encourage change in educational systems is to
involve academics who teach on the ground (Priestley et al. 2012: 191) and deal with the
design and administration of assessments, I embarked on investigating the UK HE English
language lecturers’ views and perceptions of current assessment system and potential for the
uptake of dynamic assessment in HE English language classes, and hence this dissertation as
the outcome of my research.

Research question
The research question put forward by this study is as follows:
What are the perceptions of lecturers in English language of the use of dynamic assessment in
Higher Education in an English speaking context?
My research question was open-ended and I had no preconceptions of what views and
perceptions English language lecturers teaching in the UK Higher Education might hold
regarding the potential use of dynamic assessment. Furthermore, my epistemological
standpoint was interpretive and my research approach was qualitative by applying semi-
structured interviews to collect data and utilising the procedures of grounded theory to
analyse them. Therefore, I started my research by having no hypotheses. See Chapter Three
for further elaboration on my research approach and its methodological underpinning.

Research context
This research was carried out at the universities in the UK. I sent emails to a large number of
academics teaching the English language at the UK Higher Education inviting them to
participate in the study. I received ten replies from lecturers at six universities agreeing to
partake in my research. In other words, the research took place in a native English speaking
environment with native English speaking lecturers working at the HE level. The above
context is significant as, to the best of my knowledge, no researchers have conducted a
similar and/or same study as mine in the aforementioned context. For further description of
the research context and procedures, see Chapter Three.

Theoretical underpinning of the study
As was briefly suggested above, Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory, including the concepts of
the ‘Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)’ and ‘scaffolding’, is the basis of dynamic
assessment and the current study. According to this theory, learning is a social activity whereby knowledge is co-constructed through the interactions and communications of an expert (a more knowledgeable/skilful person) and a novice (a less knowledgeable/skilful person). In this process, a learner (the novice) can achieve her potential and perform her best if she is properly scaffolded by an expert or a more knowledge person, e.g. the teacher. In other words, the learner will achieve more and reveal her full potential (i.e. will move through her ZPD) when she is provided with collaborative talk (supportive talk). The above process, which is called other-regulation, continues until the learner can self-regulate and perform without the support of the expert (Mitchell et al. 2013). Accordingly, dynamic assessment which is a way of administering assessments, whereby the future performance and the present-to-future model of assessment is the locus of assessment, focuses on what the learner can do while being scaffolded by the teacher (Poehner 2007; Lantolf and Poehner 2004). For further elaboration on the socio-cultural theory and dynamic assessment, see Chapter Two.

**Gap in the literature**

Like Ball et al. (2012) and Knight (2002) quoted above, Hamilton (2014) criticises the current assessment regime in Higher Education for lacking validity and authenticity. Norton et al. (2006) point out that there is little literature on the academics’ perceptions of the value of exams. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) argue that teachers’ beliefs affect their teaching and that understanding and influencing teachers’ belief can help with promoting change in educational systems. Nazari (2012) highlights that dynamic assessment is at early stages of its growth and further research, particularly in consultation with practitioners, is required in this area. All of the above and the fact that there is a scarcity of research and literature on the English language lecturers’ perceptions of the potential of dynamic assessment application (see Karimi and Shafiee 2014) in the UK Higher Education English language classes clearly indicate that there is a gap in English language assessment in HE that needs to be addressed. My research is an attempt to address this lacuna.

**Organisation of the dissertation**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One is an overview of the dissertation and present research in general terms. Chapter Two draws on the literature on the socio-cultural
theory, dynamic assessment and the findings of the researchers who have conducted research on dynamic assessment. It also highlights the exigency of carrying out research in this area. Chapter Three describes and justifies the research approach, data collection tool and data analysis method adopted in the current study. Chapter Four presents and analyses the data, interprets the results, discusses the findings of the study, points out the theoretical implications and the limitations of the study. Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by centering on the practical implications of the study, an example of dynamic assessment in a language class, suggestions for the uptake of dynamic assessment in the UK HE English language classes and recommendations for further research. There are a reference section and appendices at the end of the dissertation.

The following chapter reviews the literature on dynamic assessment and provides a theoretical basis for the present study.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction
This chapter describes, among other issues and concepts, the deficiencies of traditional assessment methods in Higher Education and the need to explore alternatives to traditional assessments, the notion of dynamic assessment (DA) and the theoretical underpinning (Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and the Zone of Proximal Development) of DA. It also draws on the implications of the above theory for assessment in Higher Education. The findings of researchers who have studied DA are described too. The gap in the literature on DA and the contribution of the present research to knowledge will be addressed as well.

Traditional assessment methods in HE and the need for an alternative
In a paper entitled “Are traditional assessment methods appropriate in contemporary Higher Education?” Hamilton (2014) draws on the National Student Survey which reports that “assessment in our universities is far from perfect. From student satisfaction surveys to Select Committee reports there is firm evidence that assessment is not successfully meeting the needs of students, employers, politicians or the public in general” (HEA 2012: 7) and argues that “traditional examinations have been widely criticised for lacking validity and authenticity. … Despite this lack of authenticity examinations are still widely used in the sector. Programme teams are finding it challenging to move away from examination based practices, constrained by institutional culture, lengthy regulatory frameworks and lack of training” (Hamilton 2014: no page number).

Researchers such as Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Poehner (2007) suggest that DA could be an alternative to traditional assessment methods. Nazari (2012) points out that DA is a quite young field of research, that further research in this area is needed and that research in this area needs to be carried out in consultation with other practitioners. Likewise, Vafaee (2011) endorses that empirical research on DA is still scarce and further research will shed more light on the benefits and limitations of this type of assessment. Norton et al. (2006) point out that “although there is much in the literature on students’ perceptions of exams as a form of assessment, there appears to be relatively little on university teachers’ beliefs about the
pedagogical value of exams” (Norton et al. 2006: slide 6). Furthermore, as Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) argue,

it is now well established in the teacher education literature (see, for example Phipps and Borg 2007) that teachers’ beliefs influence their instructional choices; it is also widely acknowledged that an understanding of teachers’ beliefs needs to be an integral part of initiatives that aim to promote change in what teachers do in the classroom (Wedell 2009). Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012: 283)

This lack of attention to English language lecturers’ views about DA, then, motivated me to carry out the present research. Also, “in the wake of new forms of curricular policy in many parts of the world, teachers are increasingly required to be agents of change” (Priestley et al. 2012: 191). Therefore, it makes sense to hear the voices of these teachers and empower them to achieve agency. Given that there are very few studies researching the views of English language lecturers regarding DA and its potential in Higher Education, in particular in the UK Higher Education context, I contend that my research will fill this gap in the literature by addressing this lacuna.

**Dynamic assessment**

DA is a type of assessment inspired by the socio-cultural theory of learning, in particular by Vygotskian notions of ZPD and scaffolding (see the following section on this theory), which seeks ways to assist learners to fulfil their potential (Daniels 2001). Campione draws a distinction between static and dynamic tests:

Skills can be measured in situations where students work unaided on sets of items, and are given but a single chance to demonstrate their proficiency (static tests). The contrast here involves cases where students are given some form of help designed to maximise their performance, with this aided, maximal level taken as providing the clearer picture of student ability (dynamic tests). (Campione 1996: 246)

Haywood and Lidz (2007) argue that the core characteristic of dynamic assessment is its use of an interactive procedure in which the examiner provides guidance, encouragement and feedback in an attempt to elicit the best performance. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) define dynamic assessment as a procedure whose outcome
…takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score may be learning score representing the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the post-test considered alone. (Sternberg and Grigorenko 2002: vii)

Poehner (2007) writes that dynamic assessment is based on the socio-cultural theory and that

From this perspective, assessment occurs not in isolation from instruction but as an inseparable feature of it. Assessment and instruction are dialectically integrated as a single activity that seeks to understand development by actively promoting it. This pedagogical approach, known as Dynamic Assessment (DA), challenges the widespread acceptance of independent performance as the privileged indicator of individuals' abilities and calls for assessors to abandon their role as observers of learner behavior in favor of a commitment to joint problem solving aimed at supporting learner development. In DA, the traditional goal of producing generalizations from a snapshot of performance is replaced by ongoing intervention in development. (Poehner 2007: 323)

Lantolf and Poehner (2004), drawing on Lidz and Gindis (2003), argue that future performance will be different from current performance and that

‘traditional standardized assessment follows the child’s cognitive performance to the point of “failure” in independent functioning, whereas DA in the Vygotskian tradition leads the child to the point of achievement of success in joint or shared activity.’ Indeed, Feuerstein, Rand and Rynder’s (1988) book on DA carries in its title the plea, ‘Don’t accept me as I am.’ In essence DA sees the future as a bet in favor of everyone. (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 53)

Drawing on Valsiner (2001), they also elaborate on the past-to-future model of assessment and the present-to-future one. They argue that static assessment focuses on the role of the past learning of the learner leading to the present state of her/his functioning. The present-to-future model of assessment, on the other hand, focuses on the present inter-psychological interactions to predict the future potential of the learner. As we are gaining a perspective of the learner’s future performance, we are simultaneously helping the learner to attain a future (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 53). “For testing, the future-in-the-making perspective sees ability not as a stable trait but as a malleable feature of the individual and emergent from the activities in which the person participates…. In other words, to fully understand the person’s potential to develop (i.e., her future), it is necessary to discover her ZPD” (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 53).
In dynamic assessment, determining potential performance is more important than assessing typical performance (Ajideh and Nourdad 2012: 105). Drawing on Grigorenko and Sternberg (1998), Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) also argue that “the aim of, dynamic assessment is to optimise cognitive functioning, rather than simply to sample it, and it is here that a paradigm shift in intellectual assessment occurs” (Ajideh and Nourdad 2012: 104).

Lantolf and Poehner (2004) classify dynamic assessment into two types: interventionist and interactionist. In the former the assistance procedures are standardised, whereas in the latter the assistance procedures emerge from the interaction of the assessee and the assessor. While the interventionist approach focuses on the speed of the learner’s learning to reach a pre-determined endpoint, the interactionist approach focuses on the development of the learner without concern for a predetermined endpoint (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 54):

> Using the train metaphor proposed by Elkonin (1998: 300), we might argue that those interested in speed and efficiency of learning, (i.e., interventionist DA), focus on how quickly a train moves toward the final station along a set of tracks. Interactionist DA, following Vygotsky more closely, is not as interested in the speed of the train along the already constructed track as with helping the person lay down new track leading toward a station that is potentially always relocating. (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 54)

In addition to the above distinction, another distinction might be made between these two models in that one could say the interventionist model of DA seems to promote the intervention from the tutor between the pre-test and post-test, whereas the interactionist model of DA seems to focus on scaffolding the learner during the test. No matter which approach to DA is adopted, it is not clear whether and to what extent lecturers in Higher Education, and in particular English language lecturers, see potential for dynamic assessment and challenging traditional forms of assessment in Higher Education, and hence, my research on this topic.

Furthermore, validity and reliability of DA and its application are questionable, given the institutional constraints, particularly in Higher Education where there are stringent quality control and assessment procedures in place. As far as validity is concerned, we should make sure that our assessment really assesses what it claims to assess (Douglas 2010). For example, a reading comprehension test would be considered as invalid to measure the listening ability of the language learner. As for reliability, we should make sure that our assessment produces
consistent results (Douglas 2010). For instance, if a reading comprehension test produces two different marks for the same student who has taken the test for a second time, the test will be considered unreliable. Making decisions and inferences based on invalid and/or unreliable assessments would have adverse consequences for the assessee. In other words, the ethical use of language assessments requires lecturers to ensure of the validity and reliability of their assessments (Douglas 2010). As was mentioned earlier, validity and reliability of DA are questionable, because the intervention of the assessor either during the assessment task or in-between pre- and post-test can hamper the precision and consistency of the assessment results.

On the other hand, the proponents of DA argue that if we take the concept of the ZPD seriously, we should assist the learner even during and/or in-between the assessment process to see what they are really capable of, which is an indication of their future independent performance (Naeini and Duvall 2012: 24). In other words, there are epistemological differences between those who support traditional assessment methods and those who promote the use of DA.

While looking at the notion of DA, it is also necessary to look at the concepts of ‘assessment-of-learning’ and ‘assessment-as-learning’. Assessment-of-learning is a type of assessment whereby the abilities and knowledge of the learner are measured at the end of the learning cycle. This assessment is usually summative and is usually given by the tutor (Earl 2013). Assessment-as-learning, however, is a type of assessment which is carried out during the learning cycle and more than once. Due to this type of assessment and the feedback they receive based on it, learners will be able to improve their work and tune their focus and learning strategies. This type of assessment is formative and could be given not only by the tutor but also by the peer and self, and hence helping learners to take more responsibility of their own learning and achievement (Earl 2013). To me, it seems that in both cases we can carry out DA, because

Dynamic assessment does not refer to assessment instruments but to administration procedures; in fact any test can be conducted as dynamic or nondynamic. In other words the notion of dynamic assessment does not refer to any particular way of testing or a specific procedure or technique but describes a wide range of methods. (Ajideh and Nourdad 2012:106)

Likewise, Lantolf and Poehner argue that

fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, open-ended essay, or even oral proficiency tests are in themselves neither static nor dynamic instruments. Their status is determined by the goal of the procedure and
Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and its implications

Dynamic assessment is underpinned by one of the theories of education, namely socio-cultural theory, which was initially developed by the Soviet child psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the 1920s. Socio-cultural theorists contend that learning is a process which is mediated by language and social relationships. The more skilled, more knowledgeable individual, the expert, is capable of autonomous functioning (self-regulation), whereas the less skilled, less knowledgeable individual, the novice, learns under the guidance of the expert (other-regulation) which is mediated by language. In other words, through collaborative talk (or other-regulation), the novice appropriates the new knowledge or skill (Mitchell et al. 2013). To put it another way, according to socio-cultural theory, learning involves inter-psychological collaborative activities first (other-regulation) and then intra-psychological autonomous activities (self-regulation). The process of collaborative talk (supportive talk) that guides, directs, and prompts the novice (the learner) is called scaffolding. If there is relevant and sufficient scaffolding, the learner can move through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the knowledge or skill that the learner cannot appropriate alone but can achieve in collaboration with others (i.e. through other-regulation). To put it simply, learning is first social, then individual (Mitchell et al. 2013).

Vygotsky christened the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explicate the way in which social and participatory learning happens. He defined ZPD as the distance between a learner’s “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving” and the higher level of “potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978: 86). Bazerman (1997) defines ZPD as the “area that is beyond one’s full comprehension and mastery, but that one is still able to fruitfully engage with, with the support of some tools, concepts and prompts from others” (Bazerman 1997: 305). According to Lave and Wenger (1991, 1996), the concept of ZPD has been interpreted by different scholars in different ways. One of these interpretations is referred to as scaffolding (Lave and Wenger 1991, 1996). The scaffolding interpretation maintains that the initial performance of the learner can be improved if supported by or collaborating with more experienced participants leading to subsequent
performance without assistance (Lave and Wenger 1991):

…the zone of proximal development is often characterised as the distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learner’s problem-solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more experienced people. This “scaffolding” interpretation has inspired pedagogical approaches that explicitly provide support for the initial performance of tasks to be later performed without assistance. (Lave and Wenger 1996: 144)

According to socio-cultural theorists, learning leads development which is enabled by scaffolding and the use of tools. The concept of ‘tools’ does not just refer to physical tools, which can enhance our physical abilities, but it also refers to mental/psychological tools which can enhance our mental and cognitive abilities. An example of the tools of the mind, and probably the most fundamental one, is language. Socio-cultural theorists point out that language is a means of thought, of establishing social relationships and of learning and that learning and development are mediated by language as well as social relationships.

Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory has at least three implications for language learning and teaching in Higher Education: First, language learning and teaching activities need to focus on the potential of the learner while utilising her/his present understanding, knowledge and skills (Daniels 2001). Second, language teaching needs to provide situations and circumstances for active participation of learners, opportunities for their collaboration and negotiation in the process of language education, and possibilities for the gradual empowerment of them to have a more active role in their language learning (Daniels 2001). Third, lecturer mediation should not be downgraded at the early stages of learning, particularly in the context of HE, as sometimes it is the lecturer’s expertise that is needed to help students shift along the ZPD (e.g. where working with new complex or abstract concepts) and this can link the first two principles together. I believe the above are what dynamic assessment aims to achieve (see the preceding section on dynamic assessment too). Allahyar and Nazari (2012), writing on Vygotsky’s social-cultural theory and linking it to the role of English language teachers in language learners’ willingness (or lack of) to communicate, argue that

of all output, output in collaborative dialogues is of high cognitive value and significantly contributes to language learning (Mercer, 1995). Empirical studies by Swain (2001) and Swain and Lapkin (2002) showed that it was in collaborative interactions that teachers and students could
work together to produce intellectual activities and create conditions for
language learning. (Allahyar and Nazari 2012: 86)

However, in language learning and teaching, as well as in other subject areas of human
education and humanities, there is not a perfect, infallible or immaculate theory or approach.
The same is true of socio-cultural theory described above. For example, Moll (1990) comments
on Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory as follows:

Vygotsky never specified the forms of social assistance to learners that
constitute a ZPD…. He wrote about collaboration and direction, and about
assisting children ‘through demonstration, and by introducing the initial
elements of the task’s solution…but did not specify beyond these general
descriptions. (Moll 1990: 11)

Also, we still do not know whether scaffolding causes language learners to skip over some of
the stages of language learning or it speeds up the progress through the stages (or a bit of both)
(Mitchell et al. 2013). It is not clear to what extent cooperation and group work by learners,
which are central to socio-cultural theories, are beneficial. Cooperation and group work
sometimes become competitive and reduce supportive scaffolding (Mitchell et al. 2013). Some
learners, e.g. advanced learners, may gain more benefits from group activities (Richard and
Rodgers 2001: 201) in the sense that they might dominate the conversations, group activities
and knowledge construction. Cultural issues are another factor to consider. Are group work and
social construction of knowledge suitable for all cultures?

It seems necessary to mention that scaffolding does not imply a one-way process whereby the
expert builds a scaffold and presents it to the novice to use (Daniels (2001) drawing on Newman
et al. (1989)). On the contrary, scaffolding is constructed through negotiation between the
expert and the novice, “rather than through the donation of a scaffold as some kind of
prefabricated climbing frame” (Daniels 2001: 59). This means that learners can make
contributions to the process of their education by drawing on and negotiating what they already
know (i.e., their prior knowledge), their world knowledge, their subject matter knowledge, and
their ideas and opinions. The negotiated scaffolding brings about a different way of teaching
and learning in which collaboration and cooperation between the tutor and the student and
among students will be maximised. Day and Cordon (1993) conducted some experiments on
American third graders concerning scaffolded and non-scaffolded learning and found that
scaffolded education yielded faster and better maintenance of learning. In consequence, it can
be said that learners’ participation in the process of education through a negotiated support structure seems to enhance their learning. As for language learning, Breen (2002) argues that language and language learning are socially co-constructed enterprises wherein, through mutual engagement of learners in meaningful activities, learners will scaffold each other’s language development (Nazari 2003). Through scaffolding, the control of activities and performances is gradually carried over from the more experienced participants to the learner. In this way, the learner moves from other-regulation to self-regulation, from dependence to independence.

Now that I have described the theory underpinning DA and my study, a description of the research on DA and the findings of the researchers who have carried out research on this type of assessment are in order.

**Research and findings regarding dynamic assessment**

As far as my library and online research shows, all research in the area of DA in language classes, except a couple, focuses on the design, use and marking of this assessment. For example, Davin et al. (2014) carried out research on the design and implementation of a dynamic reading comprehension task for classroom use with second language learners. The teacher in their study used pre-scripted mediation prompts during the task and scores were calculated for each individual student. The authors concluded that the task should be used as a learning tool in second language classrooms. Tavakoli and Nezakat-Alhossaini (2014) investigated the effectiveness of the implementation of corrective feedback in the light of dynamic assessment techniques on foreign language learners’ learning of reported speech structures. Two English language classes in a language centre in Iran each having 15 students were selected as the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received dynamic assessment-based treatment, whereas the control group followed only the routines of the language centre. The participants took two post-tests, i.e. one immediately after the treatment and another one after two weeks. The researchers concluded that the combination of dynamic assessment and corrective feedback was effective in enhancing the participants’ learning reported speech structures. Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) investigated the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learners’ reading comprehension in different proficiency levels. 197 Iranian university students participated in their quasi-experimental study. The results of their study revealed that while dynamic assessment had improving effects on reading
comprehension of learners in all proficiency levels, the proficiency groups did not differ significantly in their taking advantage of this kind of assessment. Naeini and Duvall (2012) studied the likely improvements in English Language Training university students’ reading comprehension performance by applying the mediations of a dynamic assessment approach to instruction and assessment. In their study, dynamic assessment procedures were conducted with 10 ELT university students. Participants took part in a pretest-mediation-posttest study. The mediation phase included focusing on a particular reading comprehension sub-skill. The analyses of the results revealed significant progress in participants’ reading comprehension performance.

In a recent study, Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) studied the impact of dynamic assessment on the vocabulary learning of EFL learners. They conducted an experimental study with 50 intermediate EFL Iranian learners. The experimental group received a pre-test, mediation and post-test, whereas the control group received no mediation. The experimental group outperformed the control group significantly in their test performance and vocabulary learning. Hessamy and Ghaderi conclude that “incorporation of DA as a supplementary procedure to standard testing has positive effect on both test performance and vocabulary learning of learners” (Hessamy and Ghaderi 2014: 645). In another recent study, Compernolle and Zhang (2014) described the design, administration and scoring of a dynamically administered elicited imitation test of L2 English morphology. They presented an analysis of an advanced L2 English speaker’s scores and compared his “actual” score, which was based on first responses only, with his “mediated” score, which was weighted to account for those abilities that become possible only with support. Compernolle and Zhang found that the student’s performance improved with support, as reflected by the mediated scores and gains. They also argued for the unification of teaching and testing and their complementary role, because they contended that approaches to DA were based on Vygotsky’s ZPD concept.

Among very few studies looking into the perceptions of English teachers regarding dynamic assessment, Hidri (2014), exploring how to improve current assessments of listening comprehension of university EFL learners in the Tunisian context, reports that “although the new assessment [DA] provided better insights into learners' cognitive and meta-cognitive processes than did the traditional assessment, raters were doubtful about the value of and processes involved in DA mainly because they were unfamiliar with it” (Hidri 2014: 1). The only studies exploring EFL teachers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment more elaborately have
been carried out by Es-hagi Sardrood (2011) and Karimi and Shafiee (2014). Es-hagi Sardrood (2011) reported on 51 Iranian EFL university, language-institute and school teachers’ perceptions of DA through the data collected by a structured questionnaire and a structured interview. The results showed that most of the teachers had a negative attitude to DA and believed that a complete implementation of DA in Iranian EFL classrooms would be too demanding. The teachers also questioned the feasibility of DA in Iranian EFL classrooms due to the lack of DA training, guideline and ICT resources as well as large EFL class sizes, the regular use of static tests and overdependence on the teachers' teaching and assessment abilities. Karimi and Shafiee (2014) delved into 42 Iranian EFL teachers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment in relation to their academic degrees and length of service. The researched were from private language institutes, schools, universities and business sectors. The researchers reported a significant difference across BA holding and MA holding teachers in their perceptions of dynamic assessment. Their findings included the following. The MA group conceptualised dynamic assessment as an ongoing, dynamic and challenging learning opportunity, expressing a preference for both interactionist and interventionist dynamic assessment. The BA group, however, had a preference for interventionist dynamic assessment. Most of the BA group considered themselves as passive agents in the application of dynamic assessment due to institutional policies, whereas most of the MA group did not hold such a view. Teachers’ agency as the decision makers of classroom assessment in applying dynamic assessment was reported to achieve a gradual importance alongside increase in teaching experience. Perception of dynamic assessment as a challenging learning opportunity showed more manifestation along with an increase in years of experience of EFL teachers. Along the increase in years of service, a pattern of increase was also reported supporting application of both interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment. Placing learners’ progress as the core of application of dynamic assessment was shown to gain more weight as participants become more experienced in the career. The EFL teachers’ awareness towards contextual and institutional factors increased as participants’ years of experience increased. Karimi and Shafiee (2014) conclude that as the generalisability of their findings beg for caution, to increase the dependability of the findings, further research into the English language teachers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment is required, which is the purpose of this dissertation research.
Chapter 3
Method of the Study

Introduction
In Chapter Two, the literature on dynamic assessment with particular reference to the assessment of the English language skills was reviewed and the theoretical underpinning of the present research was established too. In this chapter, I will describe and justify the method of the study I adopted to collect and analyse data. Accordingly, the chapter, among other matters, includes a description of the participants, the materials and procedures deployed in the study and the approach adopted to analyse the data.

Research question and the researcher’s standpoint
As was stated in the previous chapter, there is a gap in the literature on the use of dynamic assessment in gauging the English language skills of the HE students as far as the perceptions of English language lecturers are concerned. For this reason, I put forward the following research question:
What are the perceptions of lecturers in English language of the use of dynamic assessment in Higher Education in an English speaking context?
To address the above research question, it is in order to describe and theorise my research approach. In doing so, I am going to draw on my epistemology, methodology, data collection and analysis approaches.

Ontologically and epistemologically, my study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm of research. In other words, my view of what I am researching and my interpretations of the results of the study are mediated by my world view and my values (Newby 2014). To me, social reality is a personal construction, a construction of the mind, and there can be different interpretations of the same human/education phenomenon. In other words, I appreciate and acknowledge the divergence of perspectives and reality constructions. In fact, I am interested in whys and hows of matters by trying to capture the views and perceptions of the social actors rather than by calculating and exploring numbers and figures. I am not interested in scientific measuring of phenomena but would like to capture views, experiences, feelings, thoughts and opinions of people (Newby 2014). As Cohen et al. (2011) put it, in interpretivism “efforts are made to get
inside the person and to understand from within” (Cohen et al. 2011: 17). Interpretivists begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; it should be grounded in data generated by the research act (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Theory should not precede research but follow it. Investigators work directly with experience and understanding to build their theory on them. The data thus yielded will include the meanings and purposes of those people who are their source. (Cohen et al. 2011: 18)

Methodologically, my research is situated on the qualitative end of the qualitative-quantitative continuum. Since I am going to explore, describe and explain the perspectives of the participants in their own terms and without interfering with the natural setting, the data will be in the form of words rather than numbers (Punch and Oancea 2014: 3-4). This type of research method is in line with the interpretivist epistemology as both the qualitative approach and interpretivism urge the researcher to gain an insider view (emic view) rather than an outsider one (etic view). As Heigham and Croker (2009: 5) put it, qualitative research entails collecting textual data and examining it using interpretive analysis.

I am well aware that my standpoint described above has certain limitations. For instance, I realise that interpretivism and qualitative research, while rigorous, inherently work with data that is subjective and contextual, which places limits on the extent to which findings can be generalised. In fact, my intention of this research is to illuminate possibilities for educational practice. The findings of this study, hence, are based on analytical induction and not enumerative induction. According to Nazari and Willis (2014), the findings of such studies are not to be taken as grand ineffable generalizations. According to Sarantakos (2013: 375), analytic induction entails providing provisional explanations of a social phenomenon that could contribute to the formation of a theory. If the explanation turns out to be valid through examining similar phenomena, saturation is achieved and the explanation will turn into a valid theory. If the explanation is not confirmed through examining similar phenomena, it should be reformulated and again contrasted with similar phenomena in an attempt to formulate a theory (Sarantakos 2013: 375). (Nazari and Willis 2014: 116)

My intention lies in my endeavour to modestly contribute to the formation of a framework of application of dynamic assessment of the English language skills in HE. In other words, my study is an attempt to articulate principles and concepts of application based on the views and
perceptions of a sample of HE English language lecturers, rather than to generalise to their whole population.

**Materials and procedures**

To collect data, I developed a semi-structured interview schedule. I chose the semi-structured interview as my data collection tool, as this type of interview suits qualitative research in that it provides the researcher with emic view and enables them to explore issues more deeply. Also, in this type of interview, respondents are fairly free in the way they deliver their responses. It also provides the opportunity to generate rich data (Newton 2010). However, semi-structured interviews have certain limitations. For instance, they are time-consuming to carry out, transcribe and analyse. They could also be expensive if they involve travelling. In addition, the presence of the interviewer might affect the way the interviewee responds to questions (Newton 2010). Therefore, I decided to carry out the interviews via email, as this would save me time of making appointments, travelling and transcribing the data. In addition, as Cohen et al. (2011) state, there is a chance that the interviewee might be more disclosing: “Nias (1991) and Miller and Cannell (1997) suggest that the very factor that interviews are not face-to-face may strengthen their reliability, as the interviewee might disclose information that may not be so readily forthcoming in a face-to-face, more intimate situation” (Cohen et al. 2011: 206).

I adopted the convenience, purposive sampling method (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 78 and 81) and selected the accessible members of the population, based on their shared characteristics, i.e. being native English lecturers teaching the English language in the UK HE, which would enable me to explore and understand the matter that I wished to study (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 78 and 81). I sent emails to 15 universities in the UK where the names and email addresses of their English language lecturers were accessible on their websites. Out of 65 emails that I sent out, 10 replied to me. I also sent an email to BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) members, alas with no returns.

The interview questions were generated not only based on my knowledge and experience, but also based on the literature review and an Internet search. The draft questions were then subjected to a process of piloting where I asked two English language lecturers to go through the questions and let me know whether the questions were covering the research topic, whether they were clear
and unambiguous and whether there were any other potential problems. The questions were then discussed with my supervisor. Due to the above, refinements were made in the questions. For instance, one of the lecturers told me that I should make it clear what purposes of assessment I was focusing on, i.e. assessment for attainment and/or for achievement. This was made clear in my interview schedule subsequently. As another example, the question ‘what do you think are the challenges of dynamic assessment as far as HE institutional policies are concerned?’ was thought to be leading and therefore was refined to ‘do you think dynamic assessment is challenging as far as HE institutional policies are concerned? Why/why not?’ See Appendix A for a copy of the interview guide.

As far as the validity and reliability of my research is concerned, I made an attempt to achieve them through the following:

1. I carried out a pilot study and refined the interview questions. See above for further information.
2. I have been truthful, honest and accurate in reporting the research results.
3. I added to the trustworthiness (i.e., the quality of the research; how good the research is) of my research through the process of triangulation. I gathered data from different participants to include and cover more than one standpoint (i.e., data triangulation).
4. I followed the data rather than lead it.
5. Depth, richness and scope of the data collected: This was addressed by gathering a considerable amount of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews.
6. Transparency: I have done my best to describe the process of the research and data collection as clearly as possible so the reader can see the process by which the interpretations made are reached.

We have to bear in mind that, as Cohen et al. (2011: 180-183) suggest, perfect validity is not achievable in qualitative research and therefore we can only talk about degree of validity in this type of research. Likewise, it is unworkable to address the issue of reliability in qualitative research in the same way as reliability in quantitative research (Cohen et al. 2011: 201). Therefore, taking the above measures, I believe my research has achieved the rigour required for an interpretive qualitative study.

Regarding research ethics, I obtained the ethical approval of XXXX University before collecting
data (See Appendix B for a copy of the ethics application form). I ensured that anonymity of the participants was observed and the confidentiality of any private information was respected. I also gained the participants’ informed consent for taking part in this research and for using the data. I informed the participants about the purpose and aim of the study and interview. See Appendix A for the cover letter of the interview and Appendix D for a copy of the email that I sent to the English language lecturers. Last but not least, I ensured that there was no harm to the researched and researcher. The above measures are the essentials of research ethics discussed by Cohen et al. (2011: 75-102).

**Participants**

Ten lecturers and senior lecturers from six UK universities participated in this research. Seven of them were females and three were males. They held a variety of qualifications, e.g. undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (e.g. MA in Applied Linguistics and MA in TESOL), Cert in TEFL, Dip in TEFL, CELTA, DELTA, Dip TESOL Trinity and MED in TESOL. They also had varied experiences in teaching the English language at the UK HE up to twenty years. For the number of the lecturers I emailed an invitation to take part in my research and the number of responses I received, see the above section on ‘Materials and Procedures’.

**Data analysis**

When I started this research, my knowledge of dynamic assessment was negligible. What I read in the literature on dynamic assessment, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, did not include much about English language lecturers’ perspectives on this type of assessment in HE. Therefore, I had no presuppositions about their perspectives and wanted to find out what would emerge from the interview data. For this reason, to analyse the data, I adopted the procedures of grounded theory (GT) which is inductive and *a posteriori*, i.e. the findings emerge from and are grounded in systematically gathered and analysed data rather than existing before it (Cohen et al. 2011: 598). I looked at what the participants said and highlighted key points in their answers, coded the key points (by creating my own codes, adopting them from the literature and/or deriving them from the participants’ language) and identified patterns (e.g. frequencies, recurrences and absences) in the codes by conflating the codes and hence producing mega-codes (see Chapter Four and Appendix C for the analysis of the data). This is what is referred to in the research methods literature as open coding, axial coding and selective coding (see Cohen et al. 2011: 600).
As was stated before, I am aware that the data analysis I have carried out here is subjective. I acknowledge that my own interpretative work in analysing the qualitative data imposes a second level of interpretation, on the perceptions and views expressed by my research participants, which is affected by my understanding (Fox 2014). As Cohen et al. (2011) put it, qualitative interpretivist research and research reporting involve a double hermeneutic process by which the researcher analyses and interprets data from participants who have already interpreted their world (Cohen et al. 2011: 540). I know that my qualitative interpretivist approach and my human, sense-making activity is behind my analyses of the participants’ interpretations of their academic worlds (Fox 2014). In fact, as was mentioned earlier, I believe in social sciences, subjectivity adds to the rigour of research rather than downgrade it.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have described the process of developing the data collection tool, data collection and data analysis. I also justified my method of study by drawing on the concepts of interpretivism, qualitative research and semi-structured interviews. The participants of the study were described and the issues of validity, reliability and research ethics were also discussed.

The following chapter centres on the analysis of the interview data.
Chapter 4
Analyses and Discussions

Introduction
In the previous chapter, I described the method of the study, drew on the way I would collect and analyse data and justified these. In this chapter, I will analyse the data and discuss findings. As was explained in the previous chapter, the data analysis would be carried out by applying the procedures of grounded theory, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Open coding
At this stage, I went through the data (presented in the table in Appendix C) line by line several times, underlined the units (words, phrases and sentences) that said the same point, was about the same point or was a key point, gave them a code, reassigned the codes, replaced the codes and refined the codes. This pulled the data together into some order and structure (Cohen et al. 2011: 561-562 and 600). The table in Appendix C not only presents the data but also illustrates part of the open coding process where the refined open codes are depicted.

Axial and selective coding
After the open coding process, I ascribed labels to the groups of the open codes which were clustered in terms of referring to the same issue, the same concept or similar/same meanings. In doing so, axial codes were generated. In other words, I connected related open codes into a larger category, i.e. axial codes, around which several open codes revolved (Cohen et al. 2011: 561-562 and 600). The same process was carried out with the axial codes (i.e. I ascribed labels to the groups of the axial codes which were clustered in terms of referring to the same issue, the same concept or similar/same meanings) and in this way I created the selective codes which were basically at a higher level of abstraction than axial codes (Cohen et al. 2011: 561-562 and 600). The following table not only refers to the refined open codes succinctly but also demonstrates the process of axial coding and selective coding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question number</th>
<th>Open codes</th>
<th>Axial codes</th>
<th>Selective codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2                         | Limiting regulations  
                           | Mixed assessment method  
                           | Static assessment  
                           | Limited practice  
                           | Limiting requirements  | Institutional requirements *¹  
                           | Limited practice *  
                           | Mixed assessment method *  |
|                           | Student involvement  
                           | Broad practice  
                           | Process-oriented assessment  
                           | Negative attitude to the current situation  
                           | Limiting regulations  
                           | Limited practice  
                           | Static assessment  
                           | Mixed assessment method  | Negotiated scaffolding ^  
                           | Limited practice *  
                           | Mixed assessment method *  | ~ Challenges and tensions  
                           | ¹ Student-teacher collaboration on assessment  
                           | ² Ambivalent feeling  
                           | ³ Receptivity to the idea of dynamic assessment  |
| 3                         | Teacher intervention  
                           | Limited practice  
                           | Broad practice  
                           | Limiting regulations  
                           | Context dependent  
                           | Limiting requirements  
                           | Enhancing student potential  | Teacher intervention ^  
                           | Institutional requirements *  |

¹ The signs show which axial codes were clustered together to generate which selective codes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negotiated scaffolding Process-oriented assessment Enhancing student abilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student involvement Positive attitude to DA Limitations of DA Lack of knowledge about DA Reasons for DA Student involvement Lack of popularity</td>
<td>Advantages of DA + Challenges of DA ~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ambivalent feeling Hybrid assessment Context dependent Scepticism Dynamic assessment Static assessment Lack of fairness</td>
<td>Ambivalent feeling # Static assessment # Dynamic assessment # Hybrid assessment #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ambivalent feeling Process-oriented assessment Lack of knowledge about DA Student centeredness Negative attitude to DA Limitations of DA</td>
<td>Ambivalent feeling # Willingness to learn about DA + Negative attitude to DA ~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Limitations of DA Limiting regulations Student ownership Constraint</td>
<td>Tensions ~ Student ownership ^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Willingness to try out DA</td>
<td>Unpopularity with teachers</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge about DA</td>
<td>Teacher intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to try out DA</td>
<td>Unpopularity with teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ambivalent feeling</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge about DA</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Willingness to learn about DA</td>
<td>Limitations of SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussions**

As I showed in the Literature Review Chapter, there are very few studies researching the views of English language lecturers regarding DA and its potential in Higher Education, in particular in the UK Higher Education context. My research contributes to filling in this gap in the literature by addressing the following research question:

What are the perceptions of lecturers in English language of the use of dynamic assessment in Higher Education in an English speaking context?
The following subsections will draw on the findings of the study, i.e. the selective codes (current situation of assessment, student-teacher collaboration on assessment, challenges and tensions, ambivalent feeling and receptivity to the idea of dynamic assessment), describe the implications of the study and state the limitations of the study. We need to bear in mind that, as the research was qualitative, interpretive and subjective, the data were diverse and complex, the analysis of the data was complex and the findings of the study were sometimes contradictory. In other words, my research and findings reflect the messiness of the social life and the real world. See Chapter Three for more on this.

**Current situation of the English language assessment in the UK HE**

My analysis of the data indicates that the participants use assessment for both formative and summative purposes (see Taras 2010 on the definitions of these assessments) to assess the achievement and attainment of their students. For instance, the following quotation, albeit long, from one of the participants is noteworthy in this regard:

We use a number of formative and summative examinations and assignments. In our first semester, all student work is formative; students are given copious amounts of feedback and are talked through it in tutorials. It is hoped that this feedback will inform similar, summative assignments in semesters 2 and 3. Students are required to write coursework essays (1200 words); are given in-class exams in which they produce short and long answer responses to questions; students also deliver oral presentations with the aid of powerpoint. In terms of attainment, we grade students using marking criteria. These criteria are similar to IELTS, but with a more “academic focus” (there are criteria for critical analysis and academic conventions). Students are given a numerical grade (e.g. B+ =65-69%)… The formative/achievement aspects are included in the first semester in order to give students an extensive period of practice and feedback before the assessed work commences.

Another participant said:

Used oral presentations, listening tests (comprehension) written work – essays, reports, class tests covering aspects of language taught – grammar and vocabulary. Use the tools as they are in line with commercial tests (Cambridge) and the requirements of the university (academic skills).

The assessment types the participants said they use include portfolios, essays, presentations, coursework and in-class written and oral/aural tests. The reasons they give for using these
assessments are institutional requirements and policies regarding academic skills, covering the skill areas for HE study and approximating the types of assignments students come across on their degree programmes. One of the participants, for instance, said:

These tools (assignment types, criteria etc) are used in order to closely approximate the types of assignment students will face on their degree programmes. We are also hoping to build, through teaching-testing-feedback and teaching, students' academic skills by using these tools.

Another participant reported:

Any assessment would be closely linked to learning outcomes (LOs), and how this is achieved would be made explicit to students. This is a requirement here. I assume this is close to what you mean by ‘attainment’, LOs being reflected clearly in marking criteria.

However, in spite of the fact that the participants apply a mixture of assessments to assess their students’ English, their practices are similar and limited. In other words, they are required to follow the university regulations and policies and therefore do not have the liberty to apply certain types of assessment. For example, the participants reported:

For summative assessments in class, I do not intervene as these will be used as a demonstration that the student has (unaided) passed the required level for the course.

I cannot intervene in attainment assessment. I can intervene in achievement tests by discussing errors and correcting written work and the results are normally positive.

Students are assessed formally in accordance with University regulations covering the skill areas for HE study. Informally, students are encouraged to use their language skills to build confidence to communicate in English and encouraged to set their own targets.

There also seems to be a negative attitude to the current situation of the English language assessment in the UK HE, as according to the participants, the current assessment methods are outmoded, not that fair and not sufficiently challenging for some students. The following excerpts testify to this:
Too many of our students who come in with good language skills can cruise through the course with a minimum of effort, and get undeserved high or decent grades. A greater emphasis on hard-work, reflective understanding and “distance travelled” would seem to be fairer and offer more encouragement to those students with less linguistic ability but better attitudes.

HE institutions – UK educational institutions as a whole - are also still imbedded in outdated modes of teaching and testing (e.g. lectures and exams) which are easy to implement, but may be of limited educational value. This love affair with the easy to administer, standardised exam dies hard.

Discussing some of the disadvantages of exams in the UK HE, Norton et al. (2006) refer to the current assessment regime as being unreal and inauthentic, having adverse effect on students and provoking student anxiety. My interpretation of the above is that the participants apply the assessment types that they mentioned in the interviews because of the institutional requirements and constraints, they feel more comfortable with those types of assessment and they probably lack enough knowledge of other types of assessment. As Hamilton (2014) endorses, “Programme teams are finding it challenging to move away from examination based practices, constrained by institutional culture, lengthy regulatory frameworks and lack of training” (Hamilton 2014: no page number). The first two interpretations made above are supported by the quotations from the participants’ interviews cited in this section. The third interpretation will be looked at in the section entitled ‘Receptivity to the idea of dynamic assessment’.

**Student-teacher collaboration on assessment**

In spite of the fact that there are institutional requirements and constraints regarding the English language assessment in the UK HE, some lecturers and their students collaborate with each other on assessment or at least there is a tendency towards student-teacher collaboration. One of the findings of the study shows that negotiated scaffolding is sometimes provided to students in the course of their assessment and/or some of the lecturers would like to negotiate support, guidance and direction with their students in assessing them. In this regard, one of the participants said:

During coursework assignments, I work with students in the planning and drafting stages, giving feedback to support their redrafting before final submission. I feel that this increases their awareness of the task requirements
and ways they can improve their work, their awareness of writing as a process rather than just final product, their confidence and their independent learning skills for the future.

Another participant reported:

[I would like to] work with students to set their own aims and their own means of assessing how to measure success. Students need the language skills but also the confidence to use the skills.

He also said:

Personally, I would say ‘dynamic’ suits my philosophy to teaching, working alongside the student as a guide, for them to achieve their personal goals. This, of course, would mean adapt to student demands and if that is the static approach, so be it!

These participants seem to have a tendency towards the interactionist type of DA in that the assistance procedures emerge from the interaction of the assessee and the assessor (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 54).

Currently, there is also some teacher intervention, though limited, in the course of assessment. As one of the participants said, “Intervention in terms of feedback and students build on their existing skills and apply the feedback to the subsequent work is used.” However, it seems that some lecturers would like to expand this to promote their students’ ownership of assessment as learning:

EAP classes are pretty much formulaic but some students attend with differing skills and requirements. They could be used to allow students take some ownership, say, to set their own agenda for intervention; after all, it is their course, to support them.

I would like to see a move towards more dynamic based assessment esp. process/folio writing. This form of assessment treats learning as a process rather than an outcome, and encourages a much more reflective, personalised form of learning on the part of the student. This approach towards assessment is essential, I feel, in such a complex area as academic writing in which students are having to master multiple skills (e.g. control of sentence construction; logical development of ideas; vocabulary choice), and have problems and deficiencies particular to themselves.
Some of the lecturers go even further and say that some ownership of the assessment could be given to students to enable them to experiment with language and to accommodate their students’ different learning styles; for instance, one of the participants said:

> With attitudes changing towards students as customers buying the HE product, assessment changes could be part of the wider package of student ownership of their programme.

He continued to say:

> In social situations, where language usage is less of a threat, the environment (e.g. the pub) might be the threat, thus affecting students’ ‘performance’. There should be a safe haven (EAP classroom?) where students can feel free to express themselves without fear; a laboratory to experiment with their language skills.

Another participant said, “The exam system of static assessments doesn’t account for different learning styles.”

The above seem to suggest that negotiated scaffolding, teacher intervention in assessment and empowering students in the assessment process, as part of the principles of dynamic assessment, are supported by the viewpoints of some of the participants.

**Ambivalent feeling about dynamic assessment**

The data and their analysis suggest that the participants have an ambivalent feeling about dynamic assessment and its potential application to the English language assessment in the UK HE. Some of the lectures were in favour of dynamic assessment of the English language skills of HE students. For example, they said this would allow the students to take some ownership by setting the agenda for intervention, as it is their course after all. They also said dynamic assessment would avoid giving the students only one chance, which is unfair and which does not provide a true picture of their abilities. They believed that dynamic assessment would be less stressful for students. One of the proponents of dynamic assessment, in particular, said,

> In terms of interventions to support students to improve their work, I am strongly in favour of it [DA]. I do see that there can be some tensions between this and attainment testing [though]…
Others said that dynamic assessment might turn out to be unpopular as it would require more time and engagement from students and lecturers. From this group's viewpoint, it also requires an enormous input in terms of training for lecturers to be able to implement it in a fair and transparent way. This perception endorses what Es-hagi Sardrood (2011) found in his research in the Iranian EFL context. His research indicated that most of the teachers had a negative attitude to DA and believed that a complete implementation of DA in Iranian EFL classrooms would be too demanding. The teachers participating in his research also questioned the feasibility of DA in Iranian EFL classrooms due to the lack of DA training, guideline and ICT resources as well as large EFL class sizes. Among the above group in my study, some were more skeptical about dynamic assessment in that they were not sure how it works, confused it with more formative opportunities, wanted to see examples of what it might look like in real practice and thought it might undermine the generalisability of assessment outcomes. The following quotation from one of the opponents of dynamic assessment is interesting:

I think it is problematic in that it muddies the waters in terms of generalisability. Few assessment tasks in HE are explicitly explained and scaffolded. If EAP pre-sessional assessments are heavily scaffolded then it makes it difficult to generalise to the target language use context that does not have this.

By “the target language use context”, it seems that the above participant is referring to authenticity as one of the requirements in language testing, i.e. a language test is supposed to recreate the essence of language use and evaluate how well the testee can really communicate in real life situations (Bachman 1990: 300 in Fulcher and Davidson 2007: 233). However, as Hamilton’s (2014) report points out, we need to bear in mind that even “traditional examinations have been widely criticised for lacking validity and authenticity” (Hamilton 2014: no page number). Furthermore, the concept of authenticity has been questioned (see, for example, Lewkowicz 2000) on the basis of lack of clarity of which characteristics are critical for distinguishing authentic from non-authentic test tasks, whether some of the characteristics are more critical than others, what degree of correspondence is needed between the characteristics of a given language test task and the features of a target language use task, and whether authenticity really matters to test takers. Yet, some participants believed that their students would benefit from both dynamic and static assessment. The reasons they gave included the following: dynamic assessment could provide some degree of learner autonomy, scaffolding in terms of learning and assessment, and less
pressure while static assessment would motivate students, would require students to show a level of independence, and would be a standardised routine across the board. One of the respondents, for instance, said:

Static assessments perhaps can motivate some students, encouraging them into action under the pressure of a forthcoming test. However, I feel that there is more learning benefit and less pressure in dynamic assessment where students improve through the process rather than a one-off evaluation.

It seems that the participants who believe in the application of both dynamic and static assessment are in favour of a complementary approach in English language testing. Researchers such as Ajideh, Farrokhi and Nourdad (2012) take dynamic assessment as a complementary approach to traditional static assessment. Likewise, researchers such as Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) take DA as a supplementary procedure to standard testing. However, I agree with Hidri (2014) on this, who argues that these two types of assessment are basically different:

Though complementary they might appear, static and dynamic assessment have methodological differences. Since this type of assessment [SA] considers the learners’ abilities as already matured i.e., fixed and “stable across time” (Leung 2007, p. 260), in DA, such abilities are “malleable and flexible” (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p. 1). In addition, while scores in SA may be praised for their objectivity, they nevertheless fail to infer much about the learners’ cognitive processes. Hence, the importance of implementing DA. (Hidri 2014: 3)

Other respondents believed that their students would benefit more from dynamic assessment because it is fairer, less stressful and provides a true picture of students' abilities. Yet others believed static assessment with more formative feedback would be more beneficial to their students because their students are very mark-orientated and keen to use feedback to improve their marks. One of the respondents, for example, said:

It depends on the student and the circumstances. I would guess that many students would be wary of dynamic assessment and it would be difficult to sell it to them in a transparent way. Tutors may be accused of favouritism.

While a minority of lectures categorically said that they would replace the current assessment
system(s) in HE with dynamic assessment for the reasons of being more process-orientated and accounting for different learning styles, others said that they would first like to learn more about dynamic assessment and to see more examples because they were not sure how it could be done. Yet others said in some parts they would do so depending on situational factors. For instance, one of the participants said:

In some areas perhaps but it is labour intensive and requires administrative support, e.g. databases of student achievement, and may be difficult with situations of student illness, low attendance and the design of the tasks.

**Challenges and tensions of dynamic assessment**

All participants believed that implementing dynamic assessment is challenging as far as HE institutional policies are concerned. However, a minority of them commented that barriers could be overcome and that the challenge might not be traumatic. One of the participants, for instance, commented:

It would be challenging to current conventions but maybe not too traumatic. With attitudes changing towards students as customers buying the HE product, assessment changes could be part of the wider package of student ownership of their programme.

The challenges they mentioned included the pressure to follow standardised assessment procedures, requiring more time and effort on the part of lecturers/assessors, requiring lecturers’ classroom hours to be reduced in favour of probably more one-to-one teaching and assessment which would have recruitment and cost implications for HE institutions, the issue of transparency and equality, the issue of practicality with large numbers of students and the issue of reliability. In this regard, the following quotation, albeit long, from one of the participants is noteworthy:

Dynamic assessment requires considerably more time and effort on the part of teachers/assessors. In order to be implemented effectively in an EAP context, a considerable amount of one-to-one time has to be made available for students; the provision of effective formative written feedback to students is also enormously time and energy-consuming for teachers. Consequently, tutors classroom hours need to be limited, with obvious recruitment and cost implications for HE institutions. HE institutions – UK educational institutions as a whole - are also still imbedded in outdated modes of teaching and testing.
(e.g. lectures and exams) which are easy to implement, but may be of limited educational value. This love affair with the easy to administer, standardised exam dies hard. Unlike the school sector in which training students how to perform well on examinations is encouraged (too much some would say), I think there is a belief in the HE sector that exams are transparent tests of conceptual and critical ability rather than culturally-specific exercises which some students are better prepared for than others.

The challenges and tensions mentioned above are also referred to in the research carried out by Karimi and Shafiee (2014) who reported that the EFL teachers participating in their research perceived dynamic assessment as a challenging learning opportunity and were conscious of the impact of contextual and institutional factors on the application of dynamic assessment. Similarly, Hamilton’s (2014) report criticises that despite issues with traditional examinations, they are still widely used in HE, because “programme teams are finding it challenging to move away from examination based practices, constrained by institutional culture, lengthy regulatory frameworks and lack of training” (Hamilton 2014: no page number). Here we also need to remind ourselves of what Naeini and Duvall (2012) pointed out as the epistemological differences between those who support traditional assessment methods and those who promote the use of DA. According to these researchers, the proponents of DA argue that if we take the concept of the ZPD seriously, we should assist the learner even during and/or in-between the assessment process to see what they are really capable of, which is an indication of their future independent performance (Naeini and Duvall 2012: 24).

A minority of the respondents believed that implementing dynamic assessment would not be challenging in their own teaching context for the reasons that “there is an informal approach to assessment, running parallel to formal assessment criteria” in their department and that their “colleagues and department would be interested to learn more about it.” One of the participants, in particular, said that they already do a lot of dynamic assessment, much more so than in other university departments, and they still need to do more however. The majority of the respondents, however, believed that implementing dynamic assessment would be challenging in their own teaching context, as it would raise quality, transparency, equality, reliability and practicality issues.

**Receptivity to the idea of dynamic assessment**

A good number of participants welcomed the idea of dynamic assessment. For instance, one of the participants said, “Strongly support its use. As stated above, I believe that more dynamic, process forms of assessment should be used on our courses.” Another participant reported, “I like the idea
of it, and would be interested in seeing/reading examples of what it might look like in my context (academic writing).” She continued, “I am open to the idea that barriers could be overcome.” She also added, “I think my colleagues & department would be interested to learn more about it.” Most participants reported that dynamic assessment suits their values, knowledge and experiences. They argued that this type of assessment is in line with their philosophy of teaching, helps students to achieve their personal goals, is more personalised, focuses on the whole person and treats learning as a process. One of the participants, for instance, said:

Dynamic assessments are more in line with my values, knowledge and experience. Possibly my initial experience in teaching in ESOL has coloured my outlook on assessment, as in ESOL the focus is more on the whole person and very often that person has had some very difficult experiences. Therefore, if the person is not completely at ease, this will have an impact on their learning. Language learning, in my opinion, cannot be treated in isolation without considering the person as a whole. The impact of culture shock, motivation, and other factors must also be taken into consideration. Therefore, to place such significance on one final exam seems to me to be unfair. Learning is a process and never stops, so to say “I’ve reached such and such a level and now I’m finished” is not true. This is especially true of the pre-sessional EAP courses on which I teach. By their very nature they are short and intense, and not everyone learns at the same pace.

Another participant commented, “Dynamic is more in line with my own view of effective learning, the process of constructing your own knowledge, often in collaboration with others and in context.”

I would like to mention that while these participants were receptive to the idea of dynamic assessment, they were also concerned with the issue of equality, clarity of the use of this type of assessment and its practical application. For example, one of them said:

Dynamic assessment as described above sounds like good teaching. So in that sense it matches my values. How it works as assessment is less clear to me so I cannot say how it matches my values. I have no experience of it, at least where it has been explicitly labelled dynamic assessment.

Another one said, “With writing dynamic testing would work but I would have to see examples of successful dynamic assessment in other contexts before I would be convinced to try it.” Yet again another participant said:

Probably more dynamic assessment, in that I am keen to move more resources
to time spent on formative assessments from the current time spend on summative assessment and feedback that is untimely and rarely feeds forward. On the other hand, I need a clearer idea of implications and practical applications of dynamic assessments as these don’t seem to be available yet.

This finding of mine endorses Hidri’s (2014) finding, who reported, “although the new assessment [DA] provided better insights into learners' cognitive and meta-cognitive processes than did the traditional assessment, raters were doubtful about the value of and processes involved in DA mainly because they were unfamiliar with it” (Hidri 2014: 1).

**Implications of the study**

The implications of this study are twofold: theoretical and practical. Vafaee (2011), Nazari (2012) and Karimi and Shafiee (2014) point out that dynamic assessment research is still at its embryonic stages, empirical research on dynamic assessment is scarce, more research is required to shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of this type of assessment and the findings of dynamic assessment research are not generalisable yet. My research and its findings, therefore, by exploring and reflecting UK HE English language lecturers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment and its use in UK HE, help to fill an existing gap in the literature and make contributions to knowledge on (the potential of) dynamic assessment. My study also adds to the literature on dynamic assessment through the literature review presented in Chapter Two by adding the viewpoints, values, philosophies and beliefs of English language lecturers (which, as I showed in Chapter Two, are scarce) to it. As was explained in Chapter Three, the findings of my study can contribute to the formation of a theory of dynamic assessment of English language skills in HE by adding to the concept of dynamic assessment the perceptions and views of the lecturers and therefore to some extent exposing the explanatory power and external validity of this approach to assessment from its potential users’ viewpoints. My research also empowers UK HE English language lecturers by including their voice. I believe the dissemination of my research can help with hearing the lecturers’ voices and promoting change in the UK HE as well as in what these lecturers do. As Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012: 283), citing Wedell (2009), put it, “an understanding of teachers’ beliefs needs to be an integral part of initiatives that aim to promote change in what teachers do in the classroom.” In addition, my study echoes the lecturers’ voices and as “in the wake of new forms of curricular policy in many parts of the world, teachers are increasingly required to be agents of change” (Priestley et al. 2012: 191), it will hopefully “encourage change at the discipline/institutional level” (Norton et al. 2006).
For the practical implications of this study, see the next chapter.

**Limitations of the study**
No research study is perfect or impeccable. Mine is not an exception. For instance, in spite of the fact that I sent 65 emails to 15 universities in the UK where the names and email addresses of their English language lecturers were accessible on their websites and I also sent an email to BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) members, only 10 lecturers replied to me. In other words, the small size of the sample might be one of the limitations of my study. In addition, as was explained in Chapter Three, I realise that interpretivism and qualitative research, while rigorous, inherently work with data that is subjective and contextual, which places limits on the extent to which findings can be generalised. To put it another way, the degree of the generalisability of the research findings might be one of the limitations of my study.

**Summary**
The analysis of the data has revealed five main themes

- Current situation of the English language assessment in the UK HE
- Student-teacher collaboration on assessment
- Ambivalent feeling about dynamic assessment
- Challenges and tensions of dynamic assessment
- Receptivity to the idea of dynamic assessment

These findings add to the body of research around DA and its theorisation – particularly by revealing the English language lecturers’ perceptions of this type of assessment and therefore exploring the explanatory power and external validity of this assessment approach from the viewpoints of its potential users. On a practical level, this research points to the potential agency of (committed) lecturers to experimenting with and implementing DA within contextual constraints.

The implications for educational practice are explored in the next chapter which concludes this dissertation.
Chapter 5
Summary and Conclusion

Introduction
The focus of this study has been to consider the potential for introducing DA by investigating the perceptions and views of lecturers in English language teaching in the UK HE, as grounded in their experience of academic practice.

In this chapter, I will present a summary of the research, draw on the practical implications of the study for teaching and learning in HE, and make recommendations for further research.

Summary
In Chapter Two, I showed that there was a need for an alternative approach to assessment in Higher Education. I also showed that there was a gap in the literature on dynamic assessment and that there were very few studies researching the views of English language lecturers regarding dynamic assessment and its potential in Higher Education, in particular in the UK Higher Education context. In that chapter, I conceptualised dynamic assessment by drawing on its theoretical underpinning, i.e. socio-cultural theory and the concept of ZPD, made a distinction between dynamic and static assessment and critically looked at the validity and reliability of dynamic assessment. I also drew on the findings of other researchers working on dynamic assessment ad showed why research into the English language lecturers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment is in order.

In Chapter Three, I elaborated on my epistemology as an interpretivist and my qualitative methodological approach. I also justified the use of semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool in my research and described how I refined my interview questions. I described the process of data collection and my research participants. I also described and justified the data analysis method that I applied. Furthermore, I described how I made sure that no ethical regulations were breached.

In Chapter Four, I analysed the interview data, interpreted the findings of my study and elaborated on the theoretical implications and the limitations of the study. My research, mainly in Chapter Four, uncovered the connection between dynamic assessment and the perceptions, values and philosophies of some of HE English language lecturers. The following section centres on the
Implications for the uptake of DA in HE English language classes

In the interviews, the research participants pointed out the barriers to the potential implementation of dynamic assessment in Higher Education. For example, they highlighted the following:

- university regulations and policies
- lack of enough knowledge of dynamic assessment and needing training in it
- needing to see examples of dynamic assessment
- requiring more time and engagement from students and lecturers
- requiring one-to-one time with the student/assessee
- issue of fairness

However, they also argued that in some contexts there were certain approaches leaning towards dynamic assessment. To help this to spread and to address the above-mentioned issues, we would have to make sure that certain actions are taken. For instance, we would have to liberalise university policies to enable lecturers to implement dynamic assessment. This could be done by, for example, making sure that our dynamic assessments are relevant to the learning outcomes of our modules and courses rather than being too obsessed with the issues of validity and reliability in a positivist way. We would also need to redistribute the teaching and assessment hours in Higher Education institutions by, for example, less teaching and doing more assessment-as-learning. We would need to provide professional development for academics, because as Guskey (2000: 4) states, “One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development.” In our professional development courses, we should provide examples of dynamic assessment, one of which is shown below adopted from Lantolf and Poehner (2004: 62-64):

Antón (2003) used a DA procedure to place students in advanced-level courses in a university undergraduate Spanish program. Student performance was evaluated on the basis of accuracy in the use of sentence-level grammar and vocabulary. The goal

\[\text{I am aware that this is a very long direct quotation but I believe it is necessary to have direct examples along with direct explanations from the source so the reader can see coherently how DA works in practice. Paraphrasing and/or shortening this quotation can harm the clarity and integrity of the quoted material.}\]
of mediation in Antón’s study was to generate a diagnostic evaluation for more appropriate placement in courses that would better match their development level. We will discuss two representative excerpts from Antón’s protocols in which the examiner prompts the students in order to give them the opportunity to revise their performance in appropriate ways. Students who were able to revise under prompting were considered to be at a more advanced stage than students who could not and were therefore placed in different courses. In the first example, a student attempts to use Spanish past tense verbs while relating an oral narrative based on a short film about a family traveling through Spain. Upon completing the narration the examiner questions the student about details of the story, focusing in particular on the student’s use of the past tense (for convenience we present the interaction in English):

Example 1
E=Examiner; S=Student
E: You started the story in the past and then, half way you switched.
S: Yes, yes.
E: To the present.
S: Yes, yes. I heard.
E: Do you want to try again using the past? And you can ask me. If there is a verb you do not remember it’s OK.
S: Yes, yes, from the beginning?
E: Perhaps from the middle.
S: In the past, yes, yes.
E: Did you realize that you made the switch?
S: Yes, yes, I heard.
The student re-narrates the story from the middle and, with only two or three slips back into the present, uses the appropriate past tense forms. Not only was the student able to appropriately re-narrate the story when given the opportunity but under questioning he indicated his awareness of the problem. From a DA perspective, to evaluate the learner’s developmental level solely on the basis of his initial unmediated performance would have resulted in an incomplete assessment. We agree with Antón that the learner had a greater degree of control over past tense than the original performance suggested. To put it in Vygotsky’s terms, the past tense was in the process of maturing and the learner required only a leading comment to make this manifest. In a second protocol, another student, asked to narrate the same film, used the present tense exclusively throughout the narrative. When given the opportunity to re-narrate the story, this student experienced greater difficulty than the student in Example 1; in particular he has problems appropriately distinguishing first from third person and was only able to produce the correct form when the examiner narrowed the possibilities to two options. In Example 2 we present the protocol in Spanish with an English translation:

Example 2
S: Jugué al tenis [I played tennis]
E: Jugué o jugó [I played or she played?]
S: Jugó [She played]
The problem continued throughout the narration, as illustrated in Example 3:

Example 3
E: … Muy bien. Y aquí dijo, que hizo? [Very good. And here you said, what did she do?]
S: Comí [I ate]
E: Comí o comió [I ate or she ate?]
S: Comió [She ate]
E: Comió
In Examples 2 and 3, the student was unable to produce the correct verb form without assistance and, importantly, did not seem to appropriate the assistance since following the interaction in Example 2 he required the same type of explicit feedback in Example 3. On the basis of their solo performance both students experienced problem controlling the past tense in narration. From a DA perspective, however, it is clear that their respective degree of control over the relevant morphology differs to a considerable degree, as shown by their need for and responsiveness to different types of feedback. Therefore, they have different ZPDs and consequently require different types of instruction. (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 62-64)

Regarding the issue of fairness, as far as dynamic assessment is concerned, fairness does not mean providing equal amounts of feedback to students. In dynamic assessment terms, fairness means providing feedback to students based on their scaffolding needs to reveal/achieve their potential. As Lantolf and Poehner state:

to be maximally useful in promoting development assistance must be tailored to the needs and responsiveness of specific learners or groups of learners… In what to some is no doubt a curious turn, the more reliable the procedure, the less effective it is in promoting individual development. As Lidz (1991: 18) cogently puts it, ‘the word “dynamic” implies change and not stability. Items on traditional measures are deliberately selected to maximize stability, not necessarily to provide an accurate reflection of stability or change in the “real” world.’ (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 67)

However, we need to make sure that our dynamic assessments are fit for purpose, as in that sense validity is not detrimental to dynamic assessment (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 67). According to Lantolf and Poehner:

Given that the purpose of DA is to push the person’s (language) abilities forward, to the extent that this is achieved, the validity of the procedure is established… Feuerstein, Rand and Rynders (1988: 205) state that in DA, ‘very little attention is given to product or to the absolute magnitude of a result. More importance is attached to learning about the process that has brought about a particular product.’ (Lantolf and Poehner 2004: 67)

Recommendations for further research

As was mentioned in Chapter Four, my sample size was small and my research approach was interpretive and qualitative. Similar qualitative studies to mine could add to the developing picture by seeing if similar themes apply in related contexts.

All my participants were native speakers of English. It would be interesting to find out whether
there are any similarities and differences between the perceptions of native English speaking lecturers and non-native English speaking lecturers. Also, my context of research was the UK. It would be useful to know the perceptions of English language lecturers working in other native English speaking contexts, e.g. the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

My research did not explore any likely gender similarities and differences in the perceptions of lecturers. Different genders might perceive dynamic assessment and its potential implementation in HE English language classes in different ways, as the research on gendered language strategies use, gendered motivation in second language learning, gendered attitude in second language learning, gendered achievement in second language learning, gendered second language teaching and gendered supervision of doctoral and postgraduate theses has produced certain findings (see, for example, Bryant and Jaworski 2015, Abu Sharbain and Tan 2013, Zeynali 2012, Abdul-Rahman 2011, Ali 2008, Kissau 2006). Therefore, exploring likely gender similarities and differences in the English language lecturers’ perceptions of dynamic assessment and its potential use in English language classes can be another avenue for further research.

In seeking to ascertain the perceptions of UK lecturers of English Language towards dynamic assessment and its potential use in English language classes in Higher Education, this research has revealed a mix of current practices and viewpoints. Notwithstanding ambivalent feelings and concerns about the challenges of implementing dynamic assessment, there are clearly some lecturers who are philosophically inclined and open to its potential for enabling more personalised learning - and the above recommendations for future research and practice are offered to facilitate a way forward here.
References


Fox, N. J. (2014) How does a qualitative researcher remain objective and unbiased when providing her/his interpretation of results when including personal experience? Available on http://www.researchgate.net/post/How_does_a_qualitative_researcher_remain_objective_and_unbiased_when_providing_her_his_interpretation_of_results_when_including_personal_experience, retrieved in March 2015


past into the future. *Journal of Applied Linguistics.* Vol. 1.1, PP. 49-72


Appendix A
A copy of the cover letter and interview guide

Interview Questions

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting research on dynamic assessment (defined below along the terms ‘achievement’ and ‘attainment’) of the English language skills of HE students. This involves collecting the perspectives of lecturers teaching the English language in HE. I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. I realise that some questions call for perhaps long answers and would like to thank you for your time and effort.

Your answers will remain anonymous and any personal data will be kept confidential.

Once again, thank you for your help.

Kind regards,
Ahmad

Here are a couple of definitions of dynamic assessment:

Campione (1996) draws a distinction between static and dynamic tests:

Skills can be measured in situations where students work unaided on sets of items, and are given but a single chance to demonstrate their proficiency (static tests). The contrast here involves cases where students are given some form of help designed to maximise their performance, with this aided, maximal level taken as providing the clearer picture of student ability (dynamic tests). (Campione 1996: 246)

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) define dynamic assessment as a procedure whose outcome …takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score may be learning score representing the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the post-test considered alone. (Sternberg and
Grigorenko 2002: vii)

Here is a definition of achievement and attainment. Please focus on these specific primary assessment purposes when answering the questions:

The distinction between ‘achievement’ and ‘attainment’ is that the former refers to comparing the present status of the learner’s language abilities with the status of those abilities in the past whilst the latter implies comparing the present status of the learner’s language abilities with what is required by course objectives.

1. Could you please tell me about your English language teaching background, your qualifications and your current English language teaching?

2. Could you please tell me about the assessment tools (for achievement and attainment) you use to assess the English language skills of your students in HE? Why do you use these tools?

3. If there were no HE institutional constraints, how would you assess your students’ English language skills (in terms of their achievement and attainment)? Why?

4. Do you ever intervene during the process of the assessment (achievement and attainment) of your HE students? If yes, how and why and what is the outcome? If not, why not?

5. What do you think of the use of dynamic assessment of the English language skills of HE students? Why?

6. Which assessment(s) (dynamic, static or both) do you think your HE students would benefit from more? Why?

7. If you could, would you replace the current assessment system(s) in HE with dynamic assessment? Why/why not?

8. Do you think dynamic assessment is challenging as far as HE institutional policies are concerned? Why/why not?
9. Do you think dynamic assessment is challenging in your HE teaching context(s)? Why/why not?

10. As far as assessing the achievement and attainment of your HE students are concerned, which assessment(s) (dynamic, static or both) is/are more in line with your values, knowledge and experience? Why?

11. Would you like to raise any other issues?
Appendix B
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FORM

In the case of postgraduate research student projects (i.e. MRes, MA by Project/Dissertation, MPhil, PhD and DProf), this form should be completed by the student concerned in full consultation with their supervisor.

In the case of staff research projects, this form should be completed by the member of staff responsible for the research project (i.e. as Principal Investigator and/or grant-holder) in full consultation with any co-investigators, research students and research staff.

Further guidance on the University’s Research Ethics Policy and Procedures, along with links to relevant research ethics materials and advice, can be found on the Research & Postgraduate Office Research Ethics webpage:

http://www.xxxx.ac.uk/research/the-research-and-postgraduate-office/current-students/research-ethics.cfm

This form requires the completion of the following three sections –

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS
SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES
SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS

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**Proposed end date for project:** March 2015

| Ethics ID no: | * (to be completed by RERP) |

**A2 Applicant details, if for a research student project**

| Name: | Dr XXX XXXX |
| Email address: | X.XXXX@XXXX.ac.uk |

**A3 Principal Researcher/Lead Supervisor**

Member of staff at XXXX University who is responsible for the proposed research project either as Principal Investigator/grant-holder or, in the case of postgraduate research student projects, as Lead Supervisor

| Name: | Professor XXXX XXXX |
| Job title: | Head of CELT |
| Email address: | X.XXXX@XXXX.ac.uk |

**SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES**

**B1 The Research Proposal**

Rationale and Context: One of the theories of education is socio-cultural theory which was initially developed by the Soviet child psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the 1920s. Socio-cultural theorists contend that learning is a process which is mediated by language and social relationships. The more skilled, more knowledgeable individual, the expert, is capable of autonomous functioning (self-regulation), whereas the less skilled, less knowledgeable individual, the novice, learns under the guidance of the expert (other-regulation) which is mediated by language. In other words, through collaborative talk (or other-regulation), the novice appropriates the new knowledge or skill (Mitchell et al. 2013). To put it another way, according to socio-cultural theory, learning involves inter-psychological collaborative activities first (other-regulation) and then intra-psychological autonomous activities (self-
The process of collaborative talk (supportive talk) that guides, directs, and prompts the novice (the learner) is called scaffolding. If there is relevant and sufficient scaffolding, the learner can move through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the knowledge or skill that the learner cannot appropriate alone but can achieve in collaboration with others (i.e. through other-regulation). To put it simply, learning is first social, then individual (Mitchell et al. 2013).

One of the implications of the socio-cultural theories of learning is in the application of their principles to language assessment in Education and Higher Education. The type of the assessment inspired by these theories is called dynamic assessment, which seeks ways to assist learners to fulfil their potential (Daniels 2001). Campione draws a distinction between static and dynamic tests:

Skills can be measured in situations where students work unaided on sets of items, and are given but a single chance to demonstrate their proficiency (static tests). The contrast here involves cases where students are given some form of help designed to maximise their performance, with this aided, maximal level taken as providing the clearer picture of student ability (dynamic tests). (Campione 1996: 246)

Haywood and Lidz (2007) argue that the core characteristic of dynamic assessment is its use of an interactive procedure in which the examiner provides guidance, encouragement and feedback in an attempt to elicit the best performance. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) define dynamic assessment as a procedure whose outcome

…takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score may be learning score representing the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the post-test considered alone. (Sternberg and Grigorenko 2002: vii)

However, validity and reliability of dynamic assessment and its application are questionable, given the institutional constraints, particularly in Higher Education where there are stringent
quality control and assessment procedures in place. Also, it is not clear whether and to what extent lecturers in Higher Education, and in particular English language lecturers, see potential for dynamic assessment and challenging traditional forms of assessment in Higher Education, and hence, my proposal to carry out research on this topic.

The context of my research would be some of the universities in London and my participants would be 10 English language lecturers (see the methodology section below for further information).

**Background research:** As far as my library and online research shows, all research in the area of dynamic assessment in language classes focuses on the design, use and marking of this assessment. For example, Davin et al. (2014) carried out research on the design and implementation of a dynamic reading comprehension task for classroom use with second language learners. The teacher in their study used pre-scripted mediation prompts during the task and scores were calculated for each individual student. The authors concluded that the task should be used as a learning tool in second language classrooms. Tavakoli and Nezakat-Alhossaini (2014) investigated the effectiveness of the implementation of corrective feedback in the light of dynamic assessment techniques on foreign language learners’ learning of reported speech structures. Two English language classes in a language centre in Iran each having 15 students were selected as the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received dynamic assessment-based treatment, whereas the control group followed only the routines of the language centre. The participants took two post-tests, i.e. one immediately after the treatment and another one after two weeks. The researchers concluded that the combination of dynamic assessment and corrective feedback was effective in enhancing the participants’ learning reported speech structures. Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) investigated the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learners’ reading comprehension in different proficiency levels. 197 Iranian university students participated in their quasi-experimental study. The results of their study revealed that while dynamic assessment had improving effects on reading comprehension of learners in all proficiency levels, the proficiency groups did not differ significantly in their taking advantage of this kind of assessment. Naeini and Duvall (2012) studied the likely improvements in English Language Training university students’ reading comprehension performance by applying the mediations of a dynamic assessment approach to instruction and assessment. In their study, dynamic assessment procedures were conducted with 10 ELT university students. Participants took part in a pretest-mediation-posttest study. The mediation phase included focusing on a particular reading comprehension sub-skill. The analyses of the results revealed significant progress in participants’ reading comprehension performance.
In a paper entitled "Are traditional assessment methods appropriate in contemporary Higher Education?", Hamilton (2014) draws on the National Student Survey which reports that “assessment in our universities is far from perfect. From student satisfaction surveys to Select Committee reports there is firm evidence that assessment is not successfully meeting the needs of students, employers, politicians or the public in general” (HEA 2012: 7) and argues that “traditional examinations have been widely criticised for lacking validity and authenticity. … Despite this lack of authenticity examinations are still widely used in the sector. Programme teams are finding it challenging to move away from examination based practices, constrained by institutional culture, lengthy regulatory frameworks and lack of training” (Hamilton 2014: no page number). Norton et al. (2006) point out that “although there is much in the literature on students’ perceptions of exams as a form of assessment, there appears to be relatively little on university teachers’ beliefs about the pedagogical value of exams” (Norton et al. 2006: slide 6). Given that there is no research carried out on the views of English language lecturers regarding dynamic assessment and its potential in Higher Education, I contend that my research would fill this gap in the literature and address this lacuna.

**Methodology:** I would adopt an interpretivist qualitative approach to my research. This approach would help me to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and interpretations of the English language lecturers by exploring their ideas, opinions, perspectives, experiences, feelings and preferences as well as their reasons for these. I would like “to understand the subjective world of human experiences…to get inside the person and to understand from within” (Cohen et al. 2011: 17). To me, theory should not precede data but it is emergent and should be grounded in data (Cohen et al. 2011: 18). I would conduct 10 semi-structured interviews with 10 English language lecturers at some of the universities in London. As I do not intend to generalise the findings of my study and because random sampling is not possible for me for financial, spatial and temporal reasons, I would adopt the convenience sampling method and select the accessible members of the population of the English language lecturers teaching at universities in London.

**Ethical practice:** I do not envisage any ethical issues in this research. However, I will obtain the ethical approval of XXXX University before collecting any data. I will ensure that confidentiality and anonymity of the participants are observed. I will also gain the participants’ informed consent for taking part in this research and for using the data. Needless to say, the participants will be informed about the purpose and aim of the study and interview.
Please outline any ethical issues that might arise from this study and how they are to be addressed.

**NB all research projects have ethical considerations. Please complete this section as fully as possible using the following pointers for guidance.**

- Does the project involve potentially deceiving participants? No
- Will you be requiring the disclosure of confidential or private information? No
- Is the project likely to lead to the disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information about participants? No
- Does the project require a Criminal Records Bureau check for the researcher? No
- Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? No
- Will participants be rewarded for their involvement? No
- Are there any potential conflicts of interest in this project? No
- Any other potential concerns? No

If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.

Does the proposed research project involve:

- The analysis of existing data, artefacts or performances that are **not** already in the public domain (i.e. that are published, freely available or available by subscription)? No
- The production and/or analysis of physical data (including computer code, physical entities and/or chemical materials) that **might involve** potential risks to humans, the researcher(s) or the University? No
- The direct or indirect collection of **new data** from humans or animals? Yes – I would collect data from English language lecturers, they will be asked for consent and they can opt out of the interview at any time. As was mentioned earlier, I will ensure that confidentiality and anonymity of the participants are observed. I will also gain the participants’ informed consent for taking part in this research and for using the data.

If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.

Does the proposed research involve:

- The collection and/or analysis of body tissues or fluids from humans or animals? No
- The administration of any drug, food substance, placebo or invasive procedure to humans or animals? No
- Any participants lacking capacity (as defined by the UK Mental Capacity Act 2005)? No
- Relationships with any external statutory-, voluntary-, or commercial-sector organisation(s) that require(s) research ethics approval to be obtained from an external research ethics committee or the UK National Research Ethics Service (this includes research involving staff, clients, premises, facilities and data from the UK National Health Service, Social Care organisations and some other statutory public bodies within the UK)? No
If you answered yes to any of the points above, please contact your faculty’s RERP chair for further guidance.

SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

C1 Risk Assessment

Please outline
- the risks posed by this project to both researcher and research participants. None
- the ways in which you intend to mitigate these risks. N/A
- the benefits of this project to the applicant, participants and any others. Please see the research proposal above.

Checklist to be completed by applicant prior to submission of the form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Section B</td>
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<td>Section C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Research Proposal attached</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Please submit this *Form* as an email attachment to the Chair of your faculty’s Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) and copy in all of the staff and students who will be involved in the proposed research.

See: http://www.xxxxx.ac.uk/research/the-research-and-postgraduate-office/current-students/research-ethics.cfm

Please note that research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research on the condition that:
- The researcher must inform their faculty’s Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) of any changes to the proposed research that may alter the answers given to the questions in this form or any related research ethics applications.

- The researcher must apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

**Feedback from Ethics Panel**

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<th>Feedback where further work required</th>
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**Date of approval**

NB: Researcher to be notified of decision within two weeks of the submission of the application.
Appendix C
Data analysis

<table>
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<th>Data</th>
<th>Open codes</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Presently, the EAP courses on which I work are assessed by <strong>portfolio</strong>. The student will pass the course by producing two pieces of work in each skill, at the required pass mark. There are opportunities for the student to improve upon work which is not at the required standard, by formative feedback from the tutor. However, there is a time scale on this which means that the student does not have infinite attempts. These tools are used as this is <strong>university policy</strong> where I presently work.</td>
<td><strong>Limited practice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I would still use the same tools to assess the students, rather than working towards one final exam (for example) as I believe the portfolio method is less stressful on the students and gives them the opportunity to act on constructive feedback.</td>
<td><strong>Limiting regulations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It depends on the assessment. If it is formative, then yes. For summative assessments in class, I do not intervene as these will be used as a demonstration that the student has (unaided) passed the <strong>required level</strong> for the course.</td>
<td><strong>Limited practice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think that students should be given the opportunity to improve on their work and dynamic assessment is appropriate for this. As I mentioned previously, I believe it reduces the stress of an exam and there are many outside factors that can impact on a student on a particular day. This is especially true of international students who are a long way from friends and family, perhaps for the first time. There may be problems at home and this can seriously impact on their studies. Therefore, it is unfair to give them only one chance, as this may not be representative of their normal work. In addition, students may rehearse what they think are the “correct” answers and thus not give a true picture of their abilities, such as giving formulaic responses and remembered stock phrases.</td>
<td><strong>Context dependent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Dynamic</strong> - I’ve probably answered this in Q. 5. But if further clarification is needed, please let me know.</td>
<td><strong>Limiting requirements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Yes, I think that would be a good idea – see my reasons in Q.5</td>
<td><strong>Positive attitude to DA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I think it is challenging as far as my own institutional policies are concerned as it gives the opportunity for those more able students to demonstrate their abilities. It also gives other students more help to achieve, as constant feedback (should they decide to take advantage of it – and this is not always the case) is to help them, rather than just saying “no, you haven’t reached the required level”.</td>
<td><strong>Reasons for DA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Yes, I do because of the reasons given in Q 8 and the fact that</td>
<td><strong>DA</strong></td>
</tr>
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10. Dynamic assessments are more in line with my values, knowledge and experience. Possibly my initial experience in teaching in ESOL has coloured my outlook on assessment, as in ESOL the focus is more on the whole person and very often that person has had some very difficult experiences. Therefore, if the person is not completely at ease, this will have an impact on their learning. Language learning, in my opinion, cannot be treated in isolation without considering the person as a whole. The impact of culture shock, motivation, and other factors must also be taken into consideration. Therefore, to place such significance on one final exam seems to me to be unfair. Learning is a process and never stops, so to say “I’ve reached such and such a level and now I’m finished” is not true. This is especially true of the pre-sessional EAP courses on which I teach. By their very nature they are short and intense, and not everyone learns at the same pace.

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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>In-sessional does <strong>not use any formal assessment</strong>. On the MA we use a mix of traditional essays and applied projects where students have to apply what they have learned about teaching and learning to syllabus, materials or assessment design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I would use a mixture of discrete item tests and continuous integrated assessment that I hope represented a continuum from discrete to integrated and could provide both formative and summative (in the time frame of our course) information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>On our pre-sessional EAP programmes, students normally write a long essay over a period of 8 weeks, which follows a <strong>multiple draft approach</strong>. It is both the teaching and the assessed essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I think it is problematic in that it muddies the waters in terms of <strong>generalizability</strong>. Few assessment tasks in HE are explicitly explained and scaffolded. If EAP pre-sessional assessments are heavily scaffolded then it makes it difficult to generalise to the target language use context that doesn’t have this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I think they need a mixture because dynamic has the potential to aid learning and provide diagnostic feedback, static can also provide diagnostic feedback, but also more closely represents the level of independence learners may be required to work at in HE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I would need to learn a lot more about dynamic assessment before doing so. I would need to see the difference between DA and just good teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I don’t know enough about dynamic assessment to answer this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
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</table>
| 10. | Dynamic assessment as described above sounds like good teaching. So in that sense it matches my values. How it works as assessment is less clear to me so I cannot say how it matches my values. I have no experience of it, at least where it has been explicitly labelled dynamic assessment. | Ambivalent feeling
Lack of knowledge about DA |
| 2. | You refer to HE, but in the MATESOL English language skills are not formally assessed. For in –sessional support we did / do not assess achievement and attainment. Pre-sessional courses were assessed by means of presentation, long essay and reading/ writing test - there was a formative task with feedback on all three of these assessments. | Limited practice |
| 3. | My feeling with Pre-sessional students was that more formative assessments would have been useful but we had to focus on final Pass/Fail results at the end of the programme. I would prefer to use iterative writing and feedback events- where students were assessed on a first submission and where the task contributed to a second assessment but students would be given part of the final mark based on their uptake and use of feedback- their improvement. | Limited practice |
| 4. | In MATESOL – I provide a 1000 word formative writing task based on key principles of the module that are likely to be needed in the final summative assignments (4000 word documented assignments). The feedback aims to show students where they can improve, what they can currently do but what they should be aiming for. However, no marks on the formative assessment are given and is the final summative mark is based only on that piece of work. | Limited practice |
| 5. | I have problems understanding quite how dynamic assessment works on the basis of what I read in the literature (e.g. Fulcher's 2010 book,p. 73) or the US work on it. For international students who are assessed on academic writing, there is a need for more formative opportunities for them to practice and develop skills and use of conventions before summative assessment, so I wonder if the ‘dynamic’ label might refer to some more intervention that reflects the progress students make with this. | Lack of knowledge about DA
Lack of knowledge about DA |
| 6. | The iterative type of writing tasks, feedback and marking described in Q3 above. At the moment, a formative task in a module is effectively quite a ‘static’ task- so student motivation and uptake of feedback might be improved by linking it to assessment marks- students backgrounds mean they are very mark oriented and keen to improve and use feedback to improve those marks. | Static assessment
Reasons for SA
Lack of knowledge about DA |
| 7. | Not sure how it could be done. As stated above, I am still unsure as to how examiners can intervene in assessment to make it dynamic. | Lack of knowledge about DA |
| 8. | Yes, surely the problem is that it could be seen as inequitable and certainly affects traditional notions of reliability- it seems to depend on individual examiners giving individual feedback to students which will differ and mean that some students may appear to be ‘helped’ more than others. How practical is it with large numbers? | Limitations of DA |
| 2. | I am required to use spoken and written assessment tools. | Limiting requirements |
| 3. | I would use both achievement and attainment as these would be more motivating for the student and provide a clearer picture of progress. | Mixed assessment method |
| 4. | I cannot intervene in attainment assessment. I can intervene in achievement tests by discussing errors and correcting written work and the results are normally positive. | Limited practice Broad practice |
| 5. | It requires more engagement from students and lecturers and thus may be unpopular. | Student involvement Lack of popularity |
| 6. | Both would be beneficial. | Hybrid assessment |
| 7. | In some areas perhaps but it is labour intensive and requires administrative support e.g. databases of student achievement and may be difficult with situations of student illness, low attendance and the design of the tasks. | Ambivalent feeling Limitations of DA |
| 8. | Yes, as it transfers testing procedure more fully onto teachers who have traditionally divested testing onto final tests with minimum or no intervention. | Unpopularity with teachers Unpopularity with teachers |
| 9. | Yes. See 8. | Context dependent |
| 10. | See 6. Both assessments can be valuable in context. | Limiting regulations Mixed assessment method Involving students in assessment Enhancing student |
The purpose of EAP classes is to develop use of the English language tool in various situations, not take a snapshot of how they use that in a limited situation.

5. EAP classes are pretty much formulaic but some students attend with differing skills and requirements. They could be used to allow students take some ownership, say, to set their own agenda for intervention; after all, it is their course, to support them.

6. Both are useful (and necessary). Dynamic would the some degree of learner autonomy but some sort of benchmark assessment is generally valuable.

7. Yes, because in most EAP situations the process is more important than the end result.

8. It would be challenging to current conventions but maybe not too traumatic. With attitudes changing towards students as customers buying the HE product, assessment changes could be part of the wider package of student ownership of their programme.

9. Not really because there is already an informal approach to assessment, running parallel to formal assessment criteria.

10. Personally, I would say ‘dynamic’ suits my philosophy to teaching, working alongside the student as a guide, for them to achieve their personal goals. This, of course, would mean adapt to student demands and if that is the static approach, so be it!

11. Non-native English speaking students are faced with using English only in threatening situations. In the (non-EAP) classroom they feel obliged to be able to ‘perform’ as academically astutely in English as they can in their first language. This can result in those lacking confidence to opt out rather than ‘under-perform’. In social situations, where language usage is less of a threat, the environment (e.g. the pub) might be the threat, thus affecting students’ ‘performance’. There should be a safe haven (EAP classroom?) where students can feel free to express themselves without fear; a laboratory to experiment with their language skills.

2. Used oral presentations, listening tests (comprehension) written work – essays, reports, class tests covering aspects of language taught – grammar and vocabulary. Use the tools as they are in line with commercial tests (Cambridge) and the requirements of the university (academic skills).

3. I would have more frequent smaller tests to give them a clear sense of progress.

4. I ask students to submit drafts of their course work and give formative feedback on this. The others I do not, as we are not allowed to by the...
university.

5. A good idea in theory but hard to measure and would require an enormous input of a. time and b. training for teachers to be able to implement it in a fair and transparent way.

6. It depends on the student and the circumstances. I would guess that many students would be quite wary of dynamic assessment and it would be difficult to ‘sell’ it to them in a transparent way. Tutors may be accused of favouritism.

7. No for reasons stated above.

8. Yes. It raises all sorts of quality issues and transparency would be hard to demonstrate

9. Yes for reasons stated above

10. We can assess achievement in other ways, for example by assessing them on point of entry, and good teaching will provide students with clear guidance and practice of test components so that they know what to do. With writing dynamic testing would work but I would have to see examples of successful dynamic assessment in other contexts before I would be convinced to try it.

2. We are mainly only involved with formative assessment here, on our summer pre-sessional course for post-grad students in Education. All relate to academic writing: Argument Essay, Critical Review. There is a build-up in terms of feedforward & feedback, from plan to first draft & final draft. We are also involved in formative and summative marking on a Foundation course. Two written tasks are set: Essay & Work-based Portfolio. Both involve feedforward/back at plan, first draft & final draft (summative, grade, only at this stage).

3. Both individual & group tasks (e.g. collaborative writing projects). - Wide use of digital tools (wikis, google docs) and mark online using tools such as GradeMark, which I find excellent for formative feedforward - Any assessment would be closely linked to learning outcomes (LOs), and how this is achieved would be made explicit to students. This is a requirement here. I assume this is close to what you mean by ‘attainment’, LOs being reflected clearly in marking criteria. - Perhaps more student engagement in assessment design & evaluation - Course tasks explicitly linked to LOs, so students can see the correlation between what they are asked to do and end ‘product’.

4. In formative process, yes. Students may approach us at any stage for comment & advice, and I would respond to this.

5. I like the idea of it, and would be interested in seeing/reading examples of what it might look like in my context (academic writing).
6. Without much experience, I would imagine there might be a place for both. ‘Dynamic’ sounds ‘scaffolded’ in terms of the assessment itself. Perhaps, in some assessments, we withdraw the scaffolding at the moment the summative assessment starts. However, different examiners may intervene at different levels. How would this be standardised and hence fair?

7. See last answer. To some extent, perhaps. But I’d like more examples and evidence first.

8. For the reasons outlined above, yes, to some extent. However, I am open to the idea that barriers could be overcome.

9. No, I think my colleagues & department would be interested to learn more about it.

10. Not completely sure. On the one hand, I think students deserve as much support as possible from their tutors & examiners. On the other hand, fairness in assessment (equal opportunities) is extremely important.

11. Just to say I would be interested to learn more about this.

2. A learning portfolio because it allows students to demonstrate the development of their skills over time in a multitude of ways.

3. I feel the learning portfolio allows students to demonstrate achievement and attainment.

4. Intervention in terms of feedback and students build on their existing skills and apply the feedback to the subsequent work is used.

5. I agree with it hence the use of a learning portfolio. A static assessment only gives the student one chance.

6. Dynamic because formative feedback allows students to build on existing knowledge and learn from their mistakes.

7. Yes the exam system of static assessments doesn’t account for different learning styles.

8. Yes – I’m not sure what institutional policies you are referring to.

9. Yes – it allows for students to make mistakes and learn from them this is challenging.

10. Dynamic.
2. We use a number of formative and summative examinations and assignments. In our first semester, all student work is formative; students are given copious amounts of feedback and are talked through it in tutorials. It is hoped that this feedback will inform similar, summative assignments in semesters 2 and 3. Students are required to write coursework essays (1200 words); are given in-class exams in which they produce short and long answer responses to questions; students also deliver oral presentations with the aid of powerpoint. In terms of attainment, we grade students using marking criteria. These criteria are similar to IELTS, but with a more “academic focus” (there are criteria for critical analysis and academic conventions). Students are given a numerical grade (e.g. B+ = 65-69%). These “tools” (assignment types, criteria etc) are used in order to closely approximate the types of assignment students will face on their degree programmes. We are also hoping to build, through teaching – testing – feedback and teaching – students’ academic skills in these areas by using these tools. The formative/achievement aspects are included in the first semester in order to give students an extensive period of practice and feedback before the assessed work commences.

3. Possibly by placing a greater focus on the achievement aspect. Creating more assessment based on process rather than end product (e.g. reflective journals; course-work portfolios). Too many of our students who come in with good language skills can cruise through the course with a minimum of effort, and get undeserved high or decent grades. A greater emphasis on hard-work, reflective understanding and “distance travelled” would seem to be fairer and offer more encouragement to those students with less linguistic ability but better attitudes.

4. Following the formative assessments I often have classes in which we analyse (e.g. discourse analysis) model answers and offer scaffolded tasks in which students are required to analyse and improve “weak” pieces of writing (their own or their classmates). The focus is often on criticality but also targets coherence/cohesion; grammar and lexis. The outcome – hopefully – is that students develop themselves as academic writers. I also frequently give students our assessment criteria and get them to analyse and improve writing using that criteria. This activity will, it is hoped, give students a greater awareness of “the kinds of things” that assessors are looking for, and a greater ability to reproduce that in their own writing. All interventions, then, are carried out to improve students’ skills in academic writing/speaking, with a close focus on what they need to focus on in terms of “attainment”.

5. Strongly support its use. As stated above, I believe that more dynamic, process forms of assessment should be used on our courses.

6. Formative assessment and extensive feedback. Principally, Process writing in which students are expected to produce several drafts of a piece of work; students are then graded, in part, on how successfully and attentively they have responded to the assessor’s feedback. This kind of assessment

### Mixed assessment method
- Static assessment
- Static assessment
- Limited practice

### Static assessment
- Process oriented assessment
- Negative attitude to the current situation

### Limited practice
- Enhancing student potential

### Process oriented assessment
- Positive attitude to DA

### Limited practice
- Ambivalent feeling
encourages students to view academic writing as a process rather than an outcome or product, and pushes them into the habit of creating multiple drafts of their work (essential if they are going to get better marks for their assignments). It also puts the focus on the write-feedback-rewrite cycle, rather than simply teaching and testing. The former, I believe, is a far better way of actually developing students’ abilities.

7. Yes, in part (for the reasons given above).

8. Yes, of course. Dynamic assessment requires considerably more time and effort on the part of teachers/assessors. In order to be implemented effectively in an EAP context, a considerable amount of one-to-one time has to be made available for students; the provision of effective formative written feedback to students is also enormously time and energy-consuming for teachers. Consequently, tutors’ classroom hours need to be limited, with obvious recruitment and cost implications for HE institutions. HE institutions – UK educational institutions as a whole - are also still imbedded in outdated modes of teaching and testing (e.g. lectures and exams) which are easy to implement, but may be of limited educational value. This love affair with the easy to administer, standardised exam dies hard. Unlike the school sector in which training students how to perform well on examinations is encouraged (too much some would say), I think there is a belief in the HE sector that exams are transparent tests of conceptual and critical ability rather than culturally-specific exercises which some students are better prepared for than others.

9. Not necessarily. I think we already do a lot of dynamic assessment; much more so than in other university departments. We still need to do more however (see above).

10. I would like to see a move towards more dynamic based assessment esp. process/folio writing. This form of assessment treats learning as a process rather than an outcome, and encourages a much more reflective, personalised form of learning on the part of the student. This approach towards assessment is essential, I feel, in such a complex area as academic writing in which students are having to master multiple skills (e.g. control of sentence construction; logical development of ideas; vocabulary choice), and have problems and deficiencies particular to themselves.

2. Both attainment tests in 4 language skills and coursework assignments focussing on testing skills. Focus on skills testing (with outcomes referenced to CEFR) is due to visa requirements, institutional requirements for students to evidence given levels in 4 skills for entry to degree+ level courses.

3. Would have more freedom to tie assessment tasks more closely to the demands of tasks students likely to meet on degree courses (e.g. more focus on extensive reading, independent study, portfolio work, reflective assignments, multi-modal assessments, longer project work) rather than more language skills (IELTS-style) assessments. May also include some language
**assessment based on use of English (language/vocabulary)** e.g. Cambridge Use of English style assessment, rather than purely skills.

4. Yes, during coursework assignments, I work with students in the planning and drafting stages, giving feedback to support their redrafting before final submission. I feel that this increases their awareness of the task requirements and ways they can improve their work, their awareness of writing as a process rather than just final product, their confidence and their independent learning skills for the future.

5. In terms of interventions to support students to improve their own work, I am strongly in favour of it. I do see that there can be some tension between this and attainment testing where we may need to measure students level unaided, and also between wanting to support students and yet not wanting them to become overly dependent on supervision of their assessed work.

6. Static assessments perhaps can motivate some students, encouraging them into action under the pressure of a forthcoming test. However, I feel that there is more learning benefit and less pressure in dynamic assessment where students improve through the process rather than a one-off evaluation.

7. See above. Yes, to some extent, although I think there is already lots of dynamic assessment going on in HE. I am aware though that there may be need for some static assessment in terms of unaided level evaluation and ensuring students are producing their own work.

8. See above, challenges in terms of pressure to measure levels and standardise assessment.

9. See above in terms of the specifics of level evidencing in the 4 skills for HE entry, although there is some institutional flexibility in determining how to evaluate the 4 skills.

10. Dynamic is more in line with my own view of effective learning, the process of constructing your own knowledge, often in collaboration with others and in context.
Appendix D
A copy of the email sent to English language lecturers

Dear Mrs/Mr ……. ,

My name is XXXX. I work at XXXX University and I am doing research on dynamic assessment in English language teaching in HE. I wonder whether you would agree to be one of my research participants for an email interview.

I am attaching the interview questions, including the cover sheet, to this email. If you agree to be one of the participants, please type your answer under each question and return the completed document to me in an email attachment by the end of this month.

Thank you in advance for your time and please let me know whether you would do this.

Best wishes,

XXXX

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