Perceptions of educational psychologists regarding dynamic assessment of second language learners

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the mini-dissertation titled *Perceptions of educational psychologists regarding dynamic assessment of second language learners* which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis, in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

25 March 2018

Kerryn Giles

Date

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EP 16/04/02**
DEGREE AND PROJECT	M.Ed Perceptions of educational psychologists regarding dynamic assessment of second language learners
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CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

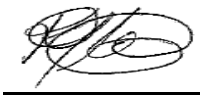
CC Ms Bronwynne Swarts
Dr Funke Omidire

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this mini-dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.



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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of educational psychologists regarding dynamic assessment of second language learners

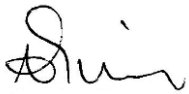
Dynamic assessment has been presented in international literature as an assessment for use with second language learners due to its ability to mitigate the negative impact of limited language proficiency on a learner's performance. Despite the attention that dynamic assessment has received in international literature, limited research has been conducted on its use by educational psychologists in South Africa. The purpose of the study was, therefore, to explore the perceptions that educational psychologists hold regarding the use of dynamic assessment with second language learners. A case study of two educational psychologists practicing in Pretoria was conducted to gain insight into this phenomenon. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with participants as well as through a collage and written reflection produced by each participant.

The findings of the study reveal that dynamic assessment is considered to be an assessment measure which holds potential value for use with second language learners. It was further found that dynamic assessment is conceptualised as a holistic form of assessment which allows the educational psychologist to adapt the assessment process to accommodate the learner's needs, aligning with literature on the topic. The findings further revealed that the educational psychologists interviewed hold some incorrect perceptions regarding dynamic assessment and may lack theoretical knowledge regarding its implementation. From the findings, recommendations are made for training and practice to enhance educational psychologists' competency in dynamic assessment. Recommendations are also made for further research to gain additional insight on the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa.

Key words: Dynamic assessment, second language learners, educational psychologists, assessment

DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

I, Arthur George Giles, hereby confirm that the mini-dissertation titled: *Perceptions of educational psychologists regarding dynamic assessment of second language learners* has been edited for language on behalf of the author, Kerryn Giles.



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CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Educational psychologists have a wide range of responsibilities, including the identification of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural challenges, as well as the planning and implementation of appropriate interventions (Reilly & Fenton, 2013), and the assessment of individuals (British Psychological Society, 2017; Department of Health, 2011b; Joy, Paul, Adey, Wilmott, & Harris, 2016). Within these roles, educational psychologists are required to work with a variety of learners, including learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are receiving education in a second language.

An increase in cultural and linguistic diversity present in schools around the world is causing concern regarding the lack of appropriate assessment measures (DelliCarpini & Guler, 2013; Foxcroft, Roodt, & Abrahams, 2013) to intensify. Accordingly, there is a need for an alternative form of assessment which takes cognisance of cultural and linguistic diversity and is not biased against learners from diverse backgrounds (Cawthon, Leppo, Carr, & Kopriva, 2013).

1.2. BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Assessment has been identified as a primary responsibility of educational psychologists, both locally (Department of Health, 2011b) and abroad (British Psychological Society, 2017; Joy et al., 2016). Assessment refers to educational psychologists' ability to collect information about a learner's functioning from a variety of sources and to use this information to make appropriate decisions (Hall, 2014). The purpose of assessment varies and includes evaluating a learner's knowledge or understanding, monitoring his or her progress (Hall, 2014), and identifying challenges that he or she is experiencing (Kavenská, Smékalová, & Šmahaj, 2013). South African sources further note that assessment guides intervention to support the learner (Bouwer, 2016; Department of Basic Education, 2014).

Within the field of assessment, the use of intelligence tests has sparked debate with regard to the validity and reliability of such tests, especially across different cultural groups (Foxcroft et al., 2013). Concern regarding the cultural sensitivity of assessment measures or tests has grown, with questions being raised about the extent to which

the measure may not be equally accessible to all populations (Cawthon et al., 2013; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2013). These concerns have been raised both internationally (Coelho, Marchante, Raimundo, & Jimerson, 2015; Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016; te Nijenhuis, Willigers, Dragt, & van der Flier, 2015) and locally. In South Africa, the issue is further exacerbated by the limited number of assessment measures that have been standardised for the South African population (Foxcroft et al., 2013).

Concern regarding the availability of appropriate assessment measures is becoming increasingly relevant due to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity present in classrooms (Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015; Fine-davis & Faas, 2014; Jantjies & Joy, 2016; M. Nel & Nel, 2016). Studies have shown that second language learners have difficulty meeting the educational demands placed on them (Notari-Syverson, Losardo, & Lim, 2003; Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012; Roseberry-McKibbin & O'Hanlon, 2000) and that these learners are likely to be referred to an educational psychologist for assessment as a result (Vega, Lasser, & Afifi, 2016).

As such, educational psychologists are faced with the challenge of using assessment measures that are appropriate and valid for a specific population (Vega et al., 2016) and that provide the educational psychologist with an opportunity to obtain an accurate reflection of a learner's ability (Cawthon et al., 2013). With the above-mentioned concern regarding the validity and reliability of assessment measures in mind, the need for alternative assessments that are culture-sensitive becomes clear.

One such alternative assessment that has received attention in literature internationally is dynamic assessment as conceptualised by Lantolf and Poehner (2010); Lidz (2003); Poehner (2008); Tzuriel (2001). Dynamic assessment incorporates the mediation of skills or content (Bouwer, 2016) by the assessor (Bester & Kühn, 2016) into the assessment process. In doing so, dynamic assessment provides a method of assessing a learner's potential future performance rather than only their current ability (van Eeden & de Beer, 2013).

As dynamic assessment assesses a learner's potential for learning and his or her ability to respond to new information, the influence of contextual factors, such as language, on a learner's performance is reduced (Peterson & Gillam, 2013). It is for this reason that dynamic assessment has been identified as a potentially useful assessment alternative for educational psychologists to use when assessing second

language learners (Budoff, 1987; Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Lawrence & Cahill, 2014; Lidz, 2003; Tzuriel, 2000).

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite international literature that has investigated the use (and potential benefits) of dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment with second language learners (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013; Lawrence & Cahill, 2014; Omidire, Bouwer, & Jordaan, 2011), minimal research has been conducted on its use by educational psychologists in South Africa (Kühn, 2016; Murphy & Maree, 2006; Smit, 2010). As such, there is limited information available regarding educational psychologists' perceptions of dynamic assessment and whether or not it is implemented in South Africa.

1.4. RATIONALE

Limited studies investigating educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment exist in the South African context (Kühn, 2016; Murphy & Maree, 2006, 2009; Smit, 2010). As such, the rationale for this study was that gaining insight into how educational psychologists perceive dynamic assessment could provide information on whether this is an alternative assessment that holds value for assessing second language learners in South Africa.

1.5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate the perceptions that educational psychologists hold regarding dynamic assessment. Through this, the aim was to gain an understanding of what educational psychologists understand by the term *dynamic assessment* and the extent to which they implement it when working with second language learners.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question for my study was:

- How do educational psychologists perceive the role of dynamic assessment in addressing the difficulties experienced by second language learners?

In order to answer the primary research question, a number of secondary research questions were explored. These questions were guided by the literature review conducted. The secondary research questions were:

- How do educational psychologists define dynamic assessment?
- To what extent do educational psychologists consider dynamic assessment as a means of addressing difficulties experienced by second language learners during assessment?
- What factors influence educational psychologists' decision regarding whether or not to implement dynamic assessment?
- What do educational psychologists consider to be the main factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa?

1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was conducted from a Social Cognitive Theory framework. Social Cognitive Theory assumes that human functioning can be explained in terms of a "model of triadic reciprocity" (Bandura, 1986, p. 18), in which behaviour, personal characteristics, and the social setting interact to influence functioning (Bandura, 1986). Consideration of the interaction of these components facilitated an understanding of the educational psychologists' perceptions.

1.8. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The working assumptions of this study were as follows:

- Educational psychologists have sufficient knowledge regarding dynamic assessment to answer the questions presented.
- Educational psychologists are aware of the contextual challenges present in the South African education system, including the prevalence of learning in a second language, and are able to formulate opinions based on this awareness.

1.9. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.9.1. Perceptions

Perceptions refer to the way in which an individual understands and makes sense of phenomena (Keenan & Evans, 2009). Perceptions can be considered mental representations of knowledge (Schunk, 2012).

1.9.2. Educational psychologists

Educational psychologists are individuals who are registered as practitioners within the category of educational psychology with the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Within the South African context, the category of educational psychology pertains to assessment, identification, diagnosis, and intervention in order to promote optimal functioning within the context of learning and development (Department of Health, 2011b).

1.9.3. Dynamic assessment

Dynamic assessment is an interactive form of assessment which incorporates mediation into the assessment process (Losardo & Notari-Syverson, 2011) in an attempt to evaluate an individual's potential for learning (van Eeden & de Beer, 2013). Dynamic assessment allows the educational psychologist to explore the extent to which a learner learns and responds to new information (Peterson & Gillam, 2013). As a result, dynamic assessment provides a reflection of a learner's ability without the influence of language proficiency (Peterson & Gillam, 2013) and provides insight into the instructional strategies that are useful to the learner (Bouwer, 2016).

1.9.4. Second language learners

A second language learner is considered to be a learner who is attending a school where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is not the same as the learner's home or first language (Department of Basic Education, 2010; Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010).

Studies have referred to second language learners as English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners (Maja, 2015; Nqoma, Abongdia, & Foncha, 2017; Singh, 2010), English Second Language (ESL) learners (Marshall, 2014; Sibanda, 2017; Warren & Miller, 2015), and English Language Learners (ELL) (DelliCarpini & Guler, 2013; Lane & Leventhal, 2015), thereby focusing specifically on the use of English as a second language. The term second language learner was selected for the study to reflect the principle of a learner's LoLT differing from that of his or her home or first language, irrespective of what the language may be.

1.10. METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO STUDY

The section provides a brief overview of the various components of the methodology that was used in this study. A detailed description of each component can be found in Chapter 3 of this document.

1.10.1. Research paradigm

The research study was conducted using an interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist paradigm was selected due to its recognition of the subjectivity of experience and its argument for a methodology and data generation methods that were relevant to the participants in the study (Grix, 2010). The assumption that individuals have varied backgrounds, assumptions, and experiences and that these contribute to their constant construction of reality (Wahyuni, 2012) accounted for the subjective way in which the participants constructed and interpreted phenomena (Mack, 2010).

1.10.2. Methodological approach

A qualitative research approach was used to reflect the attempt to describe and understand a phenomenon (Graue & Karabon, 2013). This was achieved through focusing on participants' subjective interpretations of phenomena and the way in which they view the world (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a).

1.10.3. Research design

An exploratory case study was used. The case study investigated two educational psychologists' perceptions regarding the use of dynamic assessment.

1.10.4. Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of participants in order to ensure that the purpose of the study was met (Maree & Pietersen, 2007; Wahyuni, 2012). As such, the participants selected were individuals registered as educational psychologists with the HPCSA, that practiced as educational psychologists in South Africa, and that had experience in assessing second language learners.

1.10.5. Data generation

The data was generated from a number of sources in the study, each of which is discussed briefly in this section.

The demographic questionnaire provided the opportunity to obtain basic, demographic information from the participants in a time-efficient manner (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010). This included the participants' personal information such as their age and gender, as well as information pertaining to their role as an educational psychologist, such as where they received training and their number of years of experience.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for the provision of specific questions relevant to the study as well as flexibility in terms of exploring information that emerged during the interview (Grix, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012).

The collage and written reflection were researcher-generated documents as the participants were asked to create them as part of the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The collage can be classified as an arts-based technique (Butler-Kisber, 2008) which encouraged the participants to reflect on their understanding during the process (Flicker, 2014). The collage also served the purpose of eliciting writing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), thus furthering their engagement (Rogers, 2001).

I kept a reflective journal to make sense of the research process (Orange, 2016) and engage in on-going reflection (O'Sullivan, 2015). Field notes include notes I wrote during the research process (Yin, 2014) and provide an audit trail of decisions (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

1.10.6. Data analysis

The generated data was analysed by means of thematic analysis. This was conducted by following the steps of data analysis recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016). The first step in the analysis process was the organisation and management of data, including transcribing the interviews, labelling data sources, and initial coding. The second step pertained to immersive engagement and involved more detailed analysis and the formation of themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The final step referred to the writing and interpretation of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This involved making sense of the data and putting it into context (Denzin, 2016).

1.11. QUALITY CRITERIA

Research is concerned with producing reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, a number of strategies were employed to enhance the rigour of the study.

Transferability, or the extent to which the findings of my study could be applied to other cases or situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), was ensured through the use of thick, detailed descriptions of the participants and their perceptions.

In order to enhance the study's credibility (the extent to which the findings accurately represent reality), triangulation of data, participant validation (or member checking), reflexivity, and peer reviews were implemented (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability (or consistency between the findings and the generated data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)) was also ensured through triangulation of the data, reflexivity, and peer reviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), as well as through audit trails (Houghton et al., 2013). Audit trails and reflexivity were further used to enhance the confirmability of the study (the extent to which the findings accurately reflect the participants' views) (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

1.12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conducting ethical research incorporates a number of components, including obtaining ethical approval and adhering to the guidelines of a profession's regulatory body (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). Accordingly, ethical clearance for conducting the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Furthermore, the guidelines regulating the profession of psychology and the conducting of ethical research within the profession (Department of Health, 2006, 2011a) were maintained throughout the study.

The ethical principles of informed consent, autonomy, confidentiality, and non-maleficence (Allan, 2011) were incorporated throughout the study. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study as well as what would be required from them as part of the process of obtaining informed consent. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time. In order to maintain confidentiality, the participants' identities were known only to me and my supervisor and pseudonyms were used in the dissemination of data. Furthermore, the information required from the participants did not pertain to their personal lives and centred only on their experiences as educational psychologists.

1.13. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the framework used in this study. The rationale for the study, which included gaining insight into how educational psychologists perceive dynamic assessment as an assessment measure in the South African context, was discussed. This was done within the context of the study's background and problem statement which outlined the need for fair assessment measures that are appropriate for second language learners. The research questions that guided this study followed. I also made known the assumptions that were present and clarified key concepts used in the study.

This chapter included a brief overview of important components of the study, including the research paradigm and methodological approach that were used as well as the quality criteria and ethical considerations that were incorporated.

Chapter 2 will present a discussion on the conducted literature review. The literature review covers the role of educational psychologists, specifically in terms of assessment. This is discussed in the context of the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity present and the subsequent need for appropriate assessment measures. A review of literature on the use of dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment measure follows. The chapter concludes with an overview of the theoretical framework that guided the study.

In Chapter 3, a thorough discussion and explanation of the research methodology is provided. This is followed by a report on the results and findings of the study in chapter 4. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss how the findings answer the research questions and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses existing literature pertaining to key areas of my research topic, namely the role of educational psychologists, the assessment of second language learners, and dynamic assessment. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the different components of the literature review and the relationship between them.

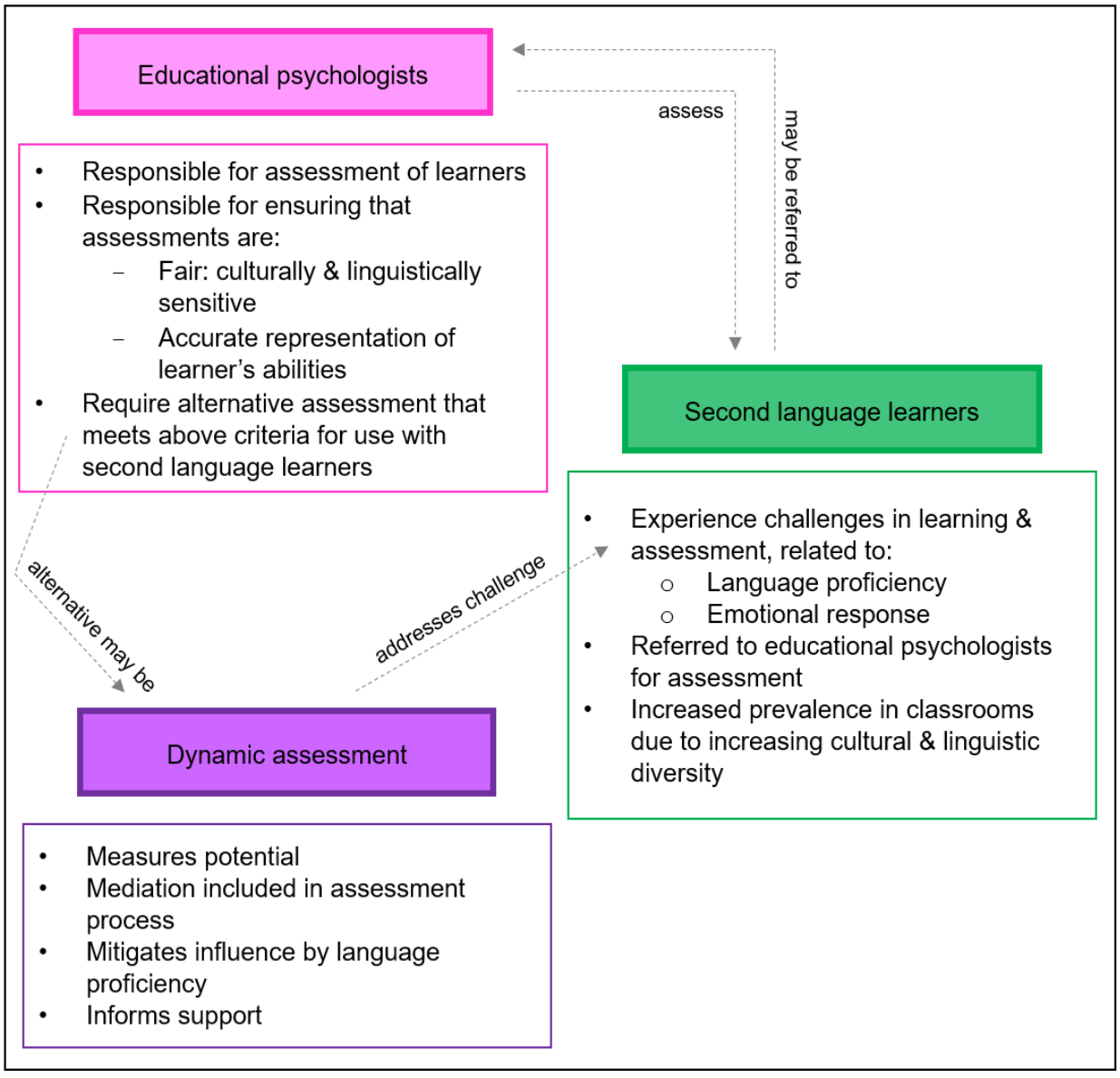

Figure 2.1. Key concepts of literature review

The literature review begins with a discussion of the profession of educational psychology, with particular reference to their role in assessing learners. The issue of learners' language proficiency in assessments is then explored, highlighting the impact of inadequate language proficiency on their assessment results and potential methods of increasing access to assessment content. The high prevalence of second language learning that occurs around the world and in South Africa makes the issue of proficiency in the language of assessment highly relevant. Research regarding this is discussed within the context of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms, both internationally and locally. Literature on the use of dynamic assessment as a potential alternative assessment for second language learners is then reviewed, including the extent to which it is used by educational psychologists.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of my theoretical framework, the Social Cognitive Theory, and how the components of the theory are applied to and guide the study.

2.2. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' ROLE WHEN WORKING WITH LEARNERS

It has been argued that defining educational psychology and the role of these professionals is complicated by the variety of programmes, academic degrees, and careers associated with the profession (Ball, Pierson, & McIntosh, 2011). The basic assumption is that educational psychologists have "specialised knowledge in both psychology and education" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 47). The role of educational psychologists, also referred to as school psychologists in some countries (Atkinson, Squires, Bragg, Muscutt, & Wasilewski, 2014), covers a variety of domains including the provision of mental health services in a school-based context (Eklund, Vaillancourt, & Pedley, 2013), educational intervention (Kavenská et al., 2013), vocational counselling (Coelho et al., 2015), and training (Joy et al., 2016).

Educational psychologists are also seen as responsible for identifying cognitive, emotional, and behavioural problems, as well as for planning and implementing appropriate interventions (Reilly & Fenton, 2013). In South Africa, the scope of practice of educational psychologists refers to assessment, diagnosis, and intervention to achieve optimal human functioning in the domains of learning and development (Department of Health, 2011b). International literature (British Psychological Society,

2017; Harris & Joy, 2010; Joy et al., 2016) and South African institutions such as the Department of Health (2011b) agree that the assessment of individuals' functioning is a primary role of educational psychologists. Within this, educational psychologists' role in the assessment of learners is particularly relevant to the study and will be discussed in the following section.

2.2.1. Assessment of learners

Assessment refers to the collection of information about a learner and the use thereof to inform judgements or decisions (Hall, 2014; Obi & Sapp, 2014). This usually involves collecting information from a variety of sources including through observations; interviews with the learner, his or her family members, educators, and other significant role-players; and the administration of various assessment measures (Bouwer, 2016; N. Nel, Nel, & Lebeloane, 2013). Assessment measures can be standardised or non-standardised and can take on a variety of forms, including screening tests as a time-efficient method of identifying learners or areas which require additional support (Obi & Sapp, 2014).

Assessments can also be classified as diagnostic; formative, to support learning; or summative, as a measure of achievement or acquisition (Hall, 2014). Curriculum-based assessment in accordance with school work can also be utilised to gain insight into the learner's strengths and possible areas of difficulty (Ball et al., 2011). In addition to these assessments, educational psychologists are also one of the few professionals qualified to assess intelligence by means of intelligence tests (Ball et al., 2011; Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016).

Assessment can serve various purposes, including 1) establishing a learner's knowledge or understanding of a particular topic or domain; 2) monitoring a learner's progress; 3) diagnosing barriers to learning; 4) informing teaching; and 5) comparing a learner's achievement to that of his or her peers (Hall, 2014). Assessment can also be used to determine the effectiveness of an education programme (Obi & Sapp, 2014). In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education (2014) emphasises that assessment should make a meaningful contribution to the support of the learner. This reflects a shift from "emphasising assessment *of the learner*, via assessment *of learning*, to assessment *for learning*" (Bouwer, 2016, p. 75).

In working with learners, educational psychologists are largely responsible for diagnostic assessments in order to identify challenges that a learner may be experiencing, assisting with the design and implementation of appropriate intervention strategies (Joy et al., 2016; Kavenská et al., 2013). The following discussion pertaining to assessment by educational psychologists, therefore, refers primarily to diagnostic assessments with the understanding that a diagnostic assessment encompasses several aspects, namely: identifying the cause of a barrier to learning for classification purposes, diagnostic information pertaining to the learner's style of learning and his/her psychological processes, and the learner's unique instructional needs (Obi & Sapp, 2014), each of which serves the purpose of informing intervention (Bouwer, 2016).

2.2.2. The issue of accessibility in assessment

The concept of assessment is not without contention. Intelligence tests in particular have sparked continuous debate over the years in terms of validity, reliability, and cultural-sensitivity (Foxcroft et al., 2013). While there has been extensive debate on the matter, I contend that Kaplan and Saccuzzo (2013) summarise the core of the issue poignantly when they note the following "[t]he question is whether the test has different meanings for different groups" (p. 163). A similar point is raised by Cawthon et al. (2013) who note that there is often little attention given to the extent to which assessment items are "differentially accessible to members of various groups" (p. 75), with assessments generally containing a single set of items which are used with diverse students. These arguments speak directly to the relevance of this study: the question of whether educational psychologists are making use of assessments that are fair and accessible to all. Further, the importance of culturally and linguistically sensitive assessments that, if standardised, are interpreted accordingly is evident.

While literature indicates that this is a global concern (Coelho et al., 2015; Fernandes, Ha, McElroy, & Myers, 2016; Ngara & Porath, 2014; Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016; te Nijenhuis et al., 2015), it is also a concern in South Africa where many of the assessment measures available were developed internationally (and, therefore, have international norms) and few South African-developed measures exist (Foxcroft et al., 2013). Another concern is the question of whether standardised assessments are sensitive to language proficiency, culture, or other individual factors (DelliCarpini & Guler, 2013), particularly for the diverse South African context.

This becomes especially relevant when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse learners where learners are receiving education in a second language. It is imperative that the assessment of second language learners reflects their content knowledge in order to inform support and monitor progress (Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2011; Shapiro, Benson, Clemens, & Gishlar, 2011). Due to limited language proficiency, however, content assessments tend to become "defacto language proficiency" (p. 141) assessments for second language learners (Clark-Gareca, 2016). The issue, therefore, becomes a learner's access to the content of the assessment in order to ensure that his or her performance is an accurate reflection of his or her ability (Cawthon et al., 2013).

2.3. CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Authors from around the world (Dawe, 1983; Hester, 1984; Jantjies & Joy, 2016; Roseberry-McKibbin & O'Hanlon, 2000) have researched the increasing diversity in classrooms in a variety of countries. As early as the 1980's, authors were noting the increasing diversity that was occurring in British classrooms where an increasing number of learners did not have English as their first language (Dawe, 1983; Hester, 1984). Over the years, additional research documenting the increase in second language learners has continued. For example, several studies conducted in the United States of America (USA) have attributed the increase in linguistic diversity within classrooms to increasing globalisation and have noted that second language learners struggle to cope with the schooling demands (Alt, Arizmendi, Beal, & Hurtado, 2013; Notari-Syverson et al., 2003; Roseberry-McKibbin & O'Hanlon, 2000).

Similar studies have continued more recently. For example, Spain has seen a considerable influx of immigrants as a result of globalisation (Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015). Consequently, a dramatic increase in ethnic diversity in classrooms is now present, with 9.53% of the student population comprising ethnically diverse learners (Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015).

Fine-davis and Faas (2014) had reported similar findings in their study of six European countries, namely France, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Ireland, and Latvia. These authors cite globalisation, as well as increased mobility between the European Union (EU) countries as contributing factors in the increased ethnic, linguistic, racial, and religious diversity that is now present in classrooms across the EU.

It is expected that cultural and linguistic diversity will continue to increase internationally with the present global refugee crisis (Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher, 2017). The United Nations' Refugee Agency, UNHCR, reported that approximately 51% of refugees worldwide are children (UNHCR, 2016), emphasising the extent to which cultural and linguistic diversity can be expected in classrooms in the future.

South Africa is no different with high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity present in classrooms (Jantjies & Joy, 2016). M. Nel and Nel (2016) argue that the majority of South African learners receive education in a second language. According to the most recent statistics released by the Department of Basic Education, English is used as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) for 65% of learners in South Africa, with only 7% of learners identifying English as their home language (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

This is supported by the 2011 Census which reports that as little as 9.6% of the South African population considers English to be their first language (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The linguistic diversity in South African classrooms, together with exacerbating issues, such as the "dialectisation" (p. 34) of the official languages, creates a situation where the majority of learners in a classroom are likely to be second language learners, regardless of the LoLT selected (National Education Evaluation & Development Unit, 2012). The high prevalence of cultural and linguistic diversity, together with the consequent high rates of second language learning, provide a background for the argument for a need to address the challenges faced by these learners.

2.4. EXPERIENCES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Learners who lack proficiency in the LoLT are likely to experience a range of barriers to learning (M. Nel & Nel, 2016) or experience their limited language proficiency as a barrier in itself (Probyn, 2001, 2006). This is largely attributed to the fact that these learners are required to have linguistic, procedural, and conceptual knowledge relating to the subject as well as executive functioning skills, such as critical thinking, while they are still acquiring proficiency in the LoLT (M. Nel & Nel, 2016).

Second language learners may have difficulty listening to the phonological system, phonotactic rules and tone melodies of the second language because it differs from their first language (N. Nel & Nel, 2013). Potential consequences of this include poor

comprehension, a limited vocabulary, mispronunciations, spelling errors, and reading difficulties in the second language (N. Nel & Nel, 2013); which have a direct impact on the learners' ability to learn and participate in the classroom. This clearly poses a challenge in terms of acquiring the content or subject knowledge but also in being able to demonstrate such knowledge.

Learners' limited language proficiency presents a challenge in terms of teaching content (Makina, 2015). As a consequence of their limited language proficiency, learners tend to take minimal notes during class and educators often omit work that they deem as too complex for the learners' language proficiency (Makina, 2015).

Furthermore, second language learners' performance on assessment measures is negatively impacted by their limited language proficiency (Omidire et al., 2011). In order to respond effectively during assessments, learners must be able to decode and process the items in the assessment (Omidire et al., 2011). Consequently, learners who lack the language proficiency to "access the assessment *per se* both functionally and conceptually, are incapacitated even before endeavouring to demonstrate their knowledge" (Omidire et al., 2011, p. 49).

This is supported by research that suggests that second language learners are likely to experience negative emotions and an expectation of failure when faced with the prospect of an assessment (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a). This, in turn, causes the learners to experience a heightened sense of anxiety and demotivation (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a). The anxiety experienced by second language learners has further been found to influence the level of motivation that they experience (Effiong, 2016), with high levels of anxiety being associated with lower levels of motivation (Xaypanya, Ismail, & Low, 2017).

The negative impact of using assessments that are inaccessible to second language learners and that do not accommodate their cultural and/or linguistic diversity is, therefore, far-reaching. The following section provides insight into assessment accommodations that have been implemented to address some of these challenges, with the purpose of illustrating the need for alternative assessments for second language learners.

2.4.1. Accommodations: increasing access

Assessment accommodations have been identified as a method of increasing access to assessment content for second language learners (Cawthon, Kaye, Lockhard, & Beretvas, 2012; Clark-Gareca, 2016; Li & Suen, 2012; Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2011; Solano-Flores, Wang, Kachaf, Soltero-Gonzalez, & Nguyen-Le, 2014), with a variety of accommodation methods existing. With reference to second language learners, accommodations refer to strategies that are used to overcome some of the barriers associated with language-based assessments (Kemp, 2014). Accommodations can be made to the assessment materials or administration procedures (Kemp, 2014) and are designed to "even the playing field" (Cawthon et al., 2013, p. 295) so that all learners have equal access to the content of the assessment.

A study conducted in the USA considered the impact of translating items for second-grade learners who were completing the KeyMath-3 test in their second language as the LoLT (Alt et al., 2013). This study sought to understand whether the language in which mathematical word-problems were presented influenced learners' performance on a standardised mathematics assessment. Results from this study indicated that learners showed a "significantly better performance on the translated items" (Alt et al., 2013, p. 33), with the authors attributing this improvement to the idea that the familiar vocabulary, phrasing, and grammar present in the learners' first language (and, therefore, in the translation of the items) facilitated their mathematical problem-solving (Alt et al., 2013).

Siegel et al. (2014) investigated the use of scaffolding in written assessment in order to address some of the challenges experienced by second language learners in classrooms in the USA. These authors found that second language learners experienced complex written assessments as "difficult and frustrating" (Siegel et al., 2014, p. 690). This study reported that modified assessments were beneficial in three areas of assessment: increasing comprehensibility, eliciting more meaningful responses, and facilitating organised thinking. Several strategies employed allowed second language learners to better understand and respond more effectively to the assessment items. Dividing questions into smaller, multiple prompts assisted learners to focus on each 'section' of the question and respond appropriately to the various important aspects. Visual tools (such as diagrams, charts, bulleted item lists) were also

beneficial in helping learners to organise their thoughts. These tools also assisted with the visualisation of the question content (Siegel et al., 2014).

A study in Australia by Warren and Miller (2015) sought to investigate learning activities and instructional practices which may assist second language learners in improving their performance in mathematics. Aspects of the authors' intervention included: 1) learning pathways – with a progression from the educator modelling the required task, followed by peer work, to individual completion; 2) integrated experiences – listening, reading, writing, manipulating, and talking about the concepts; 3) multiple representations such as charts and pictures; 4) language building through encouraging learners to use their home language, mathematical language, and the LoLT to communicate their understanding; 5) ensuring that material was visually stimulating; and 6) linking learning content to the learners' experiences. The authors report that their "multiple semiotic register perspective" (Warren & Miller, 2015, p. 202), as described above, was beneficial in assisting second language learners with understanding and responding to concepts in the mathematics classroom.

In South Africa, Makgamatha, Heugh, Prinsloo, and Winnaar (2013) investigated the use of learners' first language as an accommodation strategy in large-scale assessments. The assessment was for Grade 8 learners and assessed both language and mathematics. Glossaries or translations in the learners' first language were provided for some of the items in both sections of the assessment. The authors reported that learners' performances improved with the use of the first language as the language of assessment in comparison to the LoLT as the language of assessment (Makgamatha et al., 2013). They also found that where translations were provided in mathematics instruments, these were utilised by learners and an improved performance was noted (Makgamatha et al., 2013).

Rapetsoa and Singh (2012) explored the challenges experienced by learners in a history class in South Africa. These learners reported Sepedi as their first language but were being taught history and being assessed in English (the LoLT of the school). There were several noteworthy findings from this study. Approximately 58% of educators involved in the subject attributed learners' lower performances to inadequate language proficiency. The majority of the learners (73%) also attributed their lower performances to language-related factors. The authors reported that a primary concern was that

learners often struggled to understand what questions required from them (Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012).

The literature discussed above indicates that second language learners benefit from accommodations during assessments that are conducted in their second language. This is supported by the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Li and Suen (2012) into the fairness of accommodations for second language learners. These authors concluded that second language learners' performances were significantly higher when provided with accommodation strategies.

In addition to difficulties with the language of the assessment, second language learners experience a range of negative emotions relating to the assessment process. These include test anxiety (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a; Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012; Varasteh, Ghanizadeh, & Akbari, 2016), hopelessness, and low self-esteem (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a). This is particularly so where learners perceive the assessments to be high-stakes assessments (Hall, 2014; Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012) and is thought to impact on the learners' understanding and performance (Varasteh et al., 2016).

The studies discussed illustrate the extent to which assessments may not provide an accurate reflection of a learner's abilities when the language of assessment is not the learner's first language as well as the extent to which using alternative assessments alleviates some of the challenges present. It is, therefore, evident that an alternative assessment method is required – a method that is not biased by language or culture and that promotes a positive experience of assessment.

2.4.2. What this means for educational psychologists

With the increase in cultural and linguistic diversity in countries around the world and within classrooms, educational psychologists are also encountering increased diversity among the learners referred to them (Ball et al., 2011). These authors argue that educational psychologists are likely to receive more referrals for second language learners than other population groups as educators and parents may perceive the possible delayed academic acquisition experienced by second language learners as a potential barrier to learning that requires assessment (Ball et al., 2011). This is supported by Lanfranchi (2014) who notes that minority learners (such as second

language learners) are often referred for special education placement as a result of a generalised view of lower academic achievement.

The literature regarding the prevalence of second language learners (as a consequence of the global phenomenon of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity) and the likelihood that these learners may be referred to educational psychologists for assessment should be considered in conjunction with concerns about the potential bias of conventional assessment measures. Consequently, the need for appropriate measures or techniques that provide a more accurate reflection of a learner's ability becomes evident. Investigation into a potential alternative assessment measure, such as dynamic assessment, and the extent to which it is used, is therefore, warranted.

2.5. DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

Through the discussion above, the need for an assessment procedure that takes into account the learner's cultural and linguistic background became clear. I also discussed some of the accommodation strategies and their potential usefulness that have been investigated in literature. The general trend in the research discussed suggested that accommodation strategies may be beneficial in "levelling the playing field" (Li & Suen, 2012, p. 294) for second language learners.

With that in mind, the principle of dynamic assessment is introduced. A number of authors have, for many years, suggested dynamic assessment as an alternative method of assessment, particularly where there are language differences (Budoff, 1987; Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; Lawrence & Cahill, 2014; Lidz, 2003; Tzuriel, 2000; Tzuriel & Kaufman, 1999). The sections that follow give an overview of the principles underlying dynamic assessment. Recent literature on the use of dynamic assessment in various domains will also be discussed in order to provide a greater understanding of its potential uses and downfalls.

2.5.1. Theoretical overview of dynamic assessment

Dynamic assessment is a form of assessment which incorporates the mediation of skills and content (Bouwer, 2016). It draws on principles of Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Learning Theory, namely that educational and socio-economic opportunities affect cognitive functioning (van Eeden & de Beer, 2013), making cognitive development both "social and interactive" (Grigorenko, 2009, p. 117).

According to the Sociocultural Learning Theory, social interactions are considered to be a primary factor cognitive development (Snowman & McCown, 2013). In order for this to occur, however, mediation must be present (Snowman & McCown, 2013). In other words, a more knowledgeable person needs to interpret and transform meanings so that they are of use to the learner. Dynamic assessment allows the assessor (as a more knowledgeable person) to mediate the assessment process (Bester & Kühn, 2016). The assessor is able to provide instruction, support, and feedback to the learner, thereby scaffolding the learner's development and learning (Bester & Kühn, 2016).

The focus of Sociocultural Learning Theory lies in learning potential as opposed to current ability (van Eeden & de Beer, 2013). As dynamic assessment is a co-operative activity that is undertaken by both assessor (or mediator) and learner (Poehner, 2008, 2012), it represents a shift from assessment of the learner to assessment for learning (Bouwer, 2016).

It is often contrasted with conventional, static assessments (Stevenson, Heiser, & Resing, 2016) which reflect an "achievement-oriented perception" (Bouwer, 2016, p. 76). While static assessments provide information regarding a learner's current achievement, they fail to measure the learner's potential for learning and do not provide sufficient information regarding the learner's learning processes and potentially useful mediational strategies (Bouwer, 2016).

Lidz (2014) provides an interesting discussion on the characteristics of dynamic assessment. Dynamic assessment is broadly considered to encompass "any procedure that embeds interaction and focuses on response to intervention" (Lidz, 2014, p. 294). Elaborating on this, Lidz (2014) proposes several characteristics of "good" (p. 295) dynamic assessment, including that the process:

- Includes intervention that is relevant to the purpose and content of the assessment;
- Provides information about the nature and level of the learner's responses to the intervention;
- Allows for inferences regarding learning processes;
- Provides opportunities for observers to agree on the outcomes and conclusions; and

- Generates information that results in positive outcomes for the learner, particularly regarding future instruction and learning.

The discussion by Lidz (2014) suggests that these characteristics of "good dynamic assessment" (p. 294) are relevant irrespective of the approach or format that is used in the dynamic assessment process, providing a set of criteria against which processes can be measured. The relevance of this is evident in the multiple conceptualisations of dynamic assessment that have been provided by various authors, including Budoff (1987); Feuerstein et al. (1981); Lidz (2003) and Tzuriel (2001), over the years. The following section provides a discussion on the various approaches or conceptualisations of dynamic assessment that are present in literature.

2.5.2. Approaches to dynamic assessment

As Poehner (2011) notes, multiple approaches to assessment and learning have been developed over the years and have been categorised as a form of dynamic assessment. Table 2.1 below is based on the work of Grigorenko (2009) and provides an overview of a few of the prominent authors and approaches that are recognised within the field of dynamic assessment. Each of these approaches is then discussed in more detail.

Table 2.1. Overview of specific approaches within dynamic assessment (Grigorenko, 2009)

Approach	Prominent researchers	Key concepts within approach	Psychological or educational targets
Mediated learning experience (MLE)	Feuerstein Lidz Tzuriel	Cognitive modifiability	Cognitive abilities
Learning potential	Budoff	Educability	Cognitive abilities
Graduated prompting	Brown Campione Peña	Zone of proximal development (ZPD) Cognitive abilities	Academic skills

2.5.2.1. Mediated Learning Experience

The concept of a Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) (Feuerstein et al., 1981) operationalises Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory (Tzuriel, 2000). The MLE reflects the argument that a mediator is present to interpret the world to the learner (Feuerstein et al., 1981). In contrast to the Sociocultural Learning Theory; however, the MLE is not necessarily linked to social interaction. As the key criteria of the MLE is that meaning is transformed and transmitted to the learner through the mediation process,

the MLE provides the learner with an opportunity to gain information that would not be gained through exposure to the stimulus only (Feuerstein et al., 1981). The mediator, therefore, takes on an active role in seeking to initiate change during the course of the assessment (Feuerstein, Rand, & Rynders, 1988; Poehner, 2011). Applying the MLE to dynamic assessment,

> assessors are no longer *passive acceptors* willingly acknowledging assessment performance as a sufficient and authoritative indicator of an individual's potential and entire life trajectory; instead, assessors are *active modifiers* whose priority is to undo predictions based on assessment performance by cooperating with individuals to create a new developmental trajectory (Poehner, 2011, p. 102).

Dynamic assessment assesses how well a child learns and responds to new information and is, therefore, able to lessen the impact of contextual factors, such as language or educational background (Peterson & Gillam, 2013).

2.5.2.2. Learning potential

According to Budoff and Pagell (1968), learning potential refers to the improvement in scores that a learner achieves on an assessment measure after "coaching" (p. 479) in comparison to when he or she is assessed without such coaching. These authors proposed that a "learning-potential assessment strategy" (p. 484) provides a method for estimating the general ability of a learner that minimises his or her prior experiences. The "coaching" (Budoff & Pagell, 1968, p. 479) aspect of this approach aligns with the notion of a mediated learning experience as it aims to assess the learning potential of a learner or the extent to which his or her performance improves on a particular task after receiving mediation to provide him or her with the necessary skills for the task (Calero et al., 2013).

2.5.2.3. Graduated prompting

Graduated prompting refers to a process of assessment in which the extent of teaching that the learner requires in order to master a specific task is tracked (Campione, 1989) and is based on the principles of Vygotsky's (1978) work on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as "the distance between actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of

potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 38). The ZPD captures the difference in levels of achievement or functioning that an individual can achieve when working alone compared to when he or she receives assistance (Bouwer, 2016).

Within graduated prompting, there are four key concepts as discussed by (Grigorenko, 2009):

- *Probing* which refers to asking a sequence of clarifying questions which assist the learner to formulate the answer or solution in a relatively independent manner;
- *Prompting* which also aims to maximise a learner's independence in finding the solution but instead of asking questions, prompting involves providing the learner with a sequence of hints that ultimately provide the solution;
- *Assisted learning/teaching* which involves the use of probing and prompting as a collective process; and
- *Transfer* which refers to the extent to which the learner is able to transfer the acquired skills to other, similar tasks.

From the above discussion, it is evident that dynamic assessment has been conceptualised differently by various authors over the years (Poehner, 2011), which may contribute to the lack of clarity regarding the construct of dynamic assessment reported by other authors (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000; Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Kühn, 2016; Smit, 2010). In addition to various conceptualisations of dynamic assessment, it can also take on different formats (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). The following section provides some information on the possible formats of dynamic assessment.

2.5.3. Formats of dynamic assessment

In addition to the different approaches within dynamic assessment, dynamic assessment can also take different formats which Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) refer to as either 1) a cake format; or 2) a sandwich format. The cake format involves a single session during which time the assessor provides mediation during administration of the assessment as the need arises on an item-by-item or task-by-task basis (Poehner, 2011). The assessment items or tasks and mediation are thus layered upon one another throughout the assessment process (Poehner, 2011), hence the comparison to layers of a cake.

In contrast, the more widely-used format in dynamic assessment is the test-teach-retest format (Grigorenko, 2009), or what Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) refer to as the sandwich format. Using this approach, the assessor includes a mediating session between two non-dynamic administrations of the same assessment (Poehner, 2011). The intervention offered in both formats typically encompasses two components, namely that it provides feedback to the learner regarding his or her current performance and that it provides some form of scaffolding to assist the learner to master the task (Lidz, 2014).

It has been argued that the format used should align with the purpose of the assessment (Poehner, 2011). Furthermore, the specific processes used during dynamic assessment may vary as a result of factors such as the nature of the intervention, the content domains, and the information outcomes of the process (Lidz, 2014). For example, the test-teach-retest format of dynamic assessment is recognised as a process that allows assessors to provide mediation to learners should it be necessary while still adhering to traditional, standardised assessment criteria (Poehner, 2011). As with the variety of conceptualisations present in literature, the differing formats of dynamic assessments provide opportunity for using dynamic assessment in a way that meets the needs of a specific learner.

2.5.4. Use of dynamic assessment with second language learners

There is an extensive amount of research on dynamic assessment and its potential uses dating back several decades (see, for example, Elliot (2003); Grigorenko and Sternberg (1995); Haywood and Tzuriel (2002); Stringer, Elliot, and Lauchlan (1997); Tzuriel (2000, 2001); Tzuriel and Kaufman (1999)). Research into dynamic assessment has continued since then with studies investigating dynamic assessment as a means of accommodating cultural and linguistic diversity in assessment (Barrera, 2006; Notari-Syverson et al., 2003; Roseberry-McKibbin & O'Hanlon, 2000; Spinelli, 2008). As cultural and linguistic diversity continues to increase, research into the use of dynamic assessment in the context of this phenomenon is crucial in evaluating its potential.

A more recent study on the use of dynamic assessment with second language learners was conducted by Lantolf and Poehner (2013) and found that dynamic assessment provides information about both a learner's abilities that are fully formed and also about abilities that are still developing (i.e. potential). As such, dynamic assessment can be

considered a method of ensuring fairness in assessment practices but also in educational opportunities generally (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013). This is supported by Hill (2015) who notes that because dynamic assessment measures potential as opposed to current ability, it appears to be a fair and more accurate method of measuring the cognitive abilities of a learner.

Another study reported similar findings, noting that second language learners (in this case immigrant children) scored lower on the initial phase of dynamic assessment, as they did with conventional intelligence tests, suggesting that language competence influenced their results (Calero et al., 2013). This study also showed, however, that after the teaching phase of dynamic assessment, the learners exhibited improved performance independent of their previous level of ability (Calero et al., 2013).

Furthermore, research has shown that dynamic assessment by means of a 3D Immersive Virtual Reality Environment provides an “intellectual partnership” (p. 307) which mediates learning and increases cognitive modifiability (Passig, Tzuriel, & Eshel-Kedmi, 2016). This suggests that dynamic assessment can be used flexibly in different contexts with similar findings in terms of usefulness.

As dynamic assessment encapsulates a commitment to the development of learners, regardless of previous academic experiences or performance (Poehner, 2011), it has the potential to provide a new, beneficial assessment experience for learners. Dynamic assessment could, therefore, provide learners with an assessment that can be considered a true reflection of their knowledge and that they can consider useful in identifying areas in which they need additional support (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a).

Lawrence and Cahill (2014) explored the perceptions of learners, parents, and educators regarding dynamic assessment. Their findings identified five main themes: 1) a positive experience for the learner where he/she realised that the strategies learned could be transferred to other situations; 2) dynamic assessment has a direct, positive impact on the well-being, self-perceptions, learning, behaviour, and relationships of the learner; 3) dynamic assessment placed the difficulties experienced by the learner within the broader context and increasing awareness of strengths and potential; 4) dynamic assessment produced a more optimistic view of the learner for both the parents and educators; and 5) parents reported positive effects on their parenting approach as a

result of dynamic assessment, including supporting their child's learning and development.

Dynamic assessment has also been found to be useful in providing educational psychologists with an assessment of a learner's cognitive abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and social and emotional characteristics (Lawrence & Cahill, 2014). As such, it allows the educational psychologist to develop appropriate intervention strategies for the learner. A core purpose of dynamic assessment is to inform steps that should be taken to improve the functioning of a learner (Hill, 2015).

Referring specifically to educational psychologists, Hill (2015) notes that dynamic assessment offers valuable insights into four areas relevant to educational psychologists, namely: what is happening; who is involved; what the cause of the difficulty might be; and potential ways to address the difficulty. Dynamic assessment has the ability to provide meaningful information that can inform support and intervention, causing it to be regarded as a useful tool for educational psychologists in fostering inclusive education practices (Hill, 2015).

As educational psychologists are seen as being the "core communicator between test results and interventions" (p. 133), dynamic assessment provides a method for educational psychologists to bridge the gap between diagnosis and intervention (Tiekstra, Minnaert, & Hessels, 2016). It also provides useful information to educators and parents in terms of support and instructional practices (Tiekstra et al., 2016).

2.5.5. Use of dynamic assessment by educational psychologists

Interestingly, despite the potential usefulness of dynamic assessment having been widely researched, it is not as widely implemented as it could be (Hill, 2015). A study in the USA reported that the majority of educational psychologists surveyed were engaging in best practice when conducting cognitive assessments (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). They did, however, also find that while most educational psychologists reported adapting their assessment practices when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse learners, these adaptations generally took the form of attempting to use more appropriate tests, using non-verbal measures, and using interpreters. The authors argue that these methods are not ideal and limit the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the assessment (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014).

Similar findings were reported by Vega et al. (2016) who also found that many educational psychologists used interpreters to assist with assessments. This study also raised the issue of professional training for educational psychologists regarding competency in the assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. This, as well as access to assessment measures, were factors that impacted the educational psychologists' assessment practices (Vega et al., 2016).

Aside from the above studies, limited international research exists on the use of dynamic assessment by educational psychologists. Earlier research suggested that educational psychologists experienced a variety of challenges in implementing dynamic assessment (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000). These included (1) limited exposure to dynamic assessment in their initial training; (2) a subsequent lack of confidence in their ability to effectively implement dynamic assessment; (3) a lack of support following training; and (4) time constraints as a result of their case-loads and the time allocated for assessments by the Department of Education. This study reflected similar findings to an earlier study conducted by Stringer et al. (1997) which suggests that little has been done to address these challenges. Limited research has been conducted since Deutsch and Reynolds (2000)'s study to explore the extent to which the findings are still relevant.

Haywood and Tzuriel (2002) conducted a review of the applications and challenges of using dynamic assessment and reported similar findings to those previously conducted. Haywood and Tzuriel (2002) report a number of possible reasons for the limited implementation of dynamic assessment. As an assessment measure, many professionals indicate concern regarding the reliability and validity of dynamic assessment. More recent studies, such as Cawthon et al. (2013) and Tiekstra et al. (2016), have also noted that concerns regarding the reliability and validity of dynamic assessment measures may influence the extent to which they are used.

Haywood and Tzuriel (2002)'s earlier research also included a lack of training on dynamic assessment measures and the time-intensive nature of the process as contributing factors to its limited use. More recent research suggests that, in contrast, educational psychologists may receive some training in assessing learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014) and are becoming more cognisant of modifying assessment measures to fairly assess these learners (Calero et al., 2013; Lanfranchi, 2014).

There is minimal research regarding educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment in South Africa, particularly recently. Murphy and Maree (2006) conducted a review of research that had been conducted on dynamic assessment. These authors found that a lack of consensus exists within South Africa regarding the definition of dynamic assessment. Further findings by Murphy and Maree (2006) include that the emphasis within local research tends to be on the assessment aspect, with little focus on the mediation applications of dynamic assessment.

A misunderstanding relating to the term *potential* was also uncovered with Murphy and Maree (2006) noting that the terms *potential*, *aptitude*, and *ability* appear to be used interchangeably within existing South African test batteries. They argue that potential is measured through process-oriented assessments, while aptitude or ability are found in static or conventional assessment measures (Murphy & Maree, 2006).

Advantages of dynamic assessment were identified in the literature as being able to provide insight into a learner's potential; being able to address the bias that may exist due to educational, socioeconomic, or linguistic backgrounds; and being useful for a variety of learners – including educationally disadvantaged and gifted learners (Murphy & Maree, 2006). The time-intensive nature and high costs involved, however, were identified as criticisms (Murphy & Maree, 2006), correlating with the previous findings of Haywood and Tzuriel (2002).

A qualitative study conducted in the Western Cape explored the perceptions of 12 educational psychologists regarding the potential relevance of dynamic assessment in their practices (Smit, 2010) and reported similar findings to that of Murphy and Maree (2006). The study found that although the educational psychologists classified dynamic assessment as potentially relevant, they seldom made use of it. The educational psychologists attributed this to a lack of training as well as the perception that very few professionals are adequately trained or available to assist with supervision (Smit, 2010). Dynamic assessment was also perceived as "labour intensive and time-consuming" (Smit, 2010, p. 140) which further limited the educational psychologists' desire to make use of it. A lack of clarity regarding the construct of dynamic assessment further exacerbated the situation.

A cross-national survey was conducted by Kühn (2016) to investigate the extent to which dynamic assessment is used by educational psychologists across South Africa.

The results of the survey indicate that only 30% of the 173 educational psychologists who participated in the survey perceived themselves as competent to use dynamic assessment (Kühn, 2016). Of those 30%, only 20.8% used dynamic assessment in their practice, with less than 10% of the educational psychologists using it more than once a week. These findings support those of Murphy and Maree (2006) and Smit (2010) regarding educational psychologists' perceived incompetence in the field of dynamic assessment and also highlight the limited extent to which it is being used in South Africa. An additional noteworthy finding from the study was that 61.3% of the participating educational psychologists expressed a desire to gain additional knowledge and training on dynamic assessment (Kühn, 2016).

A gap in literature pertaining to the implementation of dynamic assessment by educational psychologists and the factors influencing it, particularly in South Africa, is clearly evident. I, therefore, hope to contribute to this gap through this current research study and to provide some insight into the extent to which educational psychologists in South Africa implement dynamic assessment with second language learners and the factors that influence this choice.

Having discussed the findings of the literature review and provided the context for the purpose of this study, the following sections will provide insight into the theoretical framework that was selected for the study. The theoretical framework will be explained in detail, followed by a discussion on its applicability to the study.

2.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

The theoretical framework that was used for this study is Bandura's (1968) Social Cognitive Theory. Social Cognitive Theory posits that human functioning can be explained in terms of a "model of triadic reciprocity" (Bandura, 1986, p. 18), in which behaviour, personal characteristics, and the social setting interact to influence functioning (Bandura, 1986). This is also referred to as triadic reciprocal causation or the triadic model (Snowman & McCown, 2013, p. 187). Bandura (1986) identified what he termed basic capabilities which influence an individual's personal characteristics. These are outlined briefly below.

Symbolising capability. This refers to an individual's ability to use symbols as a means of altering and adapting to their environment (Bandura, 1986). It is this capability that

allows individuals to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, and competencies (Bandura, 2002) and to base most of their actions on thought as opposed to trial-and-error (Bandura, 1986).

Forethought capability. Bandura (1986) argues that individuals' behaviour is generally purposive and regulated by forethought. This "future time perspective" (p. 19) is reflected in anticipating the consequence of behaviour, setting goals, and planning (Bandura, 1986). These actions are categorised as strategic planning activities, while a second category of activities, self-motivational beliefs, are also part of the forethought process (Zbainos, Karoumpali, & Kentouri, 2013). This capability is founded on the capability to use symbols meaningfully as it is the cognitive representation of future events, not the events themselves, that influence present behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Self-regulatory mechanisms facilitate the transformation of forethought into action (Bandura, 1986; Snowman & McCown, 2013).

Vicarious capability. Vicarious capability refers to an individual's ability to learn through observation (Bandura, 1986). Learning through observation allows an individual to observe (and learn) how to perform a behaviour but it also provides insight into the consequence of such a behaviour (Woolfolk, 2014). Several factors influence the effectiveness of the process, however, including the developmental status of the observer, the prestige or competence of the model, vicarious consequences, the observer's outcome expectations, the observer's goals, and the self-efficacy beliefs of the observer (this factor represents a reciprocal relationship) (Woolfolk, 2014).

Self-regulatory capability. Self-regulation refers to the ability to alter one's behaviour in order to achieve a particular outcome and involves both forethought and self-reflection (O'Donnell, Reeve, & Smith, 2012) and is a distinctive feature of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Individuals adapt or regulate their behaviour according to internal standards and self-evaluation processes (Bandura, 1986). Self-regulatory capabilities are viewed as a cyclical process encompassing three stages (Zimmerman, 1989, 2008): the forethought phase (discussed above), the performance phase, and the self-reflection phase (Snowman & McCown, 2013). The performance phase of self-regulation involves self-control (focusing attention and selecting appropriate strategies) and self-observation (recording one's behaviour and adapting as necessary), while the self-reflection phase involves self-judgement (evaluating effort and causal attribution of

results) and self-reaction (drawing inferences about strengths and areas of development) (Snowman & McCown, 2013).

Self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's capability to perform a task (Snowman & McCown, 2013). Self-efficacy influences the cognitive processes that precede action (Bandura, 1993), motivation and perseverance (Snowman & McCown, 2013), and behaviour in terms of selecting activities (Bandura, 1993). Individuals with a higher level of self-efficacy are more likely to approach a task, even if it is considered challenging, while individuals with a lower self-efficacy are more likely to avoid tasks that they perceive as challenging (O'Donnell et al., 2012).

An individual's self-efficacy beliefs can be influenced by several factors including: 1) mastery experiences. This refers to past successes and failures in similar situations (as perceived by the idnvidual). Successes that are attributed to traits of the individual are associated with higher levels of self-efficacy; 2) vicarious experiences which refers to observing others succeed at a similar task; 3) social persuasion in the form of encourament, feedback, or guidance; and 4) physiological arousal such as excitement or anxiety can also influence an individual's self-efficacy beliefs (Woolfolk, 2014).

In addition to the factors that influence self-efficacy beliefs, self-efficacy, in turn, can have a significant impact on the thought and actions of individuals (Schunk, 2012). Self-efficacy beliefs have been seen to influence selection processes (i.e. the goals an individual sets or activities that he or she participates in). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy (particularly across domains) are more likely to consider a wider variety of activities or goals. Cognitive processes are also sensitive to self-efficacy beliefs, as individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to use higher-order cognitive processes and tend to visualise themselves as succesful (Snowman & McCown, 2013). This leads to the third process impacted by self-efficacy: motivational processes (Woolfolk, 2014). The higher individuals rate their capabilities, the harder they are likely to work to achieve a goal. Finally, self-efficacy also influences affective processes, particularly when individuals are faced with challenging tasks. Self-efficacy beliefs appear to influence whether the individual approaches the task with excitement and curiosity (higher levels of self-efficacy) or with anxiety and trepidation (lower self-efficacy) (Snowman & McCown, 2013).

Personal agency. A core component of social cognitive theory is personal agency (Bandura, 2001), where *agency* refers to an individual's ability to influence his or her functioning (Bandura, 2005) within his or her current environment. Personal agency is composed of two elements, namely self-regulation and self-efficacy (Snowman & McCown, 2013), both of which were discussed above. Bandura (2005) argues that "human functioning is rooted in social systems" (p. 10) and that personal agency exists within a socio-cultural environment. Environmental feedback and social interactions, therefore, play an influential role in future cognitive processes and behaviour (O'Donnell et al., 2012), bringing us back to the model of reciprocity between personal characteristics, environmental and social factors, and behaviour discussed earlier.

2.6.1. Application to the study

The study considered the components of the Social Cognitive Theory that could interact to influence the formation of perceptions. Figure 2.2. on the following page provides a diagrammatic representation of the application of the theoretical framework to the study. A more detailed discussion on the application follows the figure.

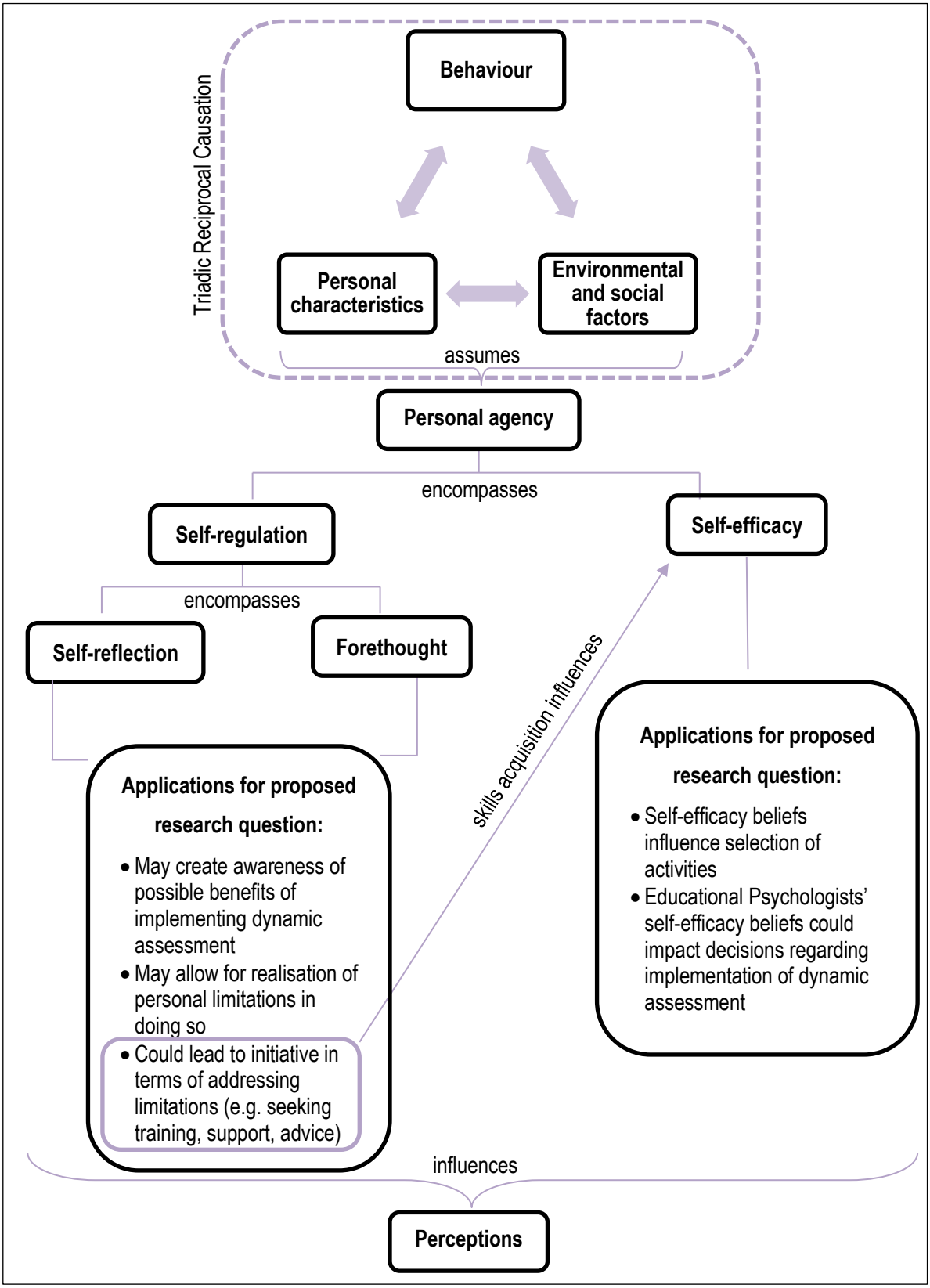

Figure 2.2. Application of the theoretical framework to the study

Bandura (2001) argues that the accessing and processing of information occurs deliberately in order to choose, construct, and evaluate courses of action. Educational psychologists, therefore, actively attend to and process information received from the environment in order to select a course of action (which in this case would be with regards to the use of dynamic assessment).

As mentioned above, self-regulation (a component of personal agency) involves both forethought and self-reflection (O'Donnell et al., 2012; Snowman & McCown, 2013). In the case of educational psychologists, these could manifest as an awareness of the potential benefit of using dynamic assessment but also an awareness of the educational psychologist's own limitation(s) in doing so. Such forethought and self-reflection could encourage the educational psychologist to seek training or advice on the subject. As self-efficacy beliefs are, in turn, influenced by the acquisition of skills (Bandura, 1993), seeking advice or support may improve the educational psychologists' self-efficacy beliefs, which would, in turn, impact the likelihood of him or her implementing dynamic assessment.

Literature has identified self-efficacy beliefs as an influencing factor in the activities in which an individual chooses to participate (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2001; O'Donnell et al., 2012; Snowman & McCown, 2013). Where individuals experience a low level of self-efficacy and lack confidence in their abilities, challenging activities are more likely to be avoided (Bandura, 1993). In the case of implementing dynamic assessment, the self-efficacy beliefs of the educational psychologist may influence that decision. Based on Bandura's (1993) assertion that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to select more challenging activities, it is possible that educational psychologists who lack confidence in their ability to effectively implement dynamic assessment could avoid doing so. As prior experience and exposure to the activity can impact self-efficacy beliefs (O'Donnell et al., 2012), these are factors that were relevant to understanding the perceptions of educational psychologists.

Social interactions are an element of the reciprocal triadic relationship identified by the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 2005). In the case of this study, environmental factors such as exposure to dynamic assessment, education and training received on its implementation, and institutional support, for example, could also have an influencing role in forming the perceptions of educational psychologists. Interactions with

colleagues or peers and observing their experiences could also impact the perceptions that were formed.

As has been discussed, Social Cognitive Theory encompasses a number of components that interact to influence behaviour and associated cognitions. As such, this theory was deemed appropriate for the study as it provided a comprehensive conceptualisation of the factors that influence decision-making, allowing me to understand the perceptions of educational psychologists in a holistic manner.

2.7. CONCLUSION

The above literature review provided information on the three core components of my study, namely the role of educational psychologists in assessing learners, the challenges experienced by second language learners, and the potential use of dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment. The literature review illustrated the role that educational psychologists play in the assessment of learners and also highlighted the increasing prevalence of second language learners due to increasing cultural and linguistic diversity.

As a result of this, educational psychologists' need for an assessment alternative that is sensitive to such differences and that is not dependent on language proficiency became clear. Dynamic assessment was presented as an alternative assessment that may hold potential benefits for use with second language learners. The gap in literature regarding the extent to which dynamic assessment is used by educational psychologists in South Africa was also highlighted, thus reaffirming the rationale for the study. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the theoretical framework that was selected and its applicability to the study.

The following chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Through the literature review conducted in Chapter 2, it became evident that minimal research has been conducted on educational psychologists' perceptions of dynamic assessment in South Africa. While research has been conducted on the potential usefulness of dynamic assessment elsewhere in the world, little exists on its potential applicability in the South African context. Against this backdrop, the purpose of my study was to understand educational psychologists' perceptions regarding the use of dynamic assessment with second language learners. It was, therefore, anticipated that this study could make a meaningful contribution to the research field by providing an opportunity for educational psychologists to discuss their perceptions of dynamic assessment and its possible use when assessing second language learners in South Africa.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology of my study and how it relates to the purpose of my study. I provide an overview of the research paradigm and methodological approach selected for this study and explain why it was deemed appropriate. I also discuss the research design and specific data generation techniques utilised, as well as provide a description of the data analysis procedures that were implemented. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the quality criteria incorporated and the ethical considerations that were involved. Figure 3.1 below provides an outline of the key concepts covered in this chapter and their relationship to the research study.

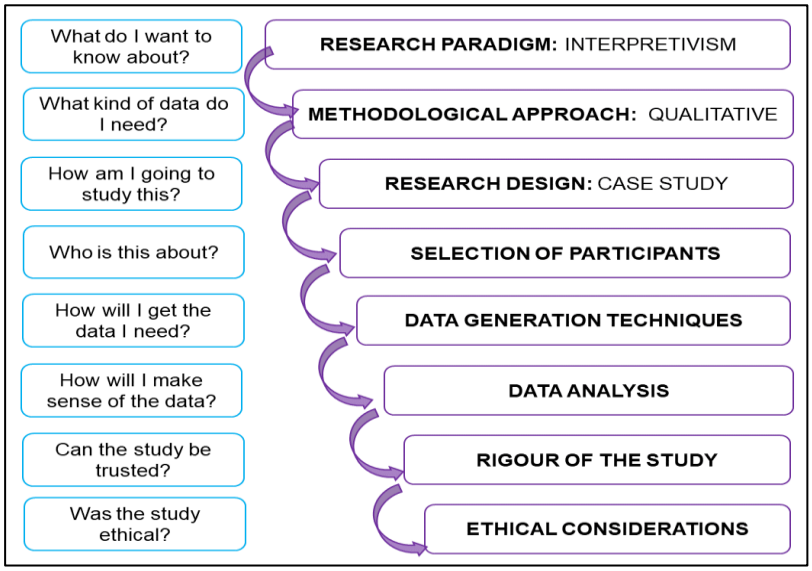

Figure 3.1. Outline of concepts addressed in Chapter 3

Figure 3.2. below provides an overview of the entire research process, including the methodology and how it related to other components of the research.

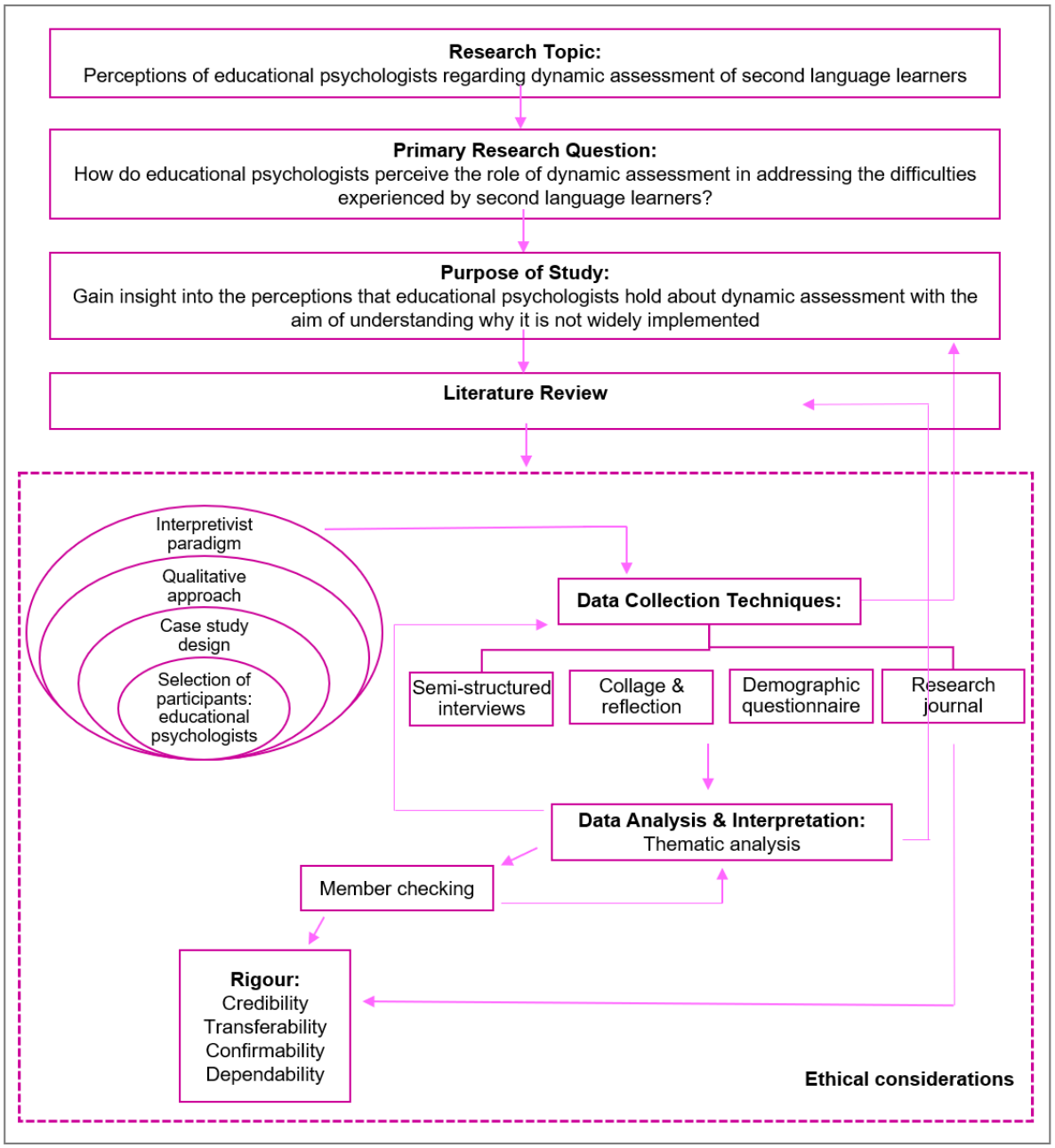

Figure 3.2. Research process

3.2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM

A paradigm refers to a "set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world-view" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a, p. 47). Paradigms, therefore, serve as an organising principle by which individuals interpret reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a). The paradigm acts as the academic point of departure for

a study (Mikkelson, 2005) and refers to the philosophical assumptions that a researcher makes when understanding the components of a study (Grix, 2010).

Interpretivism acknowledges subjectivity and argues for the need for a methodology and data generation methods that are relevant to the participants in the study (Grix, 2010). The following description of interpretivism by Nieuwenhuis (2007a) aptly captures why interpretivism was deemed appropriate for this study. He notes that interpretivism aims to provide "a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study to provide insight into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or the phenomenon they encounter" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 60). Interpretivism asserts that the world does not exist independently of individuals' knowledge of it – the world is socially constructed through interaction (Grix, 2010).

Bakker (2012) emphasises the importance of differentiating between *interpretation* and *comprehension*, arguing that interpretation is more than "direct perception, denotation, or reference…interpretation always adds something in order to try to make sense of what we see or hear" (Bakker, 2012, p. 495). Using an interpretivist paradigm allowed me, as the researcher, to obtain detailed and in-depth information from the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a) for the purpose of making sense of the information (Mack, 2010).

Interpretivism posits that "human life can only be understood from within" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 59) and cannot be observed (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivism, therefore, focuses on the subjective way in which individuals construct and interpret phenomena (Mack, 2010). It is based on the premise that individuals have varied backgrounds, assumptions, and experiences and that these contribute to their constant construction of reality (Wahyuni, 2012). Interpretivism acknowledges that multiple, subjective realities may exist for a particular phenomenon and that these vary across time and space (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a; Scotland, 2012).

Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and that in order to understand and interpret the constructed meanings, an awareness of the uniqueness or context of the phenomenon is crucial (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a). The human mind, according to interpretivism, is a "purposive source…of meaning" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a, p. 59). Interpretivists assume that in order to understand the meanings individuals attach to phenomena or social contexts, the depth and complexity of the phenomena must be explored (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a).

Interpretivism is not without criticism. Some of the disadvantages of using interpretivism include that the knowledge generated has limited transferability (Scotland, 2012) and cannot be replicated (Wahyuni, 2012). While these criticisms were taken into consideration when selecting a paradigm, they were not considered problematic for my particular study. The purpose of my study was not to transfer or generalise the findings, nor was it to create a study that could be replicated. Instead, I sought to understand the perceptions of the participants in order to gain deeper insight into the practice of dynamic assessment within the South African context.

Interpretivism was, therefore, deemed the most appropriate paradigm for the study and I use the following statement from Scotland (2012, p. 12) to illustrate the reason: interpretive methods "yield insight and understandings of behaviour; explain actions from the participant's perspective, and do not dominate the participants". An interpretive paradigm aligned with the purpose of this study because it sought to gain insight regarding perceptions of educational psychologists and wished to explore their reality, not dominate it. Furthermore, the purpose was not to establish a causal explanation but rather to understand (Grix, 2010).

3.3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH

A qualitative approach was used for this study. Qualitative research reflects an effort to describe and understand a phenomenon (Graue & Karabon, 2013). This is achieved through focusing on participants' subjective interpretations of phenomena and the way in which they "view and understand the world" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a, p. 50). Qualitative research emphasises the construction and negotiation of meaning as well as the quality of experience (Willig, 2008), aligning with the purpose of the study and the interpretivist paradigm selected.

Qualitative research is not a linear process but instead is seen as a dynamic and interactive process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The various steps within the research process are not considered discrete and sequential in qualitative research. Instead, the recursive nature of these steps within the process is acknowledged (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Qualitative research is concerned with mutual meaning-making and understanding how others experience the world (Finlay, 2015). It tends to be open-ended and, therefore, created opportunities for me to follow the research into the potentially "unforeseen areas

of discovery" (p. 5) of the participant (Holliday, 2007). The inductive nature of qualitative research allowed me to develop concepts, insights, and understandings from the data collected (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). A qualitative approach allowed new insight and understanding to emerge (Willig, 2008).

Qualitative research focuses on the meaning that the participant ascribes to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). As such, this aligned with the purpose of my research study, i.e. to understand the perceptions that educational psychologists hold regarding the use of dynamic assessment, making it an appropriate choice.

Qualitative research has a relational component (Finlay, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016) where the researcher and participant interact in order for the researcher to understand the participant's experiences. Qualitative research acknowledges the influence that the research process itself and the resulting role of the researcher may have on the meaning-making process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As such, data generation in qualitative research generally occurs through direct contact with participants and often involves face-to-face interaction (Creswell, 2014). I contend that this direct communication and interaction allowed me to gain more insight into the participants' experiences.

Furthermore, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate due to Flick's (2014) assertion that qualitative research is often used where the intention is to change the issue being studied or to produce knowledge that is relevant for producing or promoting solutions to problems. If one considers the purpose of the study, it is evident that a qualitative approach aligns with this purpose as it seeks to provide information regarding perceptions of educational psychologists with the hope that this information will provide insight for further investigation.

A criticism of qualitative research pertains to the argument that while qualitative research allows the researcher to understand a specific phenomenon in greater detail, it is at the expense of the broader perspective (Houser, 2015). While it is true that the qualitative nature of the study allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of the participants, this was the purpose of the study. The broader perspective may not be addressed specifically through this study but it is hoped that the findings will contribute to the broader perspective.

A further concern of qualitative research raised by Houser (2015) is that of the ethical responsibility of the researcher in order to protect the identity of the participants. In order

to address this concern, ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee was obtained and ethical practice was adhered to throughout the study. More details on the ethical considerations of the study are discussed in section 3.8. Ethical Considerations.

There is also concern regarding the potential bias that can occur during interpretation of the data (Houser, 2015). In order to address these concerns, data was generated using a variety of techniques, including interviews, a collage and written reflection, and my research journal (see section 3.5 Data Generation Techniques). This assisted with the validation of the research (also discussed later in the chapter).

3.3.1. Role of the researcher

The researcher is seen as the primary instrument in qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and his or her implication in the process is acknowledged (Willig, 2008). While the goal of the researcher is to understand the perspectives of the participants, it has been argued that the way in which the researcher listens to and portrays the participants' voices is linked to researcher's own voice (O'Sullivan, 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher can be seen as someone who unearths evidence (Willig, 2008). As such, my role in this study was to act as the primary instrument for generating data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) that would allow me to understand the perceptions that educational psychologists hold regarding dynamic assessment. Furthermore, drawing on the work of O'Sullivan (2015), my role was to portray the participants' voices in a way that represented their experiences authentically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY

A research design is a "plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions…to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b, p. 70).

The research design selected for this study was a case study. This case study can be classified as an exploratory case study. Exploratory case studies seek to investigate situations or phenomena on which little research or knowledge exists (Rule & John, 2011). Exploratory studies are therefore open-ended and aim to generate data that provides insight into the case (Rule & John, 2011). It is, therefore, evident that this study has both descriptive and exploratory components.

The purpose of a case study is to provide descriptive information about a phenomenon (Willig, 2008) and to suggest the potential theoretical relevance thereof (Tobin, 2012). Case studies involve a detailed inquiry into a bounded entity in which the researcher explores a phenomenon (Putney, 2012; Yin, 2014). The use of a case study design allowed me to conduct a "small-scale investigation" (p. 108) in order to answer the research questions. By obtaining rich, detailed information from the participants, a deeper understanding of the case was formed while cognisance of theoretical relevance facilitated the emergence of concepts or themes which, in turn, could shape theory (Tobin, 2012).

Case studies can be conducted about an individual or several individuals; a single environment, such as a classroom or school; a program; any entity that exists as a bounded system (Putney, 2012). Boundedness refers to a common characteristic among the individuals or entities (Putney, 2012). In this study, the case of educational psychologists' perceptions regarding a specific phenomenon, namely the use of dynamic assessment with second language learners, was investigated. As such, the common characteristics among the participants was their professional registration as educational psychologists.

Case studies are often used when a researcher seeks to understand the complexity of a phenomenon as it allows the researcher to interact with the participants in their context (Putney, 2012) and to gain detailed information from the participants (Yin, 2014). A further reason for the selection of a case study as the research design lay in the opportunity for me, as a researcher, to capture the 'real world' of the educational psychologists interviewed (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

It has been argued that the term *case study* can refer to "both the process of inquiry…and the product of inquiry" (Tobin, 2012, p. 771). This can be attributed to various authors having differing conceptualisations of a case study with some authors conceptualising it as a research process while others define it as a final product (i.e. a written, holistic analysis of a phenomenon) (Putney, 2012). For the purposes of this study, Tobin's (2012) assertion that the term case study encompasses both aspects, process and product, was accepted.

Case studies as a research design have also received criticism. One such criticism is the danger of making generalisation based on the findings from a particular case (Atkins

& Wallace, 2012). This was not an issue in my study however as it sought to gain insight (Creswell, 2014) and did not aim to generalise the findings.

3.4.1. Selection of participants

Selection of participants refers to the decisions I made regarding from whom data would be collected in order to answer my research questions (Maxwell, 2013). It is considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of a qualitative study (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015) but is central to the quality of the study (Robinson, 2014).

Selection of the participants for the case study was critical and was guided by the research purpose and research questions (Rowley, 2002). Purposive selection of participants occurred to ensure that the cases were "information-rich" (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 73) and met the needs of the research question (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). This meant that individuals were purposefully chosen to participate in the study for a particular reason, such as their experience and knowledge of particular phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In order to achieve this, the four-point approach to qualitative sampling, as proposed by Robinson (2014), was followed. A brief overview of each step with reference to my study is included below.

Table 3.1. Four-point process of selecting participants (adapted from Robinson (2014))

Step	Application to study
1. Define sample universe	Sample universe defined based on inclusion criteria and homogeneity: participant must be registered as an educational psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa
2. Decide on sample size	Idiographic (small) sample size chosen to best align with purpose of the study (i.e. in-depth analysis & understanding). This also suited the format of the study (a mini-dissertation)
3. Devise sample strategy	Purposive selection of participants: participants must be a registered educational psychologist practicing in South Africa and must have experience with second language learners
4. Source sample	Two educational psychologists were invited to participate in the study.

In order to address the primary research question, the participants selected were educational psychologists. Guided by the above literature, two participants were selected. The inclusion criteria for selection as a participant were:

- The participant must be an educational psychologist registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)
- The participant must be practicing as an educational psychologist in South Africa
- The participant must have experience in working with second language learners

3.5. DATA GENERATION TECHNIQUES

Ravitch and Carl (2016) argue that to use the term *data collection* in a qualitative study could be misleading and not give due emphasis to the role of the researcher in interacting with individuals and obtaining information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As such, a more accurate description in qualitative research would be that data are generated and co-constructed (Roulston, 2014). Data generation in qualitative research is an iterative process characterised as cyclical and emergent. The data that is generated is "emergent in response to the learning that happens throughout the research process" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 113). This view of data generation allowed me to collect data intentionally and strategically (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The data generation techniques implemented were selected based on their usefulness in providing rich, detailed information (Tobin, 2012) in order to facilitate a deeper understanding and insight into the perceptions of the participants. The techniques selected also aligned with the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methodology of the study and were based on the assertion that the participants are experts of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

As a wide range of data generation techniques are considered appropriate for a case study research design (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012), I was guided by the study's focus in selecting techniques. As such, a number of data generation techniques were implemented. Primary data was generated through conducting semi-structured interviews. Secondary data was generated through a collage and a reflection created by the participants, as well as through a demographic questionnaire that they completed. I kept a reflexive journal and made field notes throughout the process.

Participants were informed that data generation would take the form of semi-structured interviews, a collage, and a reflection in the invitation to participate in the study. After completing the semi-structured interview, I requested that the participants complete their collages and reflections.

Table 3.2 below provides a summary of the data generation techniques used in the study. This is followed by a detailed discussion on each technique.

Table 3.2. Data generation techniques used in study

Data generation techniques	Description
Demographic questionnaire	Demographic questionnaires allowed me to collect the participants' basic information such as their age, languages spoken, years in practice, and training received in a time-efficient manner (Blaxter et al., 2010).
Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews allowed for repetition of specific questions (Wahyuni, 2012) relevant to the study but also allowed for flexibility in terms of exploring information that emerged during the interview (Grix, 2010).
Collage and written reflection	These were researcher-generated documents as they were created as part of the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The collage can be classified as an arts-based technique (Butler-Kisber, 2008) while also eliciting writing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This furthered the participants' engagement (Rogers, 2001) and attention to the issues of the study (Creswell, 2014).
Reflective journal	I kept a reflective journal during the research process in order to make sense of the research process (Orange, 2016) and engage in on-going reflection (O'Sullivan, 2015).
Field notes	Field notes include notes I wrote about the research process (Yin, 2014) and provide an audit trail of decisions made (Houghton et al., 2013).

3.5.1. Semi-structured interview

Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were used as the information required for the study could not be observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews with participants provided "deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized data" [sic] (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 146). A semi-structured interview has been described as a "hybrid type of interview" (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 74) which included pre-determined themes and questions but still allowed for flexibility in terms of discussion regarding themes that arose during the interview process (Grix, 2010). The interview conducted with each participant followed customised replication (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 147). This means that similar questions that were crucial to the study were asked to

both participants but that clarifying and follow-up questions were tailored according to the interview.

Nieuwenhuis (2007b) notes that semi-structured interviews are at risk of being "side-tracked" (p. 87). I was mindful of this during the interviews and made an effort to keep the interviews focused when this occurred. Yin (2014)'s recommended guidelines for interviews were adhered to, with each interview being approximately one hour in length. A debriefing session which allowed participants to ask questions or raise any concerns followed the interviews (Wahyuni, 2012). Follow up interviews were also conducted in order to clarify aspects of the data with the participants.

The following characteristics of semi-structured interviews as identified by Ravitch and Carl (2016) can be applied to the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study:

- *Relational*. The interview process allowed me to form a brief relationship with the participants. The interviews emphasised the value of trust and reciprocity throughout the research process, including during the recruitment of participants, the actual interviews, follow up sessions, and member checking of the data.
- *Contextual/contextualised*. In conducting the interviews, I was cognisant of the fact that the interview occurred within the context of a variety of systemic factors and that, as a consequence, my role was to understand the participants' responses within their unique context. As such, I made use of clarifying and follow-up questions in order to ensure that I understood their experiences. This was particularly relevant in instances where the participants used ambiguous or vague terminology and the clarification process allowed me to ensure that I had understood their meaning correctly.
- *Non-evaluative*. This was reflected in the purpose of the study and my continued endeavour to understand, not evaluate, the participants' perceptions.
- *Person-centred*. I adopted a not-knowing position throughout the interview process and recognised each participant as the expert of her experience.
- *Temporal.* The temporal nature of interviews refers to the recognition that the number of years in the career, the specific time at which the interview was conducted, and other historical, personal, social, and institutional factors influence what the participants chose to disclose in the interview.

- *Partial*. The interviews conducted only provided a “snapshot” (p. 149) of the participants’ experiences and, as such, I recognise that it is unlikely that the interviews provided a full picture of the participants’ experiences.
- *Subjective and non-neutral*. The interviews sought to understand the participants’ unique, subjective experiences. The interviews encompassed biases, assumptions, and other influences which led to the subjective nature of the information gathered. In addition, however, I, as a researcher, have my own subjective experience and recognise that this influenced the information disclosed by the participants.

3.5.2. Demographic questionnaire

Questionnaires are a widely-used research technique for gathering information on issues relevant to a research study (Blaxter et al., 2010). It is has been argued that questionnaires are most effective when they are used in conjunction with other data generation techniques (Grix, 2010). As such, the questionnaire used in this study was incorporated as a secondary source of data generation. The questionnaire used in this study included information question types (Blaxter et al., 2010) that assisted me to obtain basic demographic information from the participants. Questions included personal information of the participant, such as date of birth and gender, and also included questions pertaining to their role as educational psychologists including for how long they have been registered as educational psychologists, for how long they have been practicing, the area in which they practice, and the languages spoken. By using the demographic questionnaire, I was able to obtain useful information from the participants in a more time-effective manner (Blaxter et al., 2010).

The use of questionnaires does have potential disadvantages, including that only a limited amount of information is obtained, the tendency for questionnaires to generate information that is not rich or contextualised, concerns regarding accuracy, literacy as a requirement, and concerns relating to access to participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These were not concerns in this study, however, as the questionnaire that was used sought only to obtain basic background and demographic information and was, therefore, not aiming to produce contextualised information. Furthermore, in the case of this study, access to participants and literacy rates were not a concern, making this an appropriate choice for obtaining the basic information.

3.5.3. Collage and reflection

Collages are “art-based research approaches to meaning-making through the juxtaposition of a variety of pictures, artifacts [sic], natural objects, words, phrases, textiles, sounds, and stories” (Norris, 2012, p. 95). It refers to the process of cutting and sticking materials onto a flat surface (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Art-based research techniques are considered a method of increasing voice and reflexivity in research, while expanding understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2008). The use of collages in research invites participants to reflect and analyse their understandings during the process (Flicker, 2014).

When using art-based research techniques, the purpose does not necessarily lie in the art but also in the use thereof for elicitation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Collage-making has been found to be useful in accompanying questionnaires and interviews (as was done in this study) as an additional data-generating technique (Norris, 2012).

Several advantages are associated with using collages in research, including that it allowed participants to respond concretely and it provided the opportunity for the participant to make use of metaphors to enhance understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2010). It is also argued that collages allow the participant to express feelings, ideas, and perceptions of an experience or phenomenon in a way that facilitates a process of reflecting and connecting new ideas (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The collages created in this study can be categorised as researcher-generated artefacts or documents because I requested that the participants create them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The rationale for the collage was that it could provide participants with an opportunity to express themselves in a different way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and through a “web of connections” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 105) and without the time constraints of the interview. I chose to use collages for the purpose of furthering exploring the participants’ perceptions and to allow them the opportunity to express insights that may have developed during the process.

Butler-Kisber (2008) identifies three approaches to the use of collages in research, namely 1) collage as a reflective process; 2) collage as a conceptualising approach; and 3) collage as elicitation for writing. In this study, the purpose of the collage addressed aspects of each of these approaches. Through the collage, the participants were able to reflect on the interview session and use this in their collage. It also provided

them with an opportunity to conceptualise the study and to express their thoughts and opinions on it.

A potential disadvantage of using the collage is that it could be difficult to interpret (Creswell, 2014) but this was addressed by asking participants to write a reflection that accompanied the collage. Other potential disadvantages relate to the evaluation of collages and the ethical considerations of the process (Butler-Kisber, 2010). In order to address these concerns, I elected to ask participants to write a reflection on their collage. This provided me with their interpretation and limited the potential bias that would occur if I were to interpret the collages without their reflections thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the data. Butler-Kisber (2010) also raises the issue of copyright where participants are using images from the internet, magazines, and so on. As the work was used for educational purposes and not for commercial or financial gain (Butler-Kisber, 2010), this would not be an issue in this particular study.

Having participants submit a written reflection with their collages aligned with a suggestion by Butler-Kisber (2010) that collages can be used to initiate dialogue, facilitate expression regarding an experience, and as "guided reflection" (p. 114). This was done for several reasons. First, working from an interpretivist paradigm, the assumption was made that multiple, subjective realities may exist for a particular phenomenon (Bhattacharya, 2012; Scotland, 2012), meaning that my interpretation of a collage may differ greatly from the meaning intended by the participant. Secondly, by writing a reflection on the collage, the participants provided me with a written analysis of the collage which formed part of the data analysis. Finally, reflection is considered crucial to professional development (Dunbar-Krige, 2006; Rogers, 2001; Ryan, 2013).

Roger's (2001) definition of reflection included that it is a cognitive and affective process that requires active engagement, triggered by unusual or challenging experiences, involves one's own responses and beliefs in light of the situation, and leads to integrating new understandings as part of a developmental process. Put more simply, reflection is the process of thinking about an experience (Maharaj, 2016). As such, creating the collage and reflecting on it after the interview may have provided the participants with the opportunity to develop new insights and to express these during the research process. This aligns with the iterative nature (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) of qualitative research. Furthermore, the use of collages and reflections in the study had the advantage of allowing me to obtain the language and words of the participants

(Creswell, 2014), thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of their experiences. It also represented information to which the participant had given attention and allowed the participant to directly share their reality (Creswell, 2014).

3.5.4. Reflective journal

Recognising the role of the researcher in qualitative research, Cruz (2015) notes that researchers need to reflect constantly during the research process in order to make effective decisions. Reflection on the development of ideas, generation and analysis of data, and interpretation forms part of the research process (Bourke, 2014)..

Keeping an electronic reflective journal allowed me to make sense of the research process and to modify the study accordingly (Orange, 2016). The use of a reflective journal fostered a form of self-development and provided the opportunity for me to critically reflect on issues arising from the research (Reece, 2014). Through the reflective journal, an audit trail of adjusting the study and the on-going analysis is evident (Ortlipp, 2008). Keeping a reflective journal also provided an opportunity to reflect on my own positionality within the research (O'Sullivan, 2015; Orange, 2016) and to consciously acknowledge my values (Ortlipp, 2008). Recognition of these values and biases provided insight into the way in which I approached the study and methodology (Bourke, 2014).

Similarly to the findings of Orange (2016) and Ortlipp (2008), I experienced some difficulty in keeping a reflective journal and so I made use of the suggestion to seek out guidelines for keeping a reflective journal (Orange, 2016). These included questions to guide reflection and pertained to specific areas of the research, such as:

- Participant recruitment, including contact with participants and appointments;
- Data generation, including the effectiveness of techniques used, potential alternatives that could be implemented, and the usefulness of the generated data; and
- Data analysis, including potential biases or assumptions and the impact of these on the analysis process, as well as the conceptualisation of themes (Orange, 2016).

3.5.5. Field notes

My field notes included my ideas and queries regarding the research (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2017), and provided an opportunity for me to note considerations for later reflection. They included notes written about the interviews and during the document analysis (Yin, 2014). Field notes enhanced the rigour of the study while also providing a space for the documentation of valuable contextual data (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2017).

Table 3.3 below provides a summary of the data generation process employed with each participant.

Table 3.3. Summary of data generation process employed with each participant

Participant / researcher	Data generation process and techniques employed
Participant 1	• Signing of consent form • Demographic questionnaire • Semi-structured interview • Collage and reflection • Analysis of data to inform follow-up interview and member checking • Follow-up interview and member checking
Participant 2	• Signing of consent form • Demographic questionnaire • Semi-structured interview • Collage and reflection • Analysis of data to inform follow-up interview and member checking • Follow-up interview and member checking
Additional data generation sources utilised throughout the process	• Field notes • Reflective journal

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Data analysis refers to “the process of making sense out of the data” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202), and includes consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the data. The goal is to provide a rich, detailed account of the data in such a way that it maintains authenticity to the ideas or experiences described by the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Put differently, the purpose of data analysis is to describe important themes within the data (Houser, 2015) and is the process used to answer the study’s research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the data analysis process, a three-pronged approach suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016) was followed. This encompassed 1)

data organisation and management; 2) immersive engagement; and 3) writing and representation.

3.6.1. Data organisation and management

Data organisation and management are important, on-going processes that support the data analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Organisation of data is critical for analysis (Flick, 2014). This refers to constantly organising data throughout the process, including consistently labelling data sources and engaging in pre-coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The transcription process also formed part of the data organisation and management step. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed immediately after the interviews in order to assist with data analysis. Transcripts provide a record of the real-time data produced through interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) by transforming the spoken word into a written format. The suggestions by Ravitch and Carl (2016) to include page numbers and line numbers to facilitate easy referral to the data were followed.

As transcripts form a representation and an interpretation of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), the transcriptions in this study were verbatim. This included recording natural speech patterns of both the participant and myself, including ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) as well as repetition of words. It is, however, recognised that nuances that may have been present in the interview may not be captured through transcription of the recordings (Flick, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this I relied on my field notes, particularly where the participant used gestures to illustrate a point. The transcriptions were done by me. Although this was time-consuming (Blaxter et al., 2010), it allowed me to reflect on the interview process and begin to formulate ideas about the data (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) while also protecting the confidentiality of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Furthermore, a data management plan assists with this process and creates familiarity with the data (Creswell, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This addressed the concern that allowing field notes and transcripts to “pile up” (p. 104) makes the task of analysis more difficult and overwhelming (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, data management facilitates formative, on-going data analysis (Maxwell, 2013) and allowed for easier identification of gaps in the data generation that needed to be addressed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Precoding occurred during the data organisation phase and involved reading, questioning, and engaging with the data prior to formally beginning the coding process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It included circling, underlining, or highlighting phrases or words that stood out, noting questions that I had and jotting down my first impressions. The purpose of this process was to familiarise myself with the data (Houser, 2015), generate potential codes, consider whether any aspects of the design needed to be altered, and identify literature that needed to be consulted (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

3.6.2. Immersive engagement

In order to engage with the data in an immersive manner, it was important to read the data multiple times and with different goals (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, originally reading and re-reading data as it is generated serves the purpose of supporting analysis (Blaxter et al., 2010). Once all the data had been collected, however, the entire collection of data was read for the purpose of beginning summative analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Unstructured reading was the initial step in the process and allowed me to orientate myself with the data.

Coding refers to the process of assigning meaning to data and forms part of the larger analysis process (Creswell, 2014). Both inductive and deductive coding processes were used in this study. While codes were primarily assigned inductively (i.e. the codes came from the data), deductive coding was also used where literature and theory guided the coding process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the open coding process, sections of the text were labelled (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process was done by hand. Open coding allowed me to begin constructing categories. Once I had read through the transcripts and noted down ideas (open codes), I began to sort the notes into categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process of sorting the original open codes into categories formed part of the axial coding (also referred to as thematic clustering coding) process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I then repeated this process for each new set of data and ultimately developed what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) term a “master list” (p. 206) of categories derived from all the data sets. Categories refer to the conceptual elements that encompass different examples of the category present in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, the aim was to develop categories that captured the recurring themes in the data (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2016). Determining what the categories were was largely influenced by the study's research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I used the following criteria (provided by Merriam and Tisdell (2016)) as guidelines when developing categories:

- *Responsive to the purpose of the research*. The categories developed answered the research questions.
- *Exhaustive*. All information from the data that was considered relevant or important could be placed into one of the categories.
- *Mutually exclusive*. Units of data could only be placed in a particular category – the categories did not overlap in conceptualisation.
- *Sensitising*. The categories that were developed were sensitive to the information contained in the data and provided a sense of the nature of this information.
- *Conceptually congruent*. The same level of abstraction was present in each of the categories at a particular level.

In order to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the data, the themes were checked by re-reading the data and adjusting the themes where necessary. This was particularly important in order to ensure that the data was not 'forced' to fit into preconceived ideas or themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A further technique to ensure that this does not happen is to look for instances that do not fit the current understanding of the data. These are referred to as negative cases, discrepant data, or outliers (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

3.6.3. Writing and interpretation

Writing is considered to be an integral component of data analysis and occurs throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), and represents making sense of all that has been learned in the research process (Denzin, 2016). Interpretation, or sense making, of the research is considered an art (Denzin, 2016) which reflects an understanding of the "internal logic of an excerpt of data or to put it into context" (Flick, 2014, p. 375). It included the writing that occurred during engagement with the data, the writing of memos and reflective journaling, as well as reflections on participant validation and the defining of codes and themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016)

Denzin (2016) identifies several key issues are present in interpretation and the subsequent writing of the research. Table 3.4 below provides an overview of each of these issues and how they were addressed in the study.

Table 3.4. Issues in writing and interpretation (Denzin, 2016)

Issue identified	Strategies used
Sense-making and decision making: how the researcher makes sense of all the data and makes decisions about what will be written and how it will be represented	• Audit trail • Reflexivity • Peer review (consultation with supervisor) • Cyclical analysis of data
Representation: the issue of voice in the research and to what extent it is the participants' voices that are heard through the writing	• Triangulation of data • Member checking (participant validation) • Reflexivity
Legitimisation: the rigour or trustworthiness of the study	• Strategies used to enhance rigour (see section 3.7. Rigour of research)
Desire: the issue of deciding what will be written but also refers to the writing practices – how to build an emergent and reflexive interpretation of the data	• Member checking (participant validation) • Reflexivity • Audit trail

3.7. RIGOUR OF RESEARCH

Research is concerned with producing reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The concepts of rigour in qualitative research include transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which together address the issue of authenticity in the study. Table 3.5 below indicates that the strategies used to ensure each element of rigour. A brief discussion on each of these follows the table.

Table 3.5. Strategies used to ensure rigour of study

Measure of trustworthiness	Strategies used
Transferability	• Thick descriptions
Credibility	• Triangulation of data • Member checking (participant validation) • Reflexivity • Peer review

Measure of trustworthiness	Strategies used
Dependability	• Triangulation of data • Reflexivity • Peer review • Audit trails
Confirmability	• Audit trails • Reflexivity

3.7.1. Transferability

The transferability of the study refers to the extent to which the findings could be applied to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a contentious issue within qualitative research as the ability to generalise findings in quantitative research is ensured with "a priori conditions" (p. 253) including that the sample is representative of the population, control of sample size, and random sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), none of which are applicable to qualitative research.

One of the strategies employed to address the issue of transferability in the study was the attainment of rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thick descriptions act as a mechanism through which analysis can occur (Sacks, 2015). Clear and detailed descriptions of the participants and their experiences, as well as the contextual factors relevant to the study, allowed me to make complex interpretations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A recommendation made by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) is that description of the findings should be supported by adequate evidence, such as quotes, field notes, etc.

3.7.2. Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research findings match reality. I.e. the extent to which the perspectives of the participants have been understood and the extent to which a holistic interpretation is presented (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility is intrinsically linked to the research design, instruments, and data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In this study, triangulation was one of the strategies employed to enhance the study's credibility. Triangulation occurred in several ways, namely through multiple methods of data collection and through multiple sources of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In terms of multiple methods of data generation, data was collected through interviews as well as through documents (a demographic questionnaire and the creation of a collage with

an accompanying written reflection). This can be considered between-methods triangulation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) which is considered to be more robust. Furthermore, data was generated from multiple sources (two participants) with follow-up interviews scheduled where required, meeting the criteria for multiple sources of data (Houghton et al., 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Member checking or participant validation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) is the second strategy that was employed in order to ensure credibility. This occurred by presenting my preliminary findings to the participants and requesting feedback on the accuracy of the information. Member checking or participant validation was based on the explanation provided by Ravitch and Carl (2016), namely that it was process-oriented and person-centred. Participants were able to note whether they recognised their experience in the findings and to provide suggestions to better represent their perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, a more relational approach was adopted where participants were asked to comment on the interpretations and analysis in a process that is more in-depth than only checking the accuracy of statements (Ravitch & Carl, 2016)

Acknowledging the researcher's reflexivity is an additional strategy used and refers to the process of explaining my biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Ravitch and Carl (2016) note, critically engaging with our biases and assumptions allowed me to conduct more ethical research. Reflexivity also refers to reflecting on research skills and the influence of these on the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In order to ensure the rigour of the study, a reflective journal was kept for the duration of the study for the purposes of engaging in critical reflection (Maharaj, 2016). A reflective journal is considered to be one of the most important elements in ensuring rigour (Baskerville, 2014). A more detailed description of the reflection process can be found earlier in the chapter under section 3.5.4. Reflective journal.

A form of peer review was also conducted. Peer review refers to having a colleague knowledgeable on the topic scan the raw data to assess whether the findings are plausible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The colleague that reviewed my findings was my supervisor who is knowledgeable in the fields of dynamic assessment and second language learners. This process provided an opportunity in which I could critically engage with my interpretations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

3.7.3. Dependability

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, dependability in qualitative research is concerned with whether the findings are consistent with the data generated. In qualitative research, studies will not be able to be replicated for the purposes of obtaining the same findings as there can be numerous interpretations for one set of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This should not discredit the study, however.

The strategies of triangulation, peer review, and reflexivity, each of which were discussed above, are methods for ensuring dependability. In addition, an audit trail was used to increase the dependability of the study. An audit trail outlines the decisions made throughout the research process to provide a rationale for the "methodological and interpretative judgements of the researcher" (Houghton et al., 2014, p. 12). The audit trail describes how I collected data, how categories were derived in data analysis, and how decisions were made during the process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.7.4. Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the extent to which the findings of the study reflect the views of participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011) rather than the characteristics or preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). It speaks to the concept of objectivity but with the emphasis on the objectivity of the researcher (Toma, 2014). Confirmability, particularly within a case study, implies that the data from which the researcher generated themes (and resultant findings), drew conclusions, and made recommendations can be reconstructed (Toma, 2014). While the role of the researcher in qualitative research is acknowledged as influencing the research process (O'Sullivan, 2015; Willig, 2008), confirmability implies that this influence was managed and limited (Toma, 2014).

Confirmability was ensured through the same measures used to ensure dependability (Houghton et al., 2013), including an audit trail and reflexivity (Houghton et al., 2013; Toma, 2014). Both the use of an audit trail and reflexivity have been discussed in detail above.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to ensure that the study was conducted ethically, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria prior to commencing any research activities. Participants were

provided with a letter of invitation to participate in the study which informed them of the nature of the study as well as of what would be expected of them. This letter was provided in advance so that participants had time to consider the information prior to consenting to participation. Participants were also informed of the ethical principles to which I subscribed during the research, including:

- *Voluntary participation* - participants could withdraw from the research at any time during the study.
- *Informed consent* - participants were fully informed about the research process and purposes at all times and gave informed consent to their participation in this research.
- *Safety in participation* - participants were not placed at risk of harm of any kind.
- *Privacy* - confidentiality and anonymity of participants was protected at all times.
- *Trust* - participants were not subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

Furthermore, no incentives were offered to participants and there was no conflict of interest in my selection of participants. As I am a student educational psychologist, my study also adhered to the ethical guidelines for research provided by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), in addition to having ethical clearance.

Concern has been raised that participants' autonomy and privacy may be at greater risk with qualitative research as it tends to be "more intimidate and open-ended" (Scotland, 2012, p. 12). This was addressed through obtaining informed consent from the participants and protecting their right to confidentiality. The nature of the study also assisted in alleviating this risk as it did not seek to gain information from the participants that was overly personal and instead related to their career as an educational psychologist.

3.9. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I outlined the paradigm and methodological approach that was used in this study and provided reasons for these choices. I further discussed the research design used and how participants were selected for the study. Information pertaining to the data generation techniques used as well as to the procedures of data analysis were also included. I concluded the chapter with an overview of the strategies that I

implemented to ensure the rigour or trustworthiness of the study as well as the ethical considerations that were present.

The following chapter will provide a detailed description of the findings of the study including the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis process.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the research are presented. Initially, a visual representation of each of the themes and subthemes is provided. This is followed by the inclusion and exclusion criteria of each theme presented in tabular format. Each of the themes and subthemes is then discussed in more detail in the following sections. Relevant quotations and excerpts from the interview transcriptions, reflections, and collages are also included[1]. This is followed by a discussion of each theme and subtheme in relation to reviewed literature on the topic.

4.2. EMERGING THEMES

From the data that was generated and analysed, four themes with subthemes, emerged. The themes that emerged are 1) conceptualising dynamic assessment; 2) challenges experienced by second language learners; 3) educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment; and 4) factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment. Figure 4.1. provides a visual representation of the four themes that emerged from the data as well as the subthemes within each theme.

[1] Henceforth the following abbreviations will be used: P1 – Participant 1; P2 – Participant 2; Int. – Interview transcriptions; R – Reflection; C - Collage

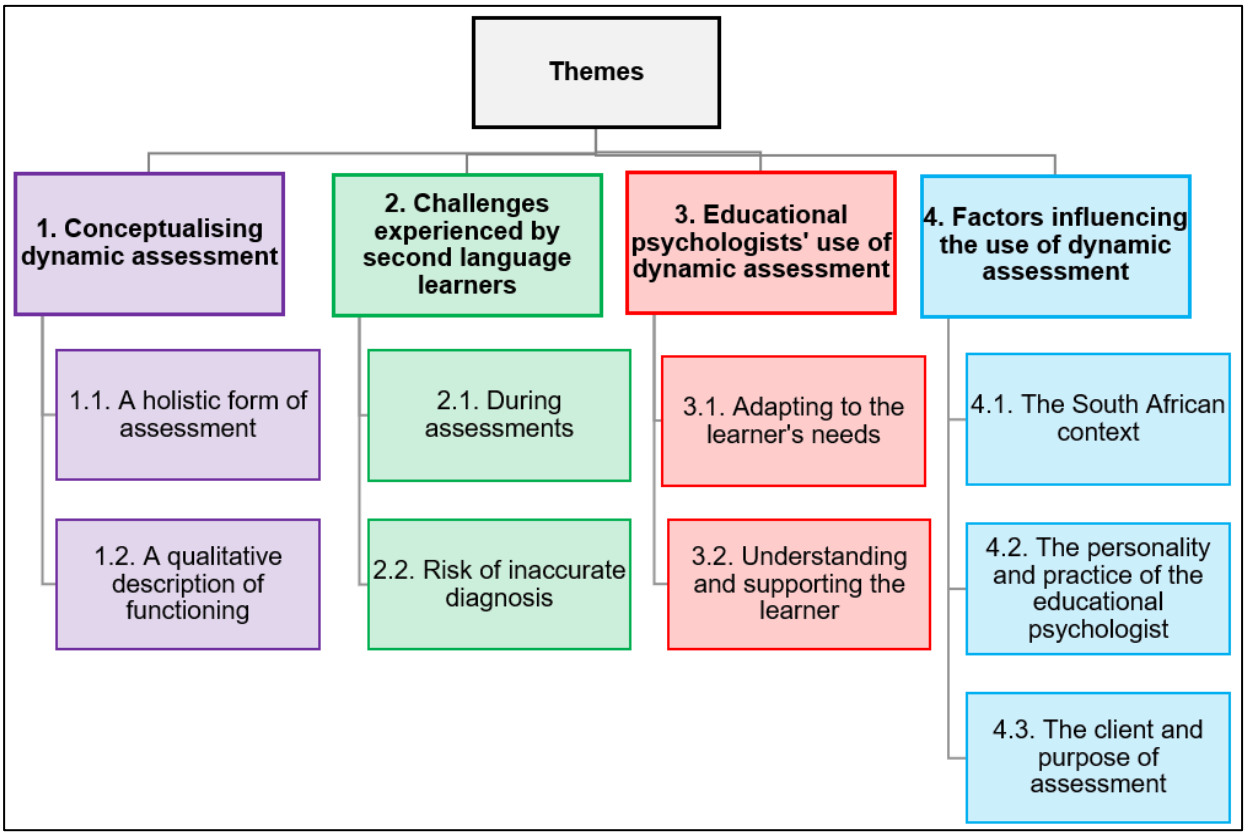

Figure 4.1. Themes and subthemes that emerged from the data

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for each theme are provided in Table 4.1 below. A discussion of each theme and its subthemes follows.

Table 4.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for each theme

Theme	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Theme 1. Conceptualising dynamic assessment	Any reference to how dynamic assessment is understood or defined.	Any reference to using dynamic assessment or other forms of assessment.
Theme 2. Challenges experienced by second language learners	Any reference to the challenges experienced by second language learners.	Any reference to first language learners.
Theme 3. Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment	Any reference to how educational psychologists use or incorporate dynamic assessment into their assessment process.	Any reference to how dynamic assessment is defined or the factors that influence its use.
Theme 4. Factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment	Any reference to factors that educational psychologists consider when deciding whether or not to use dynamic assessment.	Any reference to how dynamic assessment is defined or to how it is used during an assessment process.

4.2.1. Theme 1: Conceptualising dynamic assessment

This theme refers to the participants' understanding of the concept of dynamic assessment and the definition that they assign to it. Within the theme of *conceptualising dynamic assessment*, two subthemes emerged. The subthemes include 1) a holistic form of assessment; and 2) a qualitative description of a learner's functioning.

Table 4.2 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme. This is followed by a discussion on each subtheme.

Table 4.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 1

THEME 1: Conceptualising dynamic assessment		
Subtheme	**Inclusion criteria**	**Exclusion criteria**
Subtheme 1.1. A holistic form of assessment	Any reference to dynamic assessment as a holistic form of assessment. Any reference to dynamic assessment taking context or systemic factors into account.	Any reference to an individualistic approach to assessment.
Subtheme 1.2. A qualitative description of a learner's functioning	Any reference to dynamic assessment providing a qualitative description of functioning.	Any reference to dynamic assessment being used to obtain a score.

4.2.1.1. Subtheme 1.1: A holistic form of assessment

From the participants' responses regarding dynamic assessment, it was evident that the participants conceptualised dynamic assessment as a holistic form of assessment which provides the educational psychologist with the opportunity to gain insight into a learner's functioning while taking contextual factors, such as educational background, home environment, and societal influences, for example, into account.

In discussing her perception of dynamic assessment, a participant said the following: "*You must take consideration of their background, and you can't just use the test results and form a diagnosis. I hate the word diagnosis…but to form a diagnosis if they come from a different environment. So, to me, it's important that you should have a holistic approach*" (P2-Int., 47-50). This is further evidenced by the following statement: "*it's important to take into consideration all the different aspects of your client – the environment, the school, the parents, the family*" (P1-Int., 397). The holistic nature of assessment in relation to evaluating a learner's current functioning was also discussed,

as evidenced by the following: "*you have to assess that person within his context and his ability to see where he's at*" (P1-Int., 222-223).

Furthermore, participants' responses indicated that dynamic assessment provides an assessment of the learner's functioning across a variety of domains. This is evidenced by Participant 2's statement that dynamic assessment can provide an "*indication of their level of cognitive, scholastic, emotional and social functioning*" (P2-R).

While the participants made reference to dynamic assessment as an approach to assessment that allows the educational psychologist to take contextual factors into account, the literature discussed in Chapter 2 does not refer to dynamic assessment as a holistic form of assessment. Studies have identified dynamic assessment as an approach that limits the influence of contextual factors on the assessment process (Barrera, 2006; Notari-Syverson et al., 2003; Peterson & Gillam, 2013; Roseberry-McKibbin & O'Hanlon, 2000; Spinelli, 2008). This indicates that the participants' conceptualisation of dynamic assessment differs from that presented in the literature reviewed for the study, suggesting that the participants may lack theoretical knowledge of dynamic assessment.

4.2.1.2. Subtheme 1.2: A qualitative description of a learner's functioning

From the participants' responses, clear reference was made to dynamic assessment providing a qualitative description of a learner's functioning. This can be seen in the following statement by a participant when talking about using dynamic assessment: "*I give a qualitative description of the level of the child's language development or whatever and we talk about outcomes*" (P1-Int., 228-229). The participant continued, saying that "*the fact is that we don't use scores*" (P1-Int., 231).

The participants also noted that dynamic assessment provides an opportunity to consider the way in which a learner responds to information, without necessarily assigning a quantitative value to this. In discussing the information that can be obtained through dynamic assessment, a participant noted the following: "*also their sort of their reasoning ability. That's very important to me because this is otherwise I can't understand him. The reasoning ability –how he see things [sic]*" (P2-Int., 107-109). This was supported by Participant 1, who said that dynamic assessment allowed her to understand "*how that learner engages with his environment and familiar activities*" (P1-Int., 283-284).

Dynamic assessment was conceptualised by participants as being able to provide information about the learner's ability without labelling the learner based on a score. As a participant stated, dynamic assessment "*does not label the child*" (P1-R). Instead, it focuses on helping the learner "*get to the next level without necessarily a quantitative label to attach to it*" (P1-Int., 209-300). The second participant shared a similar opinion, saying that dynamic assessment assists her to "*put things into perspective for the parents as well, just to help them to understand the child*" (P2-Int., 68-69).

Dynamic assessment, therefore, provides the educational psychologist (and consequently the school, parents, and other role-players) with a "*qualitative description of the level*" (P1-Int., 228) of the learner's functioning in a particular domain. Participant 1 included a heart in her collage (see figure 4.2 below) and wrote in her reflection that "*the heart symbolises the attitude associated with this type of assessment. It is meant to truly make a difference in a child's life and not merely label the child. The heart also represents the qualitative nature of the assessment*" (P1-R). From the collage and reflection, it is evident that the participant identifies dynamic assessment as a form of assessment that provides qualitative information about a learner and as an approach to assessment that reflects a sense of caring for the learner, not the identification of a label.

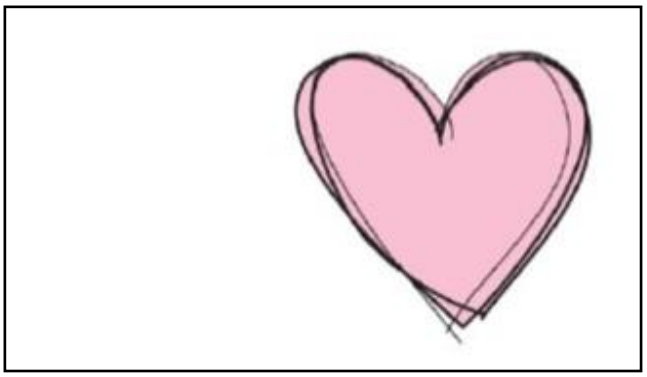

Figure 4.2. Section of collage provided by P1

When I analysed the participants' collage and reflection, I noted the following in my reflective journal.

I am again aware of how important it was for the participants to provide reflections on their collages. Had I interpreted the collage without such a reflection, I would probably not have associated a heart with the qualitative nature of dynamic assessment.

It is clear that this enhanced the credibility of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as the reflection ensured that the participants' perspectives were accurately represented and that there was not an inaccurate interpretation of the data.

Dynamic assessment has been identified as useful in providing educational psychologists with an assessment of a learner's cognitive abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and social and emotional characteristics (Lawrence & Cahill, 2014), similarly to the opinions offered by participants. Dynamic assessment also assesses the learning potential of a learner or the extent to which his or her performance improves on a particular task after receiving coaching or mediation (Calero et al., 2013). The extent to which an individual learns and responds to new information (Peterson & Gillam, 2013) is an aspect that was mentioned by participants.

The research discussed in Chapter 2 notes that both formats of dynamic assessment that are identified by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002), namely the sandwich format and cake format, produce quantifiable information. The cake format involves a single session in which the assessor provides mediation as necessary (Poehner, 2011). The assessor could, therefore, measure the extent to which mediation was required.

The sandwich format is the more commonly used format and is also known as the test-teach-retest approach (Grigorenko, 2009). Using this format, the assessor provides mediation to the learner in-between two sessions in which the same test or items are administered (Lidz, 2014; Poehner, 2011). The two tests can then be compared to evaluate the success of the mediation, providing a quantifiable measure of the learner's functioning before and after mediation.

Participants discussed the use of dynamic assessment in making a difference in the learner's life. This is supported by a study by Lawrence and Cahill (2014) which found that learners experienced dynamic assessment as positive. This occurred when learners became aware that they had learned strategies during the mediation that could be transferred to other areas, and reported a positive impact on their well-being,

learning, behaviour, and self-perceptions (Lawrence & Cahill, 2014). While the participants' understanding of dynamic assessment reflected some of the concepts present in the reviewed literature, participants' conceptualisation of dynamic assessment as a purely qualitative form of assessment is not accurate when compared to the literature on the topic reviewed for the study.

4.2.2. Theme 2: Challenges experienced by second language learners

From the responses provided by the participants, a theme regarding the experiences of second language learners and, in particular, the difficulties that they experience as a result of their limited language proficiency emerged. The subthemes that emerged within this theme are 1) challenges during assessment; and 2) the risk of an inaccurate diagnosis.

Table 4.3 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme of Theme 2. A discussion of the subthemes follows.

Table 4.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 2

THEME 2: Challenges experienced by second language learners		
Subtheme	**Inclusion criteria**	**Exclusion criteria**
Subtheme 2.1. Challenges during assessments	Any reference to difficulties experienced by second language learners in the classroom. Any reference to difficulties experienced by second language learners during assessment.	Any reference first language learners.
Subtheme 2.2. Risk of inaccurate diagnosis	Any reference to diagnosis that is incorrect or inaccurate when assessing second language learners.	Any reference to diagnosing first language learners.

4.2.2.1. Subtheme 2.1: Challenges during assessment

The participants indicated that they have identified a number of challenges experienced by second language learners during assessment. The participants discussed a range of difficulties that second language learners may experience in an assessment setting which could impact the accuracy of their results.

One participant noted the following: learners may not "*be able to express themselves properly because of the fact that they have to do it in a second language. I think they*

sometimes feel shy because of the fact that they don't necessarily have sufficient command of the second language and therefore they limit their feedback…it does, you know, impact how, I think, the scores come out at the end" (P1- Int., 60-61).

Participants also noted that second language learners may experience difficulties during assessments as a result of the lack of culturally appropriate items present in the assessment. One participant expressed her concern using the Junior South African Individual Scales (JSAIS) and Senior South African Individual Scales – Revised Edition (SSAIS-R) to illustrate her point, saying "*in the JSAIS and the SSAIS, most of the graphics and words are based on a Western understanding and a Western context. You know, none of the pictures in there are necessarily appropriate for all culture groups in South Africa*" (P1-Int., 66-68).

The participant went on to provide an example from the SSAIS-R, stating that "*there's a picture of a [sic] African man sitting in front of a hut and the word that is supposed to be associated with that word [sic] is 'primitive'. Ya. So, you can just imagine in the context of an African child's life, that is not necessarily the picture that he would associate with the word 'primitive'*" (P1-Int., 71-72).

Studies have indicated that concern exists regarding the extent to which standardised assessments contain items that are not equally accessible to all cultural and language groups (Cawthon et al., 2013; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2013). The literature reviewed also raised concern regarding the lack of assessment measures that have been developed in South Africa (Foxcroft et al., 2013) and whether there are measures (international or local) that are appropriate for the South African context (DelliCarpini & Guler, 2013). A clear similarity can be seen between the participant's experiences of assessment measures and the concerns that have been raised in literature.

The excerpt on the following page has been taken from the reflective journal.

I did not realise or remember that the picture used for the word 'primitive' in the SSAIS-R Vocabulary subtest is that of a man in front of a hut. When the participant mentioned this, I immediately pictured the image in my mind. I was shocked – both because that is still the picture used and because I had not realised this before.

I have been reading about the cultural bias present in assessment measures and recognise its presence in the South African measures as well. This highlights the need for alternative assessments in South Africa and, as a result, the potential value of this study.

4.2.2.2. Subtheme 2.2: The risk of an inaccurate diagnosis

Participants indicated that second language learners may be at risk of inaccurate or inappropriate diagnoses due to the challenges experienced with assessment. As a participant noted: learners are at risk of being "*diagnosed with lower IQ's than what they most likely really have because of the fact that the content that they are assessed with is in a language that is not their first language*" (P1-Int., 63-64).

A similar idea regarding incorrect diagnoses was expressed by a participant, saying the following about second language learners: "*don't understand the language so it was extremely difficult to understand what's going on, to concentrate in class. And then because they feel so uncomfortable and they don't know how to deal with the situation so they present with symptoms of ADD and ADHD and the primary reason for their behaviour is language difficulty*" (P2-Int., 29-32).

Both international and local studies have indicated that the assessment of second language learners is often fraught with challenges, particularly in terms of ensuring that an assessment measure provides the learner with an opportunity to demonstrate his or her content knowledge (Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2011; Shapiro et al., 2011). In many cases, however, a learner's lack of proficiency in the language of the assessment has a negative impact on the results of the assessment (Cawthon et al., 2013; Clark-Gareca, 2016). The responses provided by the participants reflected similar concerns to those raised in the reviewed literature.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment

This theme refers to how the participants implement dynamic assessment and the practices that they consider to underlie dynamic assessment. The theme reflects the participants' use of dynamic assessment based on their conceptualisation thereof. The subthemes that emerged within this theme include 1) dynamic assessment involves adapting to the learner's needs; and 2) dynamic assessment involves understanding and supporting the learner.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme are provided in Table 4.4. below.

Table 4.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 3

THEME 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment		
Subtheme	**Inclusion criteria**	**Exclusion criteria**
Subtheme 3.1. Adapting to the learner's needs.	Any reference to adapting the assessment to meet the learner's needs.	Any reference to aspects of dynamic assessment that do not involve adapting the assessment.
Subtheme 3.2. Understanding and supporting the learner.	Any reference to dynamic assessment enabling the educational psychologist to understand the learner. Any reference to dynamic assessment being focused on or oriented toward solutions, moving forward, or outcomes. Any reference to dynamic assessment enabling the educational psychologist to support the learner or provide recommendations for future support.	Any reference to uses of dynamic assessment that do not relate to the understanding and support of a learner.

4.2.3.1. Subtheme 3.1: Adapting to the learner's needs

A theme that emerged from the participants' responses referred to adapting the assessment process to meet the needs of the learner. This includes adapting the instructions, materials used, and complexity of language involved to meet the learners' current level of functioning. As a participant noted, dynamic assessment allows the educational psychologist to "*accommodate them [learners]*" (P2-Int., 182).

The participants identified a number of strategies that they implement to accommodate the learner's ability. A participant discussed the following strategy: "*I will use a synonym*

for that specific word. Just to see. That gives me an indication of if he understands the concept [sic]" (P2-Int., 78-80). Similarly, a participant discussed "*break[ing] it down to more basic instructions*" (P1-Int., 94).

Participants discussed additional strategies, described as "*creative*" (P2-Int., 91) when assessing second language learners. This was evidenced by the following statement: "*I sometimes draw pictures for them. I sometimes build things for them. We sometimes play in the sand to explain certain things*" (P2-Int., 90-91).

The literature in Chapter 2 discusses dynamic assessment as a co-operative activity that is undertaken by both educator (or mediator) and learner (Poehner, 2008, 2012). As such, the assessor, as a more knowledgeable person, is able to mediate the assessment process for the learner by providing instruction, support, and feedback (Bester & Kühn, 2016). The participants' responses regarding accommodating learners and the strategies that they employ to do so could be considered a form of mediation.

The participants indicated that the strategies employed are dependent on the needs of the learner. Accordingly, the assumption that contributions by both the assessor and learner are adjusted to meet the learner's needs (Poehner, 2011) is applicable to the participants' responses.

4.2.3.2. Subtheme 3.2: Understanding and supporting the learner.

Responses from participants repeatedly referred to dynamic assessment as a form of assessment that enables the educational psychologist to gain an understanding of the learner and to provide appropriate support, both at the time of the assessment and in the future. This is evidenced by the following statement regarding using dynamic assessment to "*support children in an appropriate manner*" (P2-R). In discussing dynamic assessment, a participant stated that it "*has a much more practical side*" (P1-Int., 297), with a focus on the learner and "*how do we help him or her to get to the next level*" (P1-Int., 299-300).

In discussing support, participants referred to dynamic assessment as solution-focused with a focus on helping the learning move forward. This can be seen in the following quote by a participant: "*solution-focused rather than just diagnosing*" (P1-Int., 314). As a participant stated, dynamic assessment assists the educational psychologist to "*look at the solution or the outcome or the next thing you're going to do to help this child to reach the next level for him or her*" (P1-Int., 295-297). The participant addressed this in

the collage and reflection as well. The participant wrote the following about dynamic assessment "*a process that invites growth and progress*" (P1-R) and represented this using a beanstalk (see figure 4.3 below). The participant further reflected "*the participant has to climb (put effort in) to reach a new level*" (P1-R).

Figure 4.3. Section of collage provided by P1

As the participant noted while discussing her use of creative strategies, "*this is where we connect. And then it makes sense to them*" (P2-Int., 98-99). By accommodating these learners in the assessment process, the participants suggested that they were able to provide useful information to the relevant role-players regarding the learner's functioning. This can be seen in the following quote: "*…to help me to understand this child and to give feedback and to give information to a school"* (P2-Int., 225-226).

One participant discussed the importance of interpreting results within the unique context of the learner, saying "*you can't just use the test results and form a diagnosis…if they come from a different environment*" (P2-Int., 47-49). She further discussed the use of dynamic assessment to obtain an indication of a learner's functioning, noting that "*we have to understand and respect their unique way to interpretation and meaning*" (P2-R).

The participant's comment aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Learning Theory, which highlights the impact of educational and socio-economic opportunities on cognitive functioning (van Eeden & de Beer, 2013), and emphasises that cognitive

development is both “social and interactive” (Grigorenko, 2009, p. 117). As such, the participants’ statements regarding the need to understand a learner and his or her perspective align with the literature discussed in Chapter 2.

The participants’ perceptions support the notion of dynamic assessment as a co-operative activity (Poehner, 2008, 2012) that assesses *for* learning (Bouwer, 2016). In order for the assessment process to be co-operative, and for the assessor to provide the appropriate support, he or she must understand the learner’s perspective.

Although dynamic assessment is conceptualised differently by various authors (see, for example, Budoff (1987); Campione (1989); Feuerstein et al. (1981); Lidz (2003)), a common element lies in the provision of support, albeit termed mediation, scaffolding, or prompting. The assumption is that the learner will take increasing responsibility for his or her learning as his or her ability improves (Poehner, 2011) with the support of a more capable assessor or mediator. This supports the perceptions of the participants regarding the element of support that is present in dynamic assessment. Tiekstra et al. (2016) support this, stating that dynamic assessment allows educational psychologists to connect diagnosis and intervention, thus providing valuable insight into appropriate intervention or support strategies.

As discussed in Chapter 2, research has identified dynamic assessment as useful in identifying areas in which learners need additional support (Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015b). Dynamic assessment provides information about a learner’s abilities that are fully formed and abilities that are still developing (i.e. a learner’s potential) (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013), providing information regarding how to support a learner’s development. As Hill (2015) notes, a primary purpose of dynamic assessment is to provide the educational psychologist with insight that can be used to inform intervention strategies.

Dynamic assessment, therefore, allows the educational psychologist to bridge the gap between diagnosis and intervention and to provide valuable insight regarding support and instructional practices appropriate for the learner (Tiekstra et al., 2016). Furthermore, the interaction between learner and educational psychologist (as assessor) will provide the educational psychologist with first-hand experience of the specific mediation strategies that were beneficial to the learner and that could, therefore,

form part of recommendations for support and instructional practices (Calero et al., 2013; Poehner, 2011).

4.2.4. Theme 4: Factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment

Theme 4 relates to the factors that influence the participants' decision regarding whether or not to use dynamic assessment with a particular client. The subthemes that emerged are 1) the South African context; 2) the educational psychologist; and 3) the client and purpose of assessment.

Table 4.5 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme within Theme 4.

Table 4.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 4

THEME 4: Factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment		
Subtheme	**Inclusion criteria**	**Exclusion criteria**
Subtheme 4.1. The South African context	Any reference to contextual factors within the South African context that influence the use of dynamic assessment.	Any factors relating to the educational psychologist's practice. Any factors relating to the educational psychologist's personality. Any factors relating to the purpose of the assessment. Any factors relating to the client.
Subtheme 4.2. The personality and practice of the educational psychologist	Any reference to factors relating to the location or clientele of the educational psychologist's practice that influence the use of dynamic assessment. Any factors relating to the educational psychologist's personality.	Any factors relating to the South African context. Any factors relating to the purpose of the assessment. Any factors relating to the client.
Subtheme 4.3. The client or the purpose of the assessment	Any reference to factors relating to the client. Any reference to factors relating to the purpose of the assessment and the influence thereof on the use of dynamic assessment.	Any factors relating to the South African context. Any factors relating to the educational psychologist's practice. Any factors relating to the educational psychologist's personality.

4.2.4.1. Subtheme 4.1: The South African context

This subtheme relates to any factors regarding the South African context that may influence an educational psychologist's decision regarding the use of dynamic assessment. One participant said the following regarding the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa: "*We don't have option because there are different cultures, so different environments, so different religions, beliefs [sic]*" (P2-Int., 179-180).

In addition to the diversity present within the South African context, there is also concern regarding the limited availability of locally developed assessment measures, as indicated by the following statement: "*If it's not normed for the population with which I'm working then it discourages me*" (P1-Int., 366-367). The second participant also identified the lack of available tests a concern, stating "*we don't have enough tests to assess children*" (P2-Int., 121-122). Furthermore, a participant raised a concern regarding the validity of locally developed measures due to the dated nature of the assessment. This is evidenced by the following comment: "*The problem is that because the test has been designed in like the 70's, you know, even if you are Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking, some of the words are incredibly outdated so, you know, first of all it's challenging for first language speaking learners*" (P1-Int., 51-54).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, limited research exists on the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa (Murphy & Maree, 2006, 2009) which limits the amount of information available regarding the factors that influence such use (or the lack thereof). Reviewed international literature on similar contextual issues does, however, support some of the perceptions held by the participants.

Studies have explored dynamic assessment as a suitable alternative assessment approach that may address the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity (Barrera, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2013; Notari-Syverson et al., 2003; Spinelli, 2008) which is a critical issue in South Africa, and an issue raised by the participants. Furthermore, research has shown that while educational psychologists may adapt their practices when working with culturally or linguistically diverse learners, this tended to take the form of using alternative tests or non-verbal measures (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014), as opposed to using dynamic assessment.

4.2.4.2. Subtheme 4.2: The personality and practice of the educational psychologist

Discussing the factors that influence the use of dynamic assessment, the participants made reference to a number of factors regarding their own personality and their practice. As a participant said: "*I think it all depends on what kind of practice you're running and obviously what your passion is*" (P1-Int., 466-467). One participant explained that the location and clientele of her practice play a role in her decision-making regarding the use of dynamic assessment. She noted the following: "*I worked with people all around from Africa, Europe, Poland, Greek, Italian…that forced me to do that kind of assessments [sic]*" (P2-Int., 222-227). A participant shared a similar sentiment, indicating that the demographics of the learners at the school in which she works influences the assessments she uses, explaining that "*all the other tests from overseas that were in English I had to do in English with the Afrikaans-speaking students*" (P1-Int., 36-37).

A participant highlighted factors relating to her personality that influenced her decision. She named several personality traits, including "*Honesty. Adaptability. Respect. Sensitivity. Humour. Empathy*" (P2-Int., 138). She emphasised the importance of her personality in making decisions, saying "*there's no difference between me and the…job that I do*" (P2-Int., 134-135) and "*it should make sense to me, otherwise I can't do my job well*" (P2- Int., Line 161). Both participants discussed the importance of understanding the client when choosing assessment measures. As a participant noted, the decision is "*about whether this is really going to be helpful to the client*" (P1-Int., 371). This view was shared by a participant who said: "*I try to get into their box*" (P2-Int., 135).

The following is an excerpt of a reflection I wrote regarding these responses.

The participant spoke about the multicultural nature of the South African context as well as the multitude of languages to which a learner may be exposed. Linked to this, she referred to her desire to understand her clients and to "get inside their box". It is clear that, for her, this is an important part of the assessment process.

A participant identified her perceptions regarding dynamic assessment as a factor that influences her decision to use dynamic assessment. She indicated that she found standardised assessments to be more time-efficient to use, particularly in terms of the writing of reports afterwards. This can be seen in the following statement: "*It's easier to do an assessment with a battery that's normed and that you can get the scores, you know what I mean? That's the easier one for you as an ed psych because, you know, it's nice and neat; it's not so neat to assess informally or qualitatively. Your reports are also very long*" (P1-Int., 393-396).

She explained this further, stating the following: "*if you do scores, you've got your stock standard template…so you tick the box where the client is in the spectrum of 1 to 10 okay and then you have standard responses to each box that's been ticked whereas qualitatively you have to interpret the behaviour…there's no existing template for those reports…so you have to think. It's basically like the difference between baking a cake from scratch and baking it from a box*" (P1-Int., 401-408).

Limited literature is available regarding factors relating to the educational psychologist and his or her practice that impact the use of dynamic assessment. Studies have, however, found that educational psychologists cited a lack of confidence in their ability to use dynamic assessment, particularly due to a lack of exposure to dynamic assessment during their training (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000; Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Stringer et al., 1997) as an influencing factor. Neither of the participants involved in the study indicated that they had received extensive training on dynamic assessment as part of their professional training or qualifications.

A factor highlighted by the participants that is also present in the literature reviewed is that of time constraints (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000) and the time required to use dynamic assessment. The time-intensive nature of dynamic assessment (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Murphy & Maree, 2006) seems to be a recurring factor that influences the likelihood of dynamic assessment being implemented.

4.2.4.3. Subtheme 4.3: The client and purpose of the assessment

When discussing factors that influenced their decision-making, participants made reference to factors that relate to the client. One of these factors was the client's expectations. As a participant said "*when I see parents for the first consultation…I ask them 'what do you expect from me?' and then I say 'this is what I can offer you and you*

can decide if you feel comfortable with that" (P2-Int., 196-198). The personality of the parents was also identified as a factor. This can be seen in the following statement: "*sometimes you get parent [sic] that, like, they are a black-and-white person and they want this exact results [sic]*" (P2- Int., 118).

Both participants indicated that the purpose of the assessment was an influencing factor when selecting their assessment battery. One participant identified concession applications as an assessment where dynamic assessment would be inappropriate. She explained her reasoning, saying: "*obviously they want the score, they want specific tests done. Honestly, they don't even really care about the qualitative interpretations that you might have because they've got their own ed psychs at the IEB [sic]*" (P1-Int., 448-449).

Forensic work was another specific form of assessment that participants identified as unsuitable for incorporating dynamic assessment. A participant explained this as follows: "*because you have to do certain things but it's correct because it has to the law and there are certain rules [sic]*" (P2-Int., 188-189).

In contrast, where the purpose of the assessment is to provide support and/or information to teachers and other role-players, the participants indicated that such a purpose may be appropriate for the inclusion of dynamic assessment. As a participant explained, "*I've been in a situation where a teacher would read the report and she'd say 'well I don't understand the difference between a verbal and non-verbal IQ so I don't really worry about it. Tell me what do I do with this child. What level is he or she reading at or writing at and how do I get them to do better?"* (P1-Int., 520-524). As the other participant also said: "*to make recommendations which will be meaningful and in the best interests of each one [learner]*" (P2-R).

In terms of factors that relate to the client, studies have identified dynamic assessment as a useful assessment approach for learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Lawrence & Cahill, 2014; Spinelli, 2008). This suggests that educational psychologists may use the learner's background and language proficiency to determine whether or not to use dynamic assessment. The participants in the study addressed this to an extent, indicating that they adapt the assessment measurements based on their observations and interactions with the learner during the assessment process.

The factors that influence the use of dynamic assessment, particularly in terms of the purpose of the assessment, are also not widely covered in literature, especially local literature. In an international study, the expectations placed on educational psychologists by the relevant Department of Education was cited as an influencing factor (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000). Participants discussed concession applications, particularly for the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), as a purpose that precludes the use of dynamic assessment. This is supported by documentation regarding the application for concessions in independent schools in South Africa which contains a list of approved assessment measures and does not include dynamic assessment (Independent Examinations Board (IEB), 2013).

Similarly, the Department of Basic Education (2014) in South Africa provides a framework for assessment and support that does also not explicitly encourage or acknowledge the use of dynamic assessment. A potential implication of this lies in the fact that educational psychologists may be hesitant to make use of dynamic assessment as it is not included on the list of recognised assessments for concession assessments. As the framework for assessment and support provided by the Department of Basic Education (2014) does emphasise the support of learners, dynamic assessment could be used to inform this support.

4.3. CONCLUSION

A number of themes and subthemes emerged from the data generated by the participants, each of which was discussed in this chapter. Each subtheme was also discussed in relation to the literature covered in Chapter 2 as a form of literature control. Through this process, it was evident that the participants shared some perceptions of dynamic assessment that have been found in studies and are supported by literature. Perhaps the two most striking differences between the responses provided by the participants and the reviewed literature are: 1) the perception that dynamic assessment only provides qualitative information; and 2) that dynamic assessment does not have a specific structure or theoretical framework to be followed during implementation or use.

These differences suggest that educational psychologists may lack sufficient knowledge in the domain of dynamic assessment for it to be effectively utilised in practice. The perception that dynamic assessment provides only qualitative information creates an opportunity in which dynamic assessment may be underutilised as its value is not

recognised. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge regarding the theoretical framework and procedures of dynamic assessment may lead to it being implemented incorrectly or insufficiently, thus reducing the amount of insight gained through the process.

In the following chapter, I will answer the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1 and discuss recommendations for future research and training.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The results of the data analysis process were presented as themes in the previous chapter. Quotations and excerpts from the data were presented in support of these themes.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the preceding chapters. I also present the conclusions of the study in relation to the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. The potential contributions of the study as well as the challenges experienced are then discussed. The chapter concludes with my recommendations for future research, training, and practice.

5.2. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study and provided an overview of the study. I explained my rationale for undertaking the study, focusing on the need for an alternative assessment measure that allows educational psychologists to assess second language learners in a way that takes into account their limited language proficiency. Dynamic assessment was introduced as an alternative assessment measure that could meet this need. I discussed the research questions and defined the key concepts relevant to the study, namely perceptions, educational psychologists, dynamic assessment, and second language learners. A brief overview of the epistemological paradigm, theoretical framework, and methodological approach was also provided. A discussion on the research process, ethical considerations, and quality criteria employed in the study followed.

Chapter 2 explored existing literature relating to the role of educational psychologists when working with learners, particularly within the context of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. Literature on the influence of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms and the consequent increase in second language learning was also presented. This was followed by a review of dynamic assessment, which was presented as an alternative assessment measure for use with second language learners. A discussion on the theoretical framework from within which the study was conducted, Social Cognitive Theory, was also included in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, I explained and justified the use of interpretivism and a qualitative approach as the epistemological paradigm and methodological approach respectively used in the study. I also discussed the use of a case study research design and its relevance for the topic of study. I then explained the data generation techniques and data analysis procedure that were employed. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the quality criteria and ethical considerations present in the study.

In Chapter 4, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data were presented. The four themes were 1) conceptualising dynamic assessment, 2) challenges experienced by second language learners, 3) educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment, and 4) factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment, each with its own sub-themes. These themes give rise to the findings discussed in the following section.

5.3. ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, conclusions are drawn by presenting the findings of the study in relation to the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. The secondary research questions are answered first, followed by a discussion on the findings pertaining to the primary research question.

The findings presented in the following sections are the result of the themes that emerged from the data analysis process and have been interpreted from within the Social Cognitive Theory framework. Using this framework, it is assumed that the educational psychologists interviewed constantly access and process information in order to choose, construct, and evaluate their actions (Bandura, 2001). The interaction between behaviour, personal characteristics, and environmental and social factors is also seen as influencing the educational psychologists' perceptions (Snowman & McCown, 2013), with this interaction being influenced by concepts of self-regulation (including self-reflection and forethought) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 2001, 2002; O'Donnell et al., 2012).

As such, the findings discussed in the following sections are based on the understanding that the perceptions of the educational psychologists are the subjective experiences of the individuals (Schunk, 2012) and are influenced by a number of

factors. Figure 5.1 below shows the themes discussed in Chapter 4 that apply to each of the research questions answered in this section.

Secondary research question 1: How do educational psychologists define dynamic assessment?

- Theme 1: Conceptualising dynamic assessment
- Theme 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment

Secondary research question 2: To what extent do educational psychologists consider dynamic assessment as a means of addressing difficulties experienced by second language learners during assessment?

- Theme 1: Conceptualising dynamic assessment
- Theme 2: Challenges experienced by second language learners
- Theme 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment

Secondary research question 3: What factors influence educational psychologists' decision regarding whether or not to implement dynamic assessment?

- Theme 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment
- Theme 4: Factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment

Secondary research question 4: What do educational psychologists consider to be the main factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa?

- Theme 2: Challenges experienced by second language learners
- Theme 3: Educational psychologists' use of dynamic assessment
- Theme 4: Factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment

Figure 5.1. Themes associated with each secondary research question

5.3.1. Secondary research questions

5.3.1.1. Secondary research question 1: How do educational psychologists define dynamic assessment?

The study found that educational psychologists define dynamic assessment in terms of particular characteristics. Educational psychologists define dynamic assessment as a holistic form of assessment and as a way of assessing a learner while taking his or her context into account. Within this, contextual factors such as his or her school and family environment were highlighted. Similar findings have been reported in literature, with authors identifying dynamic assessment as a method of ensuring that the assessment of second language learners is fair (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013; Peterson & Gillam, 2013).

Within the characteristic of holistic, a perception that dynamic assessment provides a method for assessing a learner's functioning across a variety of domains was present in the findings. The participants mentioned cognitive, scholastic, emotional, and social functioning in particular.

Dynamic assessment is further defined as a qualitative form of assessment which does not yield quantifiable information. Dynamic assessment was perceived as a means of adapting an assessment to meet a learner's needs without necessarily implementing specific procedures. The study found that dynamic assessment is perceived by educational psychologists as referring to any process which involves adapting activities or items to better meet the needs of the learner during the assessment process. This is supported by the literature discussed in Chapter 2 which notes that "varying the assessment procedure to meet learner needs as these become apparent" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013, p. 143) is a critical element of dynamic assessment.

Dynamic assessment further allows the educational psychologist to gain insight into the learner's ability with regard to that activity or item. For example, participants discussed playing outside or using familiar items to help the learner understand a particular concept. As discussed in Chapter 2, linking learning content or activities to the experiences of learners has been found to be a beneficial strategy in improving second language learners' performances (Warren & Miller, 2015).

The findings suggest that educational psychologists are able to gauge a learner's ability to respond to new information through these activities. By observing how a learner engages with an activity and the environment, the educational psychologist makes inferences about his or her reasoning ability. From this information, the educational psychologist is able to recommend and implement support to facilitate the learner's advancement in a particular area. The ability to make inferences about a learner's learning process has been highlighted by Lidz (2014) as a characteristic of dynamic assessment.

Dynamic assessment was seen as providing educational psychologists with the opportunity to support a learner without labelling a learner or his or her ability level. As a result, dynamic assessment is perceived as providing the educational psychologist with information that allows him or her to put the learner's functioning and abilities into perspective for the parents, teachers, and other significant role-players in the learner's life. A study by Lawrence and Cahill (2014) supports this perception, with these authors finding that dynamic assessment placed a learner's difficulties within a broader context, increased awareness of a learner's strengths, produced a more positive view of the learner for the both parents and teachers, and had a positive impact on the learner's well-being, learning, and behaviour.

Building on this, the findings show that dynamic assessment is considered to be a form of assessment which reflects an attitude of caring by the educational psychologist, allowing him or her to understand the learner and to make a positive difference in the learner's life. This reflects the findings of a study presented in Chapter 2 which noted that learners experienced dynamic assessment as positive and were able to generalise what they had learned to other areas (Lawrence & Cahill, 2014). These authors further found that dynamic assessment created positive change for both parents and teachers.

The definitions of dynamic assessment provided by the participants and discussed above are, as per the Social Cognitive Theory, the result of an interaction between several factors that influenced the participants' perceptions. These may include the participants' reflection on and evaluation of the assessment process. The participants' experiences of dynamic assessment may have also directly influenced their perceptions or influenced their self-efficacy beliefs and, consequently, their thoughts and actions (Schunk, 2012). In addition, environmental feedback and interactions with learners, parents, and other professionals may further have influenced the participants' cognitions regarding dynamic assessment (O'Donnell et al., 2012).

5.3.1.2. Secondary research question 2: To what extent do educational psychologists consider dynamic assessment as a means of addressing difficulties experienced by second language learners during assessment?

The findings from this study highlighted challenges that second language learners experience during assessment. One such challenge is that second language learners may have difficulty expressing themselves due to their limited language proficiency. The findings also note that second language learners may be hesitant to respond during assessment and that they may limit their responses as a result, which could have a negative impact on their results.

This aligns with the theoretical framework, Social Cognitive Theory, discussed in Chapter 2. As self-efficacy influences an individual's decision regarding his or her participation in a particular activity (Bandura, 1993, 2001), it is evident that the participants may be correct in their perception that second language learners who lack proficiency in a language (and may consequently have lower levels of self-efficacy) may be hesitant to engage with the educational psychologist during the assessment process. Second language learners frequently experience negative emotions regarding

assessments (Effiong, 2016; Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a), which may have a further negative impact on their self-efficacy beliefs.

The lack of culturally appropriate assessment materials was identified as another challenge for second language learners. South African assessment measures were used by a participant as an example of how even measures developed for the South African population may be inappropriate for certain cultural groups. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 supports these perceptions, noting that assessment measures may differ in accessibility for different population groups, both internationally (Coelho et al., 2015; Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016) and locally (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). The findings from the study suggest that dynamic assessment is able to address this because it allows them to consider the contextual factors that may be present, including language proficiency and cultural background. This is supported by Peterson and Gillam (2013) who state that dynamic assessment is able to lessen the impact of language on a learner's performance.

The lack of culturally appropriate assessment materials available in South Africa is an example of an environmental factor within the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) that may have influenced participants' perceptions. Furthermore, this environmental factor, combined with participants' self-regulatory abilities may have contributed to the perceptions that the participants hold (Bandura, 1986, 2001).

The findings emphasised that second language learners are at an increased risk of inaccurate diagnosis as a result of the challenges they face. As the results obtained may be inaccurate as a result of limited language proficiency, an educational psychologist using these results may consequently make an incorrect or inaccurate diagnosis. This aligns with studies by Ball et al. (2011) and Lanfranchi (2014) that were presented in Chapter 2. In both, the authors reported that minority learner groups (such as second language learners) are often perceived as experiencing barriers to learning and lower academic achievement that requires assessment by an educational psychologist (Ball et al., 2011) or special education placement (Lanfranchi, 2014).

A participant used the case of a lower intelligence quotient (IQ) score as an example (P1-Int., 63-34). A diagnosis of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was also used as an example, with a participant voicing the opinion that a learner may present with symptoms of ADHD in the classroom as a result of his limited language proficiency

and consequent difficulty understanding what is being said (P2-Int., 29-32). As a diagnosis influences the support learners require (van Loon, Claes, Vandevelde, Van Hove, & Schalock, 2010), an incorrect diagnosis could result in a learner receiving inappropriate or inadequate support.

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that dynamic assessment is considered a form of assessment that mitigates some of these challenges. Dynamic assessment was found to provide educational psychologists with the opportunity to adapt the assessment to meet the needs of the learner. In the case of second language learners, the ability to alter the instructions of the assessment as well as the complexity of the language used to make it more accessible for the learner was found to be an important aspect of dynamic assessment. An example of decreasing the complexity of the language used is to use synonyms with which the learner might be more familiar. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 reports similar findings, with Siegel et al. (2014) reporting that breaking down instructions into smaller components proved beneficial for second language learners.

The study further found that a variety of accommodation strategies were used by participants in dynamic assessment to make the assessment more accessible for second language learners. These included alternative methods of instruction, such as drawing or building something by way of explanation as opposed to relying on language. Visual representations were identified in studies by Siegel et al. (2014) and Warren and Miller (2015) as accommodations that increased second language learners' access to assessment activities.

Dynamic assessment is conceptualised as a broad concept that allows the educational psychologist a fair amount of freedom in determining how to assess a learner. As such, dynamic assessment is considered a form of assessment in which the educational psychologist can address the challenges faced by second language learners as they occur in the process. Studies report similar findings with Lantolf and Poehner (2013) noting that dynamic assessment allows the assessor "greater flexibility" (p. 142) during the assessment process. The findings revealed that dynamic assessment is perceived to be a form of assessment that facilitates an understanding of the learner and enables effective support to be implemented and can be considered a way of mitigating the impact of the challenges that they face.

As discussed, the participants perceive dynamic assessment as providing an opportunity to implement accommodation strategies during the assessment process and the freedom to address challenges as they arise in the assessment. These perceptions can be conceptualised in terms of the study's theoretical framework, Social Cognitive Theory, as the result of continuous self-reflection by the participants in order to achieve an outcome (in this case, the accurate and fair assessment of second language learners) (O'Donnell et al., 2012). In addition, should participants implement accommodation strategies in assessments, they may observe the learner's response to this and gain insight into the consequences of implementing such strategies (Woolfolk, 2014). Such observations may influence participants' self-efficacy beliefs pertaining to dynamic assessment and, consequently, influence their perceptions of it.

5.3.1.3. Secondary research question 3: What factors influence educational psychologists' decisions regarding whether or not to implement dynamic assessment?

From within the Social Cognitive Theory framework, the perceptions educational psychologists hold about dynamic assessment are influenced, in part, by the triadic reciprocal relationship that exists between behaviour, personal characteristics, and environmental and social factors. This triadic reciprocal causation assumes the presence of personal agency, which encompasses both self-regulation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001, 2002).

Personal characteristics as well as environmental and social factors were found to be contributing factors in the implementation of dynamic assessment. In terms of personal characteristics, the traits within the educational psychologist as well as their approach to assessment were found to influence their decision to use dynamic assessment. A participant referred to her desire to "get into their box" and to genuinely understand her clients as one such factor (P2-Int., 135). The findings also revealed that dynamic assessment is perceived to portray a caring attitude and considered to be a way of making a difference is another example of personal characteristics involved. Personality traits such as empathy, honesty, and respect for clients were also highlighted as critical factors in the decision-making process.

One of the participants noted that dynamic assessment requires more effort and is more time-consuming, particularly in terms of report writing, than conventional assessments

and that this factor influences whether or not she uses it (P1-Int., 393-396). This perception resonates with literature discussed in Chapter 2. Studies conducted both internationally (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000; Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002) and locally (Murphy, 2013; Smit, 2010) report that educational psychologists perceive dynamic assessment as both time consuming and labour intensive.

In terms of environmental and social factors, the unique South African population was found to be a reason to use dynamic assessment. The cultural and linguistic diversity present in South Africa was seen as an important factor, with the need for assessment measures that were appropriate for diverse clients being emphasised. The location and clientele of the educational psychologists' practices were linked to this, with the diversity of clientele necessitating the use of alternative assessment measures.

Other environmental factors pertain to the profession of educational psychology and the guidelines therein. The study revealed that educational psychologists perceive particular areas of focus within the field of educational psychology as limiting their ability to use dynamic assessment. Concession assessments were mentioned as such a field, with participants stating that assessments for this purpose cannot include dynamic assessment (P1-Int., 448-449). In consulting literature, however, the guidelines provided by the Department of Basic Education (2014) for the assessment of learners to identify barriers to learning and implement support stipulate the following regarding assessments:

> Standardised tests, provided they are culturally fair, can be used as part of the range of strategies used in the assessment process with the aim of informing the teaching and learning process in respect of the nature and level of educational support that needs to be provided to the learner as part of the Individual Support Plan (p. 9).

This statement makes it clear that standardised assessments are one of the assessment options available to practitioners and that these should form only *part* of the process. Furthermore, the guidelines also state that assessment must be "fair, bias-free and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and ability" (p. 9). An important finding of the study is that both these statements make provision for alternative assessment measures, such as dynamic assessment, contrasting with the perceptions held by the participants.

The policy on accommodations for the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) (2013) provides guidelines regarding specific, standardised assessment measures that must be included when applying for accommodations (what the participants refer to as concessions). The policy does state the following, however: “[t]he required tests may be supplemented with additional tests should it be felt that this will assist in identifying a specific difficulty” (IEB, 2013, p. 7), which does provide an opportunity for educational psychologists to use other measures, such as dynamic assessment, should they perceive it as beneficial. With both the Department of Basic Education (2014) and IEB (2013), the institutions do allow for the educational psychologist to use some discretion regarding the assessment measures they use and are not as rigid in this regard as the participants perceived. A review of literature pertaining to forensic assessments did not provide any evidence of existing guidelines.

5.3.1.4. Secondary research question 4: What do educational psychologists consider to be the main factors influencing the use of dynamic assessment in South Africa?

Overall, educational psychologists perceive dynamic assessment as useful when assessing second language learners. The demographics of their client base, as well as the overall cultural and linguistic diversity present in South Africa, are primary factors influencing their use of dynamic assessment.

The recognition of the potential risks of using conventional assessment measures with second language learners plays a further role in the potential use of dynamic assessment. Factors such as limited language proficiency, risk of inaccurate results, and risk of inaccurate diagnosis are, therefore, relevant. These concerns are similar to those raised in literature (Cawthon et al., 2013; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2013; Lanfranchi, 2014). The personality traits and personal characteristics of the educational psychologists are considered important as their priorities in terms of supporting and understanding the learner as well as the time and effort involved are considerations. The perception that dynamic assessment is time consuming and labour intensive is a perception that has recurred in several studies, both internationally and locally, over the years (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Murphy, 2013; Murphy & Maree, 2009; Smit, 2010).

The expectations within the scope of educational psychology and the purpose of the assessment were also identified as factors, with external pressures playing a role. For

example, concession assessments which are overseen by the Department of Education and IEB, were perceived as providing guidelines which inhibit the use of dynamic assessment. When this was investigated, however, the literature reviewed clearly shows that while these institutions provide guidelines, educational psychologists are able to include additional measures, such as dynamic assessment, should they wish to do so.

Several elements of the Social Cognitive Theory framework are present in the above responses. The participants identified environmental and social factors, such as expectations within the field of psychology and institutional regulations, as well as their own personal characteristics as influencing the use of dynamic assessment. In addition, the participants' perceptions regarding the time- and labour-intensive nature of dynamic assessment may be the result of social factors, as evidenced by this perception occurring in several studies (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002; Murphy, 2013; Murphy & Maree, 2009; Smit, 2010).

5.3.2. Answering the primary research question

This study was guided by the following primary research question: *How do educational psychologists perceive the role of dynamic assessment in addressing the difficulties experienced by second language learners?* The educational psychologists in this study perceive dynamic assessment as able to address some of the difficulties experienced by second language learners.

The study revealed a number of difficulties that second language learners may experience. These included that second language learners may limit their responses during assessments as a result of their limited language proficiency. This is supported by literature presented in Chapter 2 which notes that second language learners often have difficulties with comprehension, mispronunciations, and spelling errors, as well as a limited vocabulary (M. Nel & Nel, 2016) which affects their ability to effectively demonstrate their knowledge. In addition, the negative emotions experienced during assessment by second language learners (Effiong, 2016; Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015a) may lead to a decrease in motivation to participate (Xaypanya et al., 2017).

The study further revealed that second language learners may be at risk of inaccurate diagnosis as their language difficulties may be misinterpreted. Research has shown that minority groups, such as second language learners, are represented disproportionally

in special education placements (Lanfranchi, 2014) often because they are identified as having barriers to learning and lower academic achievement (Ball et al., 2011), similarly to the perceptions of the participants.

Furthermore, a finding pertaining to the bias in terms of culture and/or language that is present in assessment measures aligns with reviewed literature on the subject. In particular, findings reveal that certain assessment measures, although standardised for the South African population, are inappropriate for all cultural groups. This is supported by existing literature which questions the accessibility of assessments for diverse learners (Cawthon et al., 2013; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2013) as well as the multicultural-sensitivity of standardised assessments (Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016).

Consequently, the study found that educational psychologists consider dynamic assessment to be a means of adapting the assessment to meet the needs of a second language learner. Strategies such as adapting or simplifying instructions, using synonyms, and incorporating non-verbal means of communication, such as drawing and building were found to be a means of effectively addressing these challenges. Research has also found these strategies to be effective in increasing second language learners' access to assessments. Altering administration procedures (Kemp, 2014), providing translations to assessment items (Alt et al., 2013; Makgamatha et al., 2013), breaking questions down into smaller components (Siegel et al., 2014), and using multiple representations (Warren & Miller, 2015) have been identified as beneficial.

In terms of the Social Cognitive Theory, educational psychologists' adaptation of assessments to meet the needs of learners is indicative of the self-reflection and forethought components of the framework. This is evidenced by the anticipation of the consequences of an action (Bandura, 1986) and strategic planning (Zbainos et al., 2013) required to do so.

The value of taking contextual factors into account in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a learner's functioning was revealed by the study. Dynamic assessment was found to be a form of assessment that allowed the educational psychologists interviewed to do so. The importance of assessing how a learner responds to an activity or the environment and gauging his or her reasoning ability was a further finding of the study. Through this approach, the assessment is likely

to be a more accurate representation of a learner's ability in comparison to a conventional assessment measure.

This perception aligns with Lidz's (2014, p. 295) characteristics of "good" dynamic assessment, one of which is the provision of information regarding a learner's response to the intervention. Dynamic assessment is also contrasted to conventional assessments in literature, with Bouwer (2016) arguing that conventional assessments do not provide sufficient information regarding learners' potential for learning, learning processes, or beneficial mediation strategies.

From the discussion above, it is evident that the findings of the study show that educational psychologists consider dynamic assessment to be a form of assessment which may alleviate some of the challenges that second language learners face during assessment. The challenges that were identified as well as the strategies that can be implemented to address them are supported by the literature review that was conducted in Chapter 2.

With this in mind, the findings clearly reveal that the participants' perceptions regarding several aspects of dynamic assessment were accurate, including the ability to take contextual factors into account and to limit the negative impact caused by limited language proficiency. The participants' perceptions did, however, differ from the literature reviewed for the study in terms of the process of implementing dynamic assessment, with the participants making no mention of either the cake or sandwich formats (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). The participants also did not discuss the theoretical base of dynamic assessment or the different approaches (Grigorenko, 2009).

That said, it has been found that the participants' perception of dynamic assessment aligns most with the mediated learning experience (MLE) approach (Feuerstein et al., 1981; Lidz, 2003; Tzuriel & Kaufman, 1999). This is evidenced by the participants' understanding of dynamic assessment as an opportunity for the educational psychologist to adapt the assessment to meet the needs of the learner with the purpose of evaluating his or her ability to respond to that new information, thus mediating the learning experience for the learner (Poehner, 2011).

5.4. POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to knowledge pertaining to perceptions that educational psychologists hold regarding dynamic assessment and its potential usefulness with second language learners. Due to the limited literature on this topic in the South African context, this study contributes insight into the perceptions held by educational psychologists in South Africa.

From the findings of the study, it is apparent that the educational psychologists interviewed have a limited understanding of the theoretical framework of dynamic assessment and may not be aware of the various approaches that fall under the term dynamic assessment. The study also illustrates, however, that the educational psychologists interviewed are implementing dynamic assessment in a way that mostly aligns with the MLE approach.

The findings of the study illustrate that the participants hold some incorrect assumptions regarding dynamic assessment, such as that it can be used only to obtain qualitative information, that there is not a guiding procedure to be followed, and that it cannot be used for specific purposes, such as concession applications. Despite these misconceptions, the educational psychologists interviewed correctly identified a number of crucial aspects of dynamic assessment, including its ability to measure how a learner responds to new information.

A further finding is that the participants are aware of a number of challenges that second language learners experience and they identified dynamic assessment as a form of assessment that addresses some of these challenges. This information contributes to knowledge pertaining to the assessment of second language learners and doing so in a way that is unbiased.

5.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of the study is the small number of participants included in the study which limits the transferability of the findings. A case study design was used to explore the perceptions held by two educational psychologists practicing in Pretoria, South Africa. Although the participants differed in terms of the location of their practice, home language, age, and university at which they trained, the small number of participants means that the findings may not be generalisable to the larger population.

5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, I provide recommendations for future research, practice, and training based on the findings presented.

5.6.1. Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend the following for future research opportunities:

- Large scale case studies on the use of dynamic assessment by educational psychologists in South Africa, particularly with second language learners.
- Studies regarding educational psychologists' theoretical and practical training experience in the field of dynamic assessment in South Africa.
- Exploring the experiences of educational psychologists in using conventional assessment measures with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Studies to gain deeper insight into the experiences of second language learners in South Africa in assessments.

5.6.2. Recommendations for practice

A suggestion for practice is that educational psychologists who intend to use dynamic assessment in their practice ensure that they are competent to do so. Competency in dynamic assessment may include aspects such as familiarity with the theoretical aspects of dynamic assessment, the procedures of each format of dynamic assessment, how to quantify the information obtained, and familiarity with how to use this information to provide support.

5.6.3. Recommendations for training

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that educational psychologists correctly understand several aspects of dynamic assessment but that they also hold a number of misconceptions regarding crucial characteristics of dynamic assessment. A gap in knowledge was also identified in terms of the different approaches to dynamic assessment. As such, a recommendation for training is that dynamic assessment be allocated increased time in terms of theoretical and practical training of educational psychologists at Masters level, with educational psychologists being provided the opportunity to develop further competency in this domain.

5.7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study sought to investigate how selected educational psychologists in Pretoria perceive dynamic assessment in relation to the assessment of second language learners. From the findings, it is evident that the participants are aware of a number of challenges facing second language learners, both during the assessment process and as a consequence. Dynamic assessment was identified by the participants as a form of assessment which addresses some of these challenges. These findings align with those in international literature (Deutsch & Reynolds, 2000; Lantolf & Poehner, 2013; Lawrence & Cahill, 2014; Lidz, 2014).

The study also highlighted, however, the similarities and differences that exist between educational psychologists' perceptions of dynamic assessment and literature pertaining to dynamic assessment. Similarities that were noted include dynamic assessment as an assessment alternative that takes into account contextual factors and assesses how a learner responds to new information. In contrast, the educational psychologists interviewed also held some misconceptions about dynamic assessment, namely that it cannot produce quantifiable information and that there is not a specific framework or procedure that should be followed.

These findings illustrate that educational psychologists identify dynamic assessment as being useful in the assessment of second language learners but that some theoretical knowledge pertaining to dynamic assessment may be lacking. As such, the study has highlighted the importance of educational psychologists being competent in the assessment measures they use. As dynamic assessment has been identified as holding potential value, providing educational psychologists with further knowledge and training in this field could promote its use and benefit clients, particularly second language learners.

As a researcher and educational psychologist in training, I hope that this study will contribute to the existing knowledge base with regard to assessing second language learners in a more effective and accurate manner. I further hope that this study highlights the need for further research into how dynamic assessment is being used by educational psychologists in South Africa and how best we can implement it to better serve our clients.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Psychology

Dear Educational Psychologist

I am currently a student studying through the University of Pretoria. I am enrolled in the M.Ed (Educational Psychology) programme. In order to complete the requirements of this degree, I must conduct research and write a dissertation on my work.

I would like to thank you for considering participating in the study being undertaken. My research topic is ***Dynamic Assessment of Second Language Learners: Perceptions of Educational Psychologists.***

This study will involve interviewing Educational Psychologists to understand the perceptions that are held by Educational Psychologists regarding the use of dynamic assessment in the South African context. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the existing knowledge base on dynamic assessment and its potential use in South Africa.

The interview will be approximately one hour long and will be scheduled to suit your availability. As I will need to transcribe the interviews afterwards, I will need your permission to record (audio only) the interviews. You will also be asked to create a collage at your convenience following the interview and to write a reflection on the collage. I will collect the written collage from you and it will form part of the collected data.

The information obtained during this study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used solely for this research. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of the participants. The true identities of participants will be known only to the researcher and her supervisor. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence. All information collected will be securely stored in accordance with the University of Pretoria's regulations. The recordings will never be reproduced or broadcast to any third party.

I hope that the research findings will make a credible contribution to understanding Educational Psychologists' perspectives on the viability of implementing dynamic assessment in South Africa.

Yours sincerely,

Kerryn Giles
Student researcher
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APPENDIX B: DECLARATION OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

Declaration of consent

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. Signing this letter indicates that you understand that your participation in this project is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time, with no negative consequences. Under no circumstances will your identity be disclosed or published at any point during the study to anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor. All documentation pertaining to the research study will be securely stored at the University of Pretoria.

I, _____ (your full name), an Educational Psychologist, hereby agree to take part in the following study: *Dynamic Assessment of Second Language Learners: Perceptions of Educational Psychologists.* I agree to allow the researcher to record (audio) the interview conducted. I understand that the researcher subscribes to the following principals:

- **Voluntary participation** - participants may withdraw from the research at any time during the study.
- **Informed consent** - participants will be fully informed about the research process and purposes at all times, and must give consent to their participation in this research.
- **Safety in participation** - participants will not be placed at risk of harm of any kind.
- **Privacy** - confidentiality and anonymity of human respondents will be protected at all times.
- **Trust** - participants will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

_____ _____

Educational Psychologist
Research participant

Date

_____ _____

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The purpose of this schedule is to elicit the educational psychologists' perceptions of dynamic assessment and the possible use thereof to address the difficulties that are experienced by second language learners in South Africa.

1. How long have you been registered as an Educational Psychologist?

2.
    a. Please tell me about your qualifications and additional training or workshops you have attended.
    b. Please elaborate on any of these that focused on or included information on dynamic assessment.

3. What do you understand by the term 'dynamic assessment'? What are some of the processes involved in the use of dynamic assessment?

4. Please would you explain the difference between dynamic assessment and static assessment?

5. Please elaborate on your experience in assessing second language learners.

6.
    a. What assessment devices did you include when assessing a second language learner?
    b. In hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently? Please elaborate.

7. What difficulties do you perceive second language learners as experiencing – both in the classroom and in assessments?

8. Please discuss the tools you consider to be beneficial in addressing these difficulties.

9. Please discuss your opinion on whether or not dynamic assessment could be useful in addressing these difficulties.

10. What circumstances or factors have influenced your decision-making when deciding whether or not to use dynamic assessment?
    a. Personal factors
    b. Environmental factors
    c. Institutional factors

11. What factors would encourage you to implement dynamic assessment more frequently?

12. What have you found to be the advantages of using dynamic assessment?

13. What would you say are the disadvantages associated with using dynamic assessment?

14. Please elaborate on any obstacles you have encountered in implementing dynamic assessment. What measures or strategies would you find useful in addressing these obstacles?

15. Please discuss your opinion on the viability of implementing dynamic assessment in the South African context.

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

SP: Doctor, can you maybe tell me a little bit about how long you've been practicing and also the different contexts that you've practiced in?

P2: Uhm I'm practicing now for about…how many years…(laughs). Let me think, since 199… so ya. It's been 1997.

SP: And you practiced in schools, private practice…

P2: Uh uhm I practice at a child and adult clinic. This is where I started. Uh I also did my internship at the child and adult clinic. That was in Welkom. Yes, because my husband he worked there at that stage. It's very very interesting. Mmm. So, I work with children and I work with adults. Because what I've done I've done my Masters in counselling and at that stage we could decide whether we would like to register as a counselling psychologist or a uh educational psychologist. It was many many moons ago. Yeah. Yeah.

SP: Okay, so have you only been in private practice and at the clinic?

P2: Yes.

SP: Okay

P2: Yeah yeah. After I was a few years at I think was like (pause) maybe 4 years at the clinic and then I started my own practice.

SP: Okay and uhm in terms of the clients that you see, have you had experience where you've assessed second language learners? Where you have a client that is attending school that isn't their first language.

P2: Many. Because what happened in, especially in Welkom, uh it's a mining environment and there are people from all over the world and especially from Africa and their home language is French. French and Portuguese and then in in all the public schools the first language was either English or Afrikaans so many, I saw a lot of those children and sometimes the mom she's from Africa, she uhm for example speaks French and the dad speaks South Sotho and uhm they attend the English medium school. Totally confused. (Laughs).

SP: In cases of those learners, what difficulties did you perceive them as experiencing? In the classroom but specifically in assessment?

P2: Behaviour difficulties because they tend to be uhm obvious ADD or ADHD. ADD because they don't understand the language so they so it was extremely difficult to understand

what's going on, to concentrate in class. And then because they feel so uncomfortable and they don't know how to deal with the situation so they (pause) present with symptoms of ADD and ADHD and the primary reason for their behaviour is language difficulty or language delay. Yeah. And some of them couldn't even speak the mother tongue fluently so yes and this what I also see here in my practice in Pretoria as well. They attend the English medium school, they can't speak English, they can't speak Zulu, they can't speak Sotho or Tswana or Sepedi…they can't speak none of those language fluently.

SP: And in… when you see those learners, when you assess them, are there any or what difficulties do you identify within the assessment process?

P2: That they couldn't understand instructions. Yeah. They couldn't follow the instructions. So, what I did… I did a lot of other kind of assessments. Like a Grover or the Griffiths. Uhm because it's less language-based. Yeah. But (laughs) you can't do something like a JSAIS. Or the Winelands. I don't think you know that test. It's like a questionnaire that you ask the parents. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Mmm.

SP: Uhm, have… can I ask what your understanding is of dynamic assessment?

P2: Uhm… what I think about dynamic assessment or from my perception is uhm (pause), and that is my perception is that when you assess a child, I think you must always see the child from a certain perception. Yes. You must uh take consideration of their background, and you can't just use the test results and form a diagnosis. I hate the word diagnosis. But to form a diagnosis uh if they come from a different environment. So, to me, it's important that you should have a holistic approach. Yeah. And some of the assessments that we've done, that we just have to see just give us an indication of uh their functioning of certain areas, so uhm I'm not that kind of rigid psychologist that's going to say 'Listen we've done this test, this is the test results'. No, it's not me (laughs).

SP: So, then that sounds like you have used dynamic assessment in the past, is that correct?

P2: Yes

SP: How did you experience using dynamic assessment?

P2: I think for me it makes sense. It makes sense. Because I'm not this little box-y person; you can't put me in a box so… I don't like it (laughs). And uhm and we can't and we differ. And we have to keep that into consideration in assessment.

SP: So, it sounds like part of the reason uhm that you find dynamic assessment useful is that it takes the context of the learner… (indistinct)

P2: Ya ya. For example, the parents that I gave feedback this morning to them and uhm uh a bright child but uh if you look at the IQ scores, I don't even use the word IQ but if you look at the scores of the SSAIS-R, you know, you have to see that into perspective. Yes. Because he's functioning level is quite good but he only relies on his visual memory to function at school. So, when you look at the language test results are extremely poor. (pause). So, you have to explain it to the parents and it's a shock when they hear but the language is not good. But to explain it…and that gives me some freedom and also to put certain things into perspective for the parents as well, just to help them to understand the child and not to just stress out there's something terribly wrong with my child because you know he didn't function in this little box (gestures). This is how I feel about that. Yeah. And to explain certain things because you can use one word and it can has different meanings.

SP: And uhm when you use dynamic assessment with second language learners, has there…are there any disadvantages that you see?

P2: (pause). Yes, I think so. Yeah. Because of the language because they don't… sometimes the tests that we use are part do not form part of the culture, didn't form part of their environment, not even in the first language (laughs) so we have to keep that in mind. And sometimes what I do, just to help, just to give them more information about a uh client or a child is I will use a synonym for that specific word. Just to see... that gives me an indication of uh if he understands or she understands the a concept but maybe that child didn't understand uhm the academic meaning of that word. Because we test only academic language and we have to step down. And this is what I sometimes do. Can't give them a score but to explain to the parents…you know, this is why he didn't know that academic language and I think that is the disadvantage. Because sometimes they have more knowledge as we think but just on another level.

SP: And uhm, just to clarify…there you're talking about the standardised assessments?

P2: Yeah mmm.

SP: So, when you administer those and now you mentioned that you sometimes use synonyms to gauge understanding, are there any other strategies that you use with standardised assessments to try and accommodate second language learners?

P2: I sometimes draw pictures for them. I sometimes uh build things for them. We sometimes play in the sand to explain certain things. Uhm we do a lot of things. Should be very creative (laughs). Sometimes… I remember, for example, I had to explain something for a child, a little boy, and the only thing and I ask him uhm to explain that specific thing, specific word I ask or context, I ask him to show me what we can use. And he took

marbles. Because this is what he knows. And this is what we've done therapy for about seven sessions, only marbles.

SP: Do you find that those strategies help?

P2: Yes. Yes. Because immediately they can identify and they have a specific perception, they have a specific visual perception about that object and then this is where we connect. And then they it makes sense to them. And I think that is today it's really a challenge to connect with the child to understand that child. Yeah. Because I think sometimes children are in specific schools, it's not the suitable school for them but they are there and they really struggle. And just to be able to connect with that child to just to understand how he feels in that situation, therefore you should be extremely creative.

SP: Okay, so that sounds like the relationship is also important?

P2: Yeah. Mmm. Mmm.

SP: Uhm, if I can…

P2: And also their sort of their uh reasoning ability. That's very important to me because this is otherwise I can't understand him. The reasoning ability – how you how he see things, you know. Yeah.

SP: Uhm, and the reasoning ability is something that you feel you can assess through dynamic assessment and through more creative strategies?

P2: I think so…

SP: I just wanted to make sure that I understand correctly…

P2: Yes, either if it's a visual or a auditory uh uhm or language reasoning ability. Yes. Mmm.

SP: Okay. If I can go back to dynamic assessment for a second, are there any disadvantages that you see in using dynamic assessment?

P2: Yes. I think not so much for myself but I think for parents because they sometimes you get parent that like they are a white-black person and they want this uh exact results and I think sometimes that can be a disadvantage. And I also then explain to them I say 'no I understand from your percept- this is what you need'. It's like one plus one is two. And… but sometimes it's not possible and I think that's a disadvantage. Yeah. And I think we don't… yeah we don't have enough tests to assess children. Yeah.

SP: When you decide on the assessment that you're going to use, especially whether you were to decide whether you are or aren't going to use dynamic assessment, what factors influence your decision making?

P2: The first thing is I have a questionnaire that I send through to parents to uhm that they have to complete it beforehand, before I see them and then I prefer to uhm… Part of my assessment is also includes uh emotional and social functioning so I prefer to do to first do that so that I can see on which level that child more or less uhm functions so that I use the correct test material when assessing. Yeah.

SP: Are there any personal factors, something about you, the way you approach things, your values, anything like that that influences your decisions?

P2: (Pause). I think… Yes. I think there's a lot of (laughs). Because there's no difference between me and the psychol... and the job that I do. (Laughs). Uhm so but so it doesn't matter uh who I sees in my practice. I try to get into their box. Yeah. Yup. This is very important to me.

SP: Would you mind elaborating on some of your characteristics that influence your decision making?

P2: Honesty. Adaptability. Respect. Sensitivity. Humour (laughs). Yes. And uh empathy. Uhm yeah. There's more. Love. (Laughs).

SP: So, if I link that to what you said just before I asked the question, it sounds like those characteristics influence your decision-making because they make you want to understand the client…

P2: Yes

SP: And meet them where they are… Is that correct?

P2: Yeah. Yeah.

SP: Are there any environmental or institutional factors that influence whether you would or wouldn't use dynamic assessment?

P2: What do you mean by that?

SP: I'm trying to think how to ask that it is still open-ended… Uhm, just that within the profession have you had any experiences that would encourage you or discourage you from using dynamic assessment? Uhm…within uh experiences with colleagues, schools…

P2: I think you know when I done my internship at the clinic, there were certain rules and regulations and uh and the old-fashioned psychologists and (laughs) I think that's why I left so early because it was very good experience uhm because you see so interesting cases but uhm but yes but I think I grew up in that old-fashioned uhm perspective of uh

the profession. You know, you have to think you have to do this and this and that (gestured segments, almost a sequence). Uhm, you are not aware of that I am sure. Maybe. I don't hope so. (laughs). But yes, that that and then after that uhm, you know, if one of my colleagues differ from me, uhm I will always uhm I will listen to them, I can learn a lot from other people. We learn a lot from other people but I can take from that situation, I can take only those things that works for me. Uhm, because it should make sense to me, otherwise can't do my job well. But I think that's the only time… If someone differed from me that's fine, it's fine, because we are diff…we have different personalities.

SP: Yes…

P2: Yeah.

SP: So, with the uhm old-fashioned psychology and the rules, I get the impression that that was very structured, almost rigid….

P2: (Interrupting) Mmm!

SP: approach. Is tha…

P2: Mmm, very rigid. Have to write a report like this (gestures to sequence in the air) you know…specific words and (laughs). In those days I didn't think it was funny but now I can laugh about it. And if you don't use those words they mark it with a red pen like when you uh write a essay or a composition at school, you know (laughs).

SP: (laughs) Okay, so it sounds like they were very strict.

P2: And that was a clinical psychologist. Ah. But that's fine. (laughs)

SP: How viable do you think it is for educational psychologists to use dynamic assessment in South Africa?

P2: I think it's important, very important. I don't think we can (pause) we can't use…there's no option. I don't think we don't have option because there are different cultures, so different uhm environments, so different religions, beliefs, you know… Yeah. And you have to accommodate all of them. and this is what a psychologist supposed to do. Doesn't matter where they come from, you have to accommodate them. So, I don't see that we can't use that.

SP: Do you perceive there being any obstacles for psychologists in South Africa that want to use dynamic assessment?

P2: Maybe (laughs).

SP: Are there any that come to mind?

P2: We can do a lot of forensic work… that's why I didn't do forensic work anymore (laughs). Because you have to do certain things but it it's correct because it has to do the law and there are certain rules and uh I think uhm I think uh sometimes it is a challenge for forensic psychologists. Uhm, because they have to follow certain rules. That can be difficult.

SP: And for psychologists in schools or private practice, do you think there are any obstacles for them using dynamic assessment?

P2: You know what, the schools and my colleagues… no, no, no, no. and also with other therapists, like speech therapists and occupational therapists and all the schools that I (sigh) see children, you know… I think… I just explain to them from the beginning 'listen, this…' and this is what I always ask when I see the parents for the first consultation, I say 'listen, what what…' I ask them 'what do you expect from me?' and then I say this is what I can offer you. And you can decide if you feel comfortable with that.

SP: Okay. In your training and the workshops that you've attended, and I realise that once you've gone through your files and answered the questionnaire you might think of something different, but can you recall any trainings that were specifically on dynamic assessment or specifically included information on dynamic assessment? [22:16]

P2: (Pause). You know… yeah, yeah. I can't remember a specific workshop but uhm we uh we are a group of psychologists who uhm once a month we have a forum and for CPD points and uhm uh and uh there we really try to get a different uh psychologist to come and but there was one about dynamic assessment but I can't remember it now. I think it's two years ago. But I have to go through my file. But I think psychologists are very much aware of that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah…

SP: Okay so…

P2: (interrupted) and in your training, just for interest, in your training, how do they feel about dynamic assessment?

SP: It is covered but that's why I'm interested to hear…psychologists that have been practicing…

P2: Hmmm

SP: Because even if you attended a workshop doesn't necessarily mean you use it…

P2: Mmm

SP: But not being exposed to it would…could influence that and you did mention that you do use it and that's why I'm interested to know whether that's out of experience that you

developed techniques for working with your clients or whether it did form part of your training or was because of workshops you attended…

P2: I think… No… Uh I would not say uh it's because of the training or the uhm the workshops… I think it was the environment that I work in at that stage because uhm what I've done when I started private practice, as I say, I worked with people all around from Africa, Europe, Poland, Greek, Italian…doesn't matter. So, to be able to get a uhm a picture of the child's functioning, I combined a lot of tests. The Grover, the Wineland, the Griffiths, the JSAIS uhm for example, you know. So, I would just to be able to see to help me to understand this child and to give feedback and to give information to a school. So, I think it's more because of the environment that I was working in that forced me to do that kind of assessments. Yeah. Yeah. And uhm I think that was what and I think that's why I enjoyed my career up 'til now. Because it's so flexible. You can do that. Maybe the Health Professions Council or maybe PSYSSA won't be so impressed with me but that's fine. (laughs)

SP: It does sound like it was more… you using dynamic assessment was more a result of you adapting to the South African context…

P2: Yeah. That's right. I didn't have a choice. I didn't have a choice. Yeah. Yeah. And that is also why I why I've done my PhD in in in uh in the early identification of neuropsychological learning disabilities. Not because I'm so much into uhm learning disabilities because my training differ so much from what you've done today and uhm but just to understand and to uh use different material to be able to assess a child. Yeah.

SP: (Pause). If you don't mind, I think I'm going to ask if we can stop for today and I am rather going to schedule a follow up with you for when I've gone through this…

P2: No that's fine, that's fine.

APPENDIX E: COLLAGE

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

MEANING

COMPETENCE

MEETING YOU WHERE YOU ARE

DIFFERENCE VS DISORDER

APPENDIX F: REFLECTION BY A PARTICIPANT

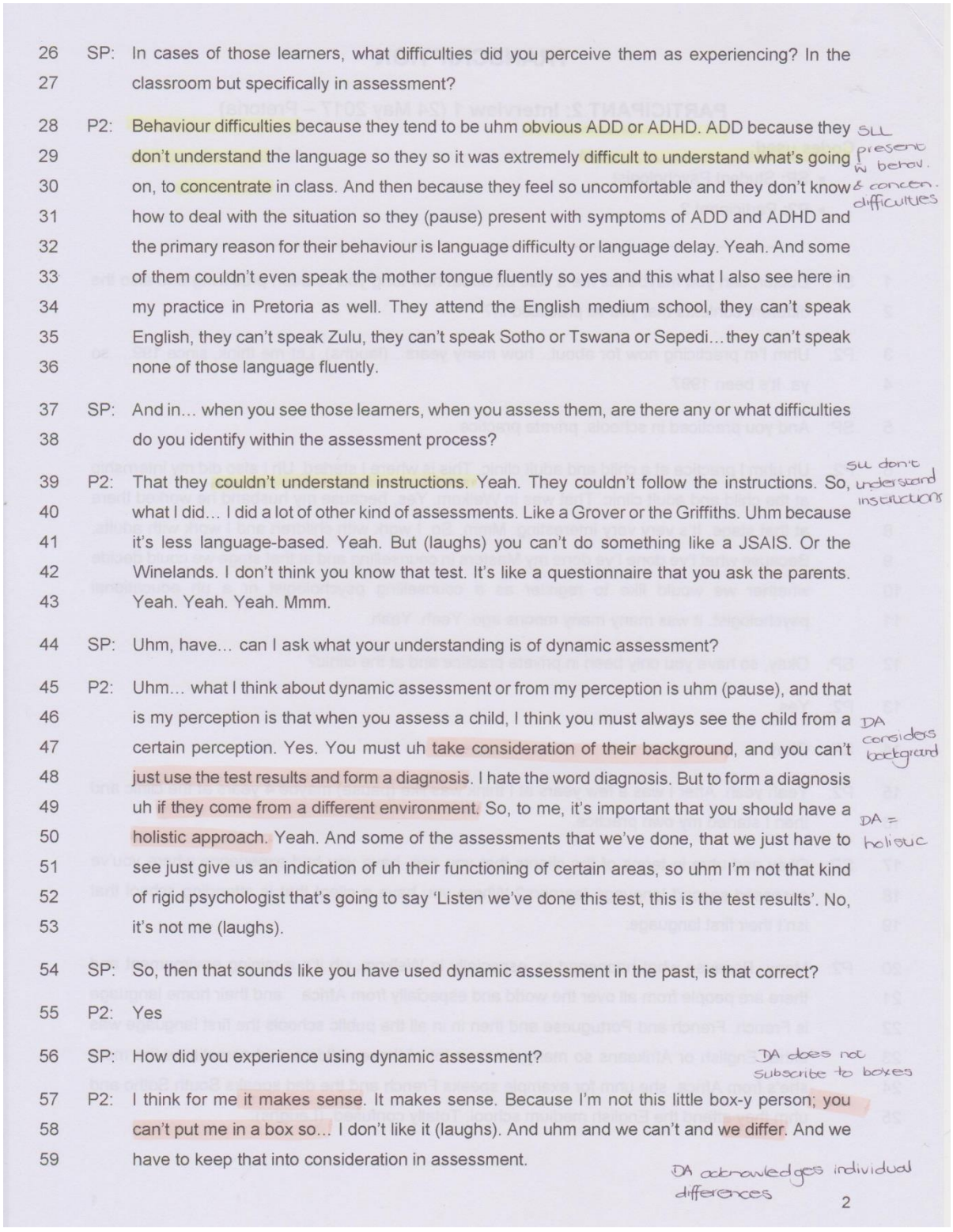
PERCEPTIONS OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENTS

I am an educational psychologist in private practice for 28 years. I have assessed many children from different cultures and backgrounds, who spoken different languages and lacked knowledge of the second language (English). Although all people process information via their five senses, the interpretation, experience and meaning of the same situation and object are different. I am of opinion that we as psychologists cannot use limited standardized measurements to assess people/children from different backgrounds. The reasons for my opinion are as follows:

- They lack knowledge of English – both receptive and expressive language.
- They attend schools which follow more or less the same curriculum, but the application of the curriculum differ from school to school. All the children's grade, level and standard of education differ.
- The children's interpretation, meaning and experiences of symbols, pictures, situations, etc. differ.
- We as psychologists have to have a holistic approached in assessments to understand and support children in an appropriate manner, and to make recommendations which will be meaningful and in the best interest of each one.
- We have to understand and respect their unique way of interpretation and meaning, to get an indication of their level of cognitive, scholastic, emotional and social functioning within the bigger population.

APPENDIX G: EXAMPLES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Example of open coding of transcript of semi-structured interview



SP: In cases of those learners, what difficulties did you perceive them as experiencing? In the classroom but specifically in assessment?

P2: Behaviour difficulties because they tend to be uhm obvious ADD or ADHD. ADD because they don't understand the language so they so it was extremely difficult to understand what's going on, to concentrate in class. And then because they feel so uncomfortable and they don't know how to deal with the situation so they (pause) present with symptoms of ADD and ADHD and the primary reason for their behaviour is language difficulty or language delay. Yeah. And some of them couldn't even speak the mother tongue fluently so yes and this what I also see here in my practice in Pretoria as well. They attend the English medium school, they can't speak English, they can't speak Zulu, they can't speak Sotho or Tswana or Sepedi…they can't speak none of those language fluently.

SLL present w behav. & concen. difficulties

SP: And in… when you see those learners, when you assess them, are there any or what difficulties do you identify within the assessment process?

P2: That they couldn't understand instructions. Yeah. They couldn't follow the instructions. So, what I did… I did a lot of other kind of assessments. Like a Grover or the Griffiths. Uhm because it's less language-based. Yeah. But (laughs) you can't do something like a JSAIS. Or the Winelands. I don't think you know that test. It's like a questionnaire that you ask the parents. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Mmm.

SLL don't understand instructions

SP: Uhm, have… can I ask what your understanding is of dynamic assessment?

P2: Uhm… what I think about dynamic assessment or from my perception is uhm (pause), and that is my perception is that when you assess a child, I think you must always see the child from a certain perception. Yes. You must uh take consideration of their background, and you can't just use the test results and form a diagnosis. I hate the word diagnosis. But to form a diagnosis uh if they come from a different environment. So, to me, it's important that you should have a holistic approach. Yeah. And some of the assessments that we've done, that we just have to see just give us an indication of uh their functioning of certain areas, so uhm I'm not that kind of rigid psychologist that's going to say 'Listen we've done this test, this is the test results'. No, it's not me (laughs).

DA considers background

DA = holistic

SP: So, then that sounds like you have used dynamic assessment in the past, is that correct?

P2: Yes

SP: How did you experience using dynamic assessment?

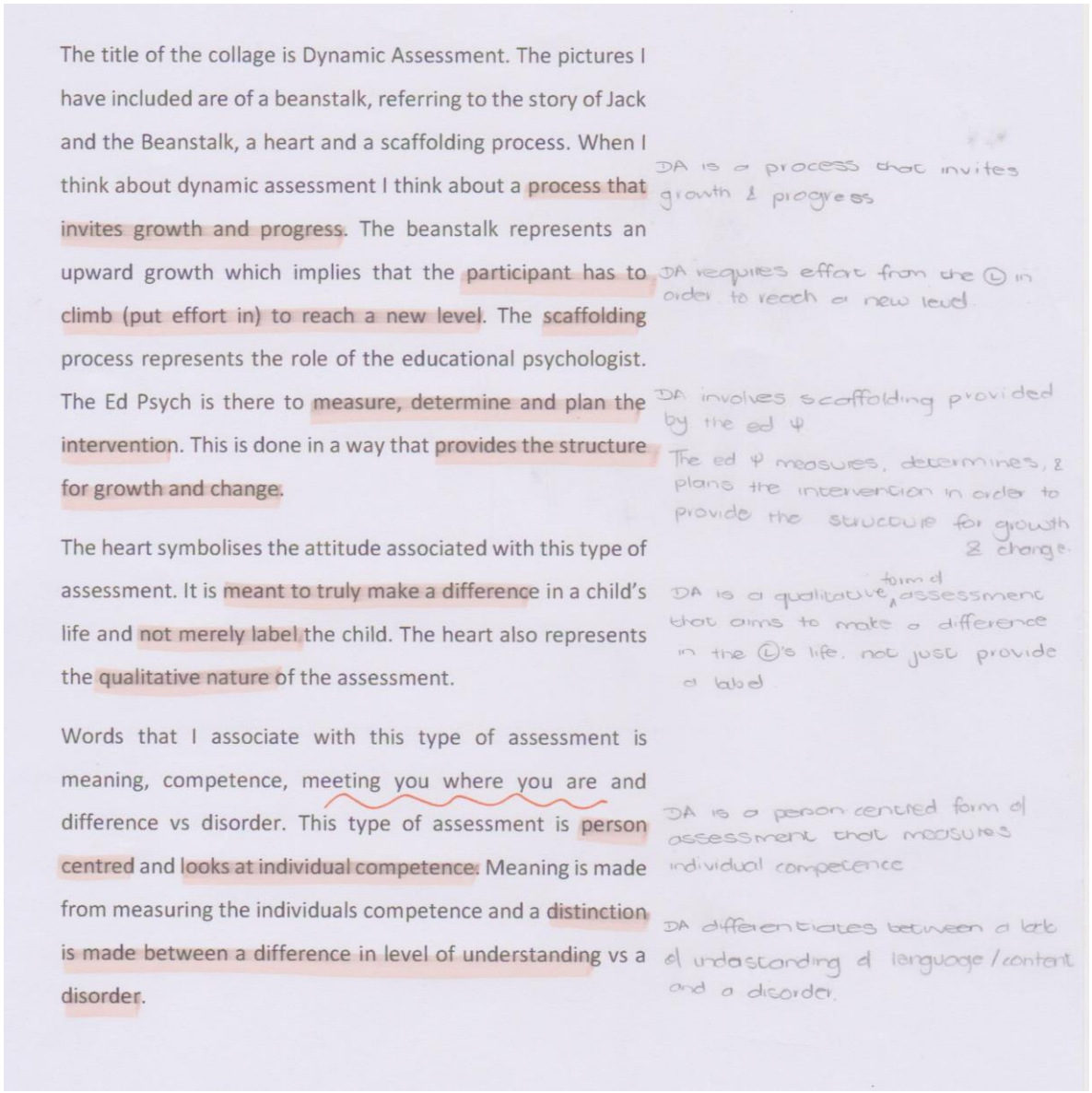
DA does not subscribe to boxes

P2: I think for me it makes sense. It makes sense. Because I'm not this little box-y person; you can't put me in a box so… I don't like it (laughs). And uhm and we can't and we differ. And we have to keep that into consideration in assessment.

DA acknowledges individual differences

2

2. Example of open coding of written reflection on collage



The title of the collage is Dynamic Assessment. The pictures I have included are of a beanstalk, referring to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, a heart and a scaffolding process. When I think about dynamic assessment I think about a process that invites growth and progress. The beanstalk represents an upward growth which implies that the participant has to climb (put effort in) to reach a new level. The scaffolding process represents the role of the educational psychologist. The Ed Psych is there to measure, determine and plan the intervention. This is done in a way that provides the structure for growth and change.

The heart symbolises the attitude associated with this type of assessment. It is meant to truly make a difference in a child's life and not merely label the child. The heart also represents the qualitative nature of the assessment.

Words that I associate with this type of assessment is meaning, competence, meeting you where you are and difference vs disorder. This type of assessment is person centred and looks at individual competence. Meaning is made from measuring the individuals competence and a distinction is made between a difference in level of understanding vs a disorder.

DA is a process that invites growth & progress

DA requires effort from the Ⓛ in order to reach a new level

DA involves scaffolding provided by the ed Ψ

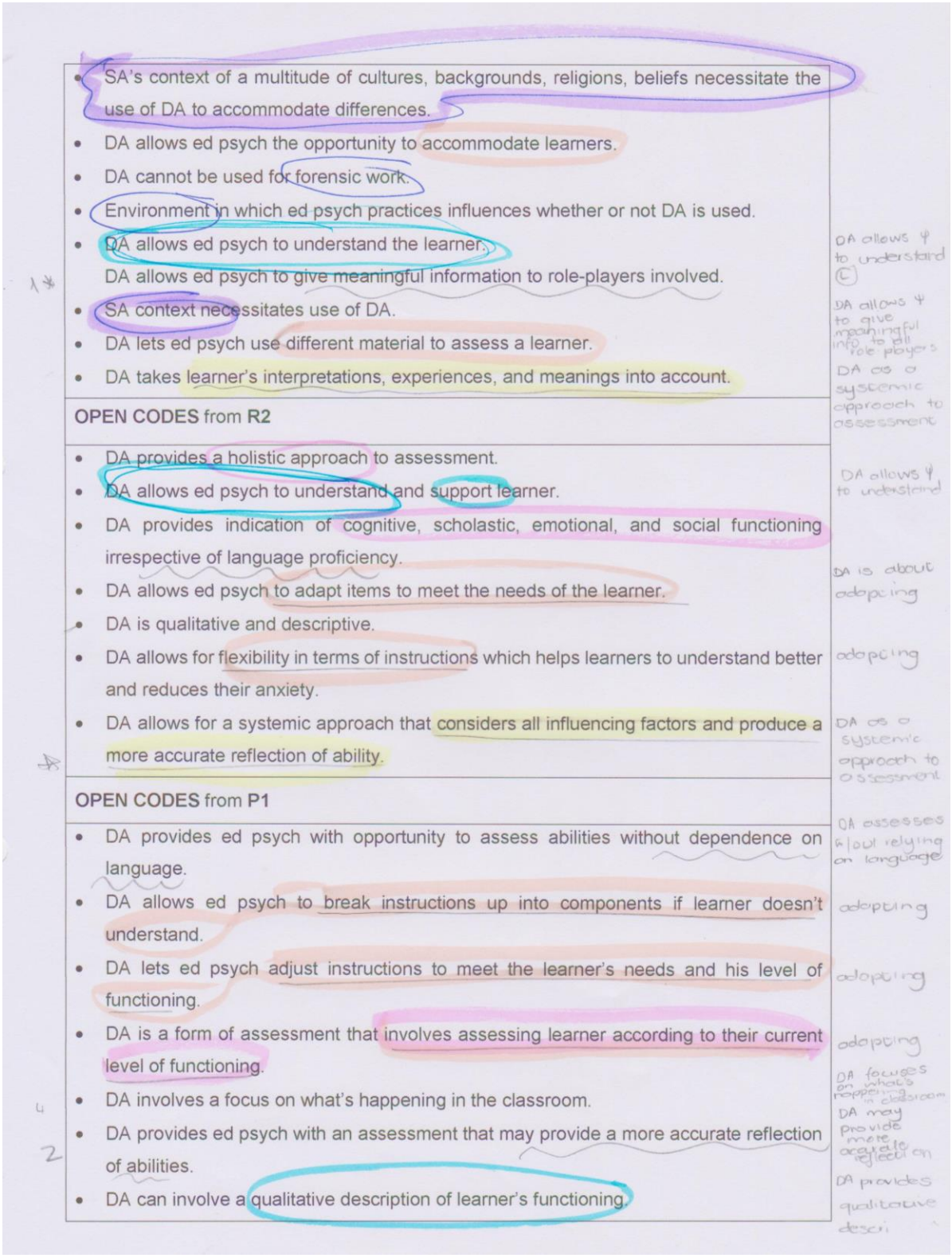
The ed Ψ measures, determines, & plans the intervention in order to provide the structure for growth & change.

DA is a qualitative, informal assessment that aims to make a difference in the Ⓛ's life, not just provide a label

DA is a person centred form of assessment that measures individual competence

DA differentiates between a lack of understanding of language/content and a disorder.

3. Example of open codes developed



- SA's context of a multitude of cultures, backgrounds, religions, beliefs necessitate the use of DA to accommodate differences.
- DA allows ed psych the opportunity to accommodate learners.
- DA cannot be used for forensic work.
- Environment in which ed psych practices influences whether or not DA is used.
- DA allows ed psych to understand the learner.
- DA allows ed psych to give meaningful information to role-players involved.
- SA context necessitates use of DA.
- DA lets ed psych use different material to assess a learner.
- DA takes learner's interpretations, experiences, and meanings into account.

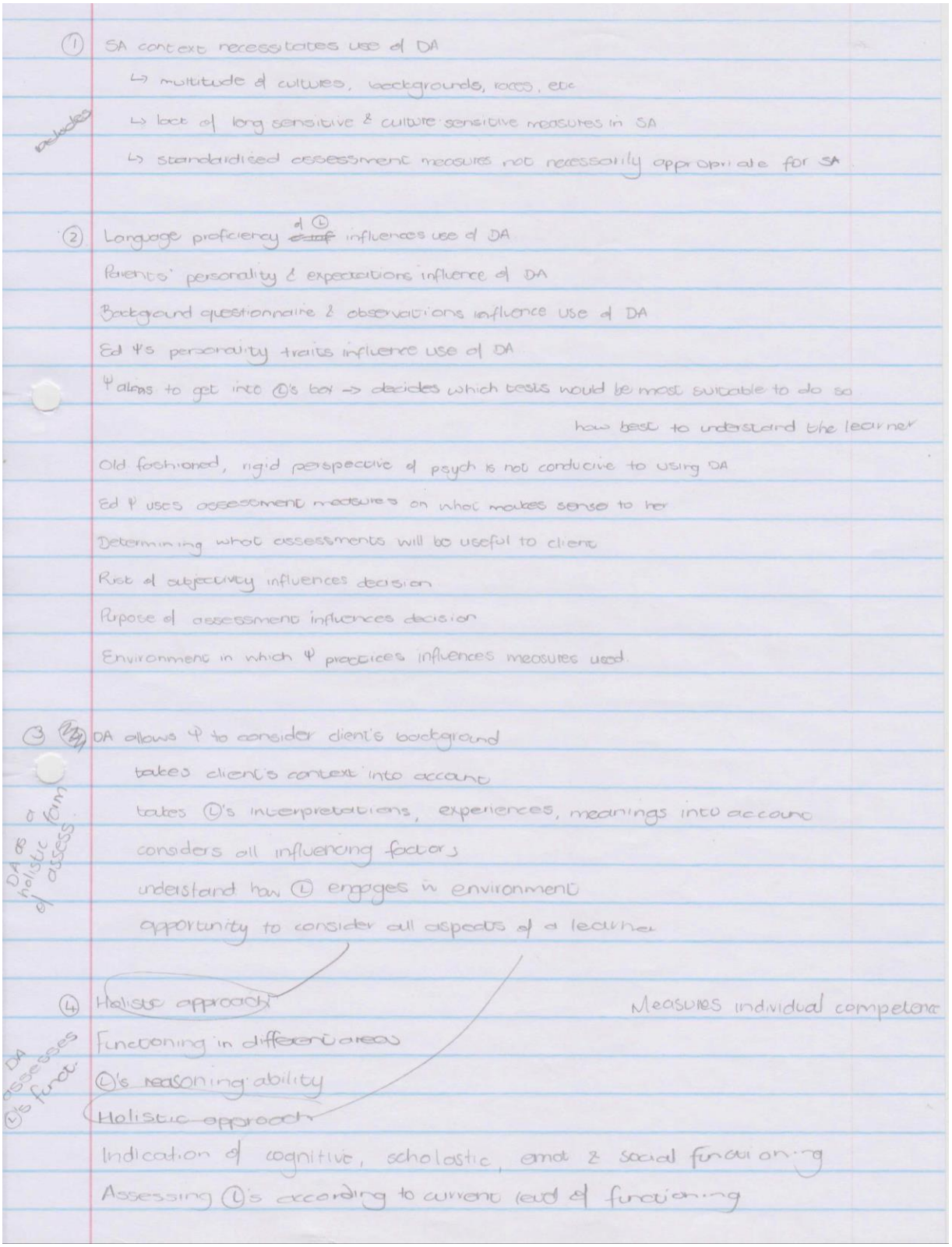
OPEN CODES from **R2**

- DA provides a holistic approach to assessment.
- DA allows ed psych to understand and support learner.
- DA provides indication of cognitive, scholastic, emotional, and social functioning irrespective of language proficiency.
- DA allows ed psych to adapt items to meet the needs of the learner.
- DA is qualitative and descriptive.
- DA allows for flexibility in terms of instructions which helps learners to understand better and reduces their anxiety.
- DA allows for a systemic approach that considers all influencing factors and produce a more accurate reflection of ability.

OPEN CODES from **P1**

- DA provides ed psych with opportunity to assess abilities without dependence on language.
- DA allows ed psych to break instructions up into components if learner doesn't understand.
- DA lets ed psych adjust instructions to meet the learner's needs and his level of functioning.
- DA is a form of assessment that involves assessing learner according to their current level of functioning.
- DA involves a focus on what's happening in the classroom.
- DA provides ed psych with an assessment that may provide a more accurate reflection of abilities.
- DA can involve a qualitative description of learner's functioning.

4. Example of initial grouping of codes to develop themes



5. Final themes from data