



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Introducing learning-oriented assessment principles to a pre- sessional EAP course

Chris Smith
University of Sheffield
Chris.R.Smith@Sheffield.ac.uk
@Chris_Myth



Overview

- Principles of LOA
- The course and assessments
- Writing assignments
- Tutorials
- Course adaptations
- Final marking
- Conclusions



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Learning Oriented Assessment

- Dynamic Assessment
- Learning Oriented Language Assessment
- Learning Oriented Assessment



Definition

“Dynamic assessment (DA) is defined as an interactive alternative type of assessment that integrates assessment and instruction. Its aim is to gauge and advance the learning potential of individual learners and to devise appropriate educational strategies.”

(Anton, 2012, p106)



Definition

“assessment in the dynamic sense involves transformation of... abilities through dialogic collaboration between learners and assessor-teachers, or mediators”

(Poehner, 2007, p324)



How or what?

We also need to focus on the what → Positive washback

“Rather than seeking washback as a sign of test validity, seek validity by design as a likely basis for washback.”

(Messick, 1996)



The Course

- 10-week and 6-week
- Enter course with test scores
- Before: end-of-course exam
- Now: assessments during the course
- BALEAP 'Can do' statements informed the construct



The Assessment tasks

- Extended Writing (reading into writing)
- Seminar (listening into interactive speaking)
- Presentation (reading into speaking)
- Other 'tasks', not part of final grade
- e.g. reading log & diagnostic writing



Reaction

- Generally positive
- “It was much better. I felt that the assessment was an assessment of what we were covering, much more integrated. I felt at peace to be honest because... I felt we were covering the kind of things they might actually have to *do*. It felt like we were teaching them things they needed to be able to do.”
(from focus group)
- Improved teacher motivation



Extended writing

- Discipline specific questions
- Plan
- 2 paragraphs
- 1st draft
- Final draft
- Weekly tutorials responding to feedback for each stage



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Format of writing tasks

- Google Docs
- Live shared docs
- Comment function



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Teacher feedback

Positive points

- Always accessible
- Unlimited space
- Always legible



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Teacher feedback

Negative points

- Takes longer
- Marking on screen “stressful”



Comment function

- Comments
- Questions
- Replies
- Prep for tutorials
- Hindsight: students need training on this



Tutorials

- “I thought the way the tutorials were set up, the times, I thought that worked really well. That this tutorial is for this feedback. That was good.”
- “It was a problem of time constraints, when you’re talking about someone’s writing, there’s so many issues, usually it’s so entangled... the students want to tell you what they were thinking when they did it.”



Student Feedback - Tutorials

Very positive

	Excellent	Good
Tutorials	75.15% 257	22.51% 77

97.66%



Adapting the course

- Yes
- e.g. voice and stance; reporting verbs
- No
- Time
- Materials were fine



Final product / performance

- Different teacher assessed final
- Avoid leniency bias
- But:
- Increased stress
- More difficult to mark
- Other problems



Final product / performance

- “With the essay, it was not [great] because the things I focused on in the class about writing... when another examiner took the papers, they didn’t have the same priorities because the examiner did not know their topics as well as I did... So there was no connection between what we did in the classroom based on their needs and how the examiner marked it.”
- For a learning oriented assessment approach, the tutor should mark the final product, since they have mediated the creation of it.



Conclusions

- End of course assessment
- EAP never an end point
- Looking back or forward?
- Preparing for life beyond the course
- EAP assessment: learning and development



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Introducing learning-oriented assessment principles to a pre- sessional EAP course

Chris Smith
University of Sheffield
Chris.R.Smith@Sheffield.ac.uk
@Chris_Myth



References

- Anton, M (2012). Dynamic Assessment. In Fulcher, G & Davidson, F. (eds) (2012) *The Routledge Handbook of Language Testing*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- BALEAP (ND) Can do framework with sample activities.
<https://www.baleap.org/projects/can-do> DOA: April 2015
- Harlen, W. (2005). Trusting teachers' judgement: Research evidence of the reliability and validity of teachers' assessment used for summative purposes. *Research Papers in Education*, 20(3), 245-270.
- Messick, S. (1996). Validity and washback in language testing. *ETS Research Report Series*, 1996(1), i-18.
- Poehner, M. E. (2007). Beyond the test: L2 dynamic assessment and the transcendence of mediated learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(3), 323-340.