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**Access to Academic Literacy: A Study of the
Economics Language and Communications Tutorial
at University of Cape Town**

by

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**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education**

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

Date

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1. Title:

Access to Academic Literacy: A Study of the Economics Language and Communications Tutorial at University of Cape Town

2. Focal Research Question:

In recent years, many universities have begun to recognize the importance of providing students with some form of access to academic literacy, particularly within the learner's chosen field of study. In order to address these needs at the University of Cape Town, many disciplines now require a first-year course which aims to equip learners with the language and communication skills, which are necessary in order to successfully complete a university degree. Students in the Economics department enroll in a discipline-specific, writing-intensive course which runs throughout the first year of the learners' university experience. The focus of this study is to examine this tutorial in terms of how it meets, or fails to meet, learners' needs in terms of developing appropriate academic writing skills for students pursuing an economics degree.

In order to arrive at some useful findings about the effectiveness of this course, I will focus on the following specific questions. What is the content of the curriculum and how is it presented? Is there evidence, in students' writing for the class, which demonstrates competence in the specific skill areas addressed by the curriculum? Finally, how effective is the assessment tool used in this research and how valid are the results it produces. The answers to these three questions provide the data to answer the major

question. Namely, does the economics language and communication tutorial help students to develop academic literacy within their given field of study? Essentially, I will want to know if there is a correlation between course content and student performance on writing tasks.

3. Rationale:

In South Africa, as well as in many other parts of the world, there has been an increased emphasis on extending access to the university to a broader segment of the population. At the University of Cape Town, efforts have been undertaken within the last decade to admit students on the basis of potential rather than denying entrance based upon inadequate preparation, for which the student bears no responsibility at all. Ideally, then, lecture halls should be filled with bright, eager learners who will quickly adopt the language of the university and thus successfully adapt to an academic environment that may have demands which bear little resemblance to the schools from which they came. In reality, this scenario is at least partially true. There is, very often, a particular eagerness and earnestness which is characteristic of these new learners. However, often desire is not enough and many of these students are unable to transition smoothly to the demanding requirements of university academic life.

For under-prepared students, one of the greatest academic challenges is acquiring the ability to write for academic purposes. Difficulties experienced

with academic writing can stem from many factors including, English as a second language, lack of writing experience in secondary schools, or writing experiences at secondary school which differ from university conventions. Particularly in South Africa's former DET schools, the quality of teaching has frequently been very poor with little or no writing and reading practices. The University of Cape Town has undertaken several initiatives to address these important needs. I plan to systematically examine one such intervention, the Economics 110 Language and Communication tutorial, in an attempt to provide useful information which may to some degree help to inform the evolving and developing curriculum of this course. It is also my hope that some observations in this study would prove to be useful and applicable to other first-year writing-centered courses.

4. Theoretical Framework:

Much of the recent writing in literacy studies has focused on continuing to develop a strong theoretical framework for understanding the sociocultural origins and implications of literacy. The work in this area has profoundly and fundamentally changed the way that many academics now view literacy. We are now beginning to see applications of this theoretical work in educational settings. Particularly in the area of academic writing, these theories have been tested and challenged to explore how they might inform the pedagogy of language instruction. Here, is where my interest and focus lies. What can be learned from the theoretical work of literacy studies that would be useful to the teachers and students of academic writing? What does this work

suggest about the roles of teachers and students? And, how can these ideas be used to give access to the skill of academic writing to a wider range and greater number of learners?

4.1 Academic Writing: What Are We Teaching?

When we teach academic writing, we are teaching a very particular and specialized form of Discourse. Here, I am talking about Discourses in the sense proposed by Gee. "To appreciate language in its social context, we need to focus not on language, but rather on what I will call 'Discourses' (with a capital 'D'). Discourses include much more than language, and in them language has no necessary pride of place" (1990: xv). But what does Gee mean when he says that Discourses include *more* than language? What else *do* Discourses contain? Gee argues that Discourses contain "combinations of sayings-doings-thinkings-feelings-valuing" (1990: xv). According to Gee, these Discourses are "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing" (1990: xix). In other words, Discourses are ways of *being* and in fact, the mastery of a Discourse is the ticket to *belonging*. To belong to the 'rave' community you must master 'rave' Discourse. To belong to the medical community, you must master medical Discourse. Belonging is predicated not just on what you say or do not say, but just as importantly on how you behave, interact, believe, and value. When we teach academic discourse, then, we are teaching a particular way of being and offering the possibility of belonging to the academic

community. To teach academic discourse is, in fact, nothing short of transforming or reshaping the very essence of the identity of the learner.

4.2 Discourse Equality?

At this point, it becomes apparent that teaching academic writing has undeniable moral and ethical implications. All students are *literate* in some form of Discourse but not all Discourses are valued equally. In fact, the common understanding of literacy is strictly limited to school literacy. School literacy and its particular form of Discourse, along with academic literacy and its related Discourse, enjoy a position of privilege and power in most societies. The ethical dilemma faced by teachers of academic writing involves nothing less than the realization that insisting on this form of discourse is indeed prescribing a particular and uniform identity to every student we encounter. The challenge, then, is to find ways to promote the value of academic discourse without devaluing other discourses. In so doing, individuals can share a common discourse, in this case academic discourse, while maintaining unique identities which are the product of the various combinations of discourses that each individual uniquely possesses. The question that still remains is the ethicality of insisting upon academic discourse rather than some other form of discourse or discourses as the ticket to membership in the cultural elite. Membership in this discourse community, of course, buys more than simply prestige. It is, in fact, the key to wealth and power in modern cultures. This, then, is both the bases for the emphasis on academic

discourse as well as the source of the ethical dilemma surrounding its prominence and promotion in all aspects of schooling.

4.3 Inequality of Access

Academic Discourse is what Gee calls a secondary discourse (1990: 137). In other words, no one grows up acquiring precisely this type of discourse in everyday home interactions. It would then seem to follow that all learners are on equal footing in terms of acquiring this type of discourse, which in many ways is equally unfamiliar to all. In reality, this is not at all the case. While no home discourse matches the conventions of academic discourse exactly, some are far more similar to academic discourse than others. It is this gap between the discourses of home and school which is a dominant factor in determining the degree of ease or difficulty that one encounters in accessing school and academic discourses. Gee cites the example of the little black girl and the little white boy who approach the simple exercise of early primary grade sharing time from very different home discourse traditions. (1990: xviii) The little white boy tells his story being careful to include only the facts in a chronological order. The little black girl tells her story in a more lively and entertaining way, which is only loosely based on the actual events. The little white boy's version of story telling is rewarded for its accuracy while the little black girl is admonished for exaggerating and over-dramatizing. Thus, from the beginning, some students are more likely than others to see themselves as members of the school discourse community. This situation is not helped by the fact that many teachers routinely make the assumption that

those students who do not quickly adopt classroom discourse are therefore less intelligent and less likely to succeed in any aspect of educational activity. The acquisition of academic discourse, then, is not equally accessible to all. If equity is our aim, we are left with two choices. We can either recognize the validity and acceptability of a full range of discourses, or we can put our efforts into making academic discourse accessible to as many learners, who want it and need it, as possible.

4.4 Toward A New Ideology or A Better Pedagogy?

It is unlikely that academic institutions will decide to move toward significantly more inclusive models of discourse acceptance. There are, of course, good reasons for this. As Gee argues, academic discourse, like every other discourse, is fundamentally and indivisibly connected to a particular social context and history (1990: 132). Every discourse serves a vital function; it allows the members of a given discourse community to communicate effectively. The discourse community defines what is meant by 'effective communication' and promotes a discourse system that preserves those values. One discourse system may emphasize liveliness and charisma while another, such as academic discourse, is far more concerned with accuracy and efficiency. Academic discourse, because of its specific context, requires a language that is capable of transmitting complex ideas with a high degree of precision. But not all of the rules of this discourse system are invoked purely for the sake of comprehension. Many rules, in fact, serve only as gatekeepers to determine whose knowledge and intellect is validated and whose is not.

While many in the field of academic literacy are aware of these issues, some academics in other fields have given the subject no thought at all. Even the most enlightened, including those in the academic literacy field, have been unwilling to relax the traditional standards and conventions of 'good' academic writing.

4.5 A New Pedagogy

The need, then, is clear. We need a new pedagogy which is significantly informed by many of the theoretical developments in the field of literacy studies. Lea and Street propose three broad areas, which they believe are the primary sources of problems for students of academic writing (1998: 170).

1. "Students lack a basic set of skills that can be dealt with primarily in a remedial study skills or learning support unit" (1998:170).
2. "Student and tutor assumptions and understandings of assignment" (1998: 170).
3. "Institutional level concerns....modularity, assessment and university procedures" (1998: 170).

These issues will serve as a framework for the following discussion surrounding the development of an effective pedagogy aimed at improving access to academic discourse skills.

4.6 Acquiring Academic Discourse Skills and Conventions

For those students who wish to be admitted to the academic community, developing academic discourse skills is essential. Gee argues that “any discourse (primary or secondary) can only be mastered through acquisition, not through learning” (1990: 144). This statement becomes highly relevant when we look carefully at Gee’s definition of ‘acquisition.’

A process of acquiring something (usually subconsciously) by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to function (1990: 138).

If we accept the argument that discourses are better acquired than learned, and that Gee’s definition of ‘acquisition’ is a reasonably accurate one, then much of this information can be usefully applied to help students to master the skills of academic discourse. An academic writing curriculum in Gee’s terms would include a wealth of models and examples, plenty of practice and feedback of academic writing, informal discussions about the meta-processes of writing, and writing practice which serves the needs of the learner. Gee’s definition of ‘acquisition’ alone, gives the instructor of academic writing a wealth of applicable insights to use in the classroom.

In agreement with much of Gee’s work, Taylor argues that a discourse can only be mastered by a gradual process of socialization within a given

discourse community (1988: 14). In other words, a discourse can only be acquired within the social context where it is to be applied. It is only within this context, for example a university, that Gee's models, practice, discussion, and legitimate application can really take place. Taylor outlines four stages of discourse acquisition which are useful as a framework to understand how the skills in a new discourse generally develop. The stages are "initial recognition, familiarization, hesitant command, and eventual fluent command" (1988: 17).

4.7 Academic Discourse(s)

At this point, it is useful to make the point that we must sometimes also speak of academic discourses in the plural. Taylor explains that students must acquire the language (discourse) of the university as well as the dialects (discourses) of various disciplines (1988: 17). This is a source of great confusion, especially for first year university students who may often excel when writing for one subject while failing in another. In many cases, this discrepancy in performance is the result of what Lea and Street call 'course switching' (analogous to the term code switching which frequently occurs in second language acquisition) (1998: 161). Lea and Street found that 'Course switching' occurred even though "students were consciously aware of switching between diverse writing requirements and knew that their task was to unpack what kind of writing any particular assignment might require" (1998: 163). This is not surprising as many first year university students

must simultaneously learn four or five new discourses as a result of registering for courses in four or five different disciplines.

4.8 Teacher and Learner Interaction

The second broad area of concern, in addressing students' problems with academic writing, focuses on the teacher-learner dynamic. The emphasis here is on analyzing what teachers tell or don't tell their students and what students understand their teachers to have said or not said. Some instructors still assume that 'good writing' is an innate ability analogous to intellect or talent. Furthermore, many instructors also fail to acknowledge that the conventions of academic discourse vary considerably from discipline to discipline. Thus, very often, students are expected to become socialized into a particular academic discourse with little or no consideration given to making the basic conventions of the discipline explicit.

The genre approach is one pedagogical development which has focused on making explicit the writing conventions and expectations of various writing tasks. Here, Maybin in Mercer and Swann, argues that "writing is very different from talk, and pupils cannot simply pick up the specialist linguistic structures involved: they need to be taught" (1996: 156). While this approach targets only genre specifically, its ideas can also be applied to teaching the various discourses of each academic discipline. The link between teaching genre and teaching discipline related registers is the notion

that neither can be adequately addressed by some type of universally applied guidelines of 'good' academic writing. Kress explains the relationship between genre and discourse as follows. "Both discourse and genre arise out of the structures and processes of a society: discourses are derived from the larger social institutions within a society; genres are derived from the conventionalized social occasions on and through which social life is carried on" (1989: 17). Students and instructors are helped greatly then by an awareness that both genre and discourse place requirements and limitations on every writing task.

While the conventions of genre can often be made fairly explicit, it is much more difficult to make equally explicit, what Ballard and Clanchy, in Taylor, call, the 'deep rules.' The deep rules are simply those features of a discourse which 'grow out of a set of cultural understandings' (1988: 8). Ballard and Clanchy, in Taylor, explain, "these cultural understandings are rarely addressed in exchanges between academics and their students." They go on to say that students, largely on their own, must "learn to 'read' the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behavior" (1988: 8). I believe this is an area where subject instructors can do more to acculturate students into their respective disciplines. Students should be using learning materials that learners and instructors can examine together and which would be used to model the types of writing which the discipline will require. Clanchy and Ballard, in Taylor, make their point powerfully and succinctly, "making the intellectual culture explicit for new

learners is the best way of helping them effect a successful integration into it” (1988: 13).

4.9 Writing Assessment and Feedback

Even when the conventions and deep rules of a given discourse are made as explicit as possible, instructors are likely to find that students need plenty of practice in order to gain some degree of proficiency with the discourse. The student apprentice writer is, ideally, given meaningful feedback from the instructor. Ballard and Clanchy, in Taylor, explain, “there is one context, of course, in which academics do provide written advice about the cultural rules and conventions by which they expect their students to behave: comments in the margins of essays. Instruction of this kind is rarely systematic...but this is sometimes the only guidance students receive” (1988: 8).

Although instructors often put a great deal of time and effort into assessing and commenting on students’ written assignments, there is still a strong tendency (perhaps as a convention of academic writing assessment discourse) on the part of instructors to write remarks in a tone that Ballard and Clanchy describe as ‘a mixture of exasperation and indignation’ (1988: 11). Increasingly, Lea and Street explain, educators are learning to soften what they call “categorical modality, using imperatives and assertions, with little mitigation or qualification” (1998: 169). Phrases like ‘in my opinion’, ‘have you thought about’, ‘is there a link with other comments here’, and ‘you might

want to consider' are finding their way into teacher assessment discourse (1998: 169). For students, who are after all only practicing or apprenticing in the craft of academic writing, these types of phrases are likely to signal a welcome change in teacher-learner interaction.

Since instructor comments on students' writing assignments do very often represent the only individualized feedback that learners receive, it follows that these comments should be made clearly and accurately. The difficulty for students and instructors, in this regard, is that the very language of assessment itself is frequently vague and incomprehensible. Lea and Street argue that basic words like 'argument', 'structure', and 'plagiarism' have multiple and contested meanings. For example, a student may very likely be expected to use one type of argument for a Chemistry assignment but quite another type of argument in Philosophy or Theology. Lea and Street explain that instructors "were able to identify when a student had been successful, but could not describe how a particular piece of writing lacked structure" (1998: 162). Similarly, instructors had very clear ideas about what they understood surrounding the meaning of plagiarism, but they often failed to adequately explain these ideas to students (1998: 167).

4.10 The Institution and The Learner

A third broad area, which is a primary source of problems for students of academic writing, is institutional level concerns. Here, I will limit my comments to two brief points. First, there is a need for inter-departmental

discussions concerning the discourse conventions of the given discipline. Far too often, Lea and Street argue, conflicting expectations occur even within the same discipline at the same university (1998: 164). University departments need to have serious organized discussions about issues of writing such as the use of first person or the explicitness of structure.

Secondly, universities should consider broad based scheduling changes that could maximize the effectiveness of subject instructors' efforts to teach academic writing. Lea and Street describe a scenario, which is certainly familiar to most students. "In many instances students did not receive feedback on assessed written work until they had completed their studies for this module. Inevitably, students found that they were unable to benefit from receiving feedback in this manner" (1998: 169). Frequently, the most important writing assignments come at the end of a particular course and are only marked and graded after students have left the university for vacation. Universities could institute policies that require written assignments to be submitted two weeks before the end of term and returned to students, for example, on the date of the final exam. Alternatively or additionally, universities could schedule dates, at the beginning of the following term, to return and discuss marked papers from the previous term. Clearly, universities have an opportunity to eliminate wasted efforts of student writing and instructor assessment which may fail to meet the intended educational objectives when students are denied the opportunity to learn from their results.

4.11 A Prognosis: Can Writing Teachers Help?

Can teachers of academic writing help learners to master these very specific types of discourse? And if so, how? If we look to Gee for answers, the outlook is rather bleak. Gee asks, "what can composition, ESL, and content teachers ...do?" (1990: 146). She offers only two answers. First, Gee suggests "classrooms must constitute active apprenticeships in academic social practices and, in most cases, must connect with...practices as they are also carried on outside the composition or language class, elsewhere in the institution." This recommendation is similar to another, Taylor's, which we have already addressed. Gee's only other recommendation, particularly for those admitted to academic discourse 'late in the game,' is to use coping-strategies he refers to as 'mushfake' (1990: 147). Here, Gee is simply suggesting that those who struggle with academic discourse must master other skills or coping-strategies to obscure what others may see as an academic deficit.

Fortunately for teachers of academic writing, not all educational theorists share Gee's rather gloomy outlook. Delpit, for example, while in agreement with many of Gee's findings, makes two strong criticisms which largely dispel the sources of Gee's negative prognosis. First, she rejects "Gee's notion that people who have not been born into dominant discourses will find it

exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to acquire such a discourse" (1995: 154). Delpit believes that Gee's argument suggests a 'dangerous kind of determinism' which can lead to teachers feeling 'powerless to effect change' (1995: 154). Secondly, Delpit rejects "Gee's argument that a person born into one discourse with one set of values may experience major conflicts when attempting to acquire another discourse with another set of values" (1995: 154). An over emphasis of this view can only lead to teacher paralysis in order to prevent unintentional, nevertheless morally questionable, assaults to students' personal identities.

Delpit counters Gee's assertions with evidence from case studies of her own (1995: 156-7). She recounts the stories of several African American associates who, in spite of not being born into a dominant discourse community, managed to successfully learn the powerful discourses of commerce and academia. These successful individuals did not simply acquire the discourses through assimilation. They were, in fact, helped by teachers who "successfully taught what Gee calls the 'superficial features' of middle-class discourse - grammar, style, mechanics - features that Gee claims are particularly resistant to classroom instruction. And the students successfully learned them" (1995: 157). Delpit goes on to paint an inspirational picture of students who, along with the help of dedicated teachers, have managed to beat the odds against them. To dismiss such a notion as romantic or cliched would, however, be faulty. I believe that Gee accurately assesses the

obstacles that stand in the way of acquiring a secondary discourse. I also believe that these obstacles, as Delpit suggests, can, to a great extent, be overcome. Teachers must know the challenges that students face as well as the strategies which can be used to effectively overcome them.

4.12 Improvement: Better writers?

The purpose of this study is to look at one example of a particular writing course within a particular context which attempts to help students to improve their academic writing skills. However, this type of exploration is by no means unique. As more and more tertiary institutions face the challenge of meeting the needs of under-prepared entrants, first-year writing courses have been under great pressure to offer quick, simple solutions to these students' writing difficulties. In many cases, the future of these 'bridging' courses depends upon the facilitator's ability to demonstrate the success and effectiveness of these courses. Much of the research, then, is, at least to some extent, designed to show results which are in line with funders' and supervisors' goals and expectations. Findings which are both generalizable and reliable are rare. Nevertheless, I do believe that most of these studies do reflect a sincere motivation to fairly assess and, where possible, inform and improve the current writing curriculum.

4.12.1 Empirical studies

Several large-scale empirical studies have been produced in an attempt to make some generalized observations and recommendations about the

teaching of academic writing. The two studies I will describe here are the Kitzhaber study and the Bay Area Writing Project study. In both cases, the findings are remarkably inconclusive and offer little guidance to those looking for a proven pedagogy to help students develop the skill of academic writing.

The 1963 Kitzhaber study, one of the earliest attempts at systematic research of college writing courses, was an impressively ambitious work. The study examined the syllabi of writing courses from 95 different universities and made extensive case-study visits to eighteen of the universities (White, 1989:19). Kitzhaber suggested that there were essentially two basic approaches to the teaching of these writing courses. First, he identified some courses as 'those designed to remedy the ill-prepared entering freshman, thus providing a service to the students and for the faculty in other departments by teaching these students to write with reasonable ease, precision, and correctness' (White, 1989:18). Other courses were identified as those which were more 'concerned with cognitive development rather than correctness' (White 1989:18). Here, Kitzhaber explains the courses are designed 'to focus the student's attention on fundamental principles of clear thinking and the clear and effective written expression of that thinking, and to give him disciplined practice in the principles' (1963:3). Regardless of which approach universities employed, the findings of Kitzhaber's research were the same. Namely, not a single one of the universities produced empirical data which was able to demonstrate an improvement in student writing as a result of the writing coursework. For example, one method Kitzhaber used at Dartmouth

was an elaborate error counting design to assess student writing. The findings from this empirical data showed that freshman writers performed better than their senior counterparts (White, 1989:19). Of course, counting errors alone does not prove that there has not been an improvement in these students' writing. Frequently, a greater number of errors were recorded because writing tasks became increasingly lengthy and more complex. Thus, in spite of the detailed and careful collection of data in this study, the findings which were solely based on empirical data, proved unreliable and inconclusive.

Another well-known study, The Carnegie Foundation Evaluation of the Bay Area Writing Project, was headed by Michael Scriven. White reports that out of all the quantitative data produced by the 32 Carnegie Foundation funded reports, not a single report was able to produce direct cause and effect statistics to prove that student writing had improved as a result of the instruction which these college students had received (1994). In fact, Paxton and others point out that 'there is as yet no research design that has demonstrated that writing instruction actually improves student writing' (Paxton, 1994; White, 1994; Knoblauch and Brannon, 1984). Here, it is important to note that Paxton is not saying that it is impossible for writing instruction to produce improvement for many students. She is stating that although educators see student improvements every day, thus far, researchers have failed to produce research designs which are able to prove that such improvements do in fact occur.

4.13 Conclusion

Teachers of academic writing must accommodate learners who bring a wide range of discourse traditions into the classroom. Many students will not be able to bridge the gap between home and academic discourses easily. The challenge to writing teachers is to create ways to open access to academic writing skills to all learners. The theoretical work of Gee, Kress, Lea and Street, as well as others, provides useful insights which teachers can apply in the classroom setting. Specifically, teachers must help students to develop a basic set of academic discourse skills, instructors must make the conventions of particular subjects and genres explicit, and institutions must be organized in ways that are intended to maximize learning. Finally, the obstacles to discourse acquisition uncovered by theoretical findings should not be regarded as negatively deterministic. Rather, they should be regarded as illuminations of important issues which educators should continue to address.

5. Research Design:

In order to answer my research question, I have gathered as much information as possible about what was taught in the tutorial, how much of this content students understood and were able to apply to their own writing, and how students themselves expressed their feelings about their own development as writers. These three areas of inquiry, then, produced the

data which was systematically analyzed to make some observations concerning the tutorial's successes and failures in meeting learners' needs.

5.1 Course content

The first set of data to be collected includes information about both what is taught in the tutorial and, to some degree, how it is taught. As a tutor on this course, I have a first-hand, detailed knowledge of the content and teaching methods used in the tutorials. This of course presents both an advantage; my ability to observe the tutorial as an active participant, and a disadvantage; the possibility that my views may be biased to some extent. Obviously, every effort will be made to remain objective. As this will be my first year tutoring on this component of the economics course, I feel no attachment to its content or methods which are largely prescribed by the course convenor. I will also balance my own observations about tutorial content by interviewing students to gain the perspective of the learners' point of view.

In an attempt to gather as much as possible about what is being taught in the tutorial, I have retained copies of all lesson plans and materials. Furthermore, careful notes concerning the implementation or modification of plans have been recorded after each session. I will specifically be looking at the first eight sessions of the course which meets weekly for two hours. From this wealth of data, then, I have clustered the course content into six major areas of instruction. The six major instructional objectives appear in subsections 5.1.1 to 5.1.6 to follow

5.1.1 Text comprehension and analysis

Many students have great difficulty dealing with the variety of texts with which they are faced at the university level. Our objective here was to give learners strategies to help them digest complex materials by identifying major arguments and the supporting evidence surrounding them. Textbook layout was also discussed to help students to get the most benefit out of its useful organizational features.

Text comprehension and analysis was specifically discussed and practiced in the first two meetings of the tutorial. During the first session, students were asked to read a textbook definition and discussion of the concepts of scarcity, choice, and opportunity costs. After the reading, each student composed a definition for opportunity costs in her or his own words. Next, each student was given an extract of an autobiography which contained an example of an opportunity cost and asked to identify the nature of the opportunity cost or costs in the author's life. Here, students needed to understand the textbook definition well enough to apply it in a different context. This entire exercise required students to work with several texts on both comprehension and analytical levels.

The second session looked specifically at the textbooks students were using in the course. Here, the goal was to teach students to make use of the text's helpful organizational features. After these features were discussed, students wrote summaries of a two-page extract of the text. Students were required to include all major points along with supporting information. The summary was not to exceed one hand written page.

5.1.2 Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline

The objective here was to sensitize students to the variety of writing features and conventions which characterize various written genres. Specifically, we wanted students to recognize, and to some extent, be able to imitate the academic style of writing used in the field of economics.

This skill was covered in the first, third, and fourth sessions of the tutorial. In the first session, the emphasis was placed on the proper handling of technical definitions. Here, students were encouraged to recognize the distinction between popular and technical definitions of words used in specific ways within a given discipline. In the third session, students were given the opportunity to practice identifying, using, and 'translating' economics discourse. To start the session, a group of extracts from various texts was given to each student. Students were asked to identify probable sources for these texts (newspaper, textbook, political speech, advertisement, etc.). Learners were exposed to different written genres in the hope that they

would recognize that each has its own very specific style and requirements of acceptability. After this exercise, students worked with a list of sentences and were asked to translate economic language into layman's terms and also translate layman's language into proper economic discourse. The fourth session focused specifically on developing a clear understanding of one key economic term, GDP or gross domestic product. Here, students carefully discussed and debated what types of production would or would not be included in official GDP figures.

5.1.3 Task analysis of essay questions

This important component of the tutorial focused on giving learners strategies to identify the key components and requirements of complex essay questions. Very often, as educators are well aware, students need instruction to learn ways to avoid answering a different question than the one being asked.

Task analysis was specifically addressed in three of the sessions. Of course, students also practiced this skill every time they were given something to write for class. During the third class meeting, students were asked to respond to a multi-part question concerning Adam Smith's description of the free market. Before students responded, they were encouraged to discuss and list ways in which they both agreed and disagreed with Smith's statement. This was the only prompt given to help students get started. During the fourth week, these essays were returned with detailed comments from the instructor. Many of these comments focused on helping the

students to recognize the need for careful task analysis. After students received these marked but ungraded papers, the class discussed possible ways to answer the question in order to adequately address each part of the writing task. Finally, students were then given the opportunity to re-write these essays which would be graded for the next class meeting.

Task analysis was revisited again in week eight when the class turned to the important work of preparing to write the 1,000 word take home essay. Here, one of the most important objectives was to make sure that each student understood all of the requirements of this complex writing task. For this purpose, the class organized into groups of five to plan and present an organizational structure for this essay. Some groups used bullet points or outline form while others used various forms of diagramming. While the primary objective of this exercise was to help students develop an organizational framework for their writing, it also provided an opportunity to reinforce the necessity of addressing all parts of the question. Here, it was also possible to point out to students areas of content that they may have wished to include but which were not relevant to the requirements of the writing task.

5.1.4 Macro organization and structural strategies for writing essays

The emphasis here focused on exploring various strategies for organizing the content of the essay in a logical, structured way. Ideas for writing effective

introductions and conclusions were discussed along with strategies for organizing the information within the body of the paper.

Organizational strategies for essay writing were not addressed until the fourth meeting of the tutorial. It is interesting to note here that students had already, prior to this instruction, been asked to produce two pieces of in-class writing. In the case of both of these writing exercises, students did receive feedback in regard to the organization of their essays. By the time this issue was addressed in week four, many students were eager for some kind of assistance to help them to improve their writing marks. With an opportunity to re-write the essay from the third week of the tutorial, most students were anxious to learn some strategies which might help them to organize their information for the essay in a more clear and logical way.

Every effort was made to fully exploit the learners' need to improve the organization of their essays in order to achieve higher essay marks after producing a re-write of the essay later in the fourth tutorial. In order to maintain student interest and involvement in this problem solving exercise, the class was arranged into groups of four to discuss and create a plan for the organization of the essay. Each group created an overhead transparency, which they then used to present their essay plan to the rest of the class. With six groups presenting, the plans varied widely. After each group presented, others in the class, including the instructor, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each group's essay plan. This exercise was

useful as a means of providing every student with a variety of effective essay organizational methods and plans. Of course, it was also useful as a tool to point out strategies which may not be effective.

Many of the organizational strategies for essay writing covered in week four of the tutorial were revisited in the seventh session. Here, common methods for essay planning were reviewed. Here, reference was made to the take home writing task that would be due for submission in just a few weeks. Students were encouraged, particularly, to explore the way that the writing task itself often provides clues to help students plan and organize their essay in a way that is clear, logical, and meets the requirements of the writing assignment.

5.1.5 Constructing logical arguments with adequate evidence

The objective of this component is to help learners to develop the skill of using information from readings and, in some cases, their own personal experience to develop strong arguments supported by adequate evidence. There is also an emphasis here on using transitions or linking to help readers to follow the student's line of argument and reasoning more easily.

During the fifth tutorial, most of the class time was spent exploring the important relationship between argument and evidence. Here, an in depth analysis of what kinds of production are included in Gross Domestic Product figures was the springboard for developing stronger argument skills. In this

tutorial exercise, students were given seven different examples of types of production and asked to defend why this economic activity would or would not be included in GDP figures. The key here was to refer to readings and to clearly state reasons for each answer. Students worked in small groups on this exercise before being asked to defend their answers in a discussion including the rest of the class.

Argument and evidence were covered again in week six using a much different approach. In this tutorial, students worked independently in the computer lab on a computer-based tutorial, which required students to go through the process of establishing and defending a particular position. Here, students were asked to take both sides of the argument in turn and to defend their position with relevant evidence. The computer-based tutorial was useful as an engaging tool to take students through the entire process of argumentation in a setting that provided immediate feedback to each of the students in terms of the strength of their arguments.

5.1.6 Referencing conventions and requirements

The importance of when, how and why to reference was presented. Learners were taught the basics of the Harvard system and how to apply it in their own essay writing. Proper bibliography presentation was covered as well.

Referencing was first covered in the sixth week of the tutorial. Students worked on a computer based interactive learning program which taught them why referencing needed to be used, when it should be used, and how to apply the Harvard citation and bibliography system. Each student worked independently to complete the computer tutorial. Thus, learners were able to work at their own pace and spend time on sections of the program where they felt they needed the most instruction. In the seventh week of the tutorial, students were asked to make corrections on citations and the bibliography of a pre-written essay containing many errors. During this session, learners were also given a style sheet which outlined the basics of the Harvard system.

5.2 Student writing

A second major source of data comes from the students' writing. For this study, I will look at four pieces of student writing for each of the 12 learners in the tutorial. The primary piece of writing I will analyze is a 1,000-word essay which was written out-of-class and due in the 10th week of the first term. The other three pieces of student writing are of the in-class variety. These in-class essays are valuable as evidence of each student's development or lack of development as writers leading up to the larger take home assignment. The in-class writing, it should be noted, was not primarily intended as an assessment tool but rather was initiated as an integral part of the instruction learners received. However, all four pieces of writing were set for marks and thus, I believe, represent the students' best efforts.

5.2.1 In-class writing

The first in-class writing assignment was relatively non-technical and allowed students to draw upon personal experience. The essay focused on two basic economics concepts; scarcity of resources and opportunity cost. Students were asked to write about an important decision that they had had to make and discuss the choice that they made along with its associated opportunity cost. This was written at the first meeting of the tutorial and aside from discussing a few examples of this scenario, no help was given to assist students in the production of the written essay. As such, this piece of writing serves as a reasonably accurate base line of students' writing abilities at the start of the semester.

The second in-class writing sample was more technical in nature and required students to draw upon several readings. The following question was discussed and then set for students to respond to in essay form:

Adam Smith claimed that the market mechanism works like an invisible hand which coordinates the selfish action of individuals to ensure that everyone is better off. Do you agree or disagree that the market system works like an invisible hand to ensure that everyone is better off?

Students were encouraged to struggle with the question and then write their answers in essay form as clearly as possible.

The third in-class writing was an opportunity to re-write the second essay after each student had her or his paper returned with extensive feedback. Students asked questions about feedback and some suggestions for improvement were made to the class as a whole. In particular, the class arrived at some strategies to break the question into several parts which could then become the basis for the structure of the body of the essay. This essay is particularly interesting as it directly demonstrates some of the strengths and limitations of tutor feedback on students' written assignments.

5.2.2 Take-home essay

The longer take-home essay was a lengthy multi-part question which required students to draw upon lectures, class readings, additional individual research readings, and some personal background information. The question was relevant to students in South Africa but was also fairly complex and challenging. The question was set as follows:

Every country has an economic system that enables it to respond to the fundamental economic problem. Economists have identified the command and market systems as two important theoretical constructs; these can be used to analyze the economic system of any given economy or society. These constructs also provide a useful

framework by which to identify those economies that are in transition; i.e. the so-called transition economies.

Discuss the chief characteristics of these two systems. Identify those aspects of the South African economy of the apartheid years that you believe were characteristic of a command economy. From the readings you have done, would you say that the South African economy has undergone a transition since 1990? Provide examples where relevant to illustrate and support your argument.

5.2.3 Evaluation of take-home essay

For the purpose of this study, this essay is intended to act as the primary means of assessing the development of students' writing as it relates to the course content. Both an external examiner and I evaluated each of the twelve 1,000-word essays. The external examiner was a qualified individual not associated with the economics department or the language and communication tutorial. Both evaluators assessed the essays in terms of the following six criteria:

1. Text comprehension and analysis.
2. Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline.
3. Task analysis of essay questions.
4. Macro organization and structural strategies for writing essays.
5. Constructing logical arguments with adequate evidence.

6. Referencing conventions and requirements.

For the purpose of this study, these six criteria are relevant only in so much as they relate to the tutorial's content. Thus, it was essential for both evaluators to reach a mutual understanding of a precise definition for each criterion. Initially, it was difficult for both evaluators to reach a consensus concerning these definitions. In order to facilitate this process, we decided to run a pilot assessment of five essays using the six criteria simply as they appear above. After independently applying these loosely constructed definitions to five essays, we came together to discuss the results. Not surprisingly, based on these loosely constructed definitions, our scores varied widely. Only after careful discussion and debate were we able to reach an agreement about exactly what issues each criterion should or should not attempt to measure. Here, it was particularly important to emphasize those aspects of each criterion which seemed to relate to the instructional objectives of the tutorial.

After the definition for each criterion was clarified, a second pilot was run with another set of five essays. In this second pilot, the scores of both examiners matched one another much more closely. Certainly, the objective here was not to have both assessors produce exactly the same scores. However, it was important for each examiner to make an assessment based upon a similar understanding of each of the criteria. The pilot studies helped us to develop and refine an essay assessment sheet which both examiners used to assign

scores and add written comments. A copy of this assessment tool is included in Appendix C.

Returning to the six major criteria, each essay received a score from one to five for each of these factors. Both evaluators assigned these six scores for every essay. This numeric data was then used to create a database which generated average performance levels for each of the major criteria. The purpose of this data, then, is not to draw conclusions or arrive at findings. Rather, the numeric data is simply intended to act as a tool to highlight major trends and generalizations about learners' development as writers in light of course content. How this data will be analyzed in order to produce reliable findings is a subject which will be dealt with in the section of this dissertation entitled, Analysis of Data.

5.2.4 Essay evaluators

Since I played the roles of teacher, essay marker, and researcher, I felt that it was most important to include a second essay evaluator. This second reader was essential in this research for several reasons. First, I worried about bias in this research as the result of my prior experience with these students. Secondly, I also worried about bias based on the fact that to some degree I was evaluating the effectiveness of my own teaching. In this regard, the research contained some aspects of action research. Finally, I was also aware of the potential for me, as an American conducting this research in South Africa, to misinterpret some aspects of the cultural context incorrectly.

For this reason, I asked Ms. Hutchings to act as a second evaluator of the student essays and an important objective reader of this research. She has worked in the Learning Development unit at UCT for more than seven years. Her leadership and dedication in the UCT Writing Center made her an ideal person to fill the role of second evaluator. Ms. Hutchings' expertise as an assessor of student writing along with her years of experience in the South African academic context, made her input an essential part of this research.

As teacher, evaluator, and researcher my role in this research was a difficult one. As a teacher, I attempted to fulfill my responsibilities in the same manner as I would when not under the microscope of research. My usual style is dynamic in the classroom and caring with individuals. I enjoy both lecturing and working with students on an individual basis. (See Appendix A for an evaluation of my teaching practices from the principal of the school where I taught before coming to South Africa.) Teaching in the South African context did, however, pose some unique challenges. I felt particularly unaware of how the tutorial fitted into these students' university experience as a whole. In some instances, I also felt poorly equipped to lead discussions which focused on South African political and social issues. As I met other tutors teaching in the program, I came to believe that I was probably average in terms of the instruction I provided. Most tutors had more experience with the tutorial, some were more immersed in economics, and all had more experience in the South African context than I. Still, I felt that my strengths

and experiences as a teacher were for the most part able to overcome any of these potential weaknesses. In other words, I believe that students in my tutorial were exposed to instruction that was quite close in terms of quality and effectiveness to the instruction offered by other tutors in the program.

5.3 Student interviews

The third set of data to be collected was student interviews. These interviews were conducted and audio recorded near the beginning and again at the end of the course, on a voluntary basis. I completed interviews with twelve of the twenty-three students in the study. The interviews were intended to yield three major types of information. First, I was interested in knowing something about these learners' experience as writers before coming to university. Secondly, I also hoped to discover students' attitudes toward writing and specifically toward the tutorial itself. Finally, at the end of the course, I wanted to know how each student feels she or he has developed as a writer. This information, as we shall see in the next section, was valuable in terms of providing a context within which to analyze the numeric data. The question guide I used for these interviews can be found in Appendix B.

5.4 Sample selection

All of the data for this study was collected from twelve of the twenty-three students in my tutorial. These twelve students were selected on the basis of their willingness to take part in an interview and participate in this study. This sample size, I believe, is large enough to generate some generalized findings

while remaining a manageable size for allowing closer scrutiny of these findings to better determine their reliability. I also felt that I wanted this study to be marked by in-depth analysis of many variables rather than limiting it to a purely empirical study which could only produce very specific observations about what was, or was not, learned without exploring the why of the question. For these reasons, the 12 volunteers seemed a very suitable sample for my study.

The 12 students who volunteered for this research were fairly representative of my particular tutorial section. These students reflected the diverse gender, racial and educational backgrounds of my tutorial group as a whole. (See Table 2, Section 6.1)

A broad range of academic achievement was also represented in my research volunteers. Class rankings for the economics course ranged from 11th to 82nd out of an entire class of 163. Thus, since none of my students fell into the lower half of the class ranking, this group could not be used to reflect the economics population as a whole. However, all of the students in my tutorial fell between the rankings of 11th and 82nd which suggests that this research sample may be useful in terms of commenting on the performance and the success of my particular section of the tutorial.

Based on this sample selection, as well as this researcher's lack of knowledge about the actual teaching in other tutorials, this study cannot produce

generalizable findings concerning the Language and Communications tutorial in its entirety. Rather, findings and conclusions must be limited to observations of the acquisition of discrete skills by individual learners within my particular tutorial group.

6. Analysis of Data:

At the core of my study was the analysis of the following six major instructional objectives and the extent to which students were able to apply them to their own writing.

1. Text comprehension and analysis.
2. Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline.
3. Task analysis of essay questions.
4. Macro organization and structural strategies for writing essays.
5. Constructing logical arguments with adequate evidence.
6. Referencing conventions and requirements.

Thus, the starting point for analysis was a five point grading scale for each of these objectives. Each objective yielded 24 performance scores, one from myself and another from a second examiner for each of the 12 essays. I could then easily generate average performance scores based upon my evaluation, the external examiner's evaluation, and a composite evaluation score. My hope was that these scores would provide an indication of what students have been able to learn and apply from the tutorials. I also looked

at the distribution of scores to provide additional information concerning class performance. These numbers, although extremely useful, are intended only to be used as a starting point for further analysis.

Since the focus of my study was to examine the effectiveness of the tutorial, rather than the students' writing, I wanted to continue my analysis to try to make some connections between student performance scores and the content of the tutorials. Here, other data, from the student interviews and in-class writing assignments, became an essential component of my research. The student interviews were a useful source of information to help determine what certain students or groups of students knew before coming to university. The interview also provided insights about learners' willingness or resistance to the requirement, and thus probably the content, of the course. Students' in-class writing also proved useful, especially as a tool to examine the development of particular skills. These sources of data, along with tutorial plans, materials, and notes, provided a rich source of information which should lead to substantial insights and findings.

To illustrate the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative data, let me pose a hypothetical example. I intend to begin by looking at the average performance scores and their distributions for each of the six major instructional objectives. If I find an average score of 6.4 out of 10 for "Task Analysis of Essay Question," for example, I would then want to see the distribution of these scores. If half of the scores are very high and the other

half very low, I would then want to look into this result more closely to try to determine why some students acquired the skill while others did not. In this example, I may investigate the in-class writing data to see if the high performing students tended to know this skill before it was covered in class. I might, likewise, look to student interviews to see if this was still a new skill set for students who performed poorly. Thus, the qualitative data is an essential component of the research which gives the quantitative data meaning.

6.1. Data: Text Comprehension and Analysis

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Text Score Baker	Text Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	4.5	4
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	3.5	3.5
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	4	3
D	M	Black	Private	30	3	3
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	3	3
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	3	3
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	3	3
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	4	2
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	3	4
J	F	Black	Private	34	3	4
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	3	4
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	3.5	3

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
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A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74
H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18
J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16
K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

The 24 scores (2 scores for each of the twelve students) for text comprehension and analysis yielded values ranging from 2 to 4.5 out of a 5 point scale. A score of 3 was most frequently assigned in 13 out of the 24 marks. Only 1 instance each of a 2 and a 4.5 score were recorded. Several questions prompted by this data include the following:

1. Why were more than half of the marks given a score of 3.0?
2. What was different about those students who received either significantly higher or lower scores than the 3.0 mean?

To answer the questions above, a careful examination of three students, including their academic history and class performance, should prove useful. Here, one high performing, one average performing, and one low performing student's case will be used as a reflection of the diverse learning experiences within one particular tutorial.

6.1.1 Text comprehension and analysis: A low performance case study

In this category, only one learner, student H, received a score of less than 3.0. However, this particular learner also represents the only instance in this category where the external examiner and I assigned marks that differed by more than one point. The student in this case, received a score of 4.0 from me and a score of 2.0 from Kathy Hutchings, the external reader. The composite score, then, is 3.0, the same as the mean for this category. The question then becomes why the significant variance in scores for this student?

There are at least several possible reasons for this unusual score variance. First, I had had previous experience with this student both in classroom situations and in grading in-class writing assignments. On the Adam Smith essay, this student received 4 out of 5 on the category, "has the student understood the readings and the lectures?" Thus, I may have already formed some opinions about this student's ability to handle the texts used in the class. Secondly, the paper was handwritten and quite difficult to read. Here, the low score may have been a reflection of the difficulty and frustration experienced while reading the essay. Of course, the higher score could also be a misplaced attempt to avoid penalizing this student for poor handwriting. In any case, one cannot help but wonder if the scores would have been different for a typewritten version of this essay. Thirdly, the variance may be an over-compensation on my part to assure fairness to a student who when interviewed for this research expressed very negative attitudes about the tutorial. Finally, the higher score given by me may reflect my familiarity with

the readings and content of the course. In other words, I was able to fill in the verbal and conceptual blanks which left Ms. Hutchings feeling that this student "seems lost." What I identified as a problem in expression of ideas, Ms. Hutchings may have read as a problem of comprehension. As this case suggests, text comprehension and analysis were difficult learning objectives to deal with because they are so closely related to the learners' ability to express complex concepts and ideas. In other words, evidence of reading comprehension can frequently be hidden or obscured by problems with expression.

How, then, can researchers and instructors make this distinction between a weakness in expression and a problem of comprehension? The answer is that they cannot, at least by means of essay assessments. In fact, assessments of textual comprehension are much better undertaken by using tools such as one-on-one oral testing or simple objective prompts including multiple choice, true or false, and matching style questions. The academic essay, then, is an intrinsically poor device for measuring student achievement in the area of textual comprehension. Often, students are able to express an idea verbally long before they can clearly articulate those same ideas on paper.

To some degree, however, a student's essays can suggest to the reader how far along in the process the learner has traveled in terms of the analysis and application of textual information as it relates to a particular essay prompt. In fact, this is an important role of essay writing in relation to meaningful

student learning. Essays ought to be assigned not simply to get students to write more, but also as a way to help learners to move beyond simple rote memorization of textual information. Academic essays ought to encourage students to use such information in ways that require more challenging aspects of analysis and application of information from a variety of texts.

In this case of the low performing student, it is difficult if not impossible to assess, on the basis of several essays, the level of this learner's textual comprehension ability. However, an examination of this student's other course marks may be one good way to assess this student's comprehension skills in a more reliable and accurate manner. This learner scored in the top 50th percentile for his class as a whole. His semester Essay score was a 54% while his Test 1 earned a 70% and his Test 2 a 60%. Thus, this data indicates that writing skills are significantly weaker than comprehension and test taking skills. Ironically, this student, who in many ways was the ideal candidate for whom this reading and writing tutorial was designed, was one of its most reluctant participants. Ideally, a student with this learner's competent basic skill set, would gain the most benefit from a tutorial of this type which focused on helping students apply this knowledge in response to an academic essay task.

6.1.2 Text comprehension and analysis: A high performance case study

The highest mark assigned for text comprehension and analysis was a 4.5 out of 5. I assigned the mark of 4.5 while Ms. Hutchings assigned this same student a mark of 4. Here, the assessments of both readers seem to indicate a higher degree of agreement and reliability than in the score of the lowest performer. The interesting question in this case, is to try to determine how much of this learner's success should be attributed to previous knowledge and how much can be credited to the learner's experiences in the reading and writing tutorial.

Student A, known by myself but not by Ms. Hutchings, came to UCT from a North West Province former DET school. His Matriculation score was 39, the highest of any of the twelve students in this study. In my interview with this learner he indicated that he appreciated the opportunity to be in the tutorial and that he had a strong desire to gain academic writing instruction and experience to help him achieve his goals at the university.

Another indication of student A's progress, within the course of this tutorial, can be observed by an examination of his earlier writings at the beginning of the term. In the first essay of the tutorial that required the students to work with various texts and respond to an essay prompt, this learner clearly struggled. In the assessment category, "has the student understood the readings and lectures?" this learner only received a mark of 3 out of 5 points. The Adam Smith essay and its re-write, both demonstrate a lack of clear understanding of Smith's capitalism as an "invisible hand" concept. While this

learner is able to adequately define the basic terminology in his own words, he falters when asked to apply those definitions in the analysis required to respond to the essay question. Thus, this student appears to be competent in his reading comprehension. But what happens when this student is required to add his own voice to the discussion?

Is this learner unable to analyze and apply the knowledge from readings or is he simply unable to express these ideas in writing? Drawing on my classroom experience with this student, I would be quite confident in concluding that his weakness here is a function of weaker skills in formal written expression. This student regularly contributed to lively debates about economic issues within the tutorial. His insights and opinions were most often clearly thought out and well communicated. In his early writing, however, this kind of personal expression seems almost non-existent. One possibility for this problem may very well be a reluctance on this student's part to engage in what he may see as the statement of his own opinion. Rather, this student begins by sticking to safe territory by relying solely on the text as it appears without any attempt to critique or analyze it. Perhaps this student's training in academic writing had been such that only textual material had validity in student writing.

Ultimately, it appears that this student A's high marks in text comprehension are warranted. But as to the question of where the student gained this skill, it is very likely that this ability was well established before he began the

tutorial. However, the skill that he did seem to improve as a result of the tutorial, was the permission and ability to analyze, critique, and apply the knowledge gained through readings. Not surprisingly, this student's writing marks went from a 65% to a 68% to a 75%.

6.1.3 Text comprehension and analysis: average performer case studies

In this category, a mark of 3 was awarded for 13 out of the 24 scores given on the students' essays. For purposes of this analysis, I will look at three of these students all of whom received a score of 3 from both readers. These students received marks of 29, 33, and 30 on their UCT matriculation scores. The first student attended school in the Transkei. The second student received her education at a former white school. The third student did his studies at Saint Stithian's College, a reputable private school. All three students are black. However, each of these students came to UCT with very different levels of preparation and little is known about these students prior experience in terms of reading comprehension and analysis.

The first learner, Student F, scored only 3 out of 5 on the category titled "has the student understood the readings and writings" for the Adam Smith Essay. In this essay, he was able to explain new concepts but with only limited ability to apply these concepts to the essay question at hand. This student, although a hard worker, had little or no experience with academic essay writing as practiced at the university level. Even his second and third in-class

writings still consisted of a simple series of sentences in a bullet-point format. These bullet-points, almost without exception, contained facts straight from the readings that related in some way to the essay topic. In his re-write of the Adam Smith essay, he used full paragraphs for the first time in this tutorial. This student continued to struggle with the writing of academic essays and received a score of only 56% on his essay at the end of the first semester. At times, this student clearly misunderstood or misinterpreted the meaning of the texts. For this learner, the tutorial's instruction and practice in reading comprehension and analysis was inadequate. He was simply unable to deal with these university level texts without further forms of intervention. A score of three, from both readers, is clearly a sign of a great deal of time, energy, and hard work on the part of this student. Given time, practice, and the considerable desire and effort of this student, improvement is highly likely. More than likely, though, the economics reading and writing tutorial will be only one of many steps on this learner's path to academic proficiency.

The second average performer on the understanding the text section, student E, earned a 33 on her UCT matriculation score after attending a former white school in Gauteng. This student began the semester with 4 out of 5 possible points on the understanding text section of the Adam Smith essay. Here, she clearly handled the readings with ease. On the major essay at the end of the semester, however, this learner struggled at times with the greater complexity of both the texts and the essay assignment. Given her ranking in the top 20% of the class and her marks of 66% and 70% on the objective

exams, she appears to have maintained a fairly good grasp of the readings. Here, student E appears to understand the text but has difficulty with applying and expressing that understanding within the context of an academic essay. This student entered the tutorial with seemingly competent reading skills and was given the opportunity to advance these skills by being presented with texts and essay topics of increasing difficulty.

The third average performer, student D, came to the tutorial with a UCT matriculation score of 30. He attended a well-respected private school before coming to UCT. On the Adam Smith essay near the beginning of the semester, this learner earned a 5 out of 5 points on the understanding the readings section. Clearly this student managed the readings with ease at this point in the semester. His writing is also strong in areas other than reading comprehension. This student appears to have had a good bit of experience with academic writing prior to entering university. However, as the semester progressed, this learner failed to keep up with the pace and the volume of information in the readings. He received a 71% on his first test but then dropped to only a 55% on the second semester test. For this student, then, the problem is not an inability to express ideas. Here, the problem appears to stem from either a failure to do the readings or an inability to manage the increasing volume and complexity of the readings. The tutorial may have helped this learner with his writing early in the semester, but the instruction may have been inadequate to prepare him for the demands of writing and testing later in the semester.

6.2. Data: Learning to understand and use the language
or discourse of the economics discipline

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Discourse Score Baker	Discourse Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	3.5	3.5
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	4	3.5
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	3.5	4
D	M	Black	Private	30	3	4
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	3	4
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	2	2
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	3	4
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	2	2.5
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	4	4
J	F	Black	Private	34	4	4
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	3	4
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	3	3.5

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74
H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18

J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16
K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

Marks for language and discourse ranged from 2 to 4 points out of 5. While only three marks of 3.0 were awarded, ten marks of 4.0 were awarded. Thus, marks were skewed toward the higher end of the scale. Here, it is important to understand why only a few students received scores of less than 3. Also, the reasons for such a large number of high scores, 4 points out of 5, should be explored. Finally, for seven out of the twelve students in this category, Ms. Hutchings assigned higher marks than I. It will be important to explore, then, why she often awarded higher marks than I did.

6.2.1 Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline : A case study of a below average performer

Student F entered UCT with a UCT matriculation score of 29 after attending school in the Transkei. His first two in-class writings indicated that this learner had been given very little instruction in academic writing prior to entering UCT. In fact, his first essays were written as a series of simple bullet points with no indication of paragraphing and no content that could be considered an introduction or a conclusion. Thus, this learner entered the tutorial with little or no experience to prepare him for university level writing.

In student F's in-class writing on the first meeting of the tutorial, he was awarded only 3 out of 5 points for the category, "has the student used words appropriately." Here, the essay required no technical language from the economics discipline. Already, however, this student was experiencing difficulty accurately expressing himself. In the Adam Smith essay, this learner showed improvement by earning a 4 out of 5 points for the category "has the student chosen words appropriately." The improvement on the Smith essay was perhaps a function of the students' having the opportunity to re-write. Here, this learner made good use of teacher remarks on his first draft as well as spending time after class to discuss this essay on a one-to-one basis with the tutor.

The improvement on the Smith essay was unfortunately not lasting. Student F had more difficulty than ever before with the major essay at the end of the semester. He earned a score of only 56% compared to previous marks of 64% and 66%. Some reasons for this low score included comments such as "second language interference", "difficulty with use of first person", and "tended to generalize." For example in his final semester essay, he wrote, 'The South African economy has undergone transition, in the sense that the state no power in all economic activity...The government had show interest towards privatization.' Here, these two sentences alone contain both second language difficulties and generalizations. On the positive side, he did handle the terminology of economics accurately if a bit too simplistically.

Much of the data for student F suggests that the tutorial was helpful in so far as helping him to use the terminology of economics accurately. However, other issues such as second language interference, misuse of the first person, and a tendency to generalize were just barely touched by the content of the tutorial. These issues would require much more time and practice on the part of this student in order to create real improvement and competency with the discourse of the economics discipline. These are the kinds of issues that cannot be solved easily and thus are very often dismissed or at best marginalized by writing instructors and writing center consultants. It is far more rewarding for both tutor and learner to sharpen those writing skills where rapid improvements can be realized easily.

6.2.2 Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline : A case study of above average performers

In the category "learning to use the language or discourse of the economics discipline," 10 marks of 4.0 were registered. This suggests a strong contingent of learners who reached competency in this area. However, it is interesting to note that no learner received more than 4 points in this category. This suggests that there was room for improvement and development in this area for every student as she or he continued to practice writing within the economics discipline. The question at hand, then, is how has or will the tutorial help students to develop as writers within the field of economics.

The first learner, student I, who received a score of 4 out of 5 points for discourse from both assessors, earned a fine mark of 37 for her UCT matriculation score. She attended an ex-white school in the Western Cape that used both English and Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. On the first two in-class writing projects, this learner received strong scores of 85% and 82%. In this case, it would appear that student I came to UCT with a good amount of experience with the conventions of academic writing and a high degree of competency in the English language. However, when faced with a more demanding and complex writing task at the end of the semester, she earned only 70% on the essay. Student I, then, had developed a certain level of competency in writing at a particular difficulty level. In order to approach more difficult tasks with the same confidence and competency, she will benefit from more practice at this higher degree of difficulty. Her ability to handle the discourse of economics, however, is one of the only writing skill areas that did not deteriorate on the more complex essay task. Thus, it appears that this learner came to UCT with a well-developed sensitivity to the requirements of academic discourse. Furthermore, she was able to apply this strength to rapidly acquiring the ability to write within the economics discipline. For student I, it is likely that the tutorial was less responsible for her success than was her previous preparation and her particular intellectual and academic strengths.

Another learner, student J, who received 4 out of 5 points from both assessors on the discourse of economics category came to UCT with a mark

of 34 on the UCT matriculation score. She had attended a good private school in the Western Cape before beginning university studies. Early in the semester this student earned a consistent 72% on the first two in-class writings. On this learner's final essay for the semester, she scored 74%, a slight increase from her previous essay scores of 72%. In the Adam Smith essay, in particular, I noted her strong and appropriate use of economics terminology. She continued this strength on her final essay. For example, she wrote in her semester final essay, 'the command system, also known as the centrally planned system, is characterized by state ownership of the factors of production and state coordination of economic activities.' Here, this student is able to clearly and concisely define an important economics term. Also, she demonstrates an awareness that others in the field may use a different term for this same concept. This learner did, however, tend to sometimes use technical terminology without considering all the implications the word or concept might have in the specific discipline of economics. For example, when student J describes the mechanism of the market system in her Smith essay, she neglects several important components of the free market in her discussion. Furthermore, she fails to make the distinction between free markets as they exist in the real world and the theoretical construct put forward by Adam Smith. At times, this student's fluid and confident writing skills tend to obscure more subtle weaknesses in her use of the discourse of the discipline.

Student J, then, came to UCT with reasonably well-developed writing skills which she is in the process of refining within the constraints and expectations of the economics discipline. Her writing suggests the work of a student who is appropriately grappling with new terminology, concepts, and information. The content of the language and communication tutorial appears to have effectively facilitated the learning process for this student. While her scores remained nearly constant, she was able to handle increasingly difficult writing tasks with the same or slightly increasing competence as the semester progressed. For this learner, the tutorial seemed to keep pace with the increasing demands and complexities of the writing tasks she was required to complete.

6.2.3 Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline : An examination of assessment variances between readers

A final area of consideration and importance in exploring the students' scores for the category, discourse of economics, is the clear difference in assessment between the two readers of the essays. For 7 out of the twelve students in this category, Ms. Hutchings assigned a higher score than I did for the same essay. I assigned a higher discourse score than Ms. Hutchings in only one instance. Why, then, were my marks for each student frequently lower than the marks assigned by Ms. Hutchings? There are several possible explanations for this difference in scoring.

First, this category really covered two broad areas of learning. On one hand, the term discourse could be narrowly applied to mean the specific discourse of the economics discipline. Here, the emphasis would tend to fall on areas such as accurate use of terminology, avoidance of generalizations, and appropriate use of academic tone. But, this category also included more broad based and generalized discourse issues such as second language interference, use or misuse of first person, and use of 'e.g.' rather than embedding examples. Given these two broad areas within this category, it was up to the reader to decide how much weight should be placed on each. Depending upon which area, narrowly or broadly defined discourse issues, the reader emphasized, the scores could be expected to vary. Dividing these two sub-categories and scoring them individually could have resulted in assigning more accurate and reliable scores.

A second explanation for the score differences may have had a lot to do with English as a second language issues. Ms. Hutchings extensive experience with ESL writers may have resulted in her tendency to be more forgiving of simple ESL errors which I may have allowed to obscure the meaning of some student's writing. My comments on the essay score sheets were far more likely than those of Ms. Hutchings to mention language and grammar issues. Thus, I may have placed greater emphasis on language and grammar issues; areas which for many students in the research pose great challenges. It is not surprising, then, that my scores would be lower.

A final factor in the score differences for the discourse category may be a function of the essay markers' familiarity with the specific discourse of the economics discipline. In this case, I was quite familiar with the terminology and technical subject matter of the students' writing. Ms. Hutchings reading was from a more generalist point of view. Thus, I may have been more demanding in terms of the specific requirements of clearly expressing the concepts that are critical to an accurate understanding of economics. Here, again, this could be another reason for the lower marks I assigned in this category.

6.3 Data: Essay task analysis

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Task Analysis Score Baker	Task Analysis Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	5	4
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	3.5	3
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	4	3
D	M	Black	Private	30	4	3
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	2	3
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	4	2.5
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	3	4
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	2	2.5
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	4	3.5
J	F	Black	Private	34	3	4
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	3.5	3
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	4	3

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74
H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18
J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16
K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

In this category scores ranged from a low of 2 out five points to a high score of a perfect 5 points. The most commonly given scores were 3 and 3.5 with eight incidences of both. Thus, a very large number of marks, 16 out of 24, were in the middle range of the scale. Competency in doing task analysis is a basic necessity for the successful writing of any academic essay. It is also a skill which is generally considered to be readily teachable. With this in mind, it is important to explore the reason for such a large number of marks in the average range. And, what about those students who fell below the average range? How can their marks be accounted for? Finally, how can the very high marks of 4.5 and 5 be explained?

6.3.1 Task analysis: A high performer case study

One learner, student A, received a perfect 5 point score for task analysis. In spite of this learner's positive educational background, he indicated in his interview that he had done little or no essay writing beyond the required exam essays. Yet, on his first in-class writing he received a full 5 points out of 5 for the category 'has the student answered the question.' On the Adam Smith essay, however, his performance of task analysis deteriorated. Here, he received 4 points for 'has the student answered the question' and only 3 points for 'has the question been discussed in appropriate detail.' This second essay was a much greater challenge for this learner. Already, this second assignment seemed to go beyond the scope of his previous academic writing experience. But what is impressive here is that just a few weeks later in the semester, student A produced an essay where he received a perfect 5 points on the task analysis category. This is particularly impressive given the difficulty and far greater complexity of this end of the semester essay task.

For student A, the tutorial appears to have been highly effective. He came to UCT with minimal academic writing experience and quickly developed the skills necessary to excel in the university environment. This learner undertook all assignments and class work with great eagerness and earnestness. As a result, the instruction proved to be useful in preparing him for the increasing demands and challenges of the required writing tasks. His lower score on the Adam Smith essay was not a reflection of waning efforts,

rather, it was evidence of a student struggling with new material in a way that would eventually help him to succeed.

6.3.2 Task analysis: A low performer case study

This learner, student H, came to university with a UCT matriculation score of 26. He had previously attended high school at a former Model C white school in the Western Cape. In my interview with him, he indicated that he had already done a good deal of essay writing before coming to university. He also strongly felt that he did not belong in a 'remedial' tutorial and resented what he believed to be a waste of his time and effort. This negative attitude toward his required enrollment in the tutorial was unfortunate given the fact of his low matriculation score and individual matriculation marks of C, D, D, C, and F.

This learner had little difficulty with writing assignments at the beginning of the semester. Although he received a mark of 76% on his first in-class essay, his weakest score was in the area of task analysis where he received a score of only 3 out of 5 points. On the Adam Smith in-class essay, he again received a respectable 72% mark. But this time, he received a full 5 points for task analysis. The timing of these two assignments, one on the first meeting of the tutorial and the other after instruction on task analysis was given, may indicate that this student had gained some task analysis skills in the interim. The second task was far more complex and yet this student performed better here.

Unlike the two essays described above, the major end of the semester essay was not an in-class composition. Here, the task was much more complex, students were expected to use plenty of evidence and argument, and that evidence needed to be properly referenced. On this assignment, student H made a very minimal effort. Multiple drafts of the essay were to be written over the course of several weeks. This learner never produced any drafts in process and in the end handed in only a poorly hand-written copy of the essay to be graded. In this essay, he failed to meet many of the basic requirements such as including a cover page, using proper referencing techniques, typing the final copy of the paper, signing a plagiarism pledge, and adhering to a checklist of basic academic writing conventions and rules. The end result was a hurried, poorly written essay which was probably not an indication of his real abilities.

For student H, the tutorial may have been somewhat effective in spite of his negative attitude toward being enrolled in the program. The improvement on the Adam Smith essay and ironically, the lack of effort on the major essay as well, may indicate a student who has learned something in spite of his best efforts not to. However, no amount of teaching, good or otherwise, can overcome a student's refusal to attempt to produce good work.

6.3.3 Task analysis: Average performer case studies

The vast majority of marks assigned in the task analysis category were either 3 or 3.5 out of 5 points. Since these scores were given in 16 out of the 24 marks assigned, it will be useful to explore more than 1 case study in this score range. The two students, who will be examined here, each received a 3.0 from one reader and a 3.5 from the other. Other students received scores such as a 2 and a 3 or a 3 and a 4 on the task analysis category. No student received a 3 or a 3.5 from both readers. Thus, the two students with a composite score of 3.25 in this category could be considered to be the most representative of the average scorers.

One of the learners, student B, who received marks of 3 and 3.5 on task analysis came to UCT with a matriculation score of 33. She had previously studied at a former white girls' school of high repute in Newlands. This learner came to UCT with some experience in academic writing. In my interview with her, she indicated, however, that most of the writing was either creative in nature or occurred at exam time. This learner started the semester with a strong 78% on her first in-class essay. On this essay, she received a full five out of five points on the category, 'has the student answered the question.' On the Adam Smith essay, she was one of the few students who actually increased her essay score, earning an impressive 83%. Here again, on this task of much greater difficulty, she received 5 out of 5 points for task analysis. This score indicates that the classroom instruction may have helped student B to maintain and even improve her scores as the

writing increased in difficulty and complexity. But, what happened on the end of semester essay when her marks dropped to only 3 and 3.5 for task analysis?

The essay at the end of the semester required the students to respond to three different questions which were embedded in the complex essay task. Previous essay tasks had only required students to focus on a singular question. On this assignment, student B had difficulty managing and responding to all parts of this multi-question task. Here, the readers' remarks become quite useful. Ms. Hutchings commented that the first and third parts of the question were poorly addressed. I also felt that the first question was addressed poorly. However, I specifically remarked that I felt the third part of the question was strongly written. Here, the readers clearly disagreed on the suitability of the content of this student's writing.

Aside from some minor assessment differences between the two readers, what could account for student B's essay mark of only 65% and specifically her lower task analysis scores of 3 and 3.5? This student ended the semester ranked number 11 out of a class of 163. Her test scores were 73% and 78%. Thus, it is clear that this student has a good grasp of the discipline-specific content. Her problem on this major essay, then, appears to be more an expressive weakness than a shortcoming in her content area. This may suggest that for this student, the tutorial failed to give her the kind of support

she needed to help her to keep her writing skills on par with the increasing difficulty of the writing tasks.

The other learner, student K, who received marks of 3 and 3.5 on task analysis came to UCT with a matriculation score of only 21. She had previously attended a fairly average former white school in Plumstead in the Western Cape. This learner started the tutorial with better than average essay scores of 78% and 74% respectively. Her scores for task analysis on these essays were a 5 out of 5 and a 4 out of 5 with her score dropping as the difficulty of the essay task increased. Here, this student's essay writing skills were stronger than her matriculation scores might have indicated.

Her essay scores are not the only surprise regarding student K. She also performed well on her first exam earning an impressive 78%. However, on her second exam she dropped dramatically earning only 55%. Likewise, in her end of semester essay, her score also dropped to a somewhat disappointing 66%. Ms. Hutchings and I both commented that although she attempted to address all parts of the task, details and examples were clearly lacking on this essay. This learner, then, appears to be a stronger writer than she is a test taker. Her essay writing ability does not deteriorate, as the level of difficulty increases, to the same degree as her testing performance. She is simply unable to keep pace with the volume of new material within the economics discipline that she is required to learn and master. Her ability to respond to all the requirements of an essay task remains fairly constant.

What she cannot seem to cope with is the necessity to respond to the essay task with adequate details and examples which she is having difficulty learning in the economics classroom. For student K, then, the tutorial is not a fix-all, but it does seem to help her to handle the basic requirement of responding to all parts of complicated multi-faceted essay questions. The inability to respond with adequate details and examples is most likely the result of falling behind in the acquisition of knowledge in the economics subject area.

6.4 Data: Macro organization and structural strategies

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Org. Score Baker	Org. Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	4	4
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	4	3
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	3	4
D	M	Black	Private	30	3	4
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	3	3
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	3	3
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	4	4
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	2	2.5
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	2	3.5
J	F	Black	Private	34	5	4
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	3.5	3
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	4	4

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74
H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18
J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16
K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

In this category scores ranged from a low of 2 out five points to a high score of a perfect 5 points. The most commonly given scores were 3 and 4, with eight incidences of the former and nine of the latter. Thus, a very large number of marks, seventeen out of twenty-four, were in the middle to high range of the scale. Competency in managing the organization and structure of an essay is a basic necessity for successful academic writing. It is also a skill which is generally considered to be readily teachable. With this in mind, it is important to explore, in particular, the writing of those students who were unable to perform on at least an average level. Also, it will be quite useful to attempt to determine to what extent the tutorial can claim responsibility for the majority of students who were able to perform at a level of at least average proficiency.

6.4.1 Macro organization and structural strategies: An above average performer

The highest score in this category was given to student J who came to UCT from a good private school in the Western Cape. She began the tutorial with a pair of essays both earning marks of 72%. On her first essay she received 4 out of 5 points for structure. On the second essay, which was considerably more difficult, her score increased to a perfect 5 out of 5 points. This student began with a strong score for organization and structure and managed to improve upon her score by the time she wrote her second essay.

Student J did an impressive job with the end of semester essay also. Here, she received her highest score to date, 75%, on an essay task of relatively high difficulty. Of course, as already reported, she managed to maintain the perfect 5 point score for organization and structure. Thus, it would appear that the tutorial kept pace with preparing this learner for writing tasks of increasing complexity and difficulty. Both essay readers commented that introductions and conclusions were particularly strong. I also remarked that the thesis statement was clear and felt that she demonstrated good audience awareness in her use of transitions. No negative comments were recorded by either reader. In conclusion, this student entered the tutorial with a better than average ability to handle academic writing tasks. But, what is encouraging is the evidence of this learner's steady improvement while

simultaneously being required to handle increasingly complex and difficult writing assignments.

6.4.2 Macro organization and structural strategies: A below average performer

Student H, who has already been identified as a below average performer in sections 6.1.1 and 6.3.2, received scores of 2 and 2.5 in this category. This learner had little difficulty with writing assignments at the beginning of the semester. He received a mark of 76% on his first in-class essay and his score for structure was a very strong 5 out of 5 points. On the Adam Smith in-class essay, he again received a respectable 72% mark. But this time, he received only 3 points for organization and structure. This drop was disappointing but not unusual as most students found this second writing assignment to be far more challenging than the first. In spite of the increased level of difficulty, this learner seemed to understand the subject content. I made the following comment on his Adam Smith essay: "You have some great ideas but some changes in the structure of this essay would make them much stronger."

Unlike the two essays described above, the major end of the semester essay was not an in-class writing. Here, the writing task was much more complex, students were expected to use plenty of evidence and argument, and that evidence needed to be properly referenced. Unfortunately, student H made a very minimal effort on this assignment and as a result earned only 54% on the essay and only 2 out of 5 points on the organization and structure

category. Multiple drafts of the essay were to be written over the course of several weeks. This learner never produced any drafts in process and in the end handed in only a poorly hand-written copy of the essay to be graded. In this essay, he failed to meet many of the basic requirements such as including a cover page, using proper referencing techniques, typing the final copy of the paper, signing a plagiarism pledge, and adhering to a checklist of basic academic writing conventions and rules. The end result was a hurried, poorly written essay which was probably not an indication of his real abilities.

In addition to falling essay scores, student H also experienced decreasing test scores. His first test score was 70% while his second test dropped down to a 60%. This learner appears to be either unable or unwilling to handle the workload required in his coursework. Although this student came to UCT with reasonably well-developed writing skills, he quickly began to fall behind in his acquisition of the ideas and concepts which he must master in the field of economics. Ultimately, it is impossible to know whether this student had the potential to master the skill of organizing and structuring an academic essay properly or if his poor performance was simply the result of his resentment toward the writing requirements of the economics course.

6.4.3 Macro organization and structural strategies: An average performer

Student C is one example of an average performer in this category. He is a student from a Gauteng former DET school who came to UCT with a

matriculation score of 31. This learner began the semester with essay scores of 73% and 62% respectively. On the first essay, his specific score for structure was 4 out of 5 points. However, when the difficulty of the writing task increased, he earned only 3 out of 5 points for structure on the Adam Smith essay. In both cases, this student worked diligently on the task and stayed after class to discuss his writing. On the Smith essay, much of this student's difficulty with organization and structure stemmed from a problem with his basic analysis of the task. I made the following remark on this essay, 'your essay, while mostly well written, attempts to *describe* the free market mechanism rather than *analyzing* the Smith quote.' In addition, even on this second essay and its revision, this student missed basic structural elements like an introduction, a clear thesis statement, and transitions.

Despite disappointing results on the Smith essay, student C managed to earn a strong 70% on the end of semester essay. For many students, scores were lower than previous essays for this difficult writing task. While I felt his introduction and conclusion were both still weak, the body of his essay was well organized and even included good transitions. Ms. Hutchings noted no weaknesses in the area of organization and awarded this student 4 out of 5 points. She noted that the student's work 'seems fine' in this category, thus denoting at least a level of competence, though probably not one of excellence. His score for task analysis also improved on this essay. Thus, poor analysis of the task did not have the negative impact on organization as

it did on the Smith essay. For student C, the tutorial seemed to support his own hard work and consistent efforts to improve his academic writing skills.

6.5 Data: Argumentation and evidence

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Argument Score Baker	Argument Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	4	4
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	2.5	3
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	3.5	3
D	M	Black	Private	30	2	3
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	2	3
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	2	2.5
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	3	3
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	3	2.5
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	3	3.5
J	F	Black	Private	34	3	3.5
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	3	3.5
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	3	3

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74

H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18
J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16
K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

The scores in this category ranged from a low of 2 to a high of 4. The average score for this category was the lowest of the six areas which were assessed. The average score I awarded was 2.83 while the marks given by Ms. Hutchings averaged 3.125. There were six marks of 2 or 2.5, sixteen marks of 3 or 3.5, and only two marks at 4, the top of the range awarded in this category. Both marks of 4 were earned by the same learner. Thus, most learners were unable to achieve scores above 3, an average level, for argumentation and evidence. The important question here is to ask why so many students failed to achieve in this area of academic writing. There are several possible sources which may contribute to students' poor achievement levels in this category:

1. A lack of adequate tutorial instruction.
2. The complex nature of the particular writing task.
3. The learners' inability to comprehend the increasingly difficult subject matter of economics.
4. Or, the students' lack of ability to express clearly those economics concepts and ideas which they did understand.

6.5.1 Argumentation and evidence: An above average performer

Only student A received a 4 point score from both readers for argumentation and evidence. This learner's achievement as an above average scorer was also explored in sections 7.1.2 and 7.3.1.

The first essay of the tutorial did not require students to use argumentation. The task was more narrative in nature. But, success on the second essay of the semester relied heavily on the learners' ability to effectively use argument and evidence. For student A, this Adam Smith essay presented the greatest challenge. Here, he received his lowest essay mark of the semester, 68%. He also received only 3 out of 5 points for argumentation on the Smith essay. Thus, student A did definitely display some evidence of difficulty handling the requirements of good argumentation and evidence. This performance on the Smith essay, then, suggests that argumentation may have been a skill which this student had not yet mastered.

While the Smith essay proved to be a challenge for this student, he made an impressive improvement on the difficult end of the semester writing task. Here, he received a mark of 4 from both readers. This was the highest score earned by any student in the study for this category. In addition to the numeric score, comments included, 'convincing (argument), lots of evidence', 'good transitions at paragraph level', and 'writer's voice is strong'. On the end of semester essay, this learner seemed to learn to include several pieces of relevant evidence to formulate a strong argument. Conversely, his Smith

essay relied completely on one example to make an argument concerning the entire subject of the free market mechanism. On the Smith essay, my written comments were primarily directed at encouraging this student to strengthen his argument. Comments included, 'do you agree?' 'completely true?' and 'other examples of market system not ensuring all are better off? This paragraph is weak.' It is encouraging to see that these comments tended to motivate this learner to reconsider his strategies for argumentation and avoid similar mistakes on following essays. Thus, student A's argumentation skills did seem to improve and develop as a result of the content and experience he gained through participating in the tutorial.

6.5.2 Argumentation and evidence: An average performer

This learner, student L, came to UCT after completing studies at a private school in the Western Cape. She earned a 31 on her matriculation score. In my interview with her, she indicated that she had had a wide variety of writing experience before coming to university. Her writing experiences included creative writing, academic essays, reports, and essay exams. Thus, her first essay score writing for the tutorial was an impressive 84%, the highest score awarded in a group of 23 students. Her prior academic writing experience was clear here. The subject of the first essay was primarily narrative and little economics specific information was required.

On the second essay, however, students were required to formulate an argument based upon the principals of the free market system. Here,

student L experienced a not uncommon drop in her essay score, earning a 76%. Her score for argumentation, though, was a strong 4 out of 5 points. For her paragraph arguing why the free market was an efficient and effective system, I commented on her paper, 'strong argument!' On the paragraph arguing the shortcomings of the free market system, however, I made comments suggesting that her argument was weak and her evidence insufficient to support her point of view. In fact the evidence she provided here could have also been used to argue the opposite point of view. Thus, this student knew how to construct an argument but at times was unaware of the potential for readers' objections to the point of view she was attempting to support.

On the end of semester essay, this student who received an average score for argumentation, was awarded a 74% for her work on a rather complex and difficult writing task. Her work, then, was still better than average overall. However, her scores for argumentation were not quite as encouraging. Here, both readers assigned just 3 out of 5 points for this category. Both readers commented that her argument was 'unconvincing' or failed to persuade the reader. For example, in her argument asserting that South Africa has some characteristics of an economy in transition she offers only the following support:

'The unionising of labour and the laws that protect the labour market is also a factor that aids in the transition (Kenney, 2000).

The mining industry proves that South Africa is in transition, because foreign investment laws have expanded, mining codes have improved as well as economic stimulus to accelerate economic development.'

Here, this student attempts to make an argument based on, essentially, only one example. Ms. Hutchings remarked that the writer's voice was 'questionable, (a) patchwork of ideas' while I also commented that she relied on 'listing' and needed 'more than transitions' to make her voice as the writer a cohesive force. Thus, for this learner, the tutorial may have taught her to support her arguments with evidence, which at times was used abundantly, but failed to provide enough instruction about the importance of the writer's voice in formulating an effective argument. This student was not alone in the lack of voice in her argument. In fact, many students at this level are likely to insert their voices as writers with great caution. The traditional mantra of 'facts not opinion' tends to suggest to students that their own thinking and analyzing are unwelcome within the constraints of an academic essay. The challenge for student L, then, is to find ways to assert her own voice, her personal process of learning, discovering, understanding, and applying facts, to the formulation of a strongly written academic argument.

6.5.3 Argumentation and evidence: A below average performer

This learner, student F, entered UCT with a UCT matriculation score of 29 after attending school in the Transkei. His first two in-class writings indicated

that this learner had been given very little instruction in academic writing prior to entering UCT. In fact, his first essays were written as a series of simple bullet points with no indication of paragraphing and no content that could be considered an introduction or a conclusion. Thus, this learner entered the tutorial with little or no experience to prepare him for university level writing. His scores for argumentation on the end of semester essay were a 2 from one reader and a 2.5 from the other.

The students in the tutorial were first required to use argumentation skills in the writing of the Adam Smith essays. Here, student F seemed quite comfortable defining the free market but was unable to articulate his opinion concerning whether or not he agreed with Smith's beliefs about the efficiency with which the free market operates. I commented on this essay, 'good explanation of free market. Do you think this explanation is accurate? Do *you* agree or disagree with Smith?' And in another paragraph I wrote, 'refer back to Smith quote. Argument here is not developed. Remember your essay is evaluating Smith's quote rather than the free market system.' Here, like many students educated in former DET schools, this learner clearly struggles to write anything beyond simple definition and explanation. In many of these schools, teachers still frequently feel inadequate themselves and thus rely on rote learning of definitions (Paxton, 1998). Not surprisingly then, the possibility of argumentation and the insertion of his analysis as the essay writer are completely undeveloped in his writing.

For student F, the Adam Smith essay, while not a success by some measures, was also clearly a great sign of progress in other significant ways. For example, his first draft of the essay was written without paragraphs, punctuation, and an introduction and conclusion. All of these elements appeared in his second draft. Thus, while this student had not yet mastered the skill of argumentation, he was developing other aspects of his writing skills at an impressive rate. He responded well to written comments on his papers and frequently stayed after the tutorial to seek extra help to improve his skills.

On the end of semester essay, student F continued to struggle. According to my comments on his essay, his arguments were 'unconvincing', relied too much on 'listing', and were clearly 'lacking (the) writer's voice.' Yet, this was clearly much better writing than what appeared in the essays this student had written at the beginning of the semester. In spite of this learner's disadvantaged position in terms of academic writing experience, he was making measurable progress. In addition to his writing improving, even as the writing tasks became much more demanding, he also managed to maintain passing test scores earning a 63% and 62% respectively. In my opinion, student F benefited greatly from his participation in the tutorial. In time, his argumentation skills would reflect the hard work he invested in using the tutorial as a resource to develop his academic writing skills.

6.6 Data: Referencing and presentation of bibliographies

TABLE 1

Student	Sex	Race	School	Matric Score	Referencing Score Baker	Referencing Score Hutchings
A	M	Black	Ex-DET	39	5	3.5
B	F	Coloured	Ex-White	33	5	3
C	M	Black	Ex-DET	31	4	5
D	M	Black	Private	30	3	3
E	F	Black	Ex-White	33	4	5
F	M	Black	Transkei	29	3	3
G	M	White	Ex-White	31	1	1
H	M	White	Ex-White	26	2	1
I	F	Coloured	Ex-White	37	2	3.5
J	F	Black	Private	34	4	3.5
K	F	Coloured	Ex-White	21	4	5
L	F	Coloured	Private	31	5	3

TABLE 2

Student	In Class Essay 1	In Class Essay 2	Semester Final Essay	Economics Test 1	Economics Test 2	Semester Ranking
A	73%	68%	75%	73%	75%	13
B	78%	82%	65%	73%	78%	11
C	73%	62%	70%	72%	67%	34
D	75%	85%	61%	71%	53%	82
E	78%	72%	66%	71%	70%	32
F	66%	64%	56%	63%	62%	63
G	81%	66%	72%	63%	55%	74
H	76%	72%	54%	70%	60%	70
I	74%	78%	70%	81%	70%	18
J	72%	72%	74%	76%	70%	16

K	78%	74%	66%	78%	55%	55
L	84%	76%	74%	71%	68%	31

The scores for referencing and bibliography presentation range from a low of 1 all the way up to a high of 5. This is the only category in which the full range is awarded. The average score I gave was a 3.5 and Ms. Hutchings awarded a slightly lower 3.29 on average. We each awarded three marks of 5, the greatest number of 5 marks in any category. The lowest score of 1 was given in three instances.

To analyze the students' work in the area of referencing and bibliographies, I will examine one case of a below average performer and one case of an average performer. I will also spend some time looking at six cases of high performers. Here, no high performer was assigned a score of 5 by both readers. Thus, I want to explore the reasons for the differences in assessing this category by the two readers. This exploration is not as much an attempt to explain assessment issues as it is a desire to understand the objectives of instruction in the area of referencing. While referencing at first glance appears to be a concrete and definitive issue, the when, how, and why often produce widely variant responses from educators even within the same department or institution. Thus, in addition to examining student performance in this area, I will also attempt to discuss these performances with an awareness of the often inconsistent assessments readers may apply to referencing and bibliography issues.

6.6.1 Referencing and bibliographies: A below average performer

This learner, student G, came to UCT with a matriculation score of 31 after attending a former white school in the Western Cape. He indicated in his interviews that he had had a great deal of experience with writing before coming to UCT. His prior writing tasks included in-class timed essays, take home essays and reports, and a limited amount of creative writing. As a result, he clearly verbalized resentment toward being enrolled in the Economics Language and Communication Tutorial. He felt that almost none of the material presented in the tutorial was useful to him. As a result, his writing efforts were usually minimal. On the first in-class diagnostic writing, he scored a strong 81%. This, perhaps, was intended to demonstrate his misplacement in the tutorial. His second writing score dropped to 66%. He earned a 72% on his end of semester essay which was more important because of the impact it could have on his final grade for the economics course.

While student G appeared to have the capacity to write a good academic essay, it is unclear what, if any, experience he had had using referencing techniques and creating bibliographies. Regardless of previous referencing experience, on his end of semester essay, he demonstrated no ability at all to apply referencing requirements in his writing. He did, however, include a bibliography, although not in the form required, listing six sources. He used no reference to these texts in any part of his paper. The poor performance,

then, appears to be a result of the student's inability or unwillingness to follow these conventions of academic writing. Given the student's lack of effort in past writing tasks and his negative attitude toward the tutorial, it is likely that his performance is more a reflection of unwillingness than inability. However, it is interesting to note that this student's performances on tests were even more disappointing. The tests were not directly related to the tutorial in any way. In fact, they represented 80% of the student's final grade for the first course in his chosen major. Here, this learner earned only 63% and 55% respectively. As a result, student G barely passed the course with an even 60% final score. Thus, it may be incorrect to assume his poor referencing performance was only related to an unwillingness to do the work that was required in a tutorial in which he resented being enrolled.

6.6.2 Referencing and bibliographies: An average performer

This learner, student D, came to UCT with a matriculation score of 30 after completing studies at Saint Stithian's College, a reputable private school. He proved his desire to develop strong academic writing skills by earning a 75% on his first writing assignment and then going on to earn an impressive 85% on the far more difficult Adam Smith essay. However, his score for the end of the semester essay was a disappointing 61%. His tests also dropped dramatically at the end of semester. His test scores were 71% and 53% respectively. He ended the semester with a non-passing score of 57.9% in the economics course.

In spite of student D's difficulties late in the semester, he did manage to earn at least an average score on referencing for the end of semester essay. His prior experience with referencing was unclear from my interview and class interaction with this learner. However, his early writing in the tutorial would suggest that this student had previously received good academic writing instruction. Yet, this instruction may or may not have contained training in referencing techniques. Or, the instruction may have included referencing methods which differed from those required by UCT's economics department. One piece of evidence that may support the hypothesis that this student may have received prior instruction in a different method of referencing can be found in his end of semester essay. Here, I commented, 'some technique incorrect' and 'inconsistent' use of referencing methods.' These are common signs of a student who is experiencing difficulty due to confusing the rules of various referencing methods. His attempts to reference correctly seem scattered, yielding occasions where he references in an incorrect format, instances where he fails to use a reference where one is clearly required, and some references which are not listed as a source in the bibliography. Thus, a picture of a student still struggling to master the convention of referencing clearly emerges. For student D, the tutorial seems to play an important part in this learning process. He is likely to benefit from more practice, feedback, and instruction as the tutorial continues into the second semester.

6.6.3 Referencing and bibliographies: Above average performers

In this category, a large number of students, six, received a score of 5 out of 5 points for referencing and bibliography presentation. However, none of these six students received a perfect score of 5 from both readers. To examine the highest scorers in this category, I have chosen 2 students to represent this group. One received a score of 5 from Ms. Hutchings and a 4 from myself. The other received a score of 5 from me and a 3.5 from Ms. Hutchings. Both cases represent a score of five from one of the two readers with the correspondingly highest score from the other reader.

Student A received a mark of 5 from myself and a 3.5 from Ms. Hutchings in the referencing category. Both Ms. Hutchings and I were pleased with his bibliography. I made no negative notations regarding referencing while Ms. Hutchings noted, 'obscure, not sure how much reading' and 'doesn't use ' 's (direct quotes).' Ms. Hutchings makes a good observation concerning the complete absence of direct quotes in this student's essay and, I believe, also makes a good judgement in not awarding this student a full 5 points in this category. Nevertheless, this learner does handle the conventions of referencing indirect quotes correctly according to the requirements of the economics department. It is likely that he gained at least some of this referencing experience within the tutorial. In fact, his lack of confusion or overlapping with other referencing systems may very well indicate that he has either not had previous referencing instruction or that he has very carefully studied and followed the requirements within his new field of study.

A second high scoring learner in this category, student K, earned only a 21 on her matriculation score. This 24-year old learner attended a fairly average former white school in the Western Cape. While her matriculation score was quite low, her performance on writing skills was surprisingly strong. She earned a 78% and a 74% respectively on the first two essays. Her end of semester essay score dropped to a disappointing 66%, but her scores, on that same essay, were 4 out of 5 and 5 out of 5 for referencing and bibliography preparation.

Ms. Hutchings awarded student K a full 5 points in this category noting, 'fine (referencing) technique' and 'fine bibliography format.' I assigned this learner 4 points commenting, 'only 2-3 sources used.' Nevertheless, both scores indicated a strong and clear understanding of the conventions required for referencing within the economics department at UCT. Throughout the semester, this student worked hard on her writing assignments, often staying after the tutorial for extra help and carefully revising essays as suggested. Here, this student appears to have given her complete attention to the details required for referencing correctly. Thus, she fully utilized the instruction and information offered in the tutorial.

Finally, Ms. Hutchings and I failed to agree on any of the scores at the top of the range for the referencing category. It is easy to assume that referencing, by its very nature, should be a well-defined, objective area of assessment.

Presumably, a student has either used the referencing techniques correctly or not. The lack of agreement in the scores of these two readers, however, clearly suggests that there is a great deal of uncertainty and subjectivity in the assessment of this writing skill.

When Ms. Hutchings awarded her three scores of 5 points for referencing, I assigned the same students scores of four each time. When I awarded my three scores of five points in this category, Ms. Hutchings assigned one score of 3.5 and two scores of 3 for these same students. Thus, the score variances were greater in every instance where I awarded a score of 5 than when Ms. Hutchings assigned the score of 5 points. The primary concern, then, is those three students who were awarded scores which differed more than one point between readers. In this case, then, we will examine the three students who were given a score of 5 points by me and lower scores by Ms. Hutchings.

Ms. Hutchings made specific comments for each of the three students to whom she assigned lower scores than I did for referencing. Her comments to these students included the following remarks, 'obscure, not sure how much reading', 'doesn't use direct quotes', '(use of referencing) obscure – not clear how much', 'doesn't always reference others ideas', and 'references = end of paragraphs.' My comments for these same students were nothing more than notations of 'fine' or 'good' for certain criteria on the scoring sheet. In general, for this category, Ms. Hutchings comments were more thorough and

her assessment seemed to speak much more directly to the questions of *when* and *why* referencing should be used. My focus tended to be more limited to the mechanics of *how* to reference. Thus, Ms. Hutchings assessment, in the referencing category, better reflected the instructional objectives where the goal was to teach students *why*, *when*, and *how* to reference correctly. Ms. Hutchings attention to the ethical issues surrounding referencing may very well be a result of her more than seven years experience working in the Learning Development unit at UCT. Here, Hutchings and her colleagues have made strong commitments to teaching students referencing as it relates to the social practices of academic institutions. In other words, a deliberate effort has been made to emphasize the ethical issues of referencing rather than merely focusing on the technical aspects.

Conversely, when my marks for students were lower than those from Ms. Hutchings, in the referencing category, I tended to point out a lack in the number of different sources that were cited as well as a shortfall in the number of citations used overall. Thus, here I tended to reduce students' marks where I felt that sources were not being used as frequently as they ought to be used in this essay.

7. Findings and Conclusions

In this section I will make some final remarks about each of the six major instructional objectives and the extent to which I believe students were able

to acquire these skills. I will also make a few comments about the validity and limitations of this research. Finally, I will try to draw some general conclusions about the effectiveness of the Economics Language and Communication tutorial.

7.1 Findings and conclusions: Text comprehension

Three of the five students, whose cases were closely examined in this category, appeared to benefit from the reading instruction and practice provided in the tutorial. The highest scorer, although he understood texts well from the beginning, learned to use the texts more appropriately as a part of his own process of analysis and application as a writer. Two of the average performers in this category improved significantly in their ability to comprehend and analyze academic texts within the economics discipline. The lowest performer made no progress in demonstrating his comprehension of the texts in any of his essay writing. His test scores, however, indicated that, despite the lack of progress evident in his writing, text comprehension was not particularly problematic for this learner.

This below average performing student's seeming lack of reading comprehension skills in his essays, as compared to the comprehension competence evident in his strong test scores, points to some important assessment issues. First, it is often difficult to differentiate between a weakness in text comprehension and a weakness in written expression based solely on student writing samples. The question which follows is, does the

student have difficulty understanding the texts or is he simply unable to express his understanding in written essay form? This question cannot be answered on the basis of essay assessments alone. Here, I found it useful to look at students' performances on tests as well. In some cases, students appeared to have no understanding of the texts at all when asked to demonstrate that comprehension in an essay format. However, in some of these cases, the same student performed quite well on tests which were primarily composed of basic objective questions. Here, these students' real area of difficulty was not reading comprehension at all. Rather, an inability to express that understanding in a formal essay format was maybe responsible for some of the lower scores. For this reason, essays are perhaps rather poor tools for assessing students' reading comprehension abilities. Still, a learner's ability to demonstrate an understanding of texts is an essential part of writing successful academic essays.

In general, text comprehension and analysis is not a skill which can be easily remediated by the time a student reaches university. However, many students, even those with poor reading skills and those who speak English as an additional language, can benefit from learning how to use texts more effectively and efficiently. In addition, most learners benefited from learning how to critically analyze and apply texts as part of their own thinking and learning processes. By the end of the first semester, most learners understood that no single given text could be used as an absolute and unquestioned authoritative voice. Rather, texts were to be used in the

learner's process of exploring and gathering information to draw her own conclusions. It is this type of reading skill, the ability to read critically and apply that reading to the formulation of one's own thinking and learning processes, that I feel the tutorial taught most effectively. A few students required remediation in basic reading comprehension skills which the tutorial was unable to supply given its limitations of time and resources. For these students, it is very likely that continued practice and experience reading university level and economics texts will help them to handle those same texts more easily.

7.2 Conclusions: The language and discourse of economics

In this category, scores tended to be skewed toward the higher end of the scale. A score of 4 was most frequently awarded for ten out of the twenty-four scores assigned. However, no student received a score of 5 from either reader. Thus, this skill appears to be one that students were in the process of acquiring rather than a skill that they were able to master within the context of the tutorial.

The data suggests that the tutorial was very effective in specifically addressing the language and discourse of the economics discipline. Students seemed to handle discipline-specific terminology with proper accuracy and precision. However, the tutorial was far less successful in addressing issues such as English as a second language interference and problems of generalization in non-technical language. In fact, in some instances where

students displayed strong basic writing skills, problems of discourse were easily obscured. Thus, students who wrote in a smooth, fluid style often were able to hide deficiencies with the more specific discourse of economics.

In general, this category may have been too broad to produce the most useful assessment data. More useful data may have been produced by creating two separate discourse categories, one to assess the students' general language abilities and another to evaluate the students' abilities to adhere to the specific discourse requirements of the economics discipline.

Finally, the tutorial appeared to be most effective when helping students to acquire the discourse specific to the economics discipline. As in the reading category, the tutorial was far less successful at handling more generalist weaknesses of discourse such as English as a second language interference and general grammar deficiencies. Here again, a few students desperately needed the kinds of support most often associated with ESL or remedial grammar course settings. Even, then, ingrained Africanization of English is extremely difficult to change. Perhaps, this brings academic institutions back to the ethical questions surrounding discourse inequalities.

7.3 Conclusions: Task analysis

In the task analysis category, students scored strongly in the middle range with a mark of either 3 or 3.5 in sixteen out of the twenty-four scores assigned. Task analysis became increasingly difficult and important as essay

tasks became more complex and demanding. Thus, even if scores for task analysis remained basically constant, it is likely that the tutorial was effective in preparing these students with both instruction and practice to be able to handle the more difficult essay task at the end of the semester.

In fact, the data shows that in three out of the four case studies explored in this category, students were helped by the tutorial. Both the high performer and low performer did better at the end of the semester than would have been indicated by earlier efforts. One of the average performers also seemed to benefit from the content of the tutorial. Although the score was only in the average range, this student did attempt to respond to all parts of the complex essay task. The reason her score did not exceed the average level was due to a lack of detail and examples in the body paragraphs of the essay. Here, the tutorial did provide this student with the correct essay structure and framework. However, an absence of details and examples was more likely a function of difficulties this student was experiencing with the acquisition of domain knowledge in the economics course. The other average performer showed some improvement between the first essay and the Adam Smith composition but was unable to sustain that progress on the end of semester essay. For this student, the tutorial did not seem to keep pace with the increasing demands of the writing tasks that were required.

7.4 Conclusions: Macro organization and structural strategies

In the macro organization category, the majority of the scores, seventeen out of twenty-four, were in the medium to medium-high range with marks of either a 3 or 4. This particular skill was given a great deal of emphasis in the tutorial. Many of the students in my class had little or no experience with the strategies which students need to know in order to organize their writing in a way which meets the basic requirements of good academic writing. Very basic components of an essay such as introductions, conclusions, paragraphing, and topic sentences needed to be learned and practiced. Other students, who were more experienced academic writers, were also challenged as writing tasks increased in complexity and difficulty. The end of the semester essay, in particular, was at a greater level of difficulty than any writing that these students had ever attempted before. Thus, the writing itself proved to be a valuable part of the students' learning experience.

The tutorial successfully helped students to increase their essay organization skills in at least two of the three case studies presented in this category. Both the high performer and the average performer showed evidence of improvement in this skill area. Only the low performer failed to show improvement in his essay organization skills. However, the tutorial alone may not be fully responsible for this student's lack of progress. In fact, it is far more likely that this student's resistance toward both the tutorial and writing within the economics course as a whole, may be the real source of the failure here. Thus, it appears that the content, instruction, and practice provided

within the tutorial were highly effective in helping these students to develop greater skills in structuring and organizing their essays. The single incidence of a score of 5, however, suggests that this was a skill that students were still in the process of acquiring. Mastering essay organization would take more time and practice, extending well beyond the students' first semester at university.

7.5 Conclusions: Argumentation and evidence

A very large number of students came to the tutorial with little or no experience of writing in the persuasive or argumentative mode. As a result, the average score for this category was the lowest of the six skill areas covered in this study. In fact, only one of the students scored above 3.5 in this category. Sixteen of the scores were judged to be either a 3 or 3.5 on the grading scale. As these scores indicate, students were generally able to demonstrate some degree of skill in argumentation. However, mastery of this skill was not realized by any of the learners in this study.

Two of the three learners cited as case studies in the argumentation category had serious deficiencies in the execution of this writing skill. The average and below average performers both failed to assert their own voices in these essays. In fact, argument was almost completely absent and evidence was often presented as a list of quotes and a patchwork of other's ideas borrowed from the texts which were supplied to students to help them address the essay topic. Only the above average performer was able to assert his voice

as the writer in a way that lent cohesion and authenticity to his argument. On prior essays, however, this learner, like the others in the tutorial, was unable to find a way to assert his own voice within the context of the essay task. Thus, it was encouraging to see this student respond favorably to comments and corrections on previous essays to the point that he was able to demonstrate progress in developing this complex writing skill.

In spite of the low average score in this category, it is likely that most students did improve their argumentation skills. Even though most students had extremely limited experience with argumentation, every learner did attempt to develop a thesis statement which he or she supported with evidence from the texts. The area not mastered by any of these students, however, was the importance of asserting her or his voice as a writer. Here, many took the traditional warning to base arguments on "fact not opinion." What we failed to relate to these learners was the necessity for each of these students to enter into the argument using their own intellect to critique, articulate, and, in some cases, advance the ideas of other scholars. I did not address the importance of the writer's voice in my tutorial instruction. However, feedback was given in this area on the second essay. The high performer in this category was able to take that feedback and use it to make improvements. Other students, however, may not have understood the meaning of comments concerning the inclusion of voice. For this vast majority of learners, more instruction would have been useful.

7.6 Conclusions: Referencing and bibliography format

Student performance for the referencing category contained the full range of score possibilities from 1 to 5. Many students had no experience using internal citations and creating bibliographies. Others had been exposed to referencing methods which differed from the methods prescribed by the UCT Economics Department. Thus, no student had prior knowledge of all the rules and conventions required for referencing in the end of semester essay.

In this category, the average performer used references in the essay but appeared to randomly switch from one method to another. In contrast, the below average performer failed to use any references within the essay or to include a bibliography of any kind. Here, the poor performance was probably caused by an unwillingness to complete the assignment rather than an inability to learn referencing and bibliography techniques.

The six above average performers all received a score of five from either Ms. Hutchings or myself. In no case did a student receive a score of 5 from both readers. Here, it became apparent that each reader was emphasizing different aspects of referencing conventions. I tended to assign a perfect score when students cited texts often and drew from a wide variety of readings. Ms. Hutchings, however, awarded the full five points when students demonstrated that they clearly grasped the when and why of referencing. We both expected students to use methods consistently in order to receive full credit. In the referencing category, the data may have been

even more useful if separate scores were assigned for when, how, and why to reference.

All of the students in the study, even perhaps the student who received a score of 1 from both readers, appeared to learn some of the methods, conventions, and expectations of proper referencing as prescribed by the UCT Economics Department. However, the end of the semester essay was the only writing task in the first semester where learners had the opportunity to practice this newly acquired knowledge. With this in mind, it is likely that improvement would follow for most students as their experience and practice with referencing techniques continued in the second semester and throughout their university career.

7.7 Conclusion: The validity of assessment in this research

In general, I believe that the primary assessment tool, the essay scoring sheet used by both essay readers, provided a great deal of useful data for this research. However, this data alone would have been an unreliable tool to draw conclusions about individual students acquisition of discrete academic writing skills. Other data, including student profile sheets, interviews, and the various pieces of student writing collected from each learner, provided additional information which made possible more complete and accurate interpretations of the numerical data produced by readers using the essay scoring sheets.

I also believe that the validity of this research was greatly enhanced by using two readers for the initial assessment of the learners' end of semester essay. The marks given by each reader were typically very similar. However, where marks did differ between readers, the analysis of these variances frequently created a wealth of useful insights and findings.

The assessment tool used in this research was designed to produce a quite narrow and limited range of findings. This research did not attempt to use this sampling of students to make claims about the average effectiveness of the tutorial for all 163 students enrolled. The research was also designed to produce results which addressed the notion of acquisition of discrete skills rather than attempting to make generalized claims about improvements of student writing. The assessment tools and research methodology used here would have been inadequate to produce claims about the effectiveness of the tutorial for all students or the general notion of improvement for any given student included in this study.

7.8 Conclusion: General observations and recommendations

Generally, the tutorial provided a good opportunity for those students enrolled to begin the process of acquiring the particular discourse of their newly entered academic community. Most students were able to learn useful skills which should serve them well in their academic careers. Students entered the tutorial with a wide range of writing experiences. Many had little or no experience writing academic essays. Much of the anecdotal evidence in this

research suggests that students of varied experience and ability levels were able to use the instruction and practice provided in the tutorial to develop the skills required to succeed in completing writing tasks in their chosen discipline.

Some of the instructional objectives of the tutorial could be learned or mastered in a relatively short period of time. Other skills would take much longer to develop. For example, referencing, task analysis, and macro organization can be taught in a fairly short span of time. Of course, even these skills need to be continually developed as writing tasks become more demanding. Conversely, skills such as text comprehension, language and discourse, and argument may take a very long time to develop. Reading and language skills can be particularly difficult to remediate for students who speak English as an additional language.

This research also indicated that some of the categories I chose for assessing the students' writing had a tendency to overlap with other categories. For example, it was often difficult to distinguish between a problem of discourse and a problem with reading. Likewise, problems with task analysis often led to further problems with organization and structure. Another problem with some categories was a tendency to be too broad. See sections 7.2 and 7.6 for examples.

Finally, while this tutorial does provide support for many students who have had little or no prior school writing experience, some students who have been enrolled do not need this kind of support. For these learners, who may not need the tutorial, a diagnostic test could be given to select only those students who are in need of the additional help to develop academic writing skills. When students were properly placed, they generally appreciated and benefited from the writing instruction and practice provided by the tutorial.

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APPENDIX B

Student Interview Question Guide:

1. Tell me about any kind of writing you've done in school before coming to UCT. (creative, poems, short stories essays, reports, exams, timed writings, etc...)
2. Have you ever done any writing for your own enjoyment?
3. What kinds of writing do you like best?
4. What kinds of writing do you least like?
5. Would you prefer to complete an essay or a creative writing assignment?
6. Would you rather spend an entire hour reading or writing?
7. Do you prefer essay tests or objective exams?
8. What is the best thing you've ever written inside or outside of school?
9. What was the most difficult thing you've ever written?
10. Are you confident or worried about university writing requirements?
11. How do you feel about your enrollment in the tutorial?
12. How do you think the tutorial might help you?
13. What has been helpful in the tutorials thus far?
14. What percentage of the time spent in the tutorials has been useful to you so far?
15. How could the time in the tutorial be better used to help you develop your writing skills?
16. What percentage of tutorial meetings would you attend if attendance was optional?

APPENDIX C

Essay Score and Comment Sheet for:

_____ (student name)

1. Text comprehension and analysis

*reliance on common knowledge only/ texts only:

*used for statistics only:

*misunderstanding of texts:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

2. Learning to understand and use the language or discourse of the economics discipline

*second language interference:

*use of first person:

*accuracy / inaccuracy of terminology:

*reliance on use of "eg" rather than embedding examples:

*tone:

*generalizations:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

3. Task analysis of essay questions

*level of detail:

*use of examples:

*1st / 2nd / 3rd part weak:

*1st / 2nd / 3rd part strong:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

APPENDIX C (Cont'd.)

4. Macro organization and structural strategies for writing essays

*weak / strong introduction:

*weak / strong conclusion:

*thesis statement:

*audience awareness:

*reliance on step-by-step structure / narrative style:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

5. Constructing logical arguments with adequate evidence

*Convincing / unconvincing:

*reliance on listing:

*writer's voice:

*transitions at paragraph level:

*sudden endings:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

6. Referencing and other essay presentation expectations

*technique:

*appeared to know / not to know when to reference:

*bibliography format:

*use of referencing method:

*other:

SCORE: ____ (1-5)

APPENDIX D

Student Essay Scores:

Student	Read B	Read H	Disc B	Disc H	Task B	Task H	Org B	Org H	Arg B	Arg H	Ref B	Ref H	Totals
A	4.5	4	3.5	3.5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3.5	49
B	3.5	3.5	4	3.5	3.5	3	4	4	2.5	3	5	3	42.5
C	4	3	3.5	4	4	3	3	3	3.5	3	4	5	43
D	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	37
E	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	4	5	38
F	3	3	2	2	4	2.5	3	3	2	2.5	3	3	33
G	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	1	1	36
H	4	2	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2	3	2.5	2	1	27.5
I	3	4	4	4	4	3.5	2	2	3	3.5	2	3.5	38.5
J	3	4	4	4	3	4	5	5	3	3.5	4	3.5	46
K	3	4	3	4	3.5	3	3.5	3.5	3	3.5	4	5	43
L	3.5	3	3	3.5	4	3	4	4	3	3	5	3	42
Avg.	3.375	3.291	3.166	3.583	3.5	3.208	3.375	3.5	2.833	3.125	3.5	3.29	

All scores reflect marks earned on the end of semester essay. There were six categories graded for each student's essay. Also, each essay was read and marked by two readers. Thus, for each skill area a "B" score for reader Baker and an "H" score for reader Hutchings was recorded.