The Role of a Tutoring Programme
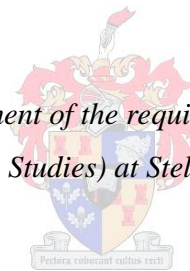# in a First-Year English Course:
Student and Tutor Perceptions

by

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, the deteriorating academic performance of first-year university students has led to the implementation of teaching and learning interventions, such as tutorial programmes, in various subjects at universities world-wide, including in South Africa. The changing nature of higher education has also led to the incorporation of more student-centred teaching approaches (such as tutorials) along with the traditional teacher-centred approaches (such as lectures). Consequently, tutorial programmes have become the topic of many research projects aimed at describing the function or operation of these programmes, or assessing their efficacy.

As a compulsory or potentially compulsory subject for at least seven courses in three faculties at Stellenbosch University, English 178 has one of the highest annual student intakes at the institution. Considering the important role the subject is generally perceived to play in equipping all manner of students for the professional environment, it was imperative that the English 178 course's primary learning intervention – its tutorial programme – be thoroughly evaluated in order to ensure its usefulness and the accomplishment of its purposes. This study investigated the role of tutors in the achievement of the English 178 course outcomes as perceived by students and tutors respectively. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed to effect this assessment.

The study found that when students arrive at English 178, they are underprepared for academic writing. According to the results, the course then equips students for the more basic aspects of this skill, such as formulating and developing an argument, and structuring an academic essay. However, advanced skills such as independent research and referencing are still problematic for many students by the end of English 178. In supporting students to acquire these academic skills, tutors have four roles, according to student and tutor perceptions: expositor, chairperson, teacher, and scaffolder. Based on these results, the English 178 course can be seen as an example of facilitated textual enquiry (FTE), a teaching and learning model introduced by this study, which constitutes a selective application of problem-based learning (PBL) principles to literary studies. FTE entails the scaffolded, partially-guided instruction of close reading, critical thinking and academic writing skills by a tutor-facilitator. The study posits that this type of model is indispensable in the achievement of course outcomes in the 21st-century academic landscape.

Key words: Pedagogy, education, learning intervention, tutoring, literary studies

Opsomming

In die afgelope twee dekades het eerstejaar-universiteitstudente se verswakkende akademiese prestasie gelei tot die implementering van onderrig- en leerintervensies, soos tutoriaalprogramme, in verskeie vakke aan universiteite wêreldwyd, insluitend in Suid-Afrika. Die veranderende aard van hoër opvoeding het ook gelei tot die inlywing van meer studentgesentreerde onderrigbenaderings (soos tutoriale) by tradisionele dosentgesentreerde benaderings (soos lesings). Gevolglik het tutoriaalprogramme die onderwerp van vele navorsingsprojekte geword wat daarop gemik is om die funksie of werking van hierdie programme te beskryf, of die doeltreffendheid daarvan te assesseer.

As 'n verpligte of potensieel verpligte vak vir ten minste sewe kursusse in drie fakulteite by die Universiteit Stellenbosch het Engels 178 een van die hoogste jaarlikse studente-innames aan die instelling. Gegewe die belangrike rol wat die vak volgens algemene persepsie speel in die toerusting van allerlei studente vir die professionele omgewing, was dit noodsaaklik dat die Engels 178-kursus se primêre leerintervensie – die tutoriaalprogram – deeglik geëvalueer word om die dienstigheid en die vervulling van die doelwitte daarvan te verseker. Hierdie studie het die rol van tutors in die bereiking van die Engels 178-kursusuitkomste ondersoek vanuit die oogpunt van onderskeidelik studente en tutors. 'n Kombinasie van kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe navorsingsmetodes is gebruik om hierdie assessering te doen.

Die studie het gevind dat wanneer studente by Engels 178 aankom, hulle ondervoorbereid is vir akademiese skryf. Volgens die resultate rus die kursus hulle dan toe vir die meer basiese aspekte van hierdie vaardigheid, soos om 'n argument te formuleer en ontwikkel, en om 'n akademiese opstel te struktureer. Gevorderde vaardighede, soos onafhanklike navorsing en verwysings, is egter teen die einde van Engels 178 steeds vir baie studente problematies. Wanneer tutors studente ondersteun om hierdie akademiese vaardighede aan te leer, het hulle volgens studente en tutors se persepsies vier rolle: uitlêer (*expositor*), voorsitter (*chairperson*), leermeester (*teacher*), en steieraar (*scaffolder*). Gegrond op hierdie resultate kan die Engels 178-kursus gesien word as 'n voorbeeld van gefasiliteerde tekstuele ondersoek (*facilitated textual enquiry* of FTE), 'n onderrig- en leermodel wat deur hierdie studie bekendgestel word en wat bestaan uit 'n selektiewe toepassing van probleemgebaseerde leerbeginsels op letterkundestudie. FTE behels die gesteierde (*scaffolded*), gedeeltelik geleide onderrig van stiplees (*close reading*), kritiese denke en akademiese skryfvaardighede deur 'n tutor-fasiliteerder. Die studie voer aan dat hierdie soort model onontbeerlik is in die bereiking van kursusuitkomste in die 21ste-eeuse akademiese landskap.

Sleutelwoorde: Pedagogie, opvoeding, leerintervensie, tutoring, letterkundestudie

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND GOALS OF STUDY

1.1. Overview

The past two decades have been marked by global, dramatic changes in academia in general, and humanities studies in particular. A report titled *The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future*, released by Harvard University in June 2013, posits that in the current economic climate, university disciplines must do at least one of three things in order to be successful: "the discipline must either (i) be devoted to the study of money; or (ii) be capable of attracting serious research money; or (iii) demonstrably promise that its graduates will make significant amounts of money. The university study of the Humanities is thought to score zero on each count" (5). This applies as much to the South African context as to the rest of the world.

An added factor in the South African context is the fact that, in an attempt to rectify the educational imbalances of the past, the government has placed emphasis on "critical areas of skills shortage such as engineering, technology, the physical sciences and certain areas of business studies such as accounting" (Department of Higher Education and Training 5). John Higgins (2010) argues that the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Management) disciplines have been favoured in government research funding at the cost of the Humanities. Higgins was also part of a study panel who compiled the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)'s Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa (2011). This study found that "[t]he weight of scholarship in the Humanities lacks international status and standing, with most of the published work appearing in local journals" (128) and that "[t]he decline of the Humanities has many causes that include government policy and funding, institutional choices and decision-making, school guidance and counselling, and parental and student preferences" (127).

The preference of STEM degrees over the Humanities is also evident at Stellenbosch University: according to the Stellenbosch University 2012 Fact Book, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences showed the lowest annual growth rate of all the faculties at the university from 2011 to 2012 (11). The contribution of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to the total enrolments at the university also decreased from 20.7% in 2006 to 17.9% in 2012. This shows that students tend to play into this commodification of education, responding strategically by doing a cost-benefit analysis of which degree will give them the best chances of employment in the least amount of time. As I argue in Chapter 5, this cost-benefit analysis also continues to guide their choices of action throughout their university studies.

Humanities disciplines world-wide are therefore increasingly subjected to market forces, and English Departments have decidedly not been exempt. The fact that the ability to analyse a literary text is simply not as valuable in the job market as English language proficiency and professional communication skills has led to an increase in, for example, academic English Studies modules that contain few or no set works. However, amid this pressure there is still a resistance against the instrumentalisation of the Humanities. Various critics have recently attempted to illustrate the value of the Humanities in the 21st century, and in particular how these disciplines can guide thinking about political and social issues, promote responsible citizenship, and inform the future of societies (Nussbaum 2009, Berlowitz 2010, Wright 2013). The ASSAf Consensus Report shows that, contrary to popular perception, "virtually all Humanities graduates are employed, that the vast majority (more than 80%) work for an employer while the rest are self-employed, and that there is a fair spread of graduate employment across the public and private sectors" (127). The responses to the student surveys, discussed in Chapter 5, also point to the fact that not all students see English Studies 178 (hereafter referred to as English 178) simply as a means of acquiring a set of communication skills to be used in the professional environment, particularly outside of the Humanities.

The English 178 course at Stellenbosch University attempts to strike a balance between the two opposing educational viewpoints just introduced. It does this by focusing on the teaching of skills that are applicable inside and outside of literary studies, i.e. reading and writing skills, but also the ability to think critically, and to manage time and administrative responsibilities. In this sense, English 178 can be seen as an example of what Higgins calls NAIL (narrative, analysis, interpretation, literacy) disciplines, which he contrasts to the STEM disciplines. In this study I describe the integrated teaching model employed in English 178 as facilitated textual enquiry (FTE), a concept on which I elaborate in Sections 1.2.5 and 2.7 and throughout Chapter 5. This model exemplifies the kind of Humanities pedagogy that equips students in all domains for being valuable citizens in a changing world.

As a compulsory or potentially compulsory subject for at least seven courses in three faculties at Stellenbosch University, English 178 has one of the highest annual student intakes at the institution. Degree programmes such as BA Law, BA Sports Science and BA International Studies do not make English 178 compulsory, but they do require students to take a language subject, and a large number of students choose English due to its supposed easiness compared to other languages, or because of its assumed usefulness in the professional world. Considering the important role the subject is therefore perceived to play in equipping all manner of students for the professional environment, and the pressure on the English Department to maintain throughput rates despite this increasing

diversity in student base, it is imperative that the English 178 course's primary learning intervention – its tutorial programme – be thoroughly evaluated in order to ensure its usefulness and the accomplishment of its purposes. Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey and Howard Freeman (2004) write that "[f]ailing to describe programme performance with a reasonable degree of validity may distort a programme's accomplishments, deny it credit for its successes, or overlook shortcomings for which it should be accountable" (16). This means that it would be impossible to evaluate the tutorial programme without also evaluating the English 178 course as a whole. This thesis is therefore primarily a project of evaluation research, also known as programme evaluation, and defined by Leonard Rutman (1984) as "the use of scientific methods to measure the implementation and outcomes of [a] programme" (10). The subject of this evaluation is the English 178 tutorial programme as a learning intervention within the English 178 course. Mixed methods research is employed to determine what students learn in English 178 and to define the role tutors play in this learning process as perceived by students and tutors respectively.

Seamus Allardice (2013) argued for an interrogation of what the English 178 course actually teaches the first-year English students. He suggests that "before any significant changes are made to the course, a study should be made of what exactly the course teaches and how that aligns with the desired learning outcomes" (101). What Allardice is in fact arguing for is an *impact assessment* of the English 178 course and it tutorial programme. According to Rossi *et al.*, "[i]mpact assessments are undertaken to find out whether programmes actually produce the intended effects" (234). This study therefore also serves as an impact assessment, in which qualitative and quantitative analysis of (a) students' experience of the course and its tutorials, and (b) tutors' perception of their role and responsibilities in the course are combined to determine the level of efficacy of the programme and the corresponding significance of tutorials to the course. The student questionnaires used in this study were structured in such a way as to yield data on the participants' educational history and demographics, which now provides a comprehensive context in which to address the research questions. The data analysis was also intended to reveal possible shortcomings in the tutorial programme (including in tutor training), which, if remedied, would result in increased programme efficacy.

1.2. Definition of key terms

This study makes extensive use of four key terms pertinent to the study's context. For the sake of clarity, the terms are defined here as they will be referred to in this study specifically.

1.2.1. Learning intervention

A learning intervention is any action or mechanism put in place with the purpose of identifying academic obstacles to student success and assisting students in overcoming these obstacles. A learning intervention may be long-term, such as a tutorial programme, supplemental instruction or remedial education, or short-term, such as a workshop or a study guide. Adapting Rossi *et al.*'s definition of a social intervention, one could also describe a learning intervention as "[a]n organised, planned and usually ongoing effort designed to ameliorate a [teaching and learning] problem or improve [teaching and learning] conditions" (434).

1.2.2. Literary studies

The term literary studies[1] refers to the reading and critical analysis of works of English literature, including newer genres such as film and media, at university level. A literary studies course is characterised by set works, i.e. prescribed books which must be read by students in order for them to speak and write about these works in a formal, analytical way, on which the students are then graded. Literary studies is distinct from linguistics or even sociolinguistics and does not purport to assist students in acquiring communication skills.

1.2.3. Tutorial

A tutorial[2] is a small-group learning environment managed by an individual with more experience than the group in the particular subject field. As opposed to a lecturer in a large-group learning environment, the small-group tutor does not lecture, but may explain and clarify concepts, as well as answer questions. The tutorial provides the students in the group with opportunities for expressing their own critical thinking and gauging the reaction of their peers, which in turn enables students to construct their own meanings. A detailed discussion of the tutorial as a teaching and learning mechanism can be found in Chapter 2.

1.2.4. Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of a course (e.g. a module of first-year English) can be described as the collection of knowledge and skills which students are expected to understand and be able to use independently as the result of the learning processes in the particular course. An example of a learning outcome would be "[the] ability to analyse a wide variety of texts" (SU Calendar 215).

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[1] This definition is one I have formulated based on my experience as a student and tutor in the field. It is therefore a definition situated in English 178, although this should not pose an obstacle, given that my study is also situated in English 178.

[2] Again, this definition is based on my experience as a tutor and my interaction with other tutors in English 178 specifically. For the purposes of my study this should not pose an obstacle.

1.2.5. Facilitated textual enquiry

This study introduces the concept of facilitated textual enquiry (FTE), which is discussed in detail in Section 2.7. FTE can be defined as the scaffolded, partially-guided instruction of close reading, critical thinking and academic writing skills by a tutor-facilitator. The teaching model of FTE adapts some of the principles of known constructivist pedagogical models, in particular the more scientific problem-based learning (PBL) approach, for the unique context of literary studies. FTE draws on the interrogative nature of the discipline to create an effective, student-centred learning environment. In FTE, students are continuously supported, but the degree of support is adjusted as the student takes responsibility for his/her own learning, which he/she is encouraged to do. Creativity and collaboration play a central role in this teaching and learning model.

1.3. Background and context

1.3.1. The English 178 course

As a university subject, English 178 straddles a huge constituency, and a large number of the students who take the subject are English Second Language (ESL) students. As a historically Afrikaans university, Stellenbosch University accommodates a student population of which just over a third (37% in 2012) have English as their home language (SU Fact Book 47). Of the respondents in the student surveys conducted as part of this study, all enrolled in the English 178 course in 2012, 47% indicated English as their home language, which is slightly higher than the Faculty average of 42% in 2012 (SU Fact Book 48). Language is merely one of the widely varying elements in the complex student demography of English 178 students; other elements include gender, race, educational background and socio-economic status. These variations are reflected in student participation and performance, and also carry challenges for the English 178 tutors, who need to provide the same level of support to students of all levels of ability and interest.

The English 178 course at Stellenbosch University has undergone various changes in the last decade, but the most drastic has been the move from a three-streamed discretionary model to a standardised course with no internal content variation. Until 2010, students enrolling for English 178 had a choice between three "versions" of the course with regard to its tutorials: Literary Studies, where tutorials focused on high literature and dealt with various set works additional to the lectures; Fact and Fiction, which followed a more journalistic approach and contained shorter literary texts in addition to the lecture set works; and Academic Skills, where tutorials (including one extra tutorial per week) focused on language acquisition and the tutorial syllabus contained no additional set works. In 2010, the standardisation of tutorial content across the three streams was

implemented to simplify the management of the tutorials. The tutorials were changed to a source of lecture support in addition to the introduction of some new content and the teaching of writing skills, since this would give students more academic hours with the texts on which tests were based (as opposed to tutorial texts, on which essays but no tests were written). For the purpose of this standardisation, the Academic Skills stream was removed in 2010, followed by the Literary Studies stream in 2011. The new, standardised course was based on the Fact and Fiction stream.

Creating a course that aims to attract more students into under- and eventually postgraduate studies in English was a sensible and well-founded decision for any academic department to make in the current economic climate, and considering the state of the discipline. Staff members at tertiary institutions world-wide are experiencing pressure to publish more of their own research, and an undergraduate curriculum that exposes students to departmental focus areas would no doubt be useful in this regard. The standardisation also eliminated the "prestige gap" between lecturers and tutors teaching Literary Studies, and lecturers and tutors teaching Academic Skills tutorials.

However, the new, standardised English 178 course enabled research at the cost of teaching, because it exacerbated a trend that had started in the mid-2000s, namely a decrease in the number of lecturers involved in teaching first-year tutorials. This compromise is not limited to the English Department at Stellenbosch University; Kala Retna, Eric Chong and Robert Cavana (2009) assert that "while research and teaching are described as complementary […], in practice, since time and resources are limited, one often takes place at the expense of the other" (251). The standardisation of the English 178 course also carried other disadvantages. The fact that the Academic Skills stream fell away meant that there was no course in the entire faculty for facilitating English-language proficiency. The standardised course is therefore currently a precarious middle-ground that does not truly cater either for additional-language speakers or for the students who are most likely to end up in postgraduate English Studies: the literary scholars.

The primary objective of the English 178 course as it currently stands, then, is for students to acquire a set of academic skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) which will equip them for further undergraduate study. According to Brenda Leibowitz (2000),

> [w]riting, reading, speaking and listening all have the potential to engage our thinking. Shifting between the modes allows us to practise aspects of the discourse in contexts which are easy and familiar to us, and allows us to internalise the concepts and phrases necessary for academic discourse. (19)

The English 178 tutorials play a cardinal role in this "shifting between … modes" (Leibowitz 19), as it is here where students are taught academic writing, and as opposed to lectures, it is here where

students speak (and, as anecdotal evidence would suggest, listen). According to the 2012 Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the intended outcome of the English 178 course "is to develop the student's ability to analyse a wide variety of texts and to communicate effectively in written and spoken English" (215). The course concentrates on "cultural and literary studies" as well as "the development of an appropriate academic discourse" (Stellenbosch University 215). The 2012 English 178 course prospectus lists the outcomes of the course as (1) "the ability to read texts critically"; (2) "an awareness of language, what it is and how it influences us"; and (3) well-developed writing skills (Department of English 1). The English 178 course is therefore primarily a literary studies course, and aims to help students master academic reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as research skills. The course is designed to prepare students for undergraduate literary and cultural studies. What the course does *not* do, contrary to the expectations of many second-language students, is to provide instruction in English language acquisition (grammar, syntax, verbal fluency, and the like).

When students come to the English 178 course, they are tested in the Early Assessment to determine the extent to which high school has prepared them for acquiring these academic skills. Ideally, students should already be able to respond to a text in writing by the time they enter the English 178 course. Students are expected to have mastered grammar skills at this point, and to be able to read and understand texts independently, at least to some extent. The Early Assessment is marked by tutors using a specifically designed marking grid instead of the Department's standard grid for marking essays and other assignments. The Early Assessment marking grid ensures that tutors mark expressly for the students' ability to present an argument, their formulation and use of critical literary terms, and their language use. This assessment consequently allows tutors to identify those students who might be in need of additional support early in the academic year.

Currently, the English 178 course consists of one lecture and two small-group tutorials per week. The same lecture is held in three different time slots so as to accommodate all students. The lecture syllabus includes poetry, two novels, two plays and a film, all of which share themes of gender, race and/or power. These recurrent themes enable the course to introduce first-year students to theoretical concepts like feminism, (post)colonialism and imperialism in a coherent programme of study. The first semester's work focuses on southern African literature and consists of Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and South African playwright Athol Fugard's *Master Harold…and the boys* (1982). In the second semester, the focus broadens with Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600)*,* Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show* (1998) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). The lecturing style is traditional, with students sitting in a tiered lecture hall and taking notes while a lecturer presents material, sometimes with the help of

PowerPoint presentations. Due to the logistics of the lecture hall, students tend not to ask questions in the lectures. Some lecturers encourage student participation by asking questions, but it is often impossible for all the students to hear the questions or responses. Other lecturers attempt group-work/pairing-up activities to encourage participation, but due to the distance between the lecturer and the students, and the consequent lack of control over how the allocated group-work time is spent, this is not particularly successful either.

Assessment in the English 178 course is continuous and consists exclusively of written work: one assignment or essay on each studied text, which is submitted during tutorials (or electronically) and marked by tutors, as well as one test per term, which is marked by the resource coordinator for the specific text along with a team of tutors who volunteer to mark and are remunerated per test script. Writing occupies a central position in the course since "[i]t is the medium in which [academics] are required to display their knowledge", and since "[s]tudents or researchers who have control over this medium will do better than those who do not, despite the fact that they may not have a better understanding of the material discussed" (Leibowitz 21). A semester essay, written twice a year as one of the assignments, carries greater weight than the shorter assignments, which is why students also submit a draft of the semester essay to their tutor approximately one month before the semester essay is due. The draft is then marked by the tutor and returned to the students with comments. According to Starfield (2000), "[g]ood feedback allows students to develop a sense of how they are faring, whether they need to improve, whether they are meeting expectations" (110). For this reason, students are encouraged to also make a personal consultation appointment with the tutor to discuss the improvement of their draft in more detail. Having had adequate time to implement the tutor's comments, the students hand in the improved final essay on the due date. The tutor then marks the final essay, bearing in mind to what extent the draft has been improved.

The central pedagogical task of teaching academic writing is therefore executed in its totality by tutors in English 178. In fact, there can be no question that the bulk of the first-year teaching load in the English Department is currently carried by the tutors, if teaching load is measured in contact hours, marking time and influence on student grades. Tutors are almost without exception not lecturers, either in title or in job description, but this does not mean that they do not play an extremely valuable role in the course. However, traditionally the title of tutor seems to bear connotations of inferiority, inexperience and pre-professionalism, and tutors are sometimes undervalued as a result. One of the goals of this study therefore is to challenge these connotations and illustrate the academic value of tutors and tutorials for first-year students in the English 178 Course at Stellenbosch University. One must bear in mind that no university can function without students, and that the postgraduate students and lecturers of the future must start out as first-years,

who spend most of their time in English 178 in a tutorial class. The responsibility of "winning students over" for postgraduate study then undoubtedly lies with tutors. On a much less idealistic note, the tutors are equally significant to the objective of student throughput. To support this argument, I now include a discussion of how tutors and tutorials feature in the English 178 course, and how this particular tutorial programme compares to similar programmes at two other universities in the Western Cape.

1.3.2 Tutoring in first-year English Studies: comparing three university courses

English 178 tutorials follow general disciplinary practice by taking on the form of group discussions which centre on literary analysis. Ideally, students prepare the relevant readings (set works and/or secondary sources) at home before the tutorial so that they are able to contribute their own interpretation of and comments on the text. Students attend two tutorials per week, always in the same group, with each tutorial group consisting of 12 to 15 students. At the beginning of each academic year, students sign up for the tutorial group of which the two weekly time slots suit them best. Students are generally not allowed to change groups, although the groups usually change tutors in the middle of the year[3]. Attendance is compulsory for the tutorials, and missing three or more tutorials over a semester can result in expulsion from the course. However, attendance is not taken at the lectures, which means that student attendance is much higher in tutorials than in lectures. According to Allardice, "tutors often come to personify the Department in the minds of students. This may be […] because the English 178 course relies so heavily on tutors that they in effect replace the lecturers as the personification of the Department, especially for students who do not attend lectures" (41).

Since approximately half of the tutorial classes in the semester (one of the two every week) build on work covered in the lectures, it is one of the responsibilities of the tutor to alert students to the importance of attending lectures. The tutor will assume (ideally, correctly) that all the students in his/her tutorial class have attended the lecture, and plan the support tutorial around that assumption. The reality is unfortunately that, due to the fact that no attendance is taken at the lectures, this assumption is often faulty and the tutor spends at least part of the support tutorial repeating information introduced in the lecture. (This is only possible if the tutor had attended the lecture him-/herself, which is encouraged, but not compulsory.) For the second tutorial of the week, the teaching schedule includes material not featured in the lectures, such as short stories. This is

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[3] This mid-year change gives tutorial groups exposure to more than one teaching style and has the advantage of providing additional perspective on students' marks, thereby increasing scrutiny of student performance. The practice may also prevent a tutorial group from staying with a weak tutor for the entire year, although the ideal would naturally be to not have weak tutors on the tutor team in the first place.

harnessed (often inventively) by the tutors in order to help students develop critical thinking and academic writing skills.

At the beginning of each semester, tutors and students receive tutorial resource packs that contain a tutorial work schedule for the semester, as well as study material such as set poems, contextual information and questions on the texts. Tutors are allowed to make minor adjustments to the schedule, for example in the case of teaching days falling on public holidays, but the purpose of the work schedule is to ensure uniformity in student learning among different tutors' tutorial groups. Another mechanism that promotes uniformity is the distribution of lesson plans to all tutors during weekly tutor meetings. In the case of poetry and short stories, individual tutors are assigned the creation of lesson plans. In the case of lecture texts, lesson plans are provided by the lecturer in question, who is referred to as the resource coordinator. Given that independent critical thinking is an important skill to be learned in English 178, these lesson plans depend on students doing the required preparatory work at home, before the tutorials.

The frequency and more informal atmosphere of the tutorials, especially in comparison to the lectures, allow tutors to build personal relationships with individual students and provide them with the academic support they need to pass the year. The tutorials also enable tutors to gain insight into the students' academic ability, which in turn enables them to intervene in order to address the students' specific needs (hence the classification of tutoring as a learning intervention). However, this close-knit environment also necessitates complete tutor investment in the course material and the students' interests.

Before appointment, tutors are interviewed by the tutor coordinator and one or more (usually experienced) tutors. At the beginning of their first year of tutoring, before the commencement of tutorials, new tutors receive two to three days of training by members of the English Department (the tutor coordinator and senior staff) and experts from Stellenbosch University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Tutors are remunerated according to their teaching hours (preparation and actual contact with students), which increase with the number of tutorial groups they teach, and also their level of qualification. Each tutor teaches between one and four tutorial groups per semester. In 2012 the tutor team consisted of thirty members, all of whom were either current or former postgraduate English students. The tutors are therefore mostly younger, less experienced and less qualified than the lecturers, although this makes them ideal for their supporting role as facilitators of knowledge and skills acquisition as opposed to conveyors of knowledge (i.e. lecturers). Allardice writes that "[f]or the most part tutors are close enough in age to the students to be able to remember the difficulties of adapting to university, but as they come from

a select group who went on to study English at postgraduate level, the individuals who are now tutors will never have been typical English 178 students" (80). While all tutors will therefore not identify with every single aspect of their students' behaviour, they are particularly suited to the kind of informal, facilitated learning that happens in tutorials. The English 178 tutorial programme fosters a culture of shared knowledge, where tutors have the opportunity to engage with the discipline both from a learning perspective, as part of their postgraduate studies, and from a teaching perspective.

The operation of the English 178 tutorial programme is in line with practice at other local universities, namely The University of the Western Cape (UWC) and The University of Cape Town (UCT). Table 1.1 provides a comparison between these three first-year English tutorial programmes in terms of the key aspects discussed above.

Table. 1.1: A comparison between three tutorial programmes

	SU	UCT	UWC
Minimum tutor requirements	Third-year English	Honours in English. Preferably also tutoring experience in other departments, such as Philosophy.	Honours in English
Tutor training and orientation	2-3 days of training presented by the English Department and Centre for Teaching and Learning	Day-long workshop.	No training.
Average number of students in first-year English course	1 000	500	750
Tutorial group size	± 15 students	± 15 students	± 15 students
Tutorial content	Lecture support as well as additional content. Close reading and writing.	Close reading and critical writing based on lecture material. Ungraded creative writing or journalistic assignments.	Lecture support as well as additional content. Close reading and writing.
Tutor team (typical)	2 members of permanent staff and 24 contract tutors.	15 tutors.	5 members of permanent staff and 10 contract tutors.
Tutor	Administrative duties,	Administrative duties,	Administrative duties,

responsibilities	lesson plans, skills development, test and essay marking	lesson plans, skills development, test and essay marking	lesson plans, skills development, test and essay marking
Groups per tutor	1-4	1-2	1-5
Tutor meetings and professional development	1 hour every week. Administrative issues, lesson plans, interaction between tutors and resource coordinator. 1 moderation meeting after marking each semester's essay. 1 marks meeting after final examination.	1 meeting per week. Focus primarily on marking.	1 meeting at the start of each term. Overview of course content and assignment outcomes. 1 moderation meeting before each essay submission date. 1 marks meeting after final examination.
Course structure	1 lecture, 2 tutorials	3 lectures, 2 tutorials	2 lectures, 1 tutorial, 1 practical[4]
Separate academic literacy course	No.	No.	Yes.

1.4. Motivation for study and research questions

It is clear from the description of the English 178 tutorial programme above that tutorials play a major role in supporting first-year learning processes. In Allardice's study, the vast majority of participating English 178 students indicated that the combination of lectures and tutorials is their preferred teaching method (see Figure 1.1 below).

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[4] These practicals, also called workshops, are used for training in information technology and general skills development.
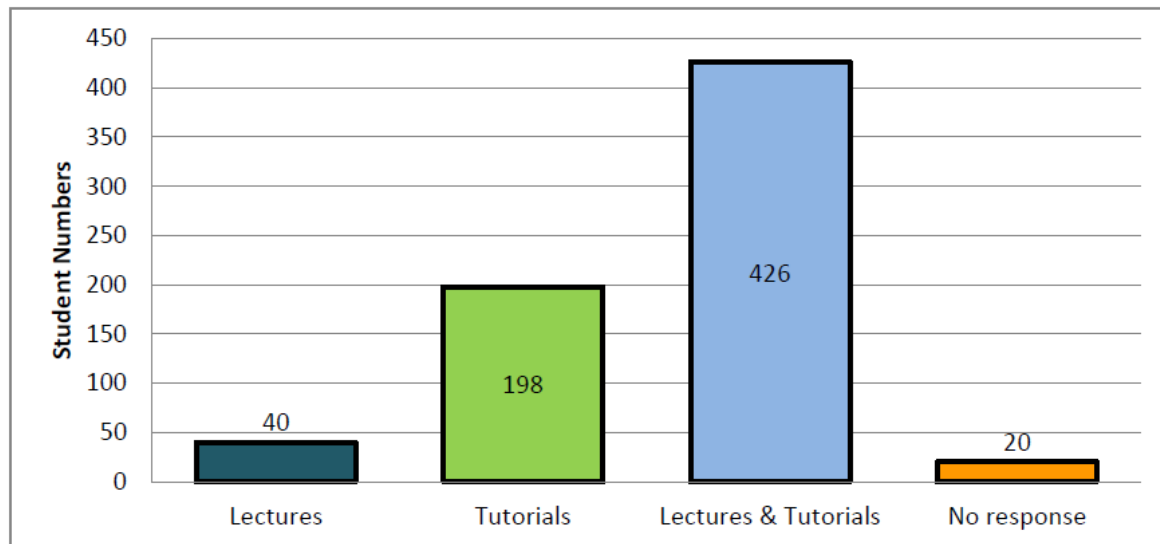
Fig. 1.1: Methods of teaching preferred by students

One of the purposes of this study is to identify possible defects in the English 178 tutorial programme (including tutor training) and to suggest ways of addressing these in order to improve the course. This thesis should also serve as a way to help the English Department understand and assess the very important work tutors do. This will encourage collaboration between lecturers and tutors with the goal of helping first-years get the most out of their time in the course.

Research on small-group tutoring has thus far favoured other fields, primarily the medical sciences, with minimal scholarly interest in small-group tutoring in literary studies. Studies by Biley and Smith (1999), Johnston and Tinning (2001) and Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2006) are just three examples from a considerable body of research on problem-based learning (PBL), a tutorial-type teaching and learning methodology widely used in medicine, nursing, physiotherapy and dentistry, which is discussed at length as part of the literature review in Chapter 2. In 2002, Bill Hutchings and Karen O'Rourke suggested that the PBL methodology may be particularly applicable to the teaching of literary studies. This thesis shows that a variation of this application already occurs in the English 178 tutorial programme, making the programme a model of what will be referred to as facilitated textual enquiry (FTE). Considering the current lack of research available with regard to the efficacy of tutorial programmes in literary studies, and to the role tutors have to play in humanities disciplines, this study hopes to add to that body of knowledge.

Martin Heidegger believed that "[t]eaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn" (15). In English 178, tutors have an important role to play in terms of letting students learn by themselves, but with support, which is referred to as scaffolding. This study was born out of a need to define and describe this role. But it is equally important to determine *what*

students are learning, and what the nature of this support provided by the tutors is. Liezel Frick (2008) writes that "it may be difficult to effectively develop and implement first-year support systems and curricula without knowing the clientele at which it is aimed" (i). This study intends to provide decision-makers at Stellenbosch University's English Department with a better knowledge of their "clientele", which I hope will enable the Department to better cater to their needs. According to Frick, the University needs to "be pro-active in planning for the future intake of students and one way of achieving this insight is to also investigate current trends in the profile of their clientele" (iii). Allardice points out that the 2009/2010 course reconfiguration "has caused conflict within the course as students, tutors and lecturers all differ on what the course should be teaching" (41). One of the purposes of this thesis is thus to determine what the course *is* teaching, as seen from the viewpoints of both the students and the tutors. Teena Clouston (2005) argues that tutors

> need to strive towards a style and skill base that promotes student satisfaction and meets individual and group needs while balancing this to maintain the boundaries and outcomes created by the organisation and curriculum in which [they] work. As such, the views of the students are crucial to effective facilitation not only for the purpose of participation and empowerment but also, fundamentally, for their voices to be heard (51).

The tutorial programme plays a key role in assisting students in the skills-acquisition and consolidation (scaffolding) process that takes place throughout the English 178 curriculum. Because of its centrality to the course, the tutorial programme should be evaluated in terms of its purpose and usefulness, and students' views are central to this, as Clouston writes above. What is more, the students' as well as the tutors' input will contribute to identifying "a style and skill base that promotes student satisfaction" (Clouston 51), which can be used as a model for future tutor training and development.

In the light of the information that has been provided in this introduction, the primary research questions of this thesis can be articulated as follows:

- What do students learn in English 178?
- How do students view the tutors' role in their learning process?
- How do tutors view their own role in this learning process?

The secondary, overarching research questions are as follows:

- What do students bring to English 178?
- What do students take away from English 178?

These five questions have guided the research undertaken in this study. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework which informed the formulation of the research questions, and in doing so, influenced the research design. A review of recent literature on tutoring, which is found in Chapter 3, encapsulates how other researchers have attempted to answer these and similar questions. Chapter 4 describes the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter 5 contains a detailed discussion of the results obtained in the study and how these results address the research questions. Chapter 6 concludes the study with recommendations based on the results.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

Two pedagogical models inform the English 178 course and, more specifically, its tutorial programme: (1) instructional or academic scaffolding, and (2) the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The tutorial programme also shows compelling similarities with the teaching model of problem-based learning (PBL), which relies strongly on scaffolding. The connecting thread between these models is the educational philosophy of socio-cultural (or social) constructivism, led by Lev Vygotsky (1978). Understanding the structure and operationality of the course in this theoretical context is imperative to understanding the research questions in this study, and the ultimate interpretation of the data. This chapter will therefore situate the practice of tutoring (defined in Section 2.2), and this study in particular, in the framework of social constructivism (Section 2.3). In Sections 2.4 and 2.5 respectively, the terms academic scaffolding and ZPD will be elaborated on with specific reference to the English 178 course. The course's tutorial programme will be weighed against the PBL method in Section 2.6 in order to determine if the programme can be theoretically classified as PBL. Finally, Section 2.7 will suggest an alternative theory for describing the English 178 tutorial programme.

2.2. What is a tutorial?

A tutorial is a small-group learning environment managed by an individual with more experience than the group in the particular subject field. Tutorials usually operate in parallel to a formal, large-group learning environment, such as a lecture series. This large group is subdivided into small groups for tutorial purposes, and the small groups usually meet more frequently than the large group. As opposed to a lecturer in a large-group learning environment, the small-group tutor does not lecture, but may explain and clarify concepts, as well as answer questions, with the purpose of firmly establishing the new content. Unlike the large-group learning environment, the tutorial provides the students in the small group with extensive opportunities for expressing their own critical thinking and gauging the reaction of their peers. According to Clouston (2005),

> [t]he group process itself can also enable facilitation by offering the opportunity for direct feedback from students and consequently give them an opportunity to be heard. This not only offers a more equitable partnership [between student and tutor] but can enhance self-worth when student voices are valued. (52)

In a literature tutorial in particular, the role of the tutor is to encourage critical thinking by probing students in a constructive manner, instead of simply providing his/her own interpretation of a given text. Bill Hutchings and Karen O'Rourke (2002) suggest that

> the opportunity to discuss problems in group-work will enable students to approach their individual reading and research with a clearer focus, in terms of both what reading to do and what issues to be looking for. This should allow students to maximise the usefulness of their private study time[, which is where] the largest part of a [literary studies] student's work is conducted. (82)

John Savery and Thomas Duffy (2001) also write that "[c]ollaborative groups are important because [students] can test [their] own understanding and examine the understanding of others as a mechanism for enriching, interweaving, and expanding [their] understanding of particular issues or phenomena" (2).

In their seminal work "The role of tutoring in problem solving" (1976), David Wood, Jerome Bruner and Gail Ross describe "the tutorial process" as "the means whereby an […] 'expert' helps somebody who is […] less expert"; "a situation in which one member 'knows the answer' and the other does not, rather like a 'practical' in which only the instructor 'knows how'" (89). However, literature tutorials differ from, for example, science practicals in the sense that literature does not have a practical aspect, i.e. a task performed manually, which has to be practised. The instructor in a literature tutorial does not so much "know how" (to use Wood *et al.*'s description) as know *better*. In a subject field like English literature, where there are no strictly right or wrong answers, as in mathematics or chemistry, the role of the instructor (tutor) is not to demonstrate to students an action that can be replicated, but to guide, model and eventually change their thinking and writing processes to enable them to critically engage with a text, and to verbalise their ideas which result from this engagement.

The function of the tutor is thus primarily to facilitate group discussions that include all the members of the group. These discussions should also not only be between the group and the tutor, but among the group members themselves. Tutorials are therefore also an example of a peer-education model, since students learn from their own thinking, as well as the ideas of their fellow students. The more informal atmosphere in a tutorial classroom, as compared to a lecture hall, may lead to disruptive conduct by students, which means that it is the responsibility of the tutor to manage tutorial sessions in such a way that each student has an opportunity to speak, and that the other students pay attention whenever a student (or the tutor) speaks. According to Wood *et al.*, effective tutoring depends on both the tutor and the tutee (student) "modifying their behaviour over

time to fit the perceived requirements and/or suggestions of the other" (97). This also applies to the tutees among themselves.

Stella Clark (1998) describes the tutorial as "the place where academic identity and activities are first engaged in" (121). Similarly, Allardice (2013) states that tutorials are "the first place where the conventions of academic writing are taught in the English undergraduate programme" (12) at Stellenbosch University. Tutorials are therefore also a space of induction, where students are introduced to new ways of critical thinking and articulation. For example, in English 178 tutorials, tutors bring uninitiated students into the discourse of English literature studies. Sue Starfield (2000) writes that

> [f]or many students [the] 'hidden rules' of academic discourse are obstacles to success and need to be explicitly taught. […] What is vital is that students are taught the required skills and that [tutors] 'surface' the many ground rules which are taken for granted by established academics. (108)

Tutors, who are typically postgraduate students and therefore not yet established academics, are uniquely suited to this process of mediation and translation. While they have already gone through this induction process and learned the ropes of academic writing, they are not yet at ease in the practice to such an extent that they cannot appreciate its foreignness to first-year students.

As is evident from this discussion, tutorials and lectures fulfil completely different functions and should never be considered interchangeable, either by students or by tutors. From a logistical point of view, tutorial venues are usually structured in a "boardroom" design (with students facing each other instead of facing forward) to encourage intra-group discussion. These venues are not conducive to lecture-style teaching in which only the tutor speaks. The tutorial class can and should never be used as a lecture opportunity by the tutor, since it is the only space where students can speak at any time and receive feedback on their ideas from their tutor and peers. Clouston writes that tutors "need to ensure that [they] facilitate and not teach, enable students and not control them" (51). This attitude from tutors is key to the success of the tutorial process.

It should be noted that the term "tutoring" is sometimes used to refer to one-on-one teaching/support sessions between tutor and student. This type of tutoring will not be covered in this study. In the English 178 course, one-on-one sessions between tutors and individual students (usually reserved for feedback on semester essays) are referred to as "consultations" and are referred to as such throughout this thesis.

2.3. The English 178 tutorial programme as social constructivist teaching practice

The social constructivist philosophy, which underpins the English 178 tutorial programme, upholds student-centred learning as its core value. According to David Porcaro (2011), "socio-cultural constructivist methods of pedagogy emphasise student creation of individual and group meaning, rather than teacher-led instruction" (43). This is why the philosophy is also at the heart of instructional models like problem-based learning (see 2.6 below), cognitive apprenticeships (Collins *et al.* 1987) and anchored instruction (CTGV 1992). In their report "Problem Based Learning: An instructional model and its constructivist framework" (2001), Savery and Duffy describe the three tenets of constructivism, namely that:

1. Understanding occurs in [students'] interactions with the[ir] environment.
2. Cognitive conflict or puzzlement is the stimulus for learning and determines the organisation and nature of what is learned.
3. Knowledge evolves through social negotiation and through the evaluation of the viability of individual understandings. (3-4)

The goals of social constructivist teaching therefore "includ[e] not only learning content but also […] epistemic practices, self-directed learning, and collaboration[, which] are not measured on achievement tests but are important for being lifelong learners and citizens in a knowledge society" (Hmelo-Silver *et al.* 105). Acquiring flexible, critical thinking skills, such as those taught in the English 178 programme, can be seen as the primary learning objective in socio-cultural constructivism (Porcaro 42). Savery and Duffy explain that

> [c]onstructivism is not a deconstructivist view in which all constructions are equal simply because they are personal experiences. Rather, we seek viability and thus we must test understandings to determine how adequately they allow us to interpret and function in our world. Our social environment [such as a tutorial classroom] is primary in providing alternative views and additional information against which we can test the viability of our understanding and in building the set of propositions (knowledge) compatible with those understandings. (2-3)

Because the tutorials in the English 178 course provide these "alternative views and additional information", they become a space for this testing of understandings. Tutors, then, take on the role of *facilitator* rather than teacher in this meaning-making process. The fact that the ratio of tutorials to lectures in the English 178 course is currently 2:1 gives students more of these interactive social learning opportunities.

Savery and Duffy (3-6) outline eight instructional principles for constructivist teaching and learning environments, which I have here related to a tutorial programme such as the one at the centre of this study:

1. **Anchor all learning activities to a larger task or problem.** All tutorial work and assessments should be explicitly tied to clear course objectives.

2. **Support the student in developing ownership for the overall problem or task.** It is important to find out what the students do not know and what they want to learn. Feedback from students is critical in this regard.

3. **Design an authentic task.** The more a student can relate an activity or assessment to the "real world" or to their own frame of reference, the more likely they are to engage with it.

4. **Design the task and the learning environment to reflect the complexity of the environment the student should be able to function in at the end of learning.** Assessments (and possibly even communication between students and tutors) should be treated as if they were occurring in a corporate work environment, with no concessions for lateness, sloppy documents, the use of informal text language, and so forth. In order to be prepared for life outside of the classroom, students need to learn that one facet of accomplishing a task cannot be favoured over another (e.g. a deadline over grammar/spelling accuracy). Time management is central in achieving this.

5. **Give the learner ownership of the process used to develop a solution.** Students, and not tutors, should lead the discussion in tutorials and be encouraged to reason out answers themselves, instead of simply looking to the tutor.

6. **Design the learning environment to support and challenge the learner's thinking.** The tutor must create an inviting and intellectually tolerant atmosphere in the tutorials, where students can put forward their ideas without fear of negation. However, it is equally important that the tutor question and contest the students' thinking instead of merely agreeing to everything they say.

7. **Encourage testing ideas against alternative views and alternative contexts.** The tutor has the responsibility of encouraging debate between different interpretations of a text in order to expose students to other viewpoints than their own. Classroom debate also helps students to practise (sometimes unwittingly) critical reasoning and persuasive discourse, which they employ in their written work. Savery and Duffy argue that "[t]he quality or depth of one's understanding can only be determined in a social environment where we can see if our understanding can accommodate the issues and views of others and to see if there are points of view which we could usefully incorporate into our understanding" (6).

8. **Provide opportunities for, and support, reflection on both the content learned and the learning process.** Again, feedback from students is critical here in that the tutor needs to obtain first-hand information on whether his/her teaching style, methods and materials are assisting students in their intellectual growth.

It should be noted that three of these instructional principles contain the word "support", which is a key ingredient and function of any tutorial programme. Extensive academic support in the form of scaffolding is an integral part of the English 178 tutorial programme.

2.4. Scaffolding in the English 178 tutorial programme

As a whole, the undergraduate English course at Stellenbosch University is based on the assumption that students will have acquired specific academic skills at various points in the course as a result of the course itself. This systematic construction of a skills base for students, called scaffolding, forms the backbone of the teaching and learning processes in the English Department.

The term "scaffolding" (Wood *et al*. 90) was introduced by Bruner in "The role of tutoring in problem solving", also mentioned above. This term was suggested as a metaphor to explain the convergence between systematic additions to a student's skills base and the corresponding removal of support structures, such as tutoring, from the student's learning process. Instructional or academic scaffolding supports a student only until he/she completes a learning process, in the same way that physical scaffolding supports builders only during the construction of a building. Upon completion of the building, the scaffolding is removed, since builders no longer have need of it. The same goes for the student: once he/she has acquired a particular academic skill, further scaffolding would not only be unnecessary, but would inhibit the student's independence. As Susanne Lajoie (2005) puts it, "[a] scaffold is, by definition, a *temporary* entity that is used to reach one's potential and then is removed when learners demonstrate their learning" (542, emphasis added).

Wood *et al*.'s article describes a study in which the co-author Ross performed the role of (scaffolding) tutor to three groups of pre-school children learning to build a three-dimensional structure. While the specific study focused on three-, four- and five-year-olds, the principles of scaffolding identified as a result of the study are applicable to a vast range of teaching situations and have consequently become entrenched in writing on teaching and learning. The principles of scaffolding are also integral to the undergraduate English course at Stellenbosch University, since the senior-undergraduate syllabi are dependent on skills acquired in first-year English. As Wood *et al*. write, "mastery of 'lower order' or constituent problems is a *sine qua non* for success with a larger problem, [with] each level influencing the other" (89). In academic scaffolding, students

build on prior knowledge to acquire new skills, and tutor assistance to students decreases as their level of competence at a skill increases. According to Wood *et al*., "the intervention of a tutor […m]ore often than not […] involves a kind of 'scaffolding' process that enables a […] novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his[/her] unassisted efforts" (90).

For scaffolding tutorials to be successful, tutors need to take specific actions in a specific way. Wood *et al*. explain that "the tutor has the initial task" – in our case this would be at the beginning of the academic year – "of *enlisting the [student] as a tutoring partner*" (95, emphasis in original). This would entail the clarification of the course requirements to the student, emphasising that the tutorials are neither a replacement for the main lectures nor for self-study. In fact, one of the key aims of scaffolding is for the tutor to allow the student to do as much as possible for him/herself; their "success or failure […] determine[s] the tutor's next level of instruction" (Wood *et al*. 92). In order to create a safe environment where students can test their critical thinking without fear of belittlement, the tutor must "[bring] to the task a gentle, appreciative approach" and "[create] an atmosphere of approval" (Wood *et al*. 92). On a practical level, tutors need to be able to direct a tutorial discussion to the subject at hand, should it start to digress, thereby functioning as a spokesperson (Wood *et al*. 93) for literary analysis, which is the actual purpose of the discussion. In a broader capacity, the tutor also acts as a chairperson for the discussion, as I suggest in Chapter 5.

The primary skill taught in English 178 is academic writing. Leibowitz (2000) argues that embedding the teaching of academic writing within the curriculum transforms writing tasks "from primarily testing activities to ones which facilitate both students' learning of the course content and their writing skills" (28). Academic writing is a skill particularly suited to scaffolding as a teaching approach since it can easily be broken down into separate, manageable tasks, but also because it is generally a skill that takes time and effort to acquire. In teaching this skill, "the design of tasks should be carefully planned so that students move through from simpler to more complex tasks, gradually internalising the rules and practices [of academic writing]" (Leibowitz 30). This is what the English 178 course aims to do. Scaffolding is particularly evident in the essay-drafting process, as explained in Section 1.3.1. Students do receive feedback on undrafted essays (shorter assignments), but they do not have the opportunity to improve on and resubmit the same piece of writing. The essay-drafting process is therefore the perfect example of scaffolding in action. Before the submission of the draft essay, the tutor provides the students with guidelines for academic writing. They are given writing-practice opportunities during tutorials and/or receive examples of good academic writing to study in class or at home, either in the form of old student essays or in the form of short and less challenging academic articles. Wood *et al*. name *demonstration* or

'modelling' as one of the functions of the tutor, with demonstration involving an 'idealisation' of the task that is to be performed (98).

The next step in the scaffolding process is for the students to submit a draft essay, which is their attempt at achieving the goal of expressing their critical thinking in written form, possibly imitating what they have been presented with thus far. In marking the draft, the tutor then "help[s] them recognise […] the nature of the discrepancy that exist[s] between their attempted constructions and what was required by the task" (Wood *et al*. 96). The students are encouraged to try to resolve this discrepancy by paying attention to the tutor's prompting comments and questions, and by rethinking the relation of their argument to the essay question. After reworking their drafts, the students submit their final essays. These are reviewed by the tutor, who has the option of either improving or lowering a student's mark, depending on the level of effort put in by the student. This mark then counts as the final mark for the essay. The tutor therefore first guides the students through the writing process (erecting the scaffold), then supports their own attempts at writing (removing some of the rungs in the scaffold, also called 'fading'), and finally allows them to write independently (removing the scaffold completely). In time, as the student's writing improves by his/her implementation of the tutor's comments on his/her drafted and undrafted essays, the tutor becomes less of an instructor or 'discrepancy interpreter' and fulfils more of "a confirmatory role until the tutee is checked out to fly on his[/her] own" (Wood *et al*. 96), or, to continue the scaffolding metaphor, to have the scaffolding removed. Students who already write well at the beginning of their first year may never exhibit this discrepancy in their essays between what is required and what is presented by them. To these students, the tutor serves mainly as "a confirmer or checker of constructions" (Wood *et al*. 96) during the essay-drafting process, since they already possess the skills necessary for first-year academic writing. The tutor therefore does not help these students build rungs in their scaffold, so to speak, but merely ensures that the rungs they themselves have built will hold.[5]

I have here elaborated extensively on the use of scaffolding principles specifically in the teaching of first-year academic writing, but scaffolding principles are also inherent in the wider structure of the undergraduate English syllabus at Stellenbosch University. For example, the English 278 course is built on the assumption that students will have learnt in English 178 how to write academically and do independent research – skills required for second-year success. Similarly, the English 318 and 348 courses follow English 278, in which tutorial support is halved from first year during the first

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[5] In practice, what good tutors do is to individualise tuition to a certain extent, and to find methods of challenging a student's knowledge and skill to extend it to new levels.

semester (only one tutorial per week), and removed completely in the second semester.[6] More and more of the scaffolding rungs are therefore removed as the students become more accomplished in the required academic skills. Lajoie writes that "[o]nce learners demonstrate competence, […] scaffolds are removed (or faded gradually) to ensure that learners can independently demonstrate their competence and articulate their knowledge without assistance" (543). In fact, Maxine Greene (1973) argues that teaching "begin[s] at the point at which the student (having mastered fundamental skills) goes beyond what he[/she] has been trained to do or drilled to do" (172). Janneke van de Pol *et al*. call this point the *transfer of responsibility*: "Via contingent fading [of scaffolding mechanisms], […] responsibility for the performance of a task is gradually transferred to the learner" (275).

David Rose takes the concept of scaffolding even further in his *Reading to Learn* methodology, which originated in his work with indigenous learners in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, where he saw success in terms of increased literacy as a result of "embracing teaching methods that focus on how learners acquire competence through social interaction" (Rose 1999, 241). Rose played a key role in a 1999 Strategic Results Project run by Australia's Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) titled *Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School*, which became the foundation of the long-term action research that would culminate in the *Reading to Learn* programme conceptualised by Rose in 2005. This action research was, and still is, aimed at the development and implementation of "a system of literacy teaching strategies that enable learners to rapidly learn to read and write at a level appropriate to their age and level of study" (Rose 2005, 1). Moreover, in her PhD study titled "A reading based theory of teaching appropriate for the South African context" (2008), Margaret Childs argues that the *Reading to Learn* method is particularly suited to the South African schooling system, especially as a way of addressing literacy issues.

While the *Reading to Learn* programme was created for use in schools, its central tenets are equally applicable to the context of first-year English at Stellenbosch University. One of these tenets is the need for tutors "to support, not just one, but all their students to do the same high-level tasks despite a wide range of independent abilities in the class" (Rose 2011, 84). This is particularly relevant to the English 178 tutorial programme, where tutors often struggle with the challenge presented by the mixed levels of academic writing proficiency that are represented by the various students in any given tutorial group. The tutor has to negotiate between sufficiently supporting the students who

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[6] This structure changed in 2013: English 278 tutorials were removed completely and replaced by small-group elective courses unrelated to the lecture content. The staff of the English department are currently (2014) debating whether to revert to support tutorials in the first semester and then having double-period electives in the second semester.

have not yet mastered the skills in question, and allowing those students who have already done so an increasing degree of independence. The *Reading to Learn* programme attempts to address this challenge by "assum[ing] that all learning occurs through the accomplishment of learning tasks, and that the task must be done successfully for the learning to occur" (Rose 2011, 84-85). Rose describes the requirements for successful learning as follows: "the learner must be prepared in some way to do the task […]. Once the task is accomplished, the learner's capacity is opened up for learning a further step in the task sequence" (Rose 2011, 85). This process is illustrated through what is called the scaffolding learning cycle, of which the assessment methods in English 178 tutorials can be seen as an example. Students are prepared for a task (in this case, always a piece of academic writing) firstly through a writing tutorial, in which the tutor describes or provides a "model text" (Rose 2011, 88) in the form of a good student essay or a short academic article from which students can imitate "language patterns", thus "appropriat[ing] the language resources of accomplished writers into their own writing" (90). As a second preparation measure, executed well before the due date of the task, the tutor clearly and thoroughly describes the criteria for the task that is to be completed, including practical information such as submission guidelines and due date. Students are encouraged to ask questions they may have on the task in class, so as to extend the reach of the answer provided to as many students as possible. When the students have handed in their completed tasks, the tutor elaborates on each student's work by providing extensive feedback. The tutor usually also addresses widespread issues by giving general task feedback in class on the day of returning the tasks. In the case of drafted essays, the students have the opportunity to elaborate on their own work by reworking their draft. The tutor's feedback, combined with the student's writing experience gained during the task, prepares the student for a subsequent, more challenging task. This starts the cycle all over again.

Fig. 2.1: The scaffolding learning cycle

The *Reading to Learn* programme has also been expanded to university studies by Rose *et al*. in a teaching model that entails the scaffolding of academic literacy (2003, 2008), which is now applied in higher-education contexts at various institutions in Australia, South Africa, China and Latin America (Rose *et al*. 2008, 166), including Stellenbosch University. The principles of this model echo those of *Reading to Learn* and are likewise pertinent to the English 178 course. Naturally, Rose's scaffolding model focuses on more advanced academic skills than simply learning to read. According to Rose *et al*. (2003),

> [t]o study independently, university students must be able to read complex academic texts with a high level of understanding, and be able to critically analyse such texts in order to present coherent analysis, argument or discussion in their own written work. They must also be able to structure their essays appropriately, using academic conventions and objective academic language, to demonstrate their mastery of a topic or inform and influence their readers. (42)

Reading is therefore acknowledged as a vital academic skill to acquire, but the emphasis is on learning-from-reading and writing-from-reading, which is precisely what the English 178 course sets out to teach. According to Childs,

> [t]he capacity to learn independently from written text is critical for progress within the schooling and tertiary systems. The […] *Reading to Learn* pedagogy provides a means of realising such a theory of teaching. Simultaneously teaching print literacy, while teaching the content of curricula, is […] a way of bringing about effective learning. (iv)

She reasons that, in using the *Reading to Learn* approach, learners are not forced to take responsibility for their own learning unless they are prepared to do so. The learning process she describes is strikingly similar to the process students and tutors participate in in English 178 tutorials:

> learners […] acquire knowledge about curriculum content at the same time as they learn about the texts in which the content is embedded. Once learners have been thoroughly prepared, they use the curriculum content to construct new texts and thus ultimately work in a way that can be characterised as learning-centred rather than learner-centred. (76)

It appears that this process is scaffolded, since students are supported throughout; in acquiring new knowledge and skills, they build on previously consolidated knowledge and skills. However, to ensure the success of such a process, it is crucial that the appropriate level of support be provided. According to Lajoie, "[d]etermining what to scaffold, when to scaffold, how to scaffold and when to fade scaffolding are core questions", which are "determined by the domain in question, the tasks

involved [and] what you want learners to accomplish" (542). In other words, the scaffolding process is contingent, as Van de Pol *et al*. (2010) argue:

> The teacher's support must be adapted to the current level of the student's performance and should either be at the same or a slightly higher level. A teacher acts contingently when he/she adapts the support in one way or another to a (group of) student(s). A tool for contingency is diagnostic strategies. To provide contingent support, that is, one must first determine the student's current level of competence. Only with such knowledge can the support to be provided be adapted to the student's level of learning (i.e., made contingent). (274-5)

2.5. The zone of proximal development in the English 178 tutorial programme

The primary factor that influences the level of scaffolding provided to a student is the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Essentially, this zone refers to the difference between what the student is able to do on his/her own (i.e. without scaffolding) and what the student will be able to do with the support of a tutor or peers (i.e. with scaffolding). The purpose of the English 178 course is to offer the correct level of assistance to students, so as to support them, but also to start promoting both academic self-sufficiency and collaborative learning.

Lev Vygotsky first used the term "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) in his influential work *Mind in Society* (1978), in which he argues that mental processes (such as learning) are also social processes, and that, for instance, the interaction between learners and between learner and teacher must be taken into account in studying mental development. This work also promotes one of the core assumptions of social constructivism, namely "that learners construct knowledge through interacts [*sic*] with more knowledgeable peers" (Porcaro 41). Vygotsky defines the ZPD as "the distance between [a child's] actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (86).

In the case of the English 178 tutorial programme, a student's ZPD would be the "space" between his/her existing level of academic ability acquired in high school and through life experience, which he/she brings to English 178, and his/her potentially increased level of academic ability if provided with support in the form of interventions, such as tutorials, which may include collaborative work. During the English 178 course, students occupy this ZPD, which Vygotsky describes as containing "functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation" (86). The tasks students complete as part of the English 178 course require additional skills ("functions") and higher conceptual grappling compared to that which they experienced and acquired in high school, i.e. skills and ideas they have not yet mastered, but are *gradually* mastering. The tasks are therefore

close enough to the students' actual developmental level for them not to be overwhelmed by the difficulty of the task, but also far enough above their actual developmental level to challenge them in order to grow intellectually. It is, after all, imperative that students master the skills taught during the English 178 course since, in keeping with the principles of scaffolding, the English 278 course relies and builds on students' possession of these skills. The ZPD, where students spend their first year of English Studies, therefore bears not so much the 'fruits' as the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development, to use Vygotsky's analogy (86). In English 278, on the other hand, students who have successfully mastered the critical skills introduced in English 178 will benefit from increasing opportunities to pick what will then be the 'fruits' of their development, i.e. to display their academic self-sufficiency.

2.6. The English 178 tutorial programme as a model of problem-based learning

According to Clouston, problem-based learning (PBL) is a type of small-group learning and teaching environment in which

> key 'real-life' problems […] are used both as the initial trigger for learning and to create a point at which new learning or critical thinking can be applied and re-applied until understanding is achieved. In this way information is built up over time and understanding is gained in small chunks that eventually form a larger whole. (49)

PBL is sometimes also known as enquiry-based learning (EBL), case-based education (CBE) or inquiry learning (IL). While some may argue that there are subtle differences between these pedagogies, Hmelo-Silver *et al.* (2007) determined that "there are no clear-cut distinguishing features [between them]" (100), and for the purpose of this discussion, I will refer to all three as PBL.

Although PBL is mostly used in the medical sciences (medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, dentistry), the principles that underpin PBL tutorials have much in common with those underpinning English literary studies tutorials. According to Hmelo-Silver *et al.*, in PBL "students learn content, strategies, and self-directed learning skills through collaboratively solving problems, reflecting on their experiences, and engaging in self-directed inquiry" (100). Furthermore, "students are cognitively engaged in sensemaking, developing evidence-based explanations, and communicating their ideas. The teacher plays a key role in facilitating the learning process and may provide content knowledge on a just-in-time basis" (Hmelo-Silver *et al.* 100). Clouston describes PBL as "a dynamic, integrative concept that engenders a critical, explorative approach and encapsulates a self-directed, active process of learning" (49). Kirschner *et al.* (2006) go as far as claiming that PBL is ineffective because it is a form of minimally guided instruction, which increases cognitive load for

students. As such, PBL is incompatible with human cognitive architecture as we currently understand it, i.e. "[t]he relations between working and long-term memory, in conjunction with the cognitive processes that support learning" (76). However, Hmelo-Silver *et al*. argue that PBL is *not* a form of minimally guided instruction, because a large extent of scaffolding, and sometimes direct instruction, is provided during PBL tutorials. The type of scaffolding used in PBL can, in fact, "reduce cognitive load, provide expert guidance, and help students acquire disciplinary ways of thinking and acting", which in turn supports "sensemaking, […] articulation and reflection" (Hmelo-Silver *et al*. 100). According to Hmelo-Silver *et al*., "a mini-lecture […] presenting key information to students is used when students understand the necessity of that information and its relevance" (100). Hmelo-Silver *et al*.'s arguments are applicable to English 178 tutorials on both counts, in that these tutorials are both highly scaffolded and allow room for occasional instances of direct instruction by the tutor.

The theory behind PBL is particularly relevant to this study because the PBL classroom is a small-group teaching and learning context managed by a tutor (usually known as a facilitator) and strictly not a lecture. Given the centrality of tutors and their pedagogical role to this study, it seems highly appropriate to consider a tutor-led environment such as PBL. According to Clouston, "[PBL] facilitators have an active and supportive role to develop that is both genuine and empathic" (51). She describes facilitation in PBL as "person-centred, collaborative, a process of synthesis, of shared learning and a means of developing critical thinking" (51). This description exactly mirrors the tutoring approach promoted at Stellenbosch University's English Department. The small tutorial groups make for personal interaction, while the fact that the tutor is often still studying him-/herself adds to the feeling of shared learning. Texts are studied in a collaborative way, with the students considering each other's critical thinking, as opposed to just their own or the tutor's/lecturer's, while the tutor attempts to continually synthesise these ideas in order to arrive at a reasonable spectrum of shared interpretation. Francis Biley and Keri Smith (1999) found that PBL students see their facilitator as "a non-interventionist guide who would only contribute if asked for help or if convinced that the group needed re-direction" (1208). While in English 178 this approach would work well for extroverted, assertive and well-prepared tutorial groups with a strong group dynamic and a propensity for debate, typical groups need more involvement from the tutor than is described here. Biley and Smith also note that "[p]roblems developed when the students tried to decide what they really wanted from the facilitator"; some students "would have liked more guidance […] because they felt that they lacked confidence in their own abilities to achieve an acceptable depth of learning", while others "wanted a […] facilitator who would not interfere" (1208). One of the objectives of my study is to determine the role of the tutor in an English Studies tutorial

programme, and Biley and Smith's findings are just one illustration of how complicated and contested this role is.

PBL tutorials in a medical teaching context are based on "real-life problems" (Clouston 49), which, naturally, are not to be found in literary studies. These medical problems involve hypothetical, but realistic, clinical practice scenarios where a diagnosis and treatment are required. Biley and Smith describe the PBL tutorial process as follows:

> In order to devise an action plan that will resolve the hypothetical scenario, individual learners are encouraged to use their existing knowledge to formulate possible hypotheses or causal relationships. They then identify what further learning needs to take place, and how that will be achieved (by, for example, referring to appropriate literature, the Internet, or expert help) in order for them to be able to deal confidently with the arising issues and therefore satisfy their learning needs.
>
> The learners reconvene to report the findings from their information seeking. These findings are presented in a variety of ways, from discussion and the use of handouts to role play. Based on this information, the group work their way back through the scenario either supporting or rejecting hypotheses until an action plan is devised. (1206)

While the presence of a "real-life" element is a decided difference between medical PBL tutorials and literary tutorials, the latter has similar "trigger[s] for learning" (Clouston 49): issues such as how an author or poet uses language to make meaning, how to read an author from a previous historical period in a contemporary context, or how to relate a text to one's own way of seeing and being in the world. In literary tutorials, students also "formulate possible hypotheses" (Biley and Smith 1206) about texts in group discussions, and test these hypotheses on their peers. Workable hypotheses can even be translated into arguments for essays and assignments, for which students are, in turn, encouraged to do research such as "referring to appropriate literature" (Biley and Smith 1206). Like in PBL, English 178 tutorials make extensive use of group work, although the groups form organically at the request of the tutor at a given time, and are usually only operational for a section of the class time. In some tutorials, there may be more than one group-work activity, and the tutor may ask the students to form new groups for the second activity. While two consecutive tutorials are seldom on the same topic and students therefore do not leave the classroom, do research and reconvene as they do in PBL, English Studies students do also "report [their] findings" (Biley and Smith 1206) to the other groups after a group-work activity. Dorothy Appalasamy (2004) writes that "[t]he case studies for PBL tutorials involve a multidisciplinary approach to encourage students to see the patient more holistically rather than a disciplinary approach, which was used previously in the traditional method" (16). The first-year English course at Stellenbosch

University may deal with texts instead of patients, but they are studied through the equally multidisciplinary lenses of philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, gender studies, history, visual studies, and more.

For decades educational philosophers have been promoting the approach that characterises PBL tutorials, and as such also English 178 tutorials. In 1970, Paulo Freire argued that "[l]iberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" (79). He advocated the use of "problem-posing education", which "bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality", and sees people (in this case students) as "beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation" (84). In problem-posing education, of which PBL would be an example, "[students] develop critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves" (Freire 83, original emphasis). Problem-posing education also "regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality" (Freire 83). Freire was a seminal contributor to propagating such collaborative learning environments as are now found in PBL tutorials, as well as in the tutorials studied in this thesis, where students can test and validate their ideas.

Furthermore, Maxine Greene (1973) explained that "[t]eaching happens when a student begins to understand what he is doing, when he becomes capable of giving reasons and seeing connections within his experience, when he recognises the errors he or someone else is making and can propose what should be done to set things straight" (172). The idea of seeing connections is one of the central tenets of PBL, while commenting on the work/ideas of others and collaborating with them lies at the core of small-group teaching methods such as tutorials. Greene recognised the utility of "real-world problems" in the academic environment: "Knowing […] is participant and principled action undertaken in response to either problematic situations or to an 'everyday reality' that must be imaginatively reconceived" (174). In her later essay "Education, Art, and Mastery: Toward the Spheres of Freedom" (1988), Greene suggests that

> there may be an integral relationship between reaching out to learn to learn and the 'search' that involves a pursuit of freedom. Without being 'onto something', young people feel little pressure, little challenge. There are no mountains they particularly want to climb, so there are few obstacles with which they feel they need to engage. […] Visible or invisible, the world may not be problematised; no-one aches to break through a horizon, aches in the presence of the question itself. So there are no tensions, no desires to reach beyond. There is an analogy here for the passivity and the disinterest that prevent discoveries in classrooms, that discourage inquiries, that make even reading seem irrelevant. (124-125)

This links to the second and fifth principles of constructivist learning as identified by Savery and Duffy above, namely that the student should be supported in developing ownership for the overall problem or task dealt with in the classroom, and that the student should be given ownership of the process used to develop a solution to that problem or task. The students, stimulated by puzzlement (cognitive conflict), should therefore take the lead in their learning process.

2.7. Facilitated textual enquiry

From a theoretical point of view, the English 178 tutorial programme shares many facets with PBL, which is a social constructivist teaching model. As far as literary studies is distanced from the medical sciences in terms of knowledge and skills, the principles that inform these two types of tutorials are surprisingly similar and have made for a useful comparison. However, there are too many differences between English 178 tutorials and PBL tutorials for the former to qualify as an example of the latter. PBL relies exclusively on group work, including for assessment, whereas English 178 allows no collaboration between students for graded assignments. In PBL, student groups are required to define what they do not know, i.e. "identif[y] knowledge deficiencies relative to the problem" (Hmelo-Silver 236) – a scientific learning component which is not required from English 178 students prior to or during essay writing. In the English 178 learning outcomes, there is also no explicit emphasis on problem-solving as a skill, whereas this is an outcome of PBL.

Therefore, instead of attempting to reconcile the English 178 tutorial programme to the PBL model, it would be more useful to look at the programme as a model of facilitated textual enquiry (FTE), which I am suggesting as a variant of PBL that constitutes a selective application of PBL principles to literary studies. FTE entails the scaffolded, partially-guided instruction of close reading, critical thinking and academic writing skills by a tutor-facilitator in the context of literary studies. FTE students are continuously supported, but the degree of support is adjusted as the student takes responsibility for his/her own learning, which he/she is encouraged to do. Creativity and collaboration play a central role in the process of meaning-making. As in PBL, and as the name suggests, FTE is about asking questions – specifically, asking questions so as to get at the meaning of a text. After all, the teaching of texts is by nature an interrogative activity; the use of questions is central to any kind of literary analysis. In a teaching model of FTE (such as the English 178 tutorial programme), the tutor acts as facilitator of knowledge and skills acquisition: asking questions, inviting questions, answering students' questions, and generally assisting (scaffolding) students in their own enquiry into the text, whether in groups or individually. In the essay-marking process, the tutor continues this role by asking questions in his/her comments on a student's essay: *Why did the author use this particular word? Why does the author employ a first-person narrator?* By

facilitating the student's own enquiry into the text instead of "teaching" a particular interpretation, the tutor encourages broader, more critical thinking on the student's part. Ultimately, this development of critical skills then fulfils the purpose of the social constructivist pedagogy.

2.8. Conclusion

This discussion has shown that the English 178 tutorial programme is situated in a social constructivist framework, employing student- or learning-centred teaching models such as scaffolding to achieve learning outcomes. Another such model is PBL, which is a theoretically relevant and constructive starting point for describing the English 178 tutorial programme. However, due to PBL's scientific nature, it is inadequate as a pedagogical model in which to categorise the English 178 tutorial programme. It is my contention that English 178 tutorials are not an example of PBL as such, but of FTE, which expands some of the PBL principles to the unique context of literary studies, while also drawing on other constructivist teaching models, and the nature of the discipline, to create an effective, student-centred learning environment.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

At the time of writing this thesis, no previous research, national or international, on the role of tutoring in an English Studies course could be found. However, various studies on the role of tutoring in other fields have been conducted in South Africa and elsewhere. The medical sciences in particular were found to yield prolific data on tutoring, particularly related to the problem-based learning (PBL) classroom. A thorough study of the recent literature on this teaching model made it apparent that the extensive available research on PBL in the medical sciences could provide a useful framework for the research in this study, as the discussion in the previous chapter showed. Research on PBL tutorials is therefore included in this literature review. The chapter ends with a summary of the major themes emerging from the research reviewed, and how they influenced this study.

3.2. Recent writings on tutoring

Over the last two decades, the deteriorating performance of first-year students has led to the implementation of teaching and learning interventions, such as tutorial programmes, in various subjects at numerous universities, including in South Africa. The changing nature of higher education world-wide has also led to the incorporation of more student-centred teaching approaches (such as tutorials) along with the traditional teacher-centred approaches (such as lectures). Consequently, tutorial programmes have become the topic of many research projects aimed at describing their function or operation, or assessing their efficacy.

Research into student conceptions of PBL by Julie Caplow *et al*. (1997) showed that students believe the tutor's role is critical to their learning (445). Three "content roles" for tutors were identified from the students' responses: the ability to facilitate, subject knowledge expertise, and critical reasoning skills, although students referred primarily to the first two roles when discussing the expectations they have of a tutor (Caplow *et al*. 445). As Biley and Smith's 1999 study mentioned in the previous chapter, the students' responses illustrated the contradictory expectations they have of tutors:

> [M]any students indicated that, to optimise learning in the group context, they preferred tutors who were not directive in their roles as facilitators [and] minimally challenging and non-judgemental in their roles as knowledge experts… […] Yet these students also indicated that, in their experience, the tutors who were moderately to highly directive, judgemental and
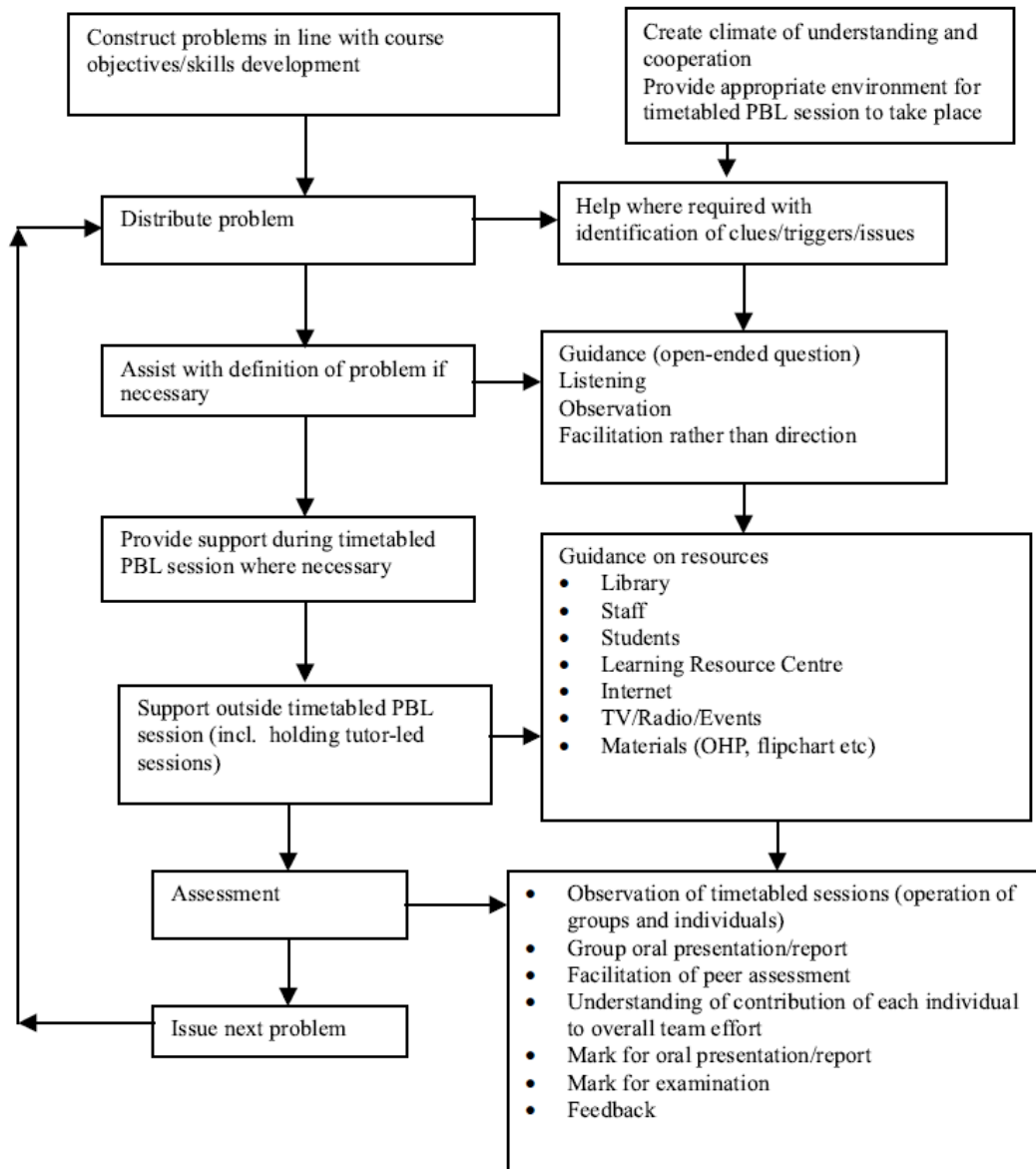
controlling in their roles challenged them to be better prepared for group sessions – thereby contributing to the depth and breadth of their individual learning. (Caplow *et al*. 445)

This discrepancy between perceptions of the tutor's role in terms of individual learning and in terms of group functioning is only one of the challenges inherent in a tutor's position, especially with regard to the power balance between students and tutor.

Carol Johnston *et al*. (2000) experimented with a collaborative problem-solving (CPS) teaching environment, not unlike PBL tutorials, in second-year macroeconomics at the University of Melbourne. In evaluating the project, they used surveys of student attitudes, teaching-evaluation questionnaires, attendance records, interviews with students and tutors, tutorial observations and examination results (Johnston *et al*. 14). The intervention was received positively and the most significant benefit seemed to have been increased student preparation for tutorials (Johnston *et al*. 14). According to Johnston *et al*., "[t]he increases in student preparation time may indicate that the CPS techniques place subtle peer pressures on students. If an appropriate level of challenge is part of a healthy educational environment, then this pressure may be viewed as a positive feature" (25). Other benefits included higher levels of student participation and more sophisticated questions asked by students, compared to traditional tutorials (Johnston *et al*. 18). However, no widespread improvement in examination marks was apparent as a result of the intervention, nor did it increase the students' interest in continuing with the subject (Johnston *et al*. 14). The tutor responses indicated that tutors preferred these tutorials over "mini-lecture" tutorials, because it gave them "the opportunity to interact with students in a more informal atmosphere", and students were therefore "more willing to ask and answer questions" (Johnston *et al*. 18). The student responses suggested that students placed a higher value on CPS tutorials than on traditional "mini-lecture"-type tutorials. Reasons for this include that students feel CPS tutorials are more interesting and interactive, that students get to know other students and in so doing build an academic support structure for outside of the classroom, and that explaining something to a fellow student, or having them explain it to you, improves and tests understanding (Johnston *et al*. 21). These findings support the argument that "student-centered approaches, […] as an alternative to conventional didactic instruction, place emphasis on what the students are doing rather than on what the instructors are doing" (Johnston *et al*. 26), thereby encouraging deeper learning and enabling better academic performance.

For a visualisation of the PBL tutor's responsibilities, I refer to Bill Hutchings and Karen O'Rourke (2002), who designed Figure 3.1 while testing PBL in a literary studies classroom at the University of Manchester. This flowchart also serves as a concise description of how PBL would operate in a literary studies classroom. Hutchings and O'Rourke's experiment revealed PBL to be "a learning strategy that reflects the scholarly process that literature teachers would take for granted as

informing their own academic scholarship" (81), and therefore potentially useful for literary studies courses. They argue that the PBL approach encourages "an active response to the intellectual processes of reading and writing" (80) as well as collaboration between students and independent research (82), making it a highly recommended (if not universally appropriate or practicable) approach to teaching literary analysis.

```
┌──────────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Construct problems in line   │        │ Create climate of            │
│ with course objectives/      │        │ understanding and            │
│ skills development           │        │ cooperation                  │
│                              │        │ Provide appropriate          │
│                              │        │ environment for timetabled   │
│                              │        │ PBL session to take place    │
└──────────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────────┘
              │                                        │
              ▼                                        ▼
       ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
   ──▶ │ Distribute       │ ───────────▶ │ Help where required with     │
  │    │ problem          │              │ identification of            │
  │    └──────────────────┘              │ clues/triggers/issues        │
  │              │                       └──────────────────────────────┘
  │              ▼                                      │
  │    ┌──────────────────────┐                        ▼
  │    │ Assist with          │          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │    │ definition of        │ ───────▶ │ Guidance (open-ended         │
  │    │ problem if necessary │          │ question)                    │
  │    └──────────────────────┘          │ Listening                    │
  │              │                       │ Observation                  │
  │              ▼                       │ Facilitation rather than     │
  │    ┌──────────────────────┐          │ direction                    │
  │    │ Provide support      │          └──────────────────────────────┘
  │    │ during timetabled    │                        │
  │    │ PBL session where    │                        ▼
  │    │ necessary            │          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │    └──────────────────────┘          │ Guidance on resources        │
  │              │                       │  • Library                   │
  │              ▼                       │  • Staff                     │
  │    ┌──────────────────────┐          │  • Students                  │
  │    │ Support outside      │          │  • Learning Resource Centre  │
  │    │ timetabled PBL       │ ───────▶ │  • Internet                  │
  │    │ session (incl.       │          │  • TV/Radio/Events           │
  │    │ holding tutor-led    │          │  • Materials (OHP,           │
  │    │ sessions)            │          │    flipchart etc)            │
  │    └──────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────────┘
  │              │                                      │
  │              ▼                                      ▼
  │    ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │    │ Assessment       │ ───────────▶ │  • Observation of            │
  │    └──────────────────┘              │    timetabled sessions       │
  │              │                       │    (operation of groups      │
  │              ▼                       │    and individuals)          │
  │    ┌──────────────────┐              │  • Group oral                │
  └────│ Issue next       │              │    presentation/report       │
       │ problem          │              │  • Facilitation of peer      │
       └──────────────────┘              │    assessment                │
                                         │  • Understanding of          │
                                         │    contribution of each      │
                                         │    individual to overall     │
                                         │    team effort               │
                                         │  • Mark for oral             │
                                         │    presentation/report       │
                                         │  • Mark for examination      │
                                         │  • Feedback                  │
                                         └──────────────────────────────┘
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Fig. 3.1: Responsibilities of the PBL tutor

Furthermore, the tutor's role is not just about what he/she does, but how they do it. Kai-Kuen Leung *et al*. (2003) developed a teaching-styles inventory for PBL tutors based on Roger Bibace *et al*.'s teaching style model (1981). The inventory consisted of four teaching styles, namely assertive, collaborative, suggestive and facilitative. A questionnaire was sent to a group of PBL tutors at the National Taiwan University College of Medicine. Participants were asked to rate, on a Likert scale,

their level of agreement with various statements, such as "Summarise the discussion for students" and "Give suggestions to solve problem" (Leung *et al*. 413). Their participants had their highest scores in the collaborative domain and lowest scores in the assertive domain, which shows that they are "fulfilling their role as effective PBL tutors" (Leung *et al*. 415). However, the researchers caution that the questionnaire measures teaching styles as reported by the tutors themselves, and it is uncertain whether these results reflect their actual behaviour (Leung *et al*. 415). The researchers suggest students' responses to tutor teaching behaviours as one possible indicator of the predictive validity of the inventory (Leung *et al*. 415).

In 2004, Appalasamy investigated the use of an orientation programme to prepare first-year medical students for a PBL tutorial curriculum at the Nelson R Mandela Medical School in South Africa. She found that PBL tutoring is an effective teaching method, but that first-year students had difficulty with the PBL process and how it is structured (94). She suggests that

> [s]taff need to be more aware of what happens in the programme, and what the students' needs are. Although feedback from the facilitators and ongoing evaluation takes place, closer monitoring of the students needs to happen and feedback from staff on how students do in the tutorials regarding the learning process must be done timeously. (Appalasamy 94)

These recommendations tie in with my own study in that they show that it is crucial to know what students' needs are and whether the course is fulfilling those needs. Through the student and tutor surveys conducted in this study, I have tried to determine where there may be gaps in the tutorial programme in terms of teaching and learning, thereby creating awareness of what is happening in the programme.

In a 2005 study, Teena Clouston gathered student perspectives on the teaching styles of PBL tutors at Cardiff University through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and narratives. The student responses revealed their perceptions of important characteristics and responsibilities of a successful tutor. Three key characteristics emerged: "Being in the group" (52), "being a resource" (53) and "being real" (53). By the tutor "being in the group", students meant that the tutor should play an active but detached role in the group discussion, e.g. through "prompting, guidance and directiveness" (Clouston 52). Students seemed to feel that "a more reserved role [played by the tutor] could be inhibiting and seen as purely observational" (Clouston 52). "Being a resource" entailed that students consider tutors "to have knowledge or experience to impart" (53), although Clouston points out that this aspect can problematise the tutor's role by blurring the distinction between expert and facilitator, and therefore also the distinction between student-centred and teacher-centred learning. The fact that tutors at Stellenbosch University's English Department,

unlike many PBL facilitators, are by definition not lecturers could exacerbate this problem. This is why the tutor's role is such a challenging one, with various precarious balances that need to be constantly maintained in the classroom. Clouston writes that "decisions have to be made [by the tutor] about *when* to offer information. Similarly, the content of knowledge given should enable, not inhibit the problem-solving process" (53, emphasis added). While literary studies is not a field usually associated with problem-solving, Clouston's ideas are just as appropriate to the group brainstorming or critical thinking sessions that often characterise English tutorials. Lastly, for students in Clouston's study, the tutor "being real" meant that he/she should be "approachable, enthusiastic, motivated and honest in group settings" (53).

Clouston's respondents also concurred on three important responsibilities for a tutor: "focusing and clarifying" (55), "challenging" the students (55) and "providing feedback and summing up" (56). The students seemed to agree that, as mentioned above, "the tutor has an important role to clarify the purpose and direction of the group to maintain focus and discussion" (Clouston 55). The students also felt that "the *way* in which facilitators challenged [them] was essential to success" and that "comments [they] made should be valued, even if wrong" (Clouston 55). Finally, the value these respondents attached to the tutor regularly "providing feedback and summing up" showed the importance of "facilitators [being] attuned to the dynamics within groups" (Clouston 56). Again, the need for timely intervention by the tutor was emphasised.

Salah Kassab *et al*. (2006) took the research a step further by comparing the self-rated with student-rated teaching styles of PBL tutors. Their rationale was that "[a] tutor who is aware of his or her teaching style can possibly make more consistent judgements about how best to run a tutorial session" (460). Leung *et al*.'s teaching style inventory (four domains: assertive, collaborative, suggestive and facilitative) was modified as a measuring instrument, which was used for both the tutors' ratings of themselves and the students' ratings of the tutors. Students were also asked to provide additional comments on tutor characteristics other than those listed in the TSI. The most significant result was that tutors tended to rate themselves mostly in the facilitative and collaborative domains, while students scored the same tutors higher in the suggestive and assertive domains, and lower in the facilitative and collaborative domains. This could mean that there is a disparity between how tutors think they teach and how they actually teach. However, Kassab *et al*. also offer two other explanations. Firstly, "differences in learning styles of students could affect their interpretations of the tutor behaviour" (Kassab *et al*. 463), which means that one student could see a tutor as an assertive teacher, while another student may see the same tutor as a collaborative teacher. Tracey Papinczak *et al*. (2009, see below) concur when they point out that "tutors whose styles were evaluated as 'controlling' may, in reality, consider themselves quite facilitative tutors"

(382). Secondly, the tutors might be idealising their rating of their teaching styles "according to their perception of what a PBL medical school regards as 'desirable' for a tutor" (Kassab *et al*. 463). The students' additional comments revealed that students perceive effective tutors as "those who respect students' opinions, establish good communications with students and understand their feelings and advise students on how to learn" (Kassab *et al*. 463). The three attributes of an effective tutor that were mentioned most frequently by the students were "establishing rapport with students", "providing academic help" and "having content knowledge" (Kassab *et al*. 462).

Gillian Maudsley (1999) and later Cindy Hmelo-Silver and Howard Barrows (2006) analysed and described the role and behaviour of PBL tutors, and their results are in line with the students' perceptions. The need for a tutor who is non-threatening, non-interventionist, encouraging, challenging, empathetic and enthusiastic is emphasised consistently by the students as beneficial to their academic performance. An effective tutor is one who, among other things, "check[s] the understanding of less vocal students and involve[s] them in the discourse", and "help[s] keep the learning process on track" (Hmelo-Silver and Barrows 30). However, the "role confusion" (Papinczak *et al*. 379) of tutors by students remains an issue in all investigations. Yvonne Steinert (2004) and Papinczak *et al*. also studied student perceptions of the components of effective small-group teaching in PBL, and came to similar conclusions as the studies mentioned above. Steinert's respondents indicated that "a non-threatening group atmosphere, group interaction […] and pedagogical materials that encourage […] thinking" (291) are important characteristics of effective small groups. According to Papinczak *et al*., "more effective tutors moderate their style of facilitation to best meet the teaching situation, whereas less effective tutors either fail to recognise the need for moderation or maintain a preferred style in a context-independent manner" (382).

Kim Fairon (2007) investigated the effect of a cognitive mediated intervention programme with first-year metallurgy students at the University of the Witwatersrand. Cognitive mediation sessions were scheduled for the third and fourth quarter of the academic year during the regular tutorial time on Fridays. However, "[t]he students' perception was that the tutors told them what to do, rather than helped them understand the work" (Fairon 66). Unlike in the English 178 tutorial programme, the tutors in Fairon's study did not mark tests or give feedback to the students in any way. Fairon suggests that "[the] implementation of [a] weekly test and feedback system might be a possible solution in assisting students to bridge the gap between the curriculum and their incoming academic competencies" (66). The importance of timely and useful feedback from tutors is therefore underscored. Fairon's results show that "mediating cognitive functions significantly improved the intellectual functioning" (8) of the students, but no significant improvement was found in the academic achievement of the students as measured by the examination results. She concludes that

12 weeks of intervention are sufficient to improve intellectual functioning, although not sufficient for this to transfer into academic achievement. Improved intellectual functioning in a student does therefore not necessarily equal higher grades for the student.

A study conducted by Constance Zulu (2008) among first-years and lecturers from various faculties at a historically black university in South Africa showed that lecturers believe tutorials are "effective practices which contribut[e] to student success" (38). Lecturers and students agreed on "class attendance, group discussions, consultation with lecturers, tutorials and oral presentations" (Zulu 39) as factors that contribute to students' academic success. Zulu therefore argues that "implementing a compulsory tutorial system which is closely monitored may be helpful in promoting and reinforcing cooperative and collaborative learning" (44).

Petronella Horn and Ada Jansen (2009) investigated the impact of tutorials on the performance of first-year Economics students at Stellenbosch University. While, unlike in English 178, tutorials were not compulsory for Economics 178 students at the time of the study, they became compulsory in 2009. The central finding of the Horn and Jansen study was that tutorial attendance had a positive effect on the marks of Economics 178 students. According to the researchers, "[t]his confirms the hypothesis that students who regularly attend tutorial classes strengthen their understanding of the subject matter, which contributes positively to their performance" (185). There was also a positive correlation between tutorial attendance and lecture attendance, i.e. students who attended more lectures and more tutorials tended to perform better in the module (although their matric results were also relatively higher) (Horn and Jansen 184). Unlike in the English Department, where the ratio of lectures to tutorials is 1:2, the ratio of lectures to tutorials in the Economics 178 course is 3:1. The tutorials cover a similar section of the syllabus, "although in a more compact and interactive format" (Horn and Jansen 188). Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, students in Horn and Jansen's study indicated that "they used the tutorials as a substitute for lectures", which allowed them to "cut back on the time spent attending lectures" (188). However, according to their statistics, students who attend all lectures will have a higher mark than students who do not attend lectures at all (Horn and Jansen 187). Their results ultimately show that both lecture and tutorial attendance contribute positively to the performance of Economics 178 students, as measured in grades, and that a tutorial programme can improve student performance. Horn, Jansen and Derek Yu (2011) followed up the 2009 study with research into the factors that explain the academic success of second-year economics students, also at Stellenbosch University. The 2011 study found that lecture and tutorial attendance contributed to academic success in second year as well (Horn *et al*. 210), which implies that academic support structures such as tutorials are not only useful in first

year. Horn *et al*. suggest that tutorials should form an integral part of the second-year Economics course (210).

Similarly, Ilze van der Merwe's research (2009) found that a writing skills intervention had a positive impact on the academic performance of first-year Tourism Development students at the University of Johannesburg. While the researcher does not make this foundation explicit, her writing skills intervention clearly followed David Rose's Scaffolding Academic Literacy pedagogy (Rose *et al*. 2008) by infusing the teaching of writing skills into the actual module content. In the intervention, "[s]pecialised writing skills were practised and developed [in] tutorial sessions, with the guidance of each group's allocated tutor" (Van der Merwe 33). This mirrors the writing activities English 178 students often do during ordinary literature tutorials, and more particularly during writing tutorials. Writing tutorials are tutorials devoted exclusively to the teaching and practising of specific components of essay-writing, such as introduction writing or paragraphing. These tutorials are timeously scheduled to assist students in their writing well before the due date of a semester essay draft. Incidentally, Van der Merwe also made use of a drafting process in her writing intervention (33).

In 2009, Anita Campbell explored the use of tutor-intensive interventions as a form of remediation for first-year Mathematics students' algebra difficulties. Students were divided into groups, and each group was exposed to a different remediation strategy. The best improvement on test scores could be seen in the group that took part in Tutor-led Cognitive Conflict, i.e. they were given weekly cognitive-conflict inducing worksheets, with the tutor providing solutions and explanations after the students had worked by themselves (Campbell 93). The students were allowed to work collaboratively or alone (Campbell 61). Interestingly, Campbell identified a problem that tutors in English Studies are thoroughly aware of: "Tutorials offer the chance for students to interact with their tutor and their class-mates but there are few demands made on students who remain disengaged in tutorials and do not ask for help" (4). Getting uninterested (or even disinterested) students to participate in classroom activities is not restricted to any specific subject field, as my own results confirm. Iris Vardi and Marina Ciccarelli (2008) also mention "inadequate […] participation" (347) as a challenge even in PBL. It is significant that the two most effective remediation strategies that emerged from Campbell's study, namely Tutor-led Cognitive Conflict and Practice (completing tests to be marked by a tutor), should also be "the most demanding in terms of implementation time and effort, as they […] required more tutor preparation […] and marking" (100). This study confirms that truly effective teaching and learning interventions require both human and financial capital, as well as complete investment by those involved in it.

Sharon Yam (2010) investigated the role of tutoring in the transition from high school to first year at an Australian university. A questionnaire was used to determine how students respond to the tutoring strategies adopted in the first six weeks of a first-year Property course. Three aspects of tutoring were identified by students as being most useful to their academic success: a student-centred teaching style, feedback, and assessments. The student responses showed that the tutor's personal attributes are "crucial" in terms of "enabl[ing] [students] to ask questions" and making them "feel comfortable and interested in the course" (Yam 12). According to the respondents, these attributes include being "approachable, motivating, encouraging, helpful, interested in [the students'] study, interested in the subject […] and organised" (Yam 12). This is in line with the responses to the tutor survey conducted as part of this study, which can be seen in Chapter 5. The students in Yam's study also saw "helpful and constructive feedback as important for their study" (13). While the students younger than 20 years old viewed the weekly test that formed part of the Property course positively, because "they found it useful in forcing them to study regularly", older students did not attach as much value to the test, because they "tend to be more self-regulated" and "could manage their study better" (Yam 14). Group exercises and assessments were also particularly well received by younger students, because "they were able to make more friends and discuss their studies together" (Yam 14). Incidentally, the tutors in Yam's study made use of PBL exercises to relate subject to practice for the students, which seems to have been successful. Yam concludes that tutorials in which a student-centred teaching style is employed are helpful in providing students with "confidence and support in their learning" (17). According to Yam, "tutors assume critical roles in helping first-year students to engage with their study as students have longer contact hours and one-to-one relationships with tutors", but tutors also "help [students] adapt to the new challenging university environment" (17), suggesting that the tutor often also functions as a kind of mentor to the student.

A 2012 study by Venicia McGhie attempted to identify the factors that have an impact on first-year students' academic progress, in the particular case of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Western Cape. The tutorials in McGhie's study are almost identical to the English 178 tutorials on which this study centres, which makes her study highly relevant to this literature review. McGhie refers to UWC's tutorials as

> [a] form of academic support provided to first-year students […] where students are divided
> into smaller groups of 20 and where they can work on work covered in the lectures in smaller
> groups and tutorial assignments. [These tutorials] also provide opportunities for students to
> discuss work and ask for clarification on issues that they did not fully understand. (57)

The only difference is that in the English 178 tutorial programme, students do not work on tutorial assignments during tutorials; while group work activities and draft writing may form part of a particular day's tutorial, all assignments are completed at home. Nevertheless, considering the similarities between the tutorial programme McGhie studied and the one I am studying, it is significant that McGhie's research yielded similar findings to my own in terms of tutoring. McGhie's literature review found that "some tutors are not equipped with the necessary skills to conduct a tutorial successfully" (58), and a number of her respondents named tutorial support as a challenge to learning if inter-tutor consistency with regard to teaching and marking is not maintained (161). In order to address these issues, McGhie suggests that "[o]ngoing tutor training and feedback sessions […] be instituted in the different departments in order to supervisor [*sic*] and monitor tutors and to provide assistance to them during the course of the year" (200). This is in direct accordance with my own recommendations in Chapter 6.

In his research on student preparedness for academic writing, Seamus Allardice (2013) included tutors' perceptions of student preparedness. According to Allardice, "[t]he views of the lecturers and the tutors were essential in establishing a guideline to determine perceptions of what constitutes preparedness on the part of students coming into university for the first time" (17). While this study – which, like my own, was conducted in Stellenbosch University's English Department – was not aimed at tutoring in particular, it does point to the value of tutors in the first-year programme and the weight their input carries when investigating student phenomena. Allardice confirms this value by stating that "[t]he views and beliefs of individual tutors can have a significant impact on their students' perceptions of their own preparedness" (48). This study found a striking discrepancy between the number of students who consider themselves prepared for university study, and the number of students perceived by lecturers and tutors to be prepared for university study.

3.3. Summary

The fact that much of the research in this literature review is situated in fields other than English Studies points to the fundamental interdisciplinarity of research on tutoring. While the subject matter of the respective fields often varies greatly, there are clear overlaps in terms of pedagogical principles. Across a wide spectrum of study fields, tutorial programmes share the same key elements, but also the same problematic issues. This literature review revealed that rigorous empirical research on the role of tutors and the efficacy of tutorial programmes is imperative in any tutorial programme in order to ensure the optimal functioning of the programme and the greatest value of it to students. Key themes which emerged from the research reviewed, and therefore played a role in the research design of this study, include the responsibilities of the tutor and their role in

the learning process (including students' perceptions), the tutor's teaching style and how this may affect student learning, the efficacy of tutorial programmes as a learning intervention, and the need for sound tutor training.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research design

The overarching purpose of this research project was to evaluate the English 178 tutorial programme as a learning intervention. Cronbach and associates (1980) state that "[a]n evaluation ought to inform and improve the operations of the [particular] social system" (65-66), in this case the tutorial programme. In an evaluation like this, "science-based findings make an important contribution to a decision-making context that is otherwise rife with self-interested perceptions and assertions, ideological biases, and undocumented claims" (Rossi *et al*. 25). My goal with this study was therefore to offer an alternative to biases and claims about the English 178 tutorial programme in the form of rigorous empirical research on the programme's function and efficacy.

A combined qualitative and quantitative design (mixed methods research) was used for this research project. Triangulation, or the use of multiple measures, is considered "the best way to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study" (Babbie and Mouton 277). It also enhances the validity and reliability of an investigation (Babbie and Mouton 275). Denzin (1989) writes that "[t]riangulation […] is a plan of action that will raise [researchers] above the personal biases that stem from single methodologies" (236). Qualitative and quantitative data were obtained through the use of self-administered surveys containing multiple-choice and open-ended questions: one survey for tutors and two surveys for students. Babbie and Mouton describe one of the advantages of surveys as follows: "Many questions may be asked on a given topic, giving [the researcher] considerable flexibility in [his/her] analyses" (263).

According to Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004), "multiple measures of important programme outcomes help the evaluator guard against missing an important programme accomplishment because of a narrow measurement strategy that leaves out relevant outcome dimensions" (215). This is a particularly important reason for making use of multiple measures, since the purpose of the study was to measure the accomplishments of the tutor programme as a learning intervention. In this study, these multiple measures entailed the use of both qualitative and quantitative data, collected from both students and tutors.
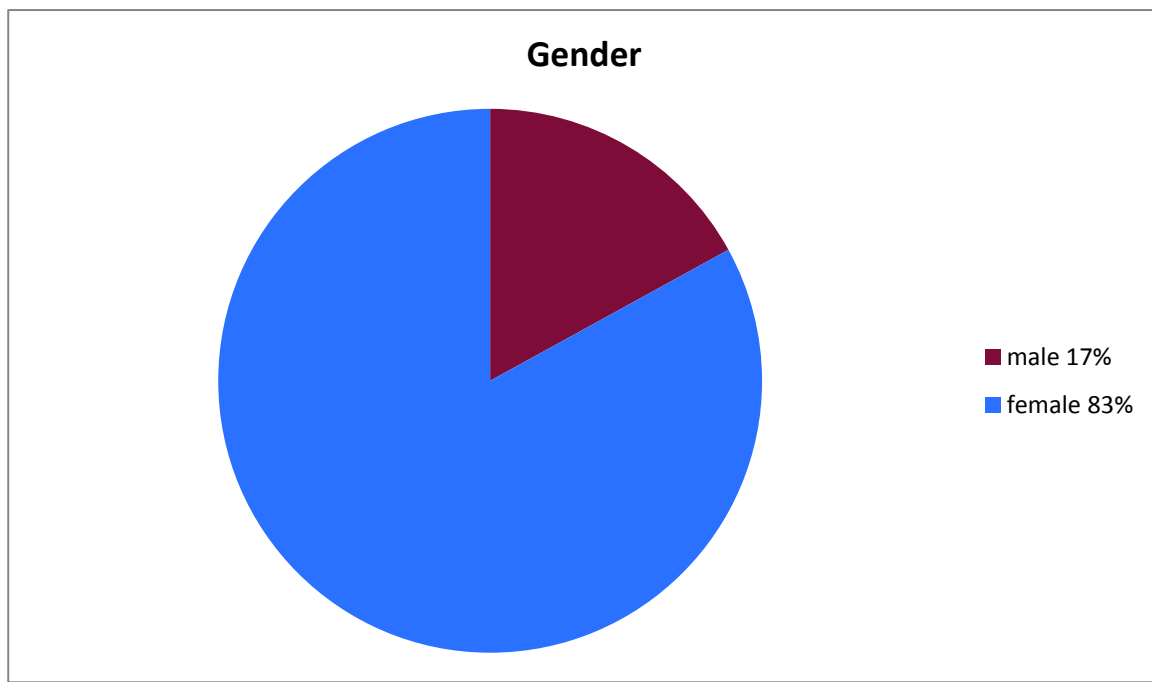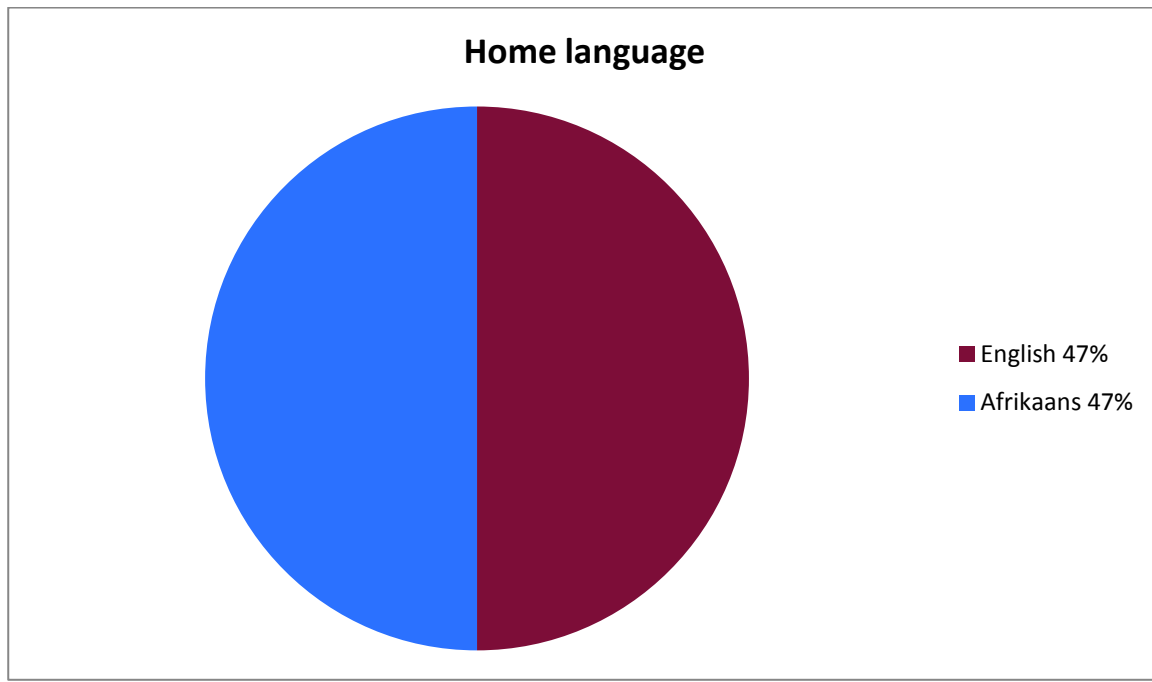
4.2. Participants

4.2.1. Tutor survey

At the end of July 2012, a call for tutor participants was sent out to the entire group of English 178 tutors. The tutors were informed that participating would entail conducting two separate surveys with their various tutorial groups (one in August and one in October of 2012), as well as completing a survey on their own experiences as a tutor (in October 2012). A probability sample of 12 out of a population of 24 tutors voluntarily undertook to participate in the study. Babbie and Mouton argue that "a sample [is] representative of the population from which it is selected if the aggregate characteristics of the sample closely approximate those same aggregate characteristics in the population" (172). The characteristics of the tutor participants are summarised below, and I contend that these characteristics mirror those of the tutor team as a whole. The sample of participants in the tutor survey can therefore be assumed to be representative of the population.

Who is the English 178 tutor?

Fig. 4.1: Gender distribution of English 178 tutors

Fig. 4.2: Home language distribution of English 178 tutors
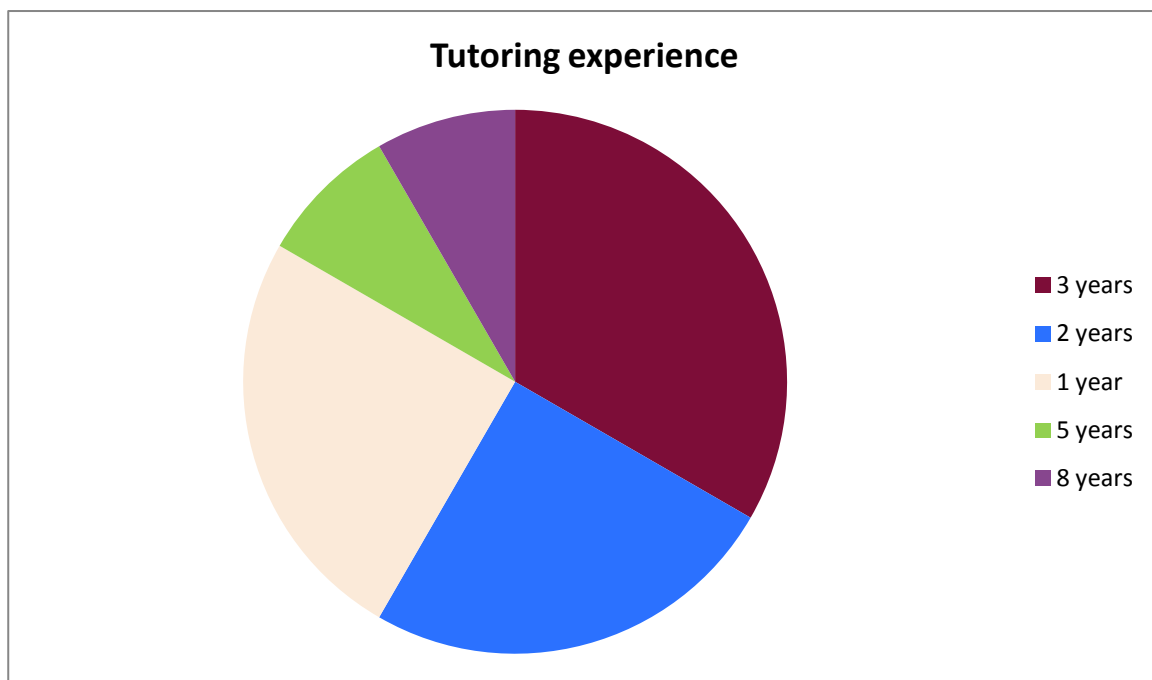
Fig. 4.3: Tutoring experience distribution of English 178 tutors

4.2.2. Student surveys

All of the participants in the two student surveys were students enrolled in English 178 during 2012. During a suitable tutorial chosen by each of the tutors at the end of August 2012, the participants were asked to complete a hard-copy survey on their experience in English 178 and its tutorial programme. Completing the survey was not compulsory and students were required to sign the

document of informed consent attached to the survey if they decided to complete it. The tutors collected the completed surveys and delivered them to me. The process was repeated with another survey at the end of October 2012. Due to time and administrative constraints, some tutors did not conduct both surveys with all of their tutorial groups. Therefore, in processing the data, I found that several participants had completed only one of the surveys. For the purpose of consistency, these participants were removed from the study. The outcome was that 216 respondents were identified, alphabetised and numbered. This probability sample (n = 216) constituted 24% of the total population of 895 registered English 178 students. The demographics of the student participants are summarised below.

According to Babbie and Mouton, "[a] large number of cases is very important for both descriptive and explanatory analyses, especially wherever several variables are to be analysed simultaneously" (263). The 24% response rate was considered a sufficiently large sample for this study. The statistics extrapolated from the survey data are from a significant and representative sample of the 2012 English 178 intake and therefore have a high degree of generalisability from the sample to population. In Chapter 5, these statistics are therefore used to draw conclusions about the entire English 178 year group.
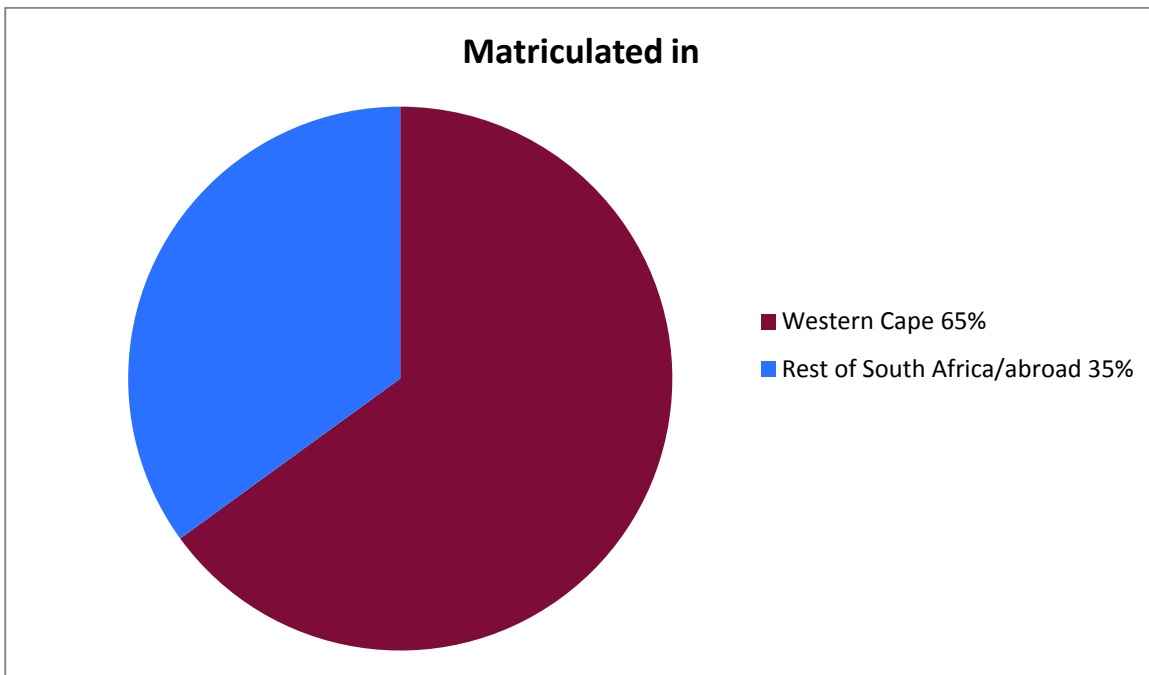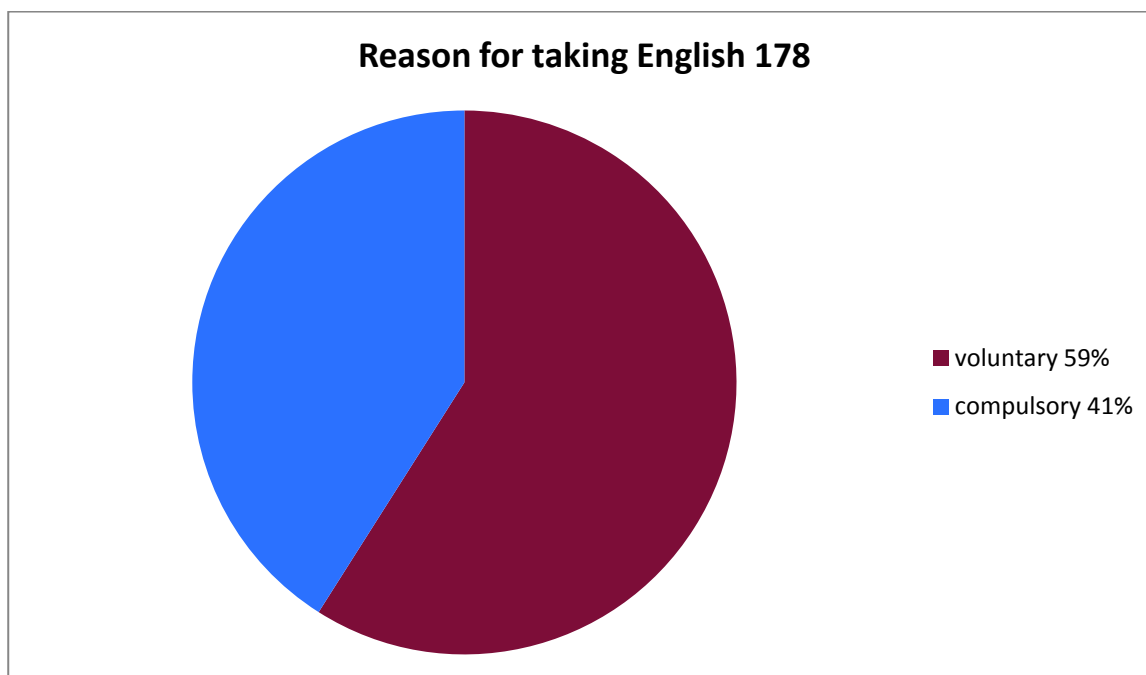
Who is the English 178 student?
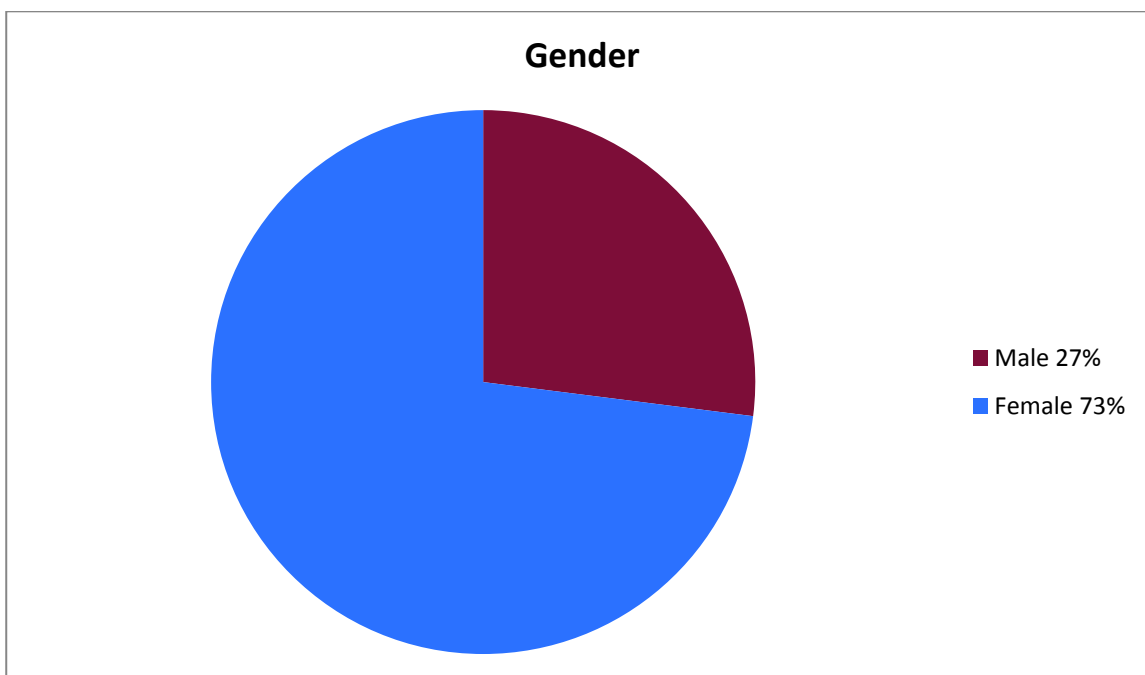
Fig. 4.4: Gender distribution of English 178 students
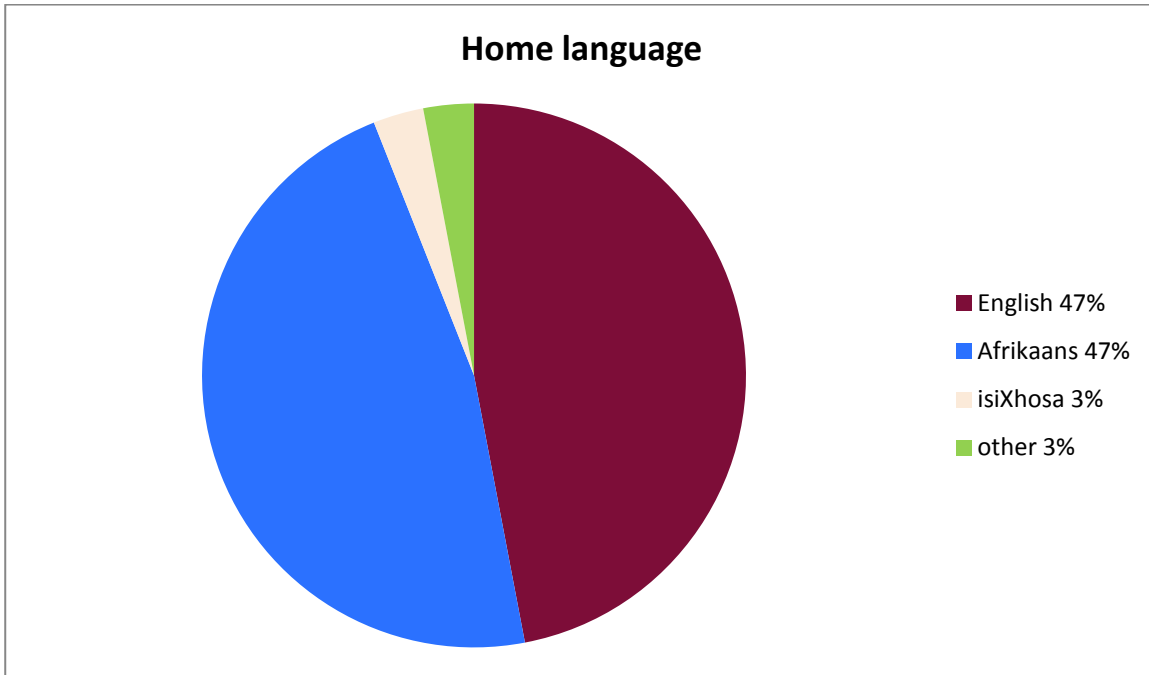
Fig. 4.5: Home language distribution of English 178 students

Fig. 4.6: Matriculation distribution of English 178 students

Reason for taking English 178

- voluntary 59%
- compulsory 41%

Fig. 4.7: Distribution of students' reasons for taking English 178

4.3. Measuring instruments

Rossi *et al*. write that

> [t]he foundation for formulating appropriate and realistic evaluation questions is detailed and complete programme description. Early in the process, the evaluator should become thoroughly acquainted with the programme – how it is structured, what activities take place, the roles and tasks of the various personnel, the nature of the participants, and the assumptions inherent in its principal functions. (72)

In my opinion, my experience as an English 178 tutor during 2011 and 2012 provided me with the necessary knowledge of the course, tutorial programme, tutors and students, which enabled me to formulate "appropriate and realistic evaluation questions" (Rossi *et al*. 72) for the student and tutor surveys conducted as part of this study.

4.3.1. Tutor survey

The tutor survey consisted of 41 questions: 24 open-ended and 17 closed-ended questions. The questions were divided into three sections, namely tutoring experience, teaching approach and tutors' use of English 178 course material. In Section B, Teaching Approach, tutors were asked to position themselves in one of the categories (assertive, collaborative, suggestive or facilitative) in a teaching style inventory adapted from the one developed as part of a study by Leung *et al*. (2003). The complete survey can be found in Addendum C.

4.3.2. Student surveys

The August student survey consisted of 26 questions: 6 open-ended and 20 closed-ended questions. The questions were divided into four sections, namely English at school, reading habits, English 178 as a course and English 178 tutorials. The October student survey consisted of 25 questions: 6 open-ended and 19 closed-ended questions. The questions were divided into two sections, namely English Studies and English Studies tutorials. Both surveys contained a box for biographical information at the beginning, with questions on gender, home language(s), high school of matriculation and English 178 as part of their degree. The complete surveys can be found in Addenda A and B.

4.4. Data analysis

4.4.1. Quantitative data analysis

Hypothesis testing was done through chi-squared testing for categorical data. Mann-Whitney U testing was used in analysing the numerical data. The study also made use of Spearman's rank correlation. The closed-ended nature of the quantitative questions means that the same results are likely to be obtained in the same analysis by a different researcher. Accordingly, the quantitative data can claim high reliability. The results from various quantitative questions were correlated to ensure construct validity, in other words the probability that a respondent who answered in a specific way in one question would answer in a specific way in another question. The quantitative sections of the surveys were therefore subjected to additional statistical analysis in order to test the relationships between different combinations of survey questions.

4.4.2. Qualitative data analysis

A content analysis approach (with coding for frequency of words, not occurrence) was used to process qualitative the data. In the process of coding the data according to specific key words or phrases, not only the linguistic content of the responses but also the meaning of the responses was coded, following Babbie and Mouton's recommendation to "generalise around the content of [the] data to include all meaningful instances of a specific code's data" (492-3). They write that "qualitative research is predominantly about understanding meaning", and that coding strictly according to linguistic content is therefore "more of a disadvantage than an advantage to your study" (493). An initial round of open coding, which Babbie and Mouton describe as "the creation of certain categories pertaining to certain segments of text" (499), was used as a starting point for categorising the qualitative responses. A second round of coding entailed the interpretation of responses in order to also incorporate each response's meaning into the data categories. This coding

process was followed by repeated reconsideration of the responses and their positions in different categories until an acceptable level of intra-categorical consistency had been reached. Finally, the data sets were grouped for write-up according to which research question they would address.

4.5. Limitations of this study

Every research methodology brings with it inherent challenges, and what follows is a discussion of potential limitations in this project. My decision to make use of both qualitative and quantitative research was an attempt to counteract these challenges, thereby increasing the content validity of the study – in other words, whether the study is measuring what it is intended to measure.

Babbie and Mouton outline several shortcomings of survey research, including the fact that "the survey researcher rarely develops the feel for the total life situation in which respondents are thinking and acting to the degree that the participant observer (for example) can" (263). I agree with this statement, and an observation study or participatory action research on tutoring would provide a valuable contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning at Stellenbosch University.

It may be argued that at the end of English 178, the participants in the student surveys were not yet in a position to determine their own level of preparedness for English 278, and that some experience in English 278 would have given them a clearer picture of their preparedness, or of what they learned in English 178. In this regard, a follow-up survey was considered for this study, but rejected due to time and administrative constraints. The argument is unquestionably valid, and a more comprehensive study incorporating the views of second-year students is recommended.

According to Rossi *et al*., a randomised field experiment is the best method for an impact assessment such as this study (266). However, in this case a randomised field experiment was not possible, because it requires both an intervention group and a control group. It was not possible to test a control group in this study, since there is no separate English Studies course without tutorials, and no portion of English 178 students who are not required to attend tutorials. Without randomised design, Rossi *et al*. claim that programme effects "can only be estimated" (266). The effects, outlined in Chapter 5, of the English 178 course and its tutorials – namely the skills students acquire as a result of taking the subject – is therefore presented as an estimation and not a mathematical measurement.

Finally, it is possible that the tutors who invested time and energy in participating in the study are more likely than other tutors to have invested time and energy in their students as well. This means that the participants in this study may have presented an overly favourable perception of the tutors

in their responses to the surveys. However, I believe that this possibility is minimised by the fact that tutorial groups almost always change tutors between the first and the second semester, which means that the student participants' responses to the August survey would have related to a different tutor, potentially not a participant in the survey.

Chapter 5

RESULTS

Throughout these results, the following abbreviations are used:

AQ [number] = August student survey question number (e.g. AQ1)

OQ [number] = October student survey question number (e.g. OQ1)

[number] A   = numbered student respondent's response in August (e.g. 001A)

[number] O   = numbered student respondent's response in October (e.g. 001O)

Each respondent received a number for the August survey and retained this number for the October survey, which means that e.g. 001A and 001O were answered by the same respondent.

TR [number]   = tutor respondent number (e.g. TR01)

5.1. Research question 1: What do students bring to English 178?

In a research report on the profile of the first-year student at Stellenbosch University, Liezel Frick (2008) writes that "[f]irst-year students at universities are often school leavers that enter the higher education system with an array of prior knowledge skills and attitudes obtained during their school careers" (i). However, it is not always clear what these knowledge skills and attitudes entail. In this regard, Suellen Shay (1998) argues that "[m]any existing curricula are failing to meet students at the appropriate starting point" (159). Allardice's 2013 study attempted to define this "array of prior knowledge skills and attitudes" (Frick i), yielding qualitative data which is summarised in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 below.
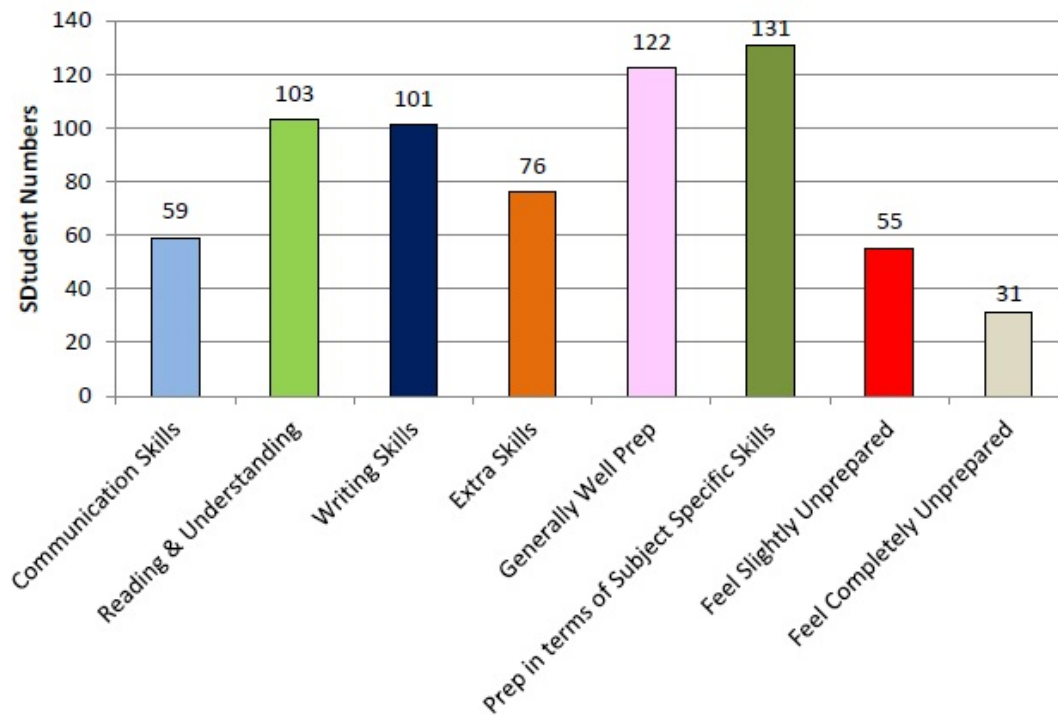
Fig. 5.1: What did your pre-university education and life prepare you for in terms of English 178?
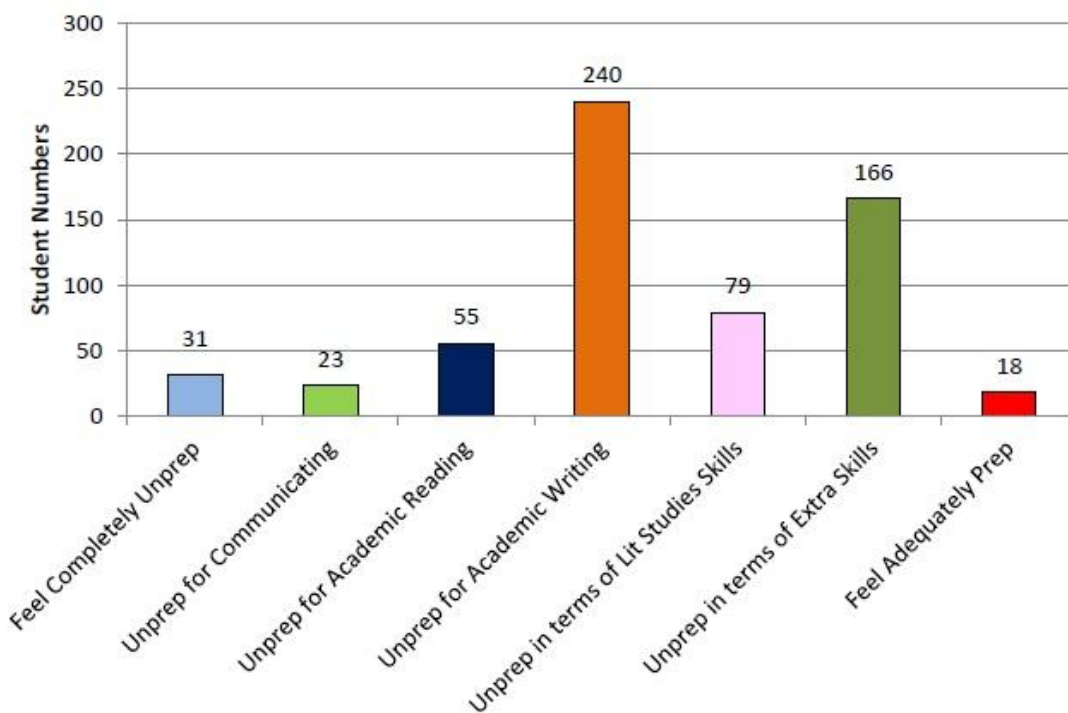
Fig. 5.2: What did your pre-university education and life fail to prepare you for in terms of English 178?

Frick goes on to say that "[l]ecturers of first-year modules and planners of foundation programmes often lack insight into the academic backgrounds of first-year students towards whom the university

curriculum is directed" (i). In my study, the purpose of the first research question was primarily to provide this insight, thereby creating a backdrop against which to read the findings on the English 178 course outcomes and the role of the tutors in the course.

AQ1 revealed that 67% of respondents had English Home Language as a subject in Grade 12, and 33% had English Additional language. According to AQ2, the average mark respondents received for English in matric was 75%, which is reasonably high. While it would not be productive at this point to speculate about the varying standards of marks between high school and university, it is safe to assume that there is at least some variance. It is therefore quite possible that the high marks students receive for English in school lull them into complacency or overconfidence by giving them a distorted impression of their abilities. English at university level is doubtlessly more difficult than anything students did at school, and marks like these lead them to overestimate their preparedness levels, as Allardice's study showed (see Chapter 2). The results of Frick's report confirm this by suggesting that "even though first-year students may perceive a module as relatively difficult, they [do] not expect to fail" (iii). However, "[r]eality contradicts this notion as the failure rate in first-year modules seem [*sic*] to be higher if compared to respondents' expected performance" (Frick iii).

The vast majority of students seem to have been introduced to novels (91%) and poems (89%) in high school, and most (75%) also to plays. Short stories are in the minority here, with 58% of students having studied the genre, but the reason for this is unclear. When asked to name specific texts they had studied, only 60 respondents (29%) could name three or more specific texts they had studied in high school. Two thirds of the respondents (137 or 67%) named up to two specific texts and/or general terms such as "a variety of poems". Seven students (3%) wrote phrases such as "don't remember" and "don't know", and 12 students did not respond. These responses illustrate the general apathy which seems to characterise the respondents' relationship with set works in particular and literature in general.

The results for AQ7 and 8 show that what students bring to English 178 is neither a love of reading nor an extensive reading history. In AQ7, respondents were asked about the number of books they read for recreational purposes every year, and the results showed a mode of four books per year, which is more representative than the mean in a statistical distribution with a large number of outliers, as in this case. Most students therefore read four non-prescribed works per year. This number is low, but not appalling, considering the visual and technological age in which these students grew up – an age characterised by what Gunther Kress (2005) refers to as a "'revolution' […] from the centrality of the medium of the book to the medium of the screen" (6). According to Kress *et al*. (2006), "the communicational landscape in general is moving more towards the use of

image in many domains of communication, especially in popular domains, and […] children are more and more habituated to getting information visually" (175). While a reading average of four recreational texts per year seems low, Kress's theories do present some extenuating circumstances.

The results concerning *what* students read raises the much-debated question of what constitutes literature. According to 170 respondents to AQ8, what students read most is auto/biography[7] (25%), romance[8] (24%) and fantasy[9] (23%). Non-fiction[10] is the fourth-most popular genre at 20% of respondents, with crime/suspense[11] at 19%. None of these genres is likely to appear in a first-year set work list. Romance and fantasy tend to refer to mainstream novels or paperbacks (as corroborated by some of the specific authors and series mentioned by students in their responses – see footnotes 6 and 7), and many of the respondents who indicated auto/biography confined their responses to works about/by their favourite sports stars (see footnote 6). The only genres that could arguably appear in set work lists had vast minorities of respondents, namely classics[12] (14 respondents or 8%), short stories[13] (5 respondents or almost 3%) and poetry[14] (3 respondents or 1.7%). The respondents' preference for works that are potentially shorter, more recent, more easily readable and often escapist in nature shows that while students seem to be in contact with texts, at least to some extent, they are not critically engaging with the written word so much as enjoying the content. Not surprisingly, survey responses show that students would prefer set works which are in line with this attitude, i.e. texts that are more "relevant" and "interesting" to them. Nine respondents (14%) to AQ26 (an opportunity for additional comments) requested that the set works for the course be changed, including comments like "Maybe replace [*Nervous Conditions*] with something more relative [*sic*] to us as students" (001A), "Set lists for first year should be reviewed. Novels should be more interesting (for first years) so that students feel more motivated to attend class and engage with text" (132A) and "Should study more relevant modern works – that relate to the youth [*sic*]" (216A). Out of 23 responses to OQ14 (also an opportunity for additional comments), 14 (61%) suggested revisions to the course, mostly in terms of set works and assessment.

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[7] Responses in this category included "auto-biographies [*sic*] that give insight into the lives of sportsman [*sic*] mainly" (027A), "sport biography" (066A), "sports autobiographies" (126A), "Herschelle Gibbs biography, Sachin Tendulkar biography" (144A) and "autobiographies – musicians, chefs" (210A).

[8] Responses in this category included "Jodi Picoult" (010A), "Francine Rivers" (025A), "Mills and Boon" (041A) and "Meg Cabot" (098A).

[9] Responses in this category included "Eragon" and "Harry Potter" (001A), "Twilight" (002A), "Terry Pratchett" (013A), "Neil Gaiman" (013A) ,"Fallen" (016A), "Game of Thrones" and "The Hunger Games" (156A).

[10] Responses in this category included "history books (World War II)" (012A), "Bill Bryson" (013A), "motivational books" (032A) and "books on countries" (072A).

[11] Responses in this category included "Stephen King" (026A, "Tom Clancy" (073A), "Karen Rose" (116A) and "Stieg Larsson" (145A).

[12] Responses in this category included "18th/19th-century authors" (059A), "Jane Austen, Sherlock Holmes" (065A), "Catch 22 - Joseph Heller; Dracula - Bram Stoker" (093A) and "Charles Dickens" (094A).

[13] No respondents specified authors here.

[14] No respondents specified poets here.

In AQ6, respondents were asked whether they had studied English grammar in matric; 77% answered "Yes" and 23% "No". Given the general standard of writing I had seen while tutoring, I had expected the Yes number to be much lower. However, when one considers that this means a quarter of the respondents did not study grammar in matric, the figure seems quite substantial. If the data in this study is representative of the whole year group, then a quarter of English 178 students have only a dubious knowledge of parts of speech, figures of speech and so forth when they start the course.[15] This undoubtedly complicates tutoring, as I (and other tutors) could corroborate with anecdotal evidence: if the tutor has to spend time in a writing tutorial explaining what a finite verb is, then (needless to say) time for discussing skills such as how to formulate an argument – something 22% of students still struggle with by the end of the English 178 year, according to OQ6 – is lost.

In terms of the kind of writing the respondents did at school, creative writing (unsurprisingly) leads the way: 92% of respondents indicated that they had done this. What was surprising was that 61% of respondents had in fact done literary analysis at school. What students do at school, however, is not yet the kind of critical, academic writing English 178 demands. Nor does an activity (such as literary analysis) at school necessarily consolidate a student's ability to do this activity, especially not independently and at an advanced level as in English 178. After all, AQ14 shows that less than a third of the respondents felt fully prepared for the following skills related to academic writing: analysing a novel (31%); analysing a play (28%); completing a poetry assignment, i.e. analysing a poem (23%); writing a poetry class test, i.e. critically analysing an unseen poem (20%); and formulating and developing an argument in an essay (28%).

Not without reason, students seem to view academic writing and creative writing as mutually exclusive. This makes academic writing even more of a "chore", both for those who did only creative writing at school and for those who simply prefer it. It would therefore be particularly productive to use this more familiar, and potentially already consolidated, skill of creative writing to feed into students' induction into academic writing in English 178. In the 2012 syllabus, some of the written assignments already lent themselves to a more creative angle, but the resource coordinators must be careful not to maintain this distinction between creative and academic writing, and simply include more creative assignments instead. English 178 is not a creative writing course, nor even a journalism course, and it is important that whatever creative writing students do must contribute to their acquisition of critical analysis skills as well. Many tutors are already

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[15] Even for those students who were exposed to grammar instruction, their language competence would depend greatly on *how* this was taught, and not simply on the fact that grammar was covered.

incorporating creative writing into their tutorials, particularly writing tutorials, using informal brainstorming activities as a platform for teaching more formal writing skills, such as formulating an argument or writing an introduction. These tutors are harnessing the students' creative energy (sometimes with truly artistic activities like drawing or role-playing) and attempting to temper it into something academically useful, without diminishing the students' enthusiasm. As mentioned above, academic writing is a relatively new skill to most of the students, and they need to acquire it quite quickly, but, fortunately, the data from this study shows that tutors mostly succeed in facilitating this learning process, especially given fact that English 178 is not an academic literacy course.

Regarding general preparedness for first-year English, the results of AQ14 show that roughly 40% of students arrive at English 178 "mostly prepared" for the study of three major text types (novel, poem and play), and another 40% arrive "fully prepared" according to their own perceptions. However, as Allardice's study showed, the understanding of "prepared" differs between students and tutors/lecturers (see Chapter 2), and to some students "fully prepared" may well mean "fully prepared to pass" and nothing more. What is interesting here, especially given the positive reception of *'Master Harold'… and the boys* by English 178 students in general (see discussion below), is that students appear to feel least equipped to study a play, out of these three text types. In AQ14, the study of a play has the highest numbers of students who feel only "somewhat prepared" or "not prepared at all".

AQ15 gauged preparedness for specific academic skills required for English 178. The most important theme that emerged here was the fact that students seem to feel adequately prepared for basic academic skills (e.g. reading and understanding texts), but not for advanced skills (e.g. critical thinking, synthesising their own ideas with sources). The fact is, of course, that a mastery of basic skills is usually not sufficient to get a student through university, or even just their first year. In addition, even if a student scrapes through English 178, he/she is likely to feel highly underprepared for second year, and to consequently struggle with the subject. As a confirmation of this, the results from OQ6, 9 and 10 show that only a minority of English 178 respondents to this survey feel fully prepared for English 278.

In AQ15, AQ14's roughly 40% of "mostly prepared" and "fully prepared" respectively are sustained, aside from some exceptions. For example, only 20% of students feel "fully prepared" to write a poetry class test, i.e. to critically analyse an unseen poem. Students feel similarly unprepared to "complete a poetry assignment" (only 23% "fully prepared"), and yet a higher number of students (38%) feel fully prepared to "read and understand a poem". This confirms the idea that

most students feel able to execute basic skills, such as reading in this case, but not more advanced skills such as critical analysis, especially in writing. With novels, too, the reading does not seem to be a problem: 45% of students feel fully prepared to "read and understand a novel", which is even higher than the number of students who feel "mostly prepared" (41%), but only 31% feel "fully prepared" to "analyse a novel". Another exception to the 40%/40% division is that the students who consider themselves "fully prepared" to analyse a play make up only 28% of the respondents, which echoes the observation from AQ14 that students feel least equipped to study a play. Interestingly, more students feel "fully prepared" to read and understand a novel (44%) than a poem (38%), which again indicates that students see poems as particularly challenging − potentially more challenging than novels − despite the fact that they are much shorter than novels in length. This is possibly largely due to the ambiguous and symbolic nature of poetry, and of course the general foreignness of non-contemporary poems for students.

From these results, students' preparedness for basic academic skills does not seem to be cause for concern. However, when it comes to advanced skills, students seem significantly less prepared. Only 12% of students consider themselves "fully prepared" to "read and understand an academic article". This skill also has the second-highest number of "not prepared at all" responses (18% - even higher than the "fully prepared" responses, which is rare in these results), and "somewhat prepared" (34%) basically equals "mostly prepared" (36%). As with most of these results, interpretation is slightly problematic, because to students, "somewhat prepared" may mean anything from being able to read only the familiar words in an article and skipping the rest, to being able to read and understand the whole article, but still feeling like they are missing something, so to speak. To make things even more interesting, to some students "mostly prepared" could also mean anything on that spectrum. Regardless of this ambiguity, OQ10's results show that students do seem to feel much better prepared for this skill by the end of the year, which means that whatever they perceive the skill to actually entail, they do acquire it during the course of English 178. The highest number of "not prepared at all" responses (39%) and corresponding lowest number of "fully prepared" responses (11%) are for "referenc[ing] primary and secondary sources in an essay", which is undeniably an advanced academic skill. The results also show that 33% of students are "somewhat prepared" for this skill, and only 17% "mostly prepared".

Regarding preparedness to "formulate and develop an argument in an essay", only 28% of students feel "fully prepared" when they enter English 178. While the 39% of students who feel "mostly prepared" for this skill is not alarmingly low, this number does serve to illustrate the idea that academic writing as it is employed in English 178 (i.e. the essay as a piece of critical analysis based on a specific, clearly stated argument) is not what students are used to from high school. They may

be able to answer longer questions on themes and imagery when given a passage from a text, but they are not yet confident in their ability to independently derive an argument from their thoughts on a text and elaborate on this argument in writing. This is confirmed in the similar numbers of students who feel prepared to analyse a novel (31% fully, 39% mostly), a play (28% fully, 37% mostly), write a poetry class test (20% fully, 42% mostly) and complete a poetry assignment (23% fully, 42% mostly).

For the purpose of this study, the skill of "follow[ing] an academic lecture and tak[ing] notes" will also be classified as an advanced skill. According to the results for AQ15, this skill seems to be somewhat problematic for students, perhaps since it is not something that high school could have prepared them for. Only a quarter (26%) of students feel "fully prepared", while one third consider themselves "mostly prepared" (33%) and "somewhat prepared" (32%) respectively. A relatively high number of students (10%) also consider themselves "not prepared at all" for this skill, which is a crucial element in any literature course.[16]

The final skill investigated by AQ15 was "managing your time and administrative responsibilities". Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) feel fully prepared for this skill, with 44% mostly prepared, 25% somewhat prepared and 5% not prepared at all. Again, these numbers are not alarming or surprising, although two things should be kept in mind in this regard. Firstly, subsequent results will show that the mere fact that students are managing their time relatively well does not mean that they are using this time to finish reading set works, or refine their written exercises, for example. AQ10's results show that sometimes lack of interest is a bigger obstacle to students' completion of set works than lack of time. Secondly, as in most of the other questions in these surveys, the phrasing here is unavoidably subjected to personal interpretation. Finishing essays the night before their due date and only just passing them could mean to a student that he/she is managing their time quite satisfactorily, while a tutor may expect above-average essays, informed class participation and the like from a student who claims to be managing his/her time.

The results from AQ12, which asked students why they are taking English 178, forms the conclusion of my discussion of what students bring to the course. Firstly, there is a slight discrepancy between the 46% of respondents who indicated that English 178 is a compulsory subject for their course, and the 41% of students who indicated the same in the text box for biographical information which appeared at the top of each of the two surveys. One reason for this

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[16] These figures should be read in the context of AQ16's results, which show that lecture attendance by first-years is disappointing. In the first semester, 53% of students attend lectures every week, 37% sometimes and 11% never. In the second semester, 43% attend every week, 39% sometimes and 18% never. These results are discussed in more detail in Section 4.2 below.

could be that some respondents left blank one or both of the questions. However, it makes no difference to the fact that the number of students who take the course because it is compulsory is higher than the number of students who take the subject because they enjoy studying literature (37% in AQ12). This component of the group seem to be the ones who plan to continue with English 278: although 49% of students indicate in AQ13 that they are planning to continue with 278, by OQ4 (from the second survey, two months later) this percentage is down to exactly 37%, the same number as abovementioned respondents. OQ8 also shows that the students who do plan to continue, do so for career possibilities or personal interest and not because the subject is compulsory.

Based on my experience as a tutor and my communication with other tutors, it is my opinion that the 31% of students who indicate in AQ12 that they are taking English 178 because they want to improve their English skills most probably have a misconception of what the course actually does. While it is likely that speaking and writing more English will improve a person's competence in the language, I believe that many students still come to English 178 with the purpose of learning grammar and other linguistic skills – a purpose which is fed by the fact that the subject is compulsory (or one of two or three options for a compulsory credit) for several courses which have no connection to literary studies, such as BA (Law), BA (Sports Science) and B.Ed. Unfortunately, these students' perception of the futility (from a career point of view) of learning how to analyse literary texts often causes resistance, which is sometimes exhibited in hostile or apathetic classroom behaviour, or in their refusal to implement the tutor's comments and suggestions on submitted work into subsequent assignments, resulting in consistently mediocre marks. For at least this 31% of survey respondents, a foundation course based on academic literacy would therefore address their academic needs more directly than the English 178 course can currently do.

5.2. Research question 2: What do students learn in English 178?

The efficacy of any academic course depends on clearly defined course outcomes, which should guide all pedagogical activity in the programme. However, in his 2013 study, Allardice found a discrepancy between lecturers' and tutors' responses when asked to specify the primary skill students should learn in English 178. He describes the underlying issue as "confusion [as to] what exactly the course is geared to teach" (Allardice 91). Research question 2 was essentially intended to address this issue by determining the actual course outcomes of English 178. In order to distinguish the findings related to this research question from the official English 178 course outcomes as they appear in the university calendar and course prospectus, the findings will be referred to as *programme effects* for the purpose of this discussion. According to Rossi *et al.*, "a

programme effect, or impact, refers to a change in the target population that would not have occurred had the programme been absent" (Rossi *et al*. 234). In other words, this section of the study is aimed at pinpointing the disciplinary skills students acquire as a result of taking English 178.

The overarching theme which characterises responses throughout this section is that most students' approach to academic work seems to be driven by a cost-benefit analysis of time, effort and performance. With university education now a commodity and increasingly governed by market forces like any industry, it is not surprising that students should take a commercial approach to their studies. Venitha Pillay and Ke Yu (2010) claim that "the rising tide of consumerism underpins the overall decline in the popularity of the study of Humanities" (602), and it appears that even if they do embark on Humanities studies, they consider their academic decisions through an Economics lens. Their behaviour is guided by this ongoing cost-benefit analysis: what they put in is first measured against what they will get out. Between academic work for various subjects and the inevitable socialising, students have limited time at their disposal and admit (also in OQ2, 13 and 20 here) that they have trouble managing it. Every hour of the week is therefore subject to cost-benefit analysis; every action's opportunity cost is measured. If, to a student, reading a set work for a whole Saturday means not going out with friends, and there is no direct, measurable benefit to the student as a result of this effort, then the opportunity cost of staying in and reading will simply be too high. The students will reason that he/she has no guarantee of doing better in a test or essay if he/she finishes the whole set work, while he/she will be guaranteed a good time if they go out. The online summary – a mediocre substitute for any novel, but still a substitute – will win out. Often for students (especially if the results in these surveys are any indication) it is not just about the *time* effort required, but also the *interest* effort.

To make this cost-benefit analysis even less favourable to the reading of set works, "benefits" in a subject like English are hard to measure. Essay-marking is subjective by nature, and tests only occur at the end of each term. No doubt students postpone reading novels until closer to the tests (as the results for OQ2 indicate, for example). This possibility of postponement affects the opportunity cost calculation every time: many students tend not to think long-term, which means that immediate gratification is likely to win. It is also difficult for students to see academic writing as a skill they are acquiring over time; instead, they see each essay or assignment as a chore on its own – something which must be finished, but can be finished quickly and still be potentially passed. Even university holidays are not exempt from this cost-benefit analysis. These breaks, which often last several weeks, offer the perfect opportunity for students to complete their readings, and yet experience and anecdotal evidence suggest that students do not make use of them in this way.

From the results in AQ9, it is clear that the shorter the set work, the less likely the students are to read an online summary instead. In the first semester, '*Master Harold'… and the boys* (hereafter referred to as *'Master Harold'*), which was the shorter of the two set works, had a lower number of online summary readers (11%) than *Nervous Conditions* (17%), and more "complete" readers. In fact, '*Master Harold'* had the most "complete" readers of all three texts: 88% of respondents, which is even higher than the number for the poems, of which 72% of respondents had read all. This difference probably stems from two factors: the fact that *'Master Harold'* is short (50 pages[17]) and easy to read (unlike poetry, which students see as short and *difficult* to read), and the fact that unlike *Nervous Conditions* – at least at first glance – the play deals with a South African setting and theme. This ties in with the argument that "relevance" and "interest" are particularly important to this generation of student readers. AQ11's results further substantiate this by showing that *'Master Harold'* was by far the most popular text studied in the first semester (69% of respondents indicated that they enjoyed studying it).

The fact that 17% of the students read an online summary of *Nervous Conditions* (the longest text in the semester at 204 pages[18], but a very short one at that) is cause for mild concern, although the reading levels look even bleaker for the second semester (OQ1). AQ9 did allow for more than one response per respondent, which means that some students may have read an online summary in addition to sections of the novel, or the whole novel. However, the fact that a notable percentage of students turned to online summaries for support with a novel as readable as *Nervous Conditions* is indicative of two things: Firstly, students do not seem to have confidence in their ability to comprehend a novel in all its facets after reading it independently; secondly, students resort to assistance from the internet all too quickly. What is more, they do not make use of legitimate academic sources, such as articles from journals. Instead they go for the oversimplified, humorous synopses on distraction-laden websites such as SparkNotes.com[19] – predictably the websites that appear as the first results on a Google search for, for example, "*Nervous Conditions* analysis". This confirms the idea that students basically refuse to read what does not seem worth their while in terms of "relevance" or "interest". It also points to the "instant" world they grew up in, where at least for some of them it does not make sense to read the whole book when there is a short (and fun) online summary available.

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[17] This page count is from the 1993 Oxford University Press edition; other editions may differ.

[18] This page count is from the 2004 Ayebia Clarke edition; other editions may differ.

[19] I mention SparkNotes specifically since in my experience it is the best-known "study guide" website. It also contains by far the most non-academic content, including personality quizzes, written and video blogs and entertainment news. Other pertinent websites would include GradeSaver.com, BookRags.com and Shmoop.com.

AQ9's preference for shorter texts is maintained in OQ1, with *Much Ado About Nothing* (107 pages[20]) and short stories having the most "complete" readers (64% and 63% respectively). The second-semester texts also show similar or higher figures of online-summary reading. Naturally, this percentage was highest for *Jane Eyre* (21%), compared to 13% for *The Truman Show* and 15% for *Much Ado About Nothing*. As the text which takes the least effort of all to complete, it is unremarkable that *The Truman Show* has the lowest percentage of summary-readers of all the set works in the entire English 178 course; the opposite applies to *Jane Eyre*. However, considering the time investment required to finish *Jane Eyre* as compared to *The Truman Show*, this is a very small difference (9%). It is encouraging that more students read the whole of *Jane Eyre* than those who relied on an adapted version or summary, although it is likely that many respondents ticked more than one of the options, and therefore supplemented their reading with other versions of the text, including cinematic adaptations.

The length and comparative difficulty of *Jane Eyre* (385 pages[21]) meant that only 44% of students read the whole novel, while the first-semester novel, *Nervous Conditions*, was read in its entirety by 61% of students. What may have played a role here was the fact that there is no film or other adapted version of *Nervous Conditions*. If such a version had existed, more students would potentially have taken the shorter, easier route of watching an adaptation than reading the novel. More students also read an online summary of *Jane Eyre* (21%) than *Nervous Conditions* (17%). This all confirms a tendency among the qualitative responses for students to admit to spending the least amount of time possible in order to receive the marks they aim for (mostly a pass). Various comments, for example at AQ19 and 26 and OQ14, expressed this sentiment: "The lectures are quite boring and I manage to obtain good marks without them" (181A); "I received 85% for my June English 178 test without attending any of the lectures, or reading the lecture slides" (193A); "Main lectures = useless because I'm getting high marks by going only to tuts" (034O). This is in line with my argument about the cost-benefit analysis that directs student behaviour. It would be cynical, but quite possible, to derive from these results that one programme effect some students gain from English 178 is learning how to pass tests and assignments without reading whole set works. Interestingly, statistical analysis showed that those students who finish their complete set works are also the students who read more books recreationally, according to AQ7. A borderline statistical significance ($p = 0.08$) indicated that students who answered in AQ9 and OQ1 that they read all of the set works read an average of 8.8 non-prescribed books per year, while the students who did not read all of the set works read about half that number (4.5 books per year).

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[20] This page count is from the 1993 Oxford World's Classics edition; other editions may differ.
[21] This page count is from the 2001 Norton Critical edition; other editions may differ.

In AQ10, respondents were asked to specify reasons for not reading specific set works, if applicable. The results show that often it is not a lack of time, but a lack of interest which hampers the students' completion of set-work reading. Of the 59 respondents who answered the question, more cited lack of interest (33 students or 56%) than lack of time (25 students or 42%), which seems surprising initially, but makes sense in the context of the previous results. Clearly this lack of interest is an active problem for students, and yet it is a very difficult problem to address. Even if all the set works in English 178 were to be changed, there would still be no guarantee of a sufficient increase in student interest that would allow all students to finish all of their readings. Time management, for example, is certainly a problem for at least a portion of the respondents, as the results for AQ15, OQ2, 10 and 13 indicate.

In the October survey (OQ2) there were 79 respondents who provided reasons for not completing set works. Of these, 37 or almost 47% cited time management issues, including comments such as "Struggled to find time" (013O) and "I ran out of time to finish the entire play" (175O). As suggested by the results so far, 21 respondents (26%) mentioned a lack of interest as their reason, writing for example "It wasn't a book that I was interested in" (088O) or "didn't capture my interest and attention enough" (126O). Sixteen respondents (20%) commented that the texts were too long, which essentially also points to a time management problem. Thirteen respondents or 16% found the set works too challenging to read, often focusing on specific texts: "Shakespeare is difficult to read" (004O); "Reading of *Jane Eyre* was difficult with the use of older language in the novel" (141O). Interestingly, the gap between "lack of interest" and "lack of time" as reasons is greater in the second semester (26% and 47%) than in the first (56% and 42%), and the two have also switched places as the most-cited reason, which makes it seem that students experienced the two semesters quite differently. In the first semester, 42% of students mentioned lack of time as the reason for not finishing set works, but in the second semester, 47% of students attributed time management issues, and this is not taking into account the students who mentioned that the set works were too long. While time management is therefore a significant factor in both semesters, it is interesting that much fewer students experienced an influential lack of interest during the second semester (26%) than the first (56%). This is surprising, given that the second-semester set works are historically, geographically and linguistically far more foreign (and therefore potentially "irrelevant" or "uninteresting") to the students than the set works from the first semester. One possible account for this increase in interest could be that students find the thematic content of the second-semester texts more appealing. After the poverty, conflict and racial tension in *Nervous Conditions* and *Master Harold*, the second-semester texts offer humour and romance: *Much Ado About Nothing* is a comedic play that centres on two relationships; *The Truman Show* delivers social

commentary in a witty and amusing way; and broadly speaking, *Jane Eyre* can be classified as a love story. Another account could be that students do begin to feel more comfortable in the discipline, and engage with it more meaningfully. Test and essay marks from first semester might also have influenced students to work harder.

However, the increase in interest in the second-semester texts should not be read out of context. While the survey results do show that fewer students experienced a lack of interest in the set works during the second semester than the first, this does not necessarily mean that students across the board enjoyed reading the second-semester texts more than reading the first-semester texts. When asked which of the English 178 prescribed texts they enjoyed reading, fewer respondents (24%) indicated *Nervous Conditions* than any of the other texts in the course. One could speculate about the reason why this novel is so unpopular; aside from the lack of "relevance", as the students phrase it, perhaps the feminist angle is not particularly enjoyable for the male students.[22] The same applies to *Jane Eyre*, which had the second-lowest enjoyment score (32%) for the year's texts. Some of the male respondents actually point this out in their qualitative responses: for example, 126O writes at OQ2 that *Jane Eyre* "didn't capture [his] interest and attention enough" and that the novel is "[h]ard to read if you're a male". While the need for universally appealing set works is debatable, it is only fair to keep in mind that three-quarters of the English 178 student population is female.

'Master Harold' is the clear favourite in the first semester, with 69% of respondents indicating that they enjoyed studying it. *The Truman Show* (58%) leads in the second semester. The fact that a film scored highest here is disappointing for what is essentially a literary studies course, but considering Kress's abovementioned claims, and the fact that a large number of English 178 students are in the course because it is compulsory, this is not surprising. For students who only wish to pass the course in order to continue with their non-literary degree, the study of a film is a welcome break from the older, longer and/or more difficult texts. Film studies is a contemporary, relevant field in which students are immersed, and *The Truman Show* is not a challenging film to analyse, even if it is hardly recent. It is therefore possible that respondents ticked "*The Truman Show*" in this question not only because they enjoyed analysing the film, but because they enjoyed not having to read a long text and muddle through its complicated gender- or race-related themes in order to be able to write an essay or test on it.

It is fascinating that *'Master Harold'* scored even higher than *The Truman Show* for the year overall, which points to the popularity of a short, relevant (historically, geographically and linguistically) text such as the former, as mentioned before. It can therefore not be assumed that

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[22] Or, for that matter, the female students: anecdotal evidence suggests that female students sometimes feel feminism is too critical, and many of them claim that at times they enjoy being feminine and objects of desire.

students will necessarily enjoy analysing films more than analysing plays, which is quite encouraging. However, *Much Ado About Nothing*, as the more "foreign" play, did not earn nearly as much favour (enjoyed by 36% of students compared to *'Master Harold'*'s 69%). More or less the same number of students enjoyed *Jane Eyre* (32%) and poetry (33%). In all likelihood, this is also the component of students who take the course voluntarily (because they are interested in literature) and who plan to continue with English until at least second-year level.

AQ16 investigated lecture attendance in English 178. The results show that the number of students who attend lectures every week decreased by 10% in the second semester (43%, down from 53% in the first semester), with a corresponding rise of 7% in those who never attend (up from 11% to 18%). The number of students who sometimes attend seems to remain consistent throughout the year: 37% in the first and 39% in the second semester. This reflects a lack of enthusiasm for, but not complete indifference to lectures – something which also emerged in the qualitative data. However, according to OQ10, 50% of respondents feel mostly prepared and 29% fully prepared to follow an academic lecture and take notes by the end of English 178. Since students can bring little preparedness for this skill from high school, academic listening and note-taking may be one of the skills they acquire in English 178.

Statistical analysis showed a strong correlation between student responses to the lecture attendance questions in the August (AQ16) and October (OQ11) surveys respectively. 70% of the students who answered "every week" in August did so in October; 63% of the students who answered "sometimes" in August did so October; and 82% of the students who answered "never" in August did so October. However, a general decrease in lecture attendance was noted: 28% of the students who answered "every week" in August answered "sometimes" in October, 20% of the students who answered "sometimes" in August answered "never" in October, and no students who answered "never" in August had a different answer in October. Students therefore seem to establish their lecture attendance habits relatively early in the year, and they tend not to deviate greatly from those habits, regardless of lecturer or content. Furthermore, students who never attend lectures are least likely to change their attendance habits. These statistics could be indicative of a tendency among students to establish specific patterns of behaviour quite early in their academic career. In my opinion, the fact that they seem to keep to the patterns established early on is all the more reason to encourage better patterns as early and strongly as possible. However, finding ways to incentivise lecture attendance, completing set work readings and the like is a problematic undertaking for which this study does not make provision, and action research is advised in this regard. Taking attendance in a lecture hall filled with 200+ students presents significant logistical problems, and the administration of registers for a year group averaging over 1 000 students is a daunting task.

Moreover, the brutal reality (at least from the data in this study) is that many students pass without finishing the readings or attending lectures – although anecdotal evidence shows that surviving on this approach becomes significantly more difficult in second-year.

While English 178 cannot "teach" students to attend lectures or read set works, the central skill the course aims to instruct students in is academic writing. This teaching and learning process makes the course the closest thing the faculty has to an academic literacy course. It is crucial that students master this skill, since academic writing is decidedly not exclusive to literary studies. Fundamental to the teaching of this skill is the essay draft process, which was evaluated in AQ24 and OQ21. The results overlapped quite consistently between the two semesters. Through the course of the year, almost two-thirds of respondents seemed to acquire the skills of formulating and developing an argument (62% in August and 60% in October) and writing an introduction (58% in August and 63% in October). These skills seem to be what tutors spend most time on when teaching academic writing, which I can confirm from personal experience and conversations with other tutors. It is interesting that more students indicated that they have learned how to write an introduction in the October survey than in the August survey. This may be because by the second semester students are simply more confident in their ability to write an introduction, having had more practice. It may also be that some tutors focused on writing in general in the first semester, and on specific skills such as introduction-writing only in the second semester.

"How to structure an essay" is the skill with the third-highest numbers, with 53% of August respondents and 63% of October respondents indicating that this was a skill they had acquired. Interestingly enough, "referencing" as a skill had a higher number of responses in the August survey (56%) than the October survey (41%). This shows that tutors start teaching the important skill of correct referencing in the first semester already, but it also shows that fewer students feel they have mastered the skill when they have to apply it to diverse primary (e.g. film) and secondary sources as is required of them in the second semester. The first semester's referencing requirements are certainly simpler, and may cause students to feel prematurely confident in this skill. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that both surveys show quite a number of respondents who feel they learned how to engage critically with a text (56% in August and 59% in October). Both surveys also had a similar number of students who indicated that they learned how to incorporate secondary sources into their writing (47% in August and 43% in October). While there is always room for improvement, these numbers reflect favourably on the combination of writing-intensive tutorials and a drafting-and-consultation process which is employed in the English 178 course.

Just over a third of students seem to have mastered the skill of writing a conclusion by the end of the year (38% in August and 37% in October), which is disappointing. Tutors should therefore be encouraged to focus more on this skill when teaching writing, but they should also receive support for doing so during their training; in my own experience conclusion-writing is much more difficult to teach than introduction-writing. Firstly, there is no such thing as a class exercise for writing a conclusion, since each student will need to bring an almost-complete essay to class for the purpose – a task which is futile to set. Also, the conclusion depends entirely on the essay, and it would be challenging for a writer's classmates or tutor to provide useful feedback on a class-written conclusion unless everyone had read the preceding essay. Finally, I myself have tried but found it hard to find a fool-proof "recipe" for a conclusion that works as well my introduction "recipe". Students have trouble writing conclusions which contain a confirmation, not a repetition, of their introduction or argument, and admittedly this distinction is difficult to make in "essays" of 600-800 words.

More students seem to discover the value of writing resources during the second semester. The number of students who learned how to use a thesaurus/dictionary to improve their essay language increased from 24% in August to 31% in October. Fewer students indicated that they learned how to find legitimate academic sources in October (24%) than in August (38%). This could mean that these respondents felt they had already mastered the skill in the first semester and would therefore not tick it again in the October survey. However, it could also mean that they had found it more challenging to find legitimate sources on the second-semester texts, and were therefore no longer as confident in this skill.

In summary, the programme effects of English 178 can be divided into academic reading and academic writing. Even if students do not acquire the self-discipline to complete set works, they do acquire the ability to read (sections of) texts for the purpose of writing on them. They also acquire various skills to be used in this writing process. Rose *et al*. (2003) write that

> university students must be able to read complex academic texts with a high level of understanding, and be able to critically analyse such texts in order to present coherent analysis, argument or discussion in their own written work. They must also be able to structure their essays appropriately, using academic conventions and objective academic language. (42)

More than half of English 178 students learn how to engage critically with a text on which they need to write, how to formulate and develop an argument for an essay, how to write an introduction for the essay, and how to structure the essay. Almost half are able to also incorporate secondary sources into the essay and then reference all the texts referred to in the essay. However, it seems

that students have difficulty when they have to find legitimate academic sources themselves, instead of these being provided. While the resource coordinators provide at least some secondary material for most of the set works, students do seem to know that they will have to find their own sources from second year. Some students may also wish to use other sources than those provided, but do not yet feel comfortable distinguishing between different possible sources. Independent research and conclusion writing are therefore two skills tutors should be paying more attention to in the tutorials. As predicted by the student preparedness levels discussed in Research question 1, the more basic writing skills present less of a challenge than the more advanced writing skills. Students also seem to acquire skills more easily when the tasks are scaffolded, in other words if they receive extensive support throughout their completion of a task. This scaffolding, here in the form of tutor support, expands students' zone of proximal development and thereby promotes learning.

On the other hand, students seem to struggle with tasks they have to complete independently, which defeats the temporary nature of scaffolding as emphasised by Lajoie (2005). While academic support is key to any first-year course, this support must be decreased through the course of the year in order to prepare students for a greater degree of independent work in second year (not just in English 278). The configuration of first-year assignments may need to be revised in order to maximise the usefulness of the academic scaffolding process, especially for more advanced skills. For example, students should be required to make use of secondary sources from early in the English 178 course. This ties in with Leibowitz's argument that "the design of tasks should be carefully planned so that students move through from simpler to more complex tasks, gradually internalising the rules and practices [of academic writing]" (30). Rose explains that "learning occurs through the accomplishment of learning tasks, and [each] task must be done successfully for the learning to occur" (2011, 84-85). This means that the "mastery of 'lower order' or constituent problems is a *sine qua non* for success with a larger problem" (Wood *et al*. 1976, 89). If students are required to practise more advanced writing skills from earlier in the course, then this will allow tutors to instruct and support students in this skill for a longer period of time, after which the students should have consolidated their ability to the extent that they can use this skill independently. Close collaboration between tutors and resource coordinators would go far in addressing skills deficiencies among students in a proactive manner, for example in terms of establishing clear outcomes for each component of the course, and aligning these micro-outcomes with the macro-outcomes of the course as a whole. This will increase the value of the tutorial programme as a learning intervention, as was the case in Zulu's 2008 study.

5.3. Research question 3: How do students view the tutors' role in their learning process?

From the results discussed thus far, it is evident that English 178 has an important function to fulfil in helping students come to grips with academic essay writing. This is a complex skill to acquire, and the results indicate that students acquire it in varying degrees during English 178. Generally speaking, the principal effects of English 178 are therefore (a) students' acquisition of a set of fairly advanced academic reading skills and (b) students' acquisition of a set of fairly advanced academic writing skills. Having identified the programme effects of English 178, the objective is now to define the role that tutors play in these programme effects. Rossi *et al*. write that "[t]he challenge for evaluators, then, is to assess not only the outcomes that actually obtain but also the degree to which any change in outcomes is attributable to the programme itself" (205). In this case, the "programme" would be the English 178 tutorial programme. The survey questions mentioned in this discussion were therefore aimed at students' perceptions of their tutors and tutorials in terms of teaching and learning in English 178.

According to AQ20 and OQ15, tutorial attendance between the first and second semester remains more or less consistent. The number of students who were never absent decreased by 8% from the first (60%) to the second semester (52%), and the number of students who missed more than one tutorial increased by a corresponding 7% (from 38% to 45%). This may be an effect of the challenges of the second semester taking a physical toll on students, or it may simply indicate that students are more comfortable with the tutorial system (see Chapter 1) during the second semester. In other words, some students may lose their fear of being excluded from the course on the grounds of tutorial absence, having already made it through the first half of the year. Fortunately, respondents who indicated that they missed several tutorials – and most likely caused their tutors considerable concern – are in the tiny minority (2% and 3% respectively).

A statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) was found between students' combined lecture and tutorial attendance patterns. 63% of the students who indicated that they were never absent from tutorials (AQ20) also indicated that they attended each week's lecture (AQ16). 32% of the students who indicated that they were never absent from tutorials indicated that they attended lectures only sometimes. Of the students who indicated that they missed more than one tutorial, 40% indicated that they attended each week's lecture; 41% answered "sometimes" and 20% "never".

According to the data from these surveys, tutorial attendance is higher than lecture attendance in both semesters, which is not surprising, given that the tutorials are compulsory. In the first semester, 53% of students attend the lecture every week (AQ16), while 60% attend their tutorials every week (AQ20). In the second semester, 43% of students attend every week's lecture (OQ11), with 52% of

students attending every week's tutorials (OQ15). There is an almost equal decrease in the two attendance figures between the first and second semester, which may be ascribed to time management issues on the students' part, a general lack of interest in the lectures, or an increased confidence in the sufficiency of attending only tutorials – a tendency which is discussed in more detail below. While the attendance figures point to the key role that tutorials play in the English 178 course, two important factors have to be taken into account to avoid interpreting these figures in a way that places the tutorials in an overly favourable light. Firstly, there seems to be a misconception of the supporting (scaffolding) role of the tutorials by some students, who seem to see tutorials as a replacement for the main lectures instead. This misconception is discussed in more detail below. Secondly, the small number of students in each tutorial class and the fact that attendance is taken mean that, unlike lectures, tutorials are almost impossible to be absent from without it being noticed. The higher attendance figures for tutorials can therefore not be taken to mean that they are "better" than the lectures, as some student responses seem to suggest.

In AQ21 and OQ16, respondents were asked whether they found it easy to participate in tutorial discussions. The vast majority of students answered "Yes" in both surveys (86% in August and 78% in October). When respondents were asked to provide a reason for their answer in OQ17, the following themes emerged. Out of 185 respondents, 111 (60%) cited the fact that their tutor was approachable and friendly, and/or created a comfortable atmosphere for discussion. This included responses like "Our tutor was very easy going [*sic*] and made an environment where everyone was made to feel comfortable" (005O), "relaxed conversations made it easy to participate" (101O) and "The environment created by my tutor was not threatening and set me to ease [*sic*]" (185O). This shows that an approachable tutor who facilitates discussion is the most important ingredient in a successful tutorial class, i.e. where all of the members in the group participate in an informed critical discussion. The fact that such a high number of respondents referred to their tutor in this way ties in with my argument that the English 178 tutorial programme is a model of facilitated textual enquiry (FTE), as discussed at the end of Chapter 2.

The second-most frequent theme emerging from OQ17, namely a good relationship between tutorial group members, appeared in 31 out of 185 responses (almost 17%). A good class dynamic can therefore also be seen as an important, if secondary, factor in the success of tutorials. Out of the 190 respondents, 21 (11%) cited the fact that they felt confident and/or eager as their reason for participating in the discussion. Thirteen respondents (almost 7%) commented that it was easier to participate when it was done in a small-group environment.

14% of students answered "No" when asked whether they found it easy to participate in tutorial discussions (AQ21 and OQ16). Three main reasons for this answering emerged from the responses provided by OQ17. Twelve respondents cited being a second-language speaker as their reason, and the other reasons were being afraid of speaking in public (8 respondents) and having problems understanding the work or the questions (7 respondents). The fact that the first two reasons cannot be related to the tutor's behaviour reflects well on the tutors, but the third reason emphasises the importance of clearly phrased questions in tutorials. As one of the pivotal components of any tutorial discussion, the question is central to the interrogative nature of teaching texts and its value cannot be overestimated. In order to ensure the maximisation of this value in tutorials, there is room in tutor training for more attention to framing and phrasing questions, as well as answering students' own questions.

One of the key responsibilities of tutors in English 178 is to mark and comment on essay drafts in such a way that students will understand where, why and how they can improve their work before handing in the final version. According to the results for AQ22 and OQ18, not only did the vast majority of students find their draft feedback useful (93% and 99% respectively), but this majority increased even further between the middle and the end of the year. One reason for this may be that students gain a better understanding of the essay draft process as the academic year progresses. In any event, what these results make clear is the usefulness of the essay draft process as a way of teaching academic writing (see also the discussions on drafting in Sections 1.3.1. and 2.4.). Also, due to the fact that tutors are the mainstays of this draft process, it makes sense to construe from these results that students perceive tutors as integral to their acquisition of academic writing skills.[23]

Another reason why tutors play an important role in the essay-drafting process is the fact that the majority of students consult with their tutor personally during this process. The tutor is thus not just a faceless individual in charge of grading, but a knowable, accessible academic mentor and source of support, advice and even inspiration. With most of the tutors having completed their own induction into academic writing only in the reasonably recent past, they are in an ideal position to provide assistance from their knowledge and experience, but also to empathise with the challenges students are facing for the first time. AQ23 shows that 67% of respondents consulted with their tutor personally on their draft essay in the first semester, and 33% did not. According to OQ19, 69% of students consulted with their tutor in the second semester, and 31% did not. The numbers

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[23] For the past four years, the Department has also been rolling out an Online Writing Lab and encouraging tutors to mark assignments and essays electronically. Anecdotal evidence suggests that electronic marking has thus far been received very favourably by students, primarily due to the fact that it allows tutors to mark in a more efficient and detailed way. Essays can be handed in and returned electronically, which speeds up the feedback loop, and can be kept on record by the tutor to be used in case of, for example, a plagiarism hearing. Student perceptions of electronic marking in English 178 were also gauged in Allardice (2013).

remained consistent between the two surveys, with about two-thirds of students who did consult with their tutor and one-third who did not. This may indicate a preference for personal consultation among students, or simply a tendency among tutors to make these consultations compulsory for all members of their tutorial groups – something which I have not done in my experience as a tutor, although I have communicated with tutors who do. Indeed, many tutors prefer personal consultations to writing extensive comments, because they feel that this creates better mutual understanding, thereby aiding the writing support process and avoiding confusion, which may waste the time of both parties involved. The October survey contained an additional question about why, if applicable, students did not consult with their tutor personally about their draft essay. Out of 57 respondents, 33 (58%) wrote that just the tutor's comments were sufficient. Sixteen respondents (28%) cited time constraints as a reason and 6 respondents (11%) wrote that they had missed the scheduled consultation with their tutor.

Another official function of the tutorials is to serve as a learning intervention by supplementing the lectures in terms of instructional material. AQ25 and OQ22 asked respondents whether the content covered in the tutorials adequately prepared them for the four English 178 term tests. The results for the two questions were mostly consistent, with around 90% of students feeling prepared for each test, and 10% not. Test preparedness for *Much Ado About Nothing* is highest in the year (94%), and preparedness is lowest for *Jane Eyre* (88%). One possible reason for this is that *Jane Eyre* is the longest and densest text studied in the year, and the one for which students devote most time to historical context and themes. Another possible reason is that the November test on *Jane Eyre* was the only test students had not written by the time they completed the related survey. This means that, unlike for the other three tests, students could not base their preparedness response on the mark they had already received.

The fact that so many respondents indicated that the tutorials adequately prepared them for tests is reinforced by comments from 11 respondents to OQ24 (6%) who stated that the tutorials prepared them for tests and essays. These comments include "Although they were compulsory and I often didn't feel like going, when I went and topics were discussed, I found it easy to write the tests, essays, and assignments" (005O) and "We discussed everything in detail which helps with exam preparation & completion of assignments" (145O). A figure of 6% may seem low, but two aspects should be kept in mind here. The first is that in this question (OQ24), students were asked how the tutorials influenced their learning experience in the course. I find it encouraging that the responses to OQ24 did *not* focus exclusively on tests, which means that for the respondents in this study, assessment does not define their learning experience. The second aspect to keep in mind is that the function of the tutorials is *not* just test preparation – in fact, it is almost the opposite. This is

supported by Hmelo-Silver *et al.*'s observation that the goals of constructivist teaching "includ[e] not only learning content but also […] epistemic practices, self-directed learning, and collaboration[, which] are not measured on achievement tests" (105).

Out of the 178 respondents to OQ24, 95 (53%) responded that the tutorials enriched their learning experience in some way. This category included comments like "Improved my writing and speaking skills" (014O), "Made it much more interactive" (030O) and "It allowed me to engage fully with the texts which were provided" (144O). Sixty-six respondents (37%) wrote that the tutorials helped them to understand and do the coursework, which is in keeping with the tutorial programme's purpose as a learning intervention. Responses included "Made it easier to understand lectures + content" (025O), "It helped me to understand the texts better" (038O) and "It made me see things in the text which I would not see by myself" (078O). Nineteen responses (10%) suggested that tutorials are more useful than lectures, including "I learnt more from the tutorials than the lectures" (021O), "[I] feel that main lectures should rather be replaced by the tuts as it is of a lot more worth" (070O) and "lectures seemed almost unnecessary" (119O). This misconception eventually emerged as a strong tendency among the qualitative responses. Of the 24 respondents to AQ19 (an opportunity for additional comments), 12 or 50% indicated that they found the lectures uninteresting or unhelpful. Examples of these responses include "The lectures are quite boring and I manage to obtain good marks without them" (181A) and "I found the lectures unstimulating and boring" (199A). These 12 respondents are not a significant number considering the size of the study population, but their comments are still cause for concern. Their sentiments are echoed in OQ14's additional comments, where 9 out of 23 students (39%) expressed issues with lectures, including "The lectures were incredibly unhelpful and I suffered no detriment having not attended" (075O) and "The lectures could have provided more opportunities to further understand the texts more relevantly" (147O). The misconception of the roles of tutorials and lectures is problematic, since the constructivist teaching principles that underpin the tutorial programme are fundamentally supportive in nature (Savery and Duffy 2001, 3-6; cf. Section 2.3), which means that they do not apply to lecturing as a teaching mode. In fact, Porcaro (2011) directly contrasts "constructivist methods of pedagogy" to "teacher-led instruction" (43). In English 178, these two modes are symbiotic, not interchangeable, and the efficacy of either is decreased if the other is neglected.

Two of the 12 August respondents (AQ19) and 5 of the 9 October respondents (OQ14) who found the lectures uninteresting or unhelpful commented on the lectures in terms of tutorials. Examples of these responses include "The lectures warranted very little attention, if any. The tutorials supplied all the same information and more" (135A) and "The lectures feel irrelevant, because the same work is discussed in the tutorials" (186O). AQ26 (also an opportunity for additional comments)

yielded five similar comments, including "I did all my analysing and interpreting in the tutorials. It's possible to pass Eng [*sic*] without attending one lecture" (034A) and "I find the tutorials to be far more stimulating than the lectures" (181A). These respondents seem to be comparing lectures and tutorials as two alternatives for fulfilling the same function, rather than regarding them as complementary teaching modes. On such a comparative basis, it is not surprising that students would judge the low-pressure, personal and practical environment of small-group tutoring more favourably. Students tend to find the tutorials more engaging, since the language used there is less formal and academic than in the lectures. The students themselves also contribute to the general class experience to a much greater extent than they do in the lectures. These results echo findings by Johnson *et al.* (2000), Horn and Jansen (2009) and Yam (2010). Moreover, the tutors are usually closer to the students in age and interests than the lecturers, which makes them more approachable.

Comments like those mentioned above, of which there were many more, including "Main lectures = useless because I'm getting high marks by going only to tuts" (034O from OQ14) and "The tutorials render the lectures unnecessary and dispensable" (135O from OQ14), are problematic because they show up what seems to be a repetition in work coverage between lectures and tutorials, which defeats the purpose of the dual-mode structure completely. This apparent perception among students that the tutorials can somehow serve as a replacement for lectures may indicate a need for better communication and collaboration between lecturers and tutors in terms of lesson planning. In training, tutors will also need to be alerted to the fact that tutorials are not a repetition of the lectures, but a supplement to the work covered there, as emphasised by Savery and Duffy (3-6). However, from my own experience as a tutor I know that it is not always easy to maintain this distinction. In any given tutorial, the varying levels of enthusiasm for lecture attendance translate into a classroom situation where the students who have not attended the lecture which the tutor is basing his/her lesson plan on may exceed those who have. This means that, unless the tutor repeats or at least summarises a portion of the pertinent lecture, the majority of the group will not be able to contribute to the planned discussion or activities. This not only provides a challenge to the tutor, but essentially hinders the progress (or at least wastes the time) of those students who did actually attend the lecture. As is often the case, the tutor in such a situation must find a mean between two fundamentally irreconcilable extremes – while still attempting to take into account the learning outcomes of the lesson – which suggests that he/she also acts as a type of mediator.

OQ25 asked respondents to describe the role their tutors played in their English 178 learning experience. A total of 125 respondents answered this question, with the majority (77 respondents or 61%) describing the role of the tutors as "very important" (006O), "big" (026Oct), "crucial" (099O), "vital" (087O) and so forth. In these responses, students tended to elaborate on their initial

descriptive words, for example "Huge impact – mentor; gave me extensive feedback on my work" (122O) or "Very big role. Encouraged and inspired the students by making the tuts interesting and fun but still educational" (132O). More than half of the responses to OQ25 (67 out of 125 or 53%) denoted that tutors provided help, whether in general or specific terms. General comments were phrased as "very helpful" (030O), "[t]hey helped me a great deal" (111), and the like. These comments echo the additional comments provided by 62 respondents at AQ26. Of these, 25 or 40% wrote that the tutorials played an important role in their experience of the course. These comments included "I found my tutorials extremely helpful in my learning process" (009A) and "[T]he tutorials really helped me to better understand and analyse the texts" (086A) and "The tutors both were excellent and helpful" (156). Several respondents to OQ25 specified areas in which tutors assisted or supported them, mostly related to academic writing: "Tutors are a great source of aid and advice when it comes to understanding the texts and in writing essays" (031); "[v]ery helpful and willing. Put in a lot of effort to help with my essay writing" (069); "[t]utors provide a better and deeper understanding on the subject material. Tutoring effectively helped me to produce better essays that have strong arguments" (090). These comments show that students view their tutor as an essential figure in the process of acquiring critical writing skills. This positive effect of tutor support on writing skills development mirrors findings by Van der Merwe (2009).

Of the 125 respondents, 47 (37%) wrote that their tutor facilitated their understanding of the course material and tasks. They wrote, for example, that tutors "helped [them] … make sense of difficult concepts" (039O), "gave vital information and guidance" (086O), "provide[d] a better and deeper understanding on [sic] the subject material" (090O) and "helped with insight [in]to content" (141O), which suggests that the tutors are perceived as a support structure, not just for the essay writing process, but for the broader intellectual assimilation of work covered in the main lectures. This confirms my conception of the tutorial programme as a model of FTE.

The responses to OQ25 suggest a better understanding among respondents of the course structure and the function of the tutorials than was previously suggested. However, OQ25 also received nine responses (7%) which expressed the view that tutorials are more useful than lectures, in comments such as "Alot [sic]. I think the tut groups/tutors play the most important role. The lectures do not help at all" (052O), "I found that the tutors played a more important part in my experience than the lectures. […] A tutor can make or break the course whereas I find that most students disregarded the lectures" (096O), and "[t]he tutors convey more information than the lecturers. They helped me understand the text" (186O). From these responses, students seem to be comparing tutors and lecturers in the same way they seem to compare tutorials and lectures throughout the surveys. This demonstrates a misconception that the two are interchangeable components of the English 178

learning process, instead of an ability to distinguish between the two's separate functions.

It is encouraging, but not surprising (or particularly useful for research purposes) that the majority of respondents to OQ24 and 25 expressed a generally positive sentiment about tutorials and tutors without referring to practical examples. This is, firstly, because what students learned was not necessarily practical or definable, as in "we learned about series and parallel circuits", and secondly, it is quite possible that first-year students lack the vocabulary for speaking about their learning experiences in a formal and detailed way.

5.4. Research question 4: How do the tutors view their own role in this learning process?

Through the October tutor survey I attempted to determine the role tutors perceive themselves to play in student learning in English 178. The survey included questions on tutor training, specifically what tutors need from their training in order to equip them to play this role.

When asked how they would describe a good first-year English tutor (Q11), 100% of respondents indicated that the tutor should be both *dedicated* and *knowledgeable*. This is telling of the tutors' perception of their role in the course. While they obviously value subject knowledge, they are aware that one cannot facilitate the students' knowledge acquisition if one is not "committed" (TR09), "passionate" (TR02), "dedicated […] and PREPARED" (TR12) and "available to answer students' queries and problems" (TR08). This last comment points to the close relationship tutors have with students and to the time-consuming nature of tutoring. The fact that 8 out of 12 tutors (66%) believe that a good tutor should also be *patient* and *approachable* further confirms the personal nature of small-group teaching. This kind of teaching and learning environment also necessitates complete tutor investment. Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) write that tutors should facilitate learning by "[asking] leading questions, challenging [students'] thinking, and raising issues and points that need to be considered" (83), which links to the idea of the tutorial programme as FTE. Tutors have to be able to perform these essential duties, and this is illustrated by the length of time they spend preparing for tutorials. Seven out of 12 respondents (58%) indicated in Q31 that they routinely spend approximately three hours preparing for each tutorial (which lasts only 50 minutes). Two additional respondents indicated that they spend no less than an hour on every tutorial. Four out of 12 respondents (33%) wrote that they do additional research on the text or topic in question before formulating their lesson plans (Q30).

Overall, the tutors appear to view their function in the course as facilitators and even collaborators in the students' knowledge and skills acquisition. Unlike the respondents to the student surveys, the tutor respondents seem to be aware of the distinction between lectures and tutorials, and the

respective purposes of these two teaching and learning environments. When asked to describe a successful tutorial class (Q13), 11 out of 12 respondents (91%) indicated that this occurs when *students engage in class discussion*. Several comments showed tutors feel strongly that extensive speaking by the tutor has no place in tutorials, as opposed to what is necessary and expected from lecturers in large-class lectures. TR11 wrote: "[I]deally you as the tutor are merely facilitating and guiding rather than being the driving force", and described a successful tutorial as "[o]ne where I hardly have to talk". Tutors are therefore aware that they are fulfilling a particular pedagogical function in the first-year course, i.e. providing students with a safe space where they can explore and articulate their own ideas without fear of criticism, in a small-scale informal environment, before translating those ideas into academic writing for their assessments. Wood *et al.* describe this environment as an "atmosphere of approval" (92), which is highly conducive to learning. In addition, tutors also prefer hearing students' ideas to transferring their own knowledge – a sentiment for which lectures seldom allow time. One tutor described a successful tutorial class as one where "students talk to each other about the tutorial topic, rather than feeding set answers back to the tutor" (TR09). This ties in with Porcaro's argument that constructivist teaching methods "emphasise student creation of individual and group meaning" (43). During successful tutorials, students will therefore be "test[ing] [their] own understanding and examin[ing] the understanding of others as a mechanism for enriching, interweaving, and expanding [their] understanding" (Savery and Duffy 2).

The tutor respondents further confirmed their understanding of their position as non-lecturers when asked to specify the primary responsibility of a first-year English Studies tutor (Q32). Eight out of 12 respondents (66%) answered that this is to facilitate students' understanding of the texts studied, in keeping with the suggestion of the tutorial programme as a model of FTE. Five respondents (41%) indicated the teaching of critical thinking skills to students as their primary responsibility, and four respondents (33%) referred to the teaching of academic writing. When asked what they see as the most positive aspect of tutoring first-year English (Q16), 10 out of 12 respondents or 83% answered that, for them, this is *helping or seeing students improve*, whether in terms of "writing skills and critical thinking" (TR06) or simply "think[ing] out of the box" (TR02). This supports the fact that tutors see their role as that of guide, facilitator and mentor to the students. According to Clouston (2005), a small-group facilitative tutoring environment "promulgates a more personal approach than necessitated in traditional teaching environments, and, consequently, can result in facilitators' styles differing dramatically, which, conversely, can have a profound impact on both the learning process and outcomes" (51). Not surprisingly, therefore, when asked to choose the

single most important characteristic of a first-year English Studies tutor (Q12), 7 out of 12 respondents (58%) ticked "Ability to facilitate group discussion".

In Q17 the respondents were asked to choose out of four teaching styles (adapted from Leung *et al*. 2003) the one which described them best (see Table 5.1). Seven out of 12 respondents (58%) best identified with the collaborative teaching style. Three respondents (25%) each identified with the facilitative and suggestive styles respectively (one respondent indicated both suggestive and collaborative).

Table 5.1: Leung's Teaching Styles Inventory adapted for first-year English Studies tutors

Assertive	Facilitative
Tell students answers directly Tell everything I know to the students Answer the questions I asked Tell students what to do when they are wrong Point out students' mistakes directly	Facilitate students' expressions of their points of view about the question Let students understand their strengths and weaknesses Try to understand students' feelings Let students determine their learning direction Keep silent in the group discussion
Suggestive	**Collaborative**
Summarise the discussion for the students Give my opinion about the problem to the students Give suggestions to solve problems Raise all possible solutions to the problems Use my own experience to help students in problem solving	Explore students' understanding about questions Facilitate students' expressions of their points of view about the question Try to explore students' true opinions Listen to students' own experiences Encourage students to express their ideas

Of course, in reality a tutor's teaching style is much harder to pinpoint with a few descriptive words, and depends greatly on the tutor's personality, academic background, non-academic interests, and so forth. A tutor team of, say, 25 tutors therefore actually features 25 uniquely different teaching styles – which can be a great advantage to any course. Yet these different tutoring styles must be reconciled to the achievement of the course objectives, and for a tutorial programme to be effective, all tutors must adhere to its underlying principles. Two strategies that could help ensure this are tutor training and continuous tutor development. Both are discussed in detail in the Recommendations section, with particular reference to the findings reported here.

The October tutor survey yielded valuable insight into what tutors need from their training. This data is particularly useful since many of the respondents to the survey already had some experience in tutoring, and could therefore draw on this experience to specify exactly how tutors should be equipped at the beginning of their tutoring careers. On average, survey respondents suggest no less than three days of training for new tutors and possibly more, which shows that tutors are willing to invest time and energy in being properly equipped for their task. From the data, four important topics emerged which tutors feel must be included in tutor training. It is my recommendation that these topics form the basis of future tutor training courses. The topics are summarised here and discussed below:

1. the formulation of lesson plans
2. outcomes of the first-year English course
3. marking
4. real-life teaching situations

Eight out of 12 respondents (66%) indicated that the formulation of lesson plans should be covered in tutor training. This shows that tutors know tutorial classes need to be structured in order to achieve the aims of the course, and that it is the tutor's responsibility to keep the discussion on track. Clouston writes that

> not only each group, but each individual group meeting can require a different level of participation to enable proactive movement. Therefore, [tutors] have to both intervene at the crucial moment and intervene with a purpose, as comments that do not facilitate have little meaning to group members. (52)

This means that tutors "have an important role to clarify the purpose and direction of the group to maintain focus and discussion" (Clouston 55). During each section of the English 178 course, the relevant lecturer provides the tutors with material, additional to the lecture content, to be used as lesson plans in their tutorials. However in Q30, 11 out of 12 respondents (91%) indicated that they prepare for tutorials by formulating their own lesson plans and group work activities. One reason for using group work activities is because tutors find that, as Allardice (2013) claims, "students are very comfortable when given a text to puzzle it out in groups of three to four [as opposed to] formulating their own interpretations of a text" (75). In Q35 (a multiple-choice question), five out of 12 respondents (41%) answered that they always base their lesson plans on the questions or discussion points provided by the lecturers, while six respondents ticked the option that "[they] sometimes have students complete the questions in the resource pack as preparation, but seldom keep to the content". This indicates that the material provided by the resource coordinators is

potentially inadequate as lesson plans for the tutors, even though it may be adequate as preparatory homework for the students. Furthermore, in Q36, seven out of 12 respondents (58%) ticked "I occasionally give students extra material in class or via e-mail". This supports the argument that the material provided by the resource coordinators is often inadequate, at least from the perspective of the tutors, who manage tutorial classes and deal with students on a daily basis. On the other hand, it shows that the more experienced tutors are able to use the material that is provided as a starting point and then to then create their own approaches to teaching the content. These tutors may feel free to diverge from the suggested plans, since they have at their disposal tried-and-tested methods of achieving the desired outcomes.

Eight out of 12 respondents (66%) indicated that the outcomes of the English 178 course should be dealt with in tutor training. This shows an awareness among tutors that these outcomes are necessary both for lesson planning and for the tutors' understanding of their own function in programme. In this regard, Starfield (2000) argues that "[b]y […] reflecting on and specifying the criteria which will be used to assess the students and the outcomes one would like, and by communicating these clearly to students, one should get better quality assignments and facilitate the giving of feedback" (103). Considering that feedback on writing is one of the primary responsibilities tutors have in the course, Starfield's strategy would be of great benefit to both students and tutors. Leibowitz (2000) confirms this when she writes that "support for essay writing depends to a great extent on the rest of the curriculum, as well as on how the essay topic is phrased and its relationship to the curriculum" (27). The tutor survey set out to determine how tutors perceive their role in the course, and the fact that 66% of respondents feel a need to be familiarised with the course objectives in tutor training shows that the tutors see themselves as instrumental to the achievement of these objectives. One respondent asked that tutors be provided with "a detailed breakdown of what the course is going to teach that year and [an explanation of] how each component is going to be taught and what the learning outcome of each component is" (TR10). Learning outcomes link to marking, an area which 9 out of the 12 survey respondents (75%) believe should be covered in tutor training. However, in their comments the respondents made it clear that hypothetical discussion and general guidelines are not sufficient in this regard. For example, one respondent wrote that "[l]etting senior tutors talk vaguely about their experiences in the course is pointless" (TR10).

The final, non-negotiable requirement for tutor training showed up in 10 out of 12 tutor responses (83%): there is an urgent need for training, including real-life teaching situations. Respondents phrased this topic in various ways, such as "classroom management" (TR11), "class simulations" (TR02), "how to deal with difficult students" (TR10) or "dealing with second-language English

speakers" (TR08). The solution that I propose in the Recommendations section will not only prepare tutors for handling these kinds of situations, but will simultaneously allow experienced tutors to share what they know and assist new tutors in training. When asked whether they believed new tutors would benefit from working closely together with a senior tutor in a mentor/mentee relationship, 10 out of 12 respondents (83%) answered "Yes" and the remaining two respondents "Maybe". This indicates a need for post-training support to new tutors, for example someone who will "double-check some of [their] work or lesson plans" (TR03) or who will be "willing to answer any questions" (TR11). Bearing in mind the number of senior tutors who completed the questionnaire, the results also show a willingness on the side of experienced tutors to share their knowledge and advice.

The results of the tutor survey show that tutors view themselves as integral to the course in terms of student support, but supplementary to the lectures in terms of knowledge transfer. The tutors understand and embrace their position as facilitators of the students' own thinking processes, and are willing to put in often considerable time and effort to prepare themselves for this task. They see their primary tasks as facilitating the students' understanding of the coursework, including lecture material; the development of students' analytical skills; and instructing students on academic writing.

5.5. Research question 5: What do students take away from English 178?

While this study focuses on the role of tutors in the English 178 course, it would be impossible to evaluate the tutorial programme without also evaluating the course. This research question therefore serves as an evaluation of students' academic experience of the course as a whole. It also brings the data analysis full circle in that it was intended to gauge preparedness levels of English 178 students for English 278 or second-year academic writing in general. By looking at preparedness levels for skills specifically taught in the tutorials, I hope to also give an indication of which aspects of the answer to this research question are due to tutors and tutorials.

AQ17 and OQ12 asked respondents how they found the English 178 course. The results seem to differ quite significantly between the two semesters, which is understandable due to the increased workload and content difficulty in the second. Whereas 40% of respondents found the first semester "undemanding and a little boring", this number was only 16% for the second semester, which proves that this part of the course is more demanding than the first half. Considering that, along with the more popular genre of film, the second semester contained two typically canonical works (a Shakespeare play and a work of Victorian literature), it is surprising (and promising) that few students seem to find the second semester boring. This idea is reinforced by the higher number

(56%) of students who indicated that they found the second semester "interesting and intellectually stimulating" (vs. 44% in the first semester). Of course, what is intellectually stimulating for a literary-minded student who takes the subject voluntarily may be very challenging for a student, perhaps a second-language speaker, from a different discipline, for whom English 178 is compulsory.

Considering the set works and types of assignments that characterise the second semester, the increase in respondents who found this semester "unfamiliar and mostly difficult" (up from 16% in August to 28% in October) is to be expected. Statistical analysis showed that more of the respondents who found the course "unfamiliar and mostly difficult" were students for whom English 178 is compulsory (24%) than students for whom it is not (8.6%). The analysis also showed a significant difference between student perceptions of the course between those respondents who answered in AQ16 that they never attend lectures, and those who answered "sometimes" or "every week". Students who indicated that they never attend lectures were therefore more likely to have found the course "undemanding and a little boring" in AQ17 ($p = 0.046$). Similar results were found in analysis of the October data. It seems that students see the fact that they do not find the course interesting as a justification for not attending lectures, which is in accordance with my argument that students' academic habits are governed by a cost-benefit analysis. Again, lack of interest plays a significant role in student behaviour.

In AQ18 and OQ13, respondents were asked (if applicable) why they found the course challenging. For the first semester, with its arguably easier content, the results show that more of the students who found the course challenging did so because of the content (47%) than because of the workload (27%), although 6 respondents wrote in AQ19 (an opportunity for additional comments) that the course's workload was too heavy, while none referred to the difficulty of the content. (It is of course possible that students misunderstood the distinction.) Of the 43 respondents who ticked "Other" in AQ18, most indicated that they struggled with academic writing (13 out of 43 or 31%). Six respondents (almost 14%) cited lack of interest or motivation as a reason why they found the course challenging, which ties in with the idea that a lack of interest is an actual, inhibiting problem for students. In this question, some students may also have meant "a lack of interest in the content" when they ticked "content" as their reason for finding the course challenging.

In the second semester (OQ13), there were many more students who responded to this question and therefore found the course challenging (126), with the challenge divided almost evenly between content (28%) and workload (31%). This shows that the increased workload (longer texts, more and more difficult assignments) poses as much of a challenge to the students as the older, more foreign

set works. 12% of respondents ticked "Other", and out of these 24 responses, 6 or 25% contained references to struggling with academic writing, which is only half the number of August responses about the same problem. Academic writing therefore becomes a problem for more students in the second semester. The second-most common reasons specified in October's "Other" category were struggling with time management and being a second-language speaker (5 responses or almost 21% each). Coincidentally, 9 respondents (14%) to AQ26 (an opportunity for additional comments) also expressed the opinion that second-language speakers struggle in the course. These responses included quotes such as "I think that they should be more considerate to these [*sic*] who had English First Additional Language at school" (136A) and "I found this course so far very difficult and don't think there's been catered for Afr[ikaans] students" (195A). These sentiments emphasise the need for a foundation course for students who are not equipped by their high school studies in such a way as to enable them to cope with English 178.

When asked if they were planning to continue with English 278, about half (49%) of the August respondents (AQ13) said yes. In OQ4, 36% of respondents indicated that they plan to continue with English 278, and an additional 13% answered "Maybe", which adds up to the 49% of continuers from AQ13. The addition of the "Maybe" category in October means that there are not necessarily fewer students who plan to continue with 278 by the end of 178, but there is such a possibility. In AQ13, 29% of respondents indicated that they were planning to continue with English 318 as well, which is not far from the 32% who indicated the same in the October survey. Not all of them are keen to take English as a full (year) major, however, with a quarter (25% in August and 24% in October) of respondents indicating that they are planning to take English 348 as well. In the August survey, 10% of students expressed their plans to continue with English up to Honours level, and the October results show a similar figure (11%). A comparison between the results for AQ13 and OQ4 showed statistically significant differences between the responses. 86% of the students who answered "No" in August when asked whether they were planning to continue with English 278 gave the same response in October, but only 68% of the students of the students who answered "Yes" gave the same response. This means that during the course of the second semester a significantly larger number of students decided against taking English 278 than in favour of it.

Respondents were also asked to provide a reason for continuing with English after 178. Of the respondents who indicated that they plan to continue with English 278 and potentially further, 23% cited "personal interest" as a reason for this. Almost as many respondents (21%) ticked "career possibilities", although it must be kept in mind that respondents were allowed to tick more than one answer at this question. These "career possibilities" were not specified, and some students may have interpreted this option to mean indirect usefulness in career terms, i.e. assisting in the general

improvement of English skills – a reason given by 31% of respondents in AQ12 for why they are taking English 178. On the other hand, English literary studies is generally perceived to be useful in fields like journalism, TEFL and publishing, and it is likely that many students would continue with English because they believe it will better equip them for these professions. Very few students (1%) indicated that they would continue with English 278 because it is compulsory for their degree. This is most probably because English 278 is not compulsory for nearly as many degree programmes as English 178 is. A major component of the English 178 student intake is therefore in the course because they are compelled to be, and they seem to leave it the moment they are no longer compelled. It also seems likely that the students who take English voluntarily (i.e. out of personal interest) are likely to continue with English 278, and possibly further, for the same reason.

In OQ9, 58% of respondents indicated that English 178 "mostly prepared" them for studying short stories and plays, and 52% indicated the same for novels. About a quarter of respondents considered themselves "fully prepared" to study these three text types. More respondents felt only "somewhat prepared" to study a novel (24%) than short stories (14%) or a play (17%). No respondents considered themselves "not prepared at all" to study a play, while only one respondent ticked this option for studying a novel, and three for studying short stories. About half of the respondents therefore feel mostly equipped to study these three text types as a result of English 178. The relatively high number of respondents who feel only "somewhat prepared" to study a novel would probably have been lower if the students had studied only *Nervous Conditions*, and not *Jane Eyre* as well. While both are novels, they are vastly different in terms of length, language or content. This high number, and the fact that fewer students feel "fully prepared" to study a novel than the other two text types, are most likely a direct consequence of students' exposure to *Jane Eyre* prior to the October survey.

The results for OQ10 show that the majority of respondents consider themselves "mostly prepared" for reading and understanding short stories, novels and plays (around 60%). "Watch[ing] and understand[ing] a film for academic purposes" had fewer "mostly prepared" responses (53%), but the highest number of "fully prepared" responses of all the text types (31%). About a quarter of respondents considered themselves fully prepared for reading and understanding short stories, novels and plays. No respondents considered themselves "not prepared at all" to read and understand a novel or a play, and the numbers were extremely low for short stories (1 respondent) and watching a film (4 respondents).

In terms of critical skills, the majority of respondents again considered themselves mostly prepared. The numbers varied from 50% for analysing a film to 59% for analysing a short story. Naturally,

film analysis had the lowest number of "mostly prepared" responses again, because it had the highest number of "fully prepared" responses (28%). The other three text types scored around 20% on this preparedness level. The number of "not prepared at all" responses were almost negligible again, with none for analysing a play and the highest number at 4 respondents (2%) for analysing a short story and analysing a film respectively.[24]

The numbers for research and writing skills were slightly less positive. Less than half (46%) of respondents considered themselves mostly prepared to do research independently, and 28% considered themselves fully prepared. Only 14% of respondents considered themselves fully prepared to "read and understand an academic article", although almost half (49%) feel "mostly prepared" 49%. The skill of "respond[ing] critically to an academic article" showed similar figures, with almost half of the respondents considering themselves "mostly prepared" for this advanced skill, which is of critical importance for English 278 and onwards. Regarding preparedness to "formulate and develop an argument in an essay", OQ10 showed that 54% of students feel "mostly prepared" and 24% "fully prepared", with only 2% of respondents indicating that they feel "not prepared at all" for this skill. The 21% of respondents who indicated that they feel "somewhat prepared" corresponds to the 22% of students who ticked "formulating and developing an argument in an essay" as a skill they were not yet confident about in OQ6. Only 20% of respondents feel fully prepared to do referencing, with 51% considering themselves mostly prepared and 24% somewhat prepared. For this skill, 5% of respondents considered themselves "not prepared at all", although this number is much lower than the 16% of students who indicated in OQ6 that referencing is something they are not yet confident about.

According to OQ10, English 178 does not seem to prepare all students to manage their time and administrative responsibilities. 49% of students feel mostly prepared for this skill by October, with 27% somewhat prepared, 4% not prepared at all and only 19% fully prepared. These perceptions on the students' part probably stem from the increase in content difficulty and workload in the second semester of English 178. It is likely that the comparative easiness of the first-semester work (fewer and less academic assignments, shorter set works) gives them a false sense of security, which is then unsettled when it becomes time to study *Much Ado About Nothing* and especially *Jane Eyre*. Any improvement in managing their time which they may feel they have gained during the first three quarters of the year is likely to be eradicated by their experience of the *Jane Eyre* component,

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[24] The October survey only investigated text types studied in the second semester. Since poetry is only studied in the first semester, the October survey did not gauge students' preparedness for reading, understanding and analysing poetry. Further research is advised in this regard.

with its much higher workload.[25] Furthermore, anecdotal evidence shows that a number of students who drop out of the course name their inability to cope, i.e. to manage their time, as the key factor.

OQ5 asked respondents if English 178 as a whole has equipped them to deal with English 278. While it reflects well on the course that 88% of respondents said "Yes" and only 12% "No", it is quite possible that there is a discrepancy between students' understanding of the term "equipped" (or "prepared") and that of the resource coordinators and tutors, as turned out to be the case in Allardice's study. Students may well perceive themselves as equipped for second-year English without having actually mastered the skills that will be required of them, which they will obviously not know the scope of until they enter the 278 course. OQ6 linked to OQ5 and asked the respondents who indicated that English 178 had not equipped them to specify which academic skills they are the least confident about. However, many respondents who had ticked "Yes" in OQ5 also answered OQ6. This demonstrates that students who feel generally equipped for English 278 may nevertheless have specific academic areas they are still concerned about. The skill of "responding critically to an academic article" scored the highest percentage of concerned respondents here (23%), which again shows that more advanced academic skills are still problematic for students by the end of English 178. The second-highest score (22%) was for "formulating and developing an argument in an essay". Analysing poetry (20%), a novel (19%) and (surprisingly) a film (17%) still seem to be a problem for some of the students, while analysing a play had a somewhat lower score (11%). AQ14 showed that of all the text types, students feel least equipped by high school to study a play. However, the question did not ask students about their study of film at school. It may therefore be the case that, while most students enjoy the lighter workload in the *Truman Show* component of the course (see AQ11), not all of them necessarily find it easy to analyse a film, even a relatively short mainstream film. "Reading and understanding an academic article" was quite high on the list of concerns in OQ6 (17%), as was time management (17%). The areas of least concern in this question were "understanding a play", "understanding a short story" and "contributing to a small-group academic discussion", with 5% each. This confirms the contention that students deal with shorter texts more easily, and it also reflects well on the facilitating skills of the tutors.

The results for OQ6 identify key areas where students need more support throughout the year. It would be particularly useful if this data could be made available to tutors in tutor training, since they could make use of it in order to better structure their lesson plans. These key areas need to be incorporated into the outcomes of specific tutorials, and to this end, tutors should be encouraged to

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[25] While studying *Jane Eyre*, students have to hand in weekly research tasks, as opposed to the less frequent semester essays and assignments for other set works (at least two weeks between due dates). These research tasks require the same word count as other assignments, and they also require secondary reading, which is not strictly necessary for other assignments.

generate lesson plans that centre around these skills. For example, students' lack of confidence for responding critically to an academic article can be addressed by means of group-work activities during which each group receives a different (short) academic article and must make sense of it and write or deliver a short response to it. As mentioned before, it would also be valuable to introduce the academic article earlier in the course, i.e. at the beginning of the first semester.

5.6. Conclusion

In terms of what students learn in English 178, the results point to the nature of the discipline: tutors teach skills, not facts. Critical thinking is not something you can learn how to build in a practical, for example; it is not something you only have to "get right" once in order to master it. For most first-year students, it is also challenging to talk about academic experiences in a meaningful and constructive way, as the qualitative comments show. All things considered, what students seem to acquire in English 178 is a set of elementary critical skills. This ties in with the argument that the course as it currently stands embodies a sort of neutral ground, where students who are headed for the professional world are equipped with (at least some) skills they will probably not need, while students who are headed for literary scholarship are not fully equipped with the advanced skills they will need for senior undergraduate reading and writing. I describe the skills acquired here as elementary, because if the data from these surveys has shown anything, it is that the *majority* of English 178 students are not *fully* prepared for *advanced* academic writing. A relatively small component (25% maximum) is incontestably fully prepared for all manner of academic activities and will most likely excel in the rest of their university careers. However, the numbers of fully prepared students for most of the skills taught in English 178 should be significantly higher if the course truly wants to reach its aim of equipping students with a set of advanced critical skills. The same applies if the course aims to equip those students who wish to continue with the rest of the undergraduate English course, since this will build on the foundation of English 178. Bath *et al.* (2000) claim that "[the] current focus on graduate attributes is accompanied by […] an active focus at the grassroots level to identify and map the opportunities for graduate attribute development across courses" (314), which is what the English Department is currently hoping to achieve.

A focus on skills (or graduate attribute) development across the whole undergraduate course will necessarily mean changes to the English 178 course structure, including graded aims for each year level. As the course currently stands, for example, there is no room in tutorial lesson plans for students to practise their critical skills at an advanced level. This means that students often use tutorials to "catch up" on what they missed by not going to lectures. It is also clear from the qualitative responses that tutors help students to understand the course work better, which means

that tutorials tend to be spent on explaining and clarifying instead of critical skills development. Allardice confirms this when he writes that

> when discussing a text in class, especially a first-year class of widely varying abilities and levels of interest in the course, it is particularly difficult to go into any significant depth about a single issue within a text. Therefore class discussions tend towards general outlining of issues or themes rather than in-depth oral analysis. (68)

Even just the fact that the assignments in the course are so short is problematic, because this limits the scope of critical expression. Furthermore, Allardice argues that

> because [all tutorial assignments] are marked, students focus on these at the expense of the preparing for classes and reading the primary texts. This […] arguably teaches students to place tremendous value on being able to regurgitate the crucial information but does not actively encourage a more diverse general knowledge or the ability to think critically. (82)

Finally, there are not enough set works in the course through which to establish and consolidate an advanced skills set. Personal experience and communication with other tutors have revealed that time is often wasted in the course by scheduling more tutorials than necessary for a single, short and easily understandable text.

The division between students who had English Home Language in matric and those who had Additional Language informs most of the results from the student surveys. As the results in general have indicated, it is not the case that English 178 students across the board find the course extremely difficult, and are demanding a complete overhaul of the course. Mostly, it is a small component of the respondents who seem to be having great trouble. While only 16% of students found the course "unfamiliar and mostly difficult" in the first semester (AQ17), the portion of students who found the second semester (OQ12), with its older and more challenging set works and higher level of academic writing, "unfamiliar and mostly difficult" (28%) is more or less in keeping with the 33% of students who indicated that they had English Additional Language in matric. Statistical analysis also showed that a significantly larger number of students who had English Additional Language found the course "unfamiliar and mostly difficult" than those who had English Home Language ($p < 0.01$). According to AQ17 and OQ12, 47% of students who found the course difficult in the first semester, struggled with course content (as opposed to workload), and 28% in the second semester. These respondents, particularly those from the second semester, are most likely the students who had English Additional Language in matric. If course content in this case refers to academic reading and writing, then there is clearly a need of additional support to students who did not take English Home Language in matric, or who are simply not on a level of English-

language proficiency that enables them to deal with the course content of English 178. In this regard, it is recommended that a foundation course, additional to English 178, be introduced to the faculty with the purpose of providing this support. This suggestion is discussed in detail at the end of Chapter 6.

What can be deduced from the students' and tutors' perceptions is that the tutor plays four different roles in the English 178 course.

(1) **Expositor:** Tutors supplement and clarify lecture content to facilitate student understanding, thereby contributing to the process of FTE.

(2) **Chairperson:** Tutors facilitate class discussions by making students comfortable, creating a safe space and directing the discussion (i.e. textual enquiry) with understandable, stimulating questions.

(3) **Teacher:** Tutors induct students into the practice of academic writing, firstly by instructing them on writing principles in class, and secondly by providing clear and constructive feedback on assignments and consulting with students, often personally, during the essay draft process.

(4) **Scaffolder:** Tutors provide general support while students acquire the skills necessary to continue their endeavours in the academic world independently.

Another important conclusion from these results is that students show a lack of understanding of the course structure as a whole. The data from the student surveys reveal that students tend to view the tutorials as a substitute for lectures, and not as a support mechanism. This view is enabled by the fact that tutors are often forced to repeat or summarise lecture material in the tutorials to avoid excluding students from discussions or group-work activities.

Regarding the question of what students take away from English 178, less than half of students leave the course with the intention to continue. Between one half and two thirds of students feel mostly prepared for basic academic skills after English 178, but less than half feel mostly prepared for the more advanced skills – and yet the vast majority of students feel that English 178 did equip them for English 278. It is clear that the skills students still struggle with by the end of English 178 are advanced and not basic academic skills – a fact that must be considered in any potential changes to the course. The survey results show that, in general, students cope relatively well with English 178's mostly short set works and the short, simple assignments, of which the topics are highly specified and of which most do not require secondary sources. This ability to cope leads students to perceive themselves prepared for English 278. However, English 278 is characterised by a considerably greater number of (sometimes longer) set works, as well as longer essays. The latter

require the ability to do and report on unassisted close-reading, the ability to independently research secondary sources, and the ability to show insight into, and write original commentary on, challenging texts. The survey results suggest that these are not skills which students feel they have mastered by the end of English 178. Furthermore, the skills which students do acquire are scaffolded to a large extent by the intervention of tutors, as the results show. Students' perception of their preparedness is therefore, wittingly or unwittingly, coloured by the influence of tutor support, which may lead students to overestimate their preparedness for practising academic skills without this support. The respondents to the student surveys were most likely unaware that tutorials are eliminated in English 278[26], which means that their perceived preparedness for English 278 is based on their experience of English 178, although the two courses are hardly comparable. By the end of English 178, students are therefore prepared for a workload and writing standard similar to that of English 178: they are generally equipped with a solid, if basic, set of academic literacy skills. What they are not fully prepared for, however, is the sophisticated, advanced skills set required by the considerably more challenging English 278.

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[26] From 2013. Until 2012, English 278 students attended one tutorial per week, additional to the lectures, for the first semester of the course.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary of the data analysis

This study has investigated the role of tutors in the teaching and learning processes inherent to English 178 and their responsibilities towards students in relation to the course's outcomes. The five research questions which were addressed and answered can be summarised as follows:

- **What do students bring to English 178?**

  What students bring to English 178 is a general preparedness for basic, but not advanced academic skills. With regard to academic writing in particular, they are unprepared. The majority of students have experience with studying various text types (at high-school level), as well as with creative writing. A large component of students bring with them a resistance not just to reading literature, but also to studying literature, since it has no bearing on their career plans. However, students who are habituated to reading tend to cope better with the course's reading load, which should have a positive influence on their academic performance.

- **What do students learn in English 178?**

  During the course, students acquire various skills to be used for academic reading and especially writing purposes through the process of FTE. While most students are not yet able to write long, critically incisive and source-supported essays by the time they complete the course, the course does lay a foundation on which to build in English 278. Most students learn how to formulate and develop an argument, how to write an introduction, how to structure an essay and how to engage critically with a text. The extent to which students acquire these writing skills differs between the various skills, with more advanced skills in the minority. Many students seem to acquire academic listening and note-taking skills. Furthermore, many students seem to learn how to write on a text without reading it in its entirety. The latter is an excellent example of a behaviour guided by the continuous cost-benefit analysis which characterises student choices. The same goes for learning how to pass a literary studies course without attending the lectures. Finally, the course seems to give half or just over half of the students a relatively firm foundation for studying short stories, plays and novels.

- **How do students view the tutors' role in their learning process?**

  Students' perceptions of tutors from these surveys are in strong alignment with the intended function of FTE facilitators, which tutors are in this case. The majority of students see their tutor as a group chairperson in the first place; someone who creates a comfortable atmosphere for discussion in the tutorials. They also see their tutor as an expositor of literary texts, responsible for explaining the content and themes of set works, and as the scaffolder of the tasks that feed into the process of acquiring academic writing skills. Finally, students also see their tutors as teachers, which is in line with the partially-guided teaching approach of FTE, although some students erroneously compare tutors to lecturers in this capacity. In all of these roles, students view their tutor as an essential figure in the process of acquiring critical writing skills.

- **How do tutors view their own role in this learning process?**

  Tutors see themselves as knowledgeable expositors in the first place, with their primary responsibility being to facilitate students' understanding of the coursework. They also consider themselves scaffolders in the process of acquiring academic writing skills, for which they demand dedication and patience from themselves and their colleagues. They assume the role of chairperson, not lead speaker, in tutorial discussions, and tend to be approachable to students in this role. While they do see themselves as teachers of critical thinking and academic writing, they do not see themselves as lecturers. Instead, their role is more collaborative and supporting in nature. In all of these roles, tutors are well-suited to a pedagogical model such as FTE.

- **What do students take away from English 178?**

  What students leave the course with is a sense of preparedness which may well spring from a false sense of confidence, since the majority of students feel equipped for basic, but not advanced academic skills. What students take away from English 178 is therefore less than what the course outcomes assume, which is certain to cause problems for students and lecturers alike in senior undergraduate years.

6.2. Recommendations based on the data

In her report on the profile of the Stellenbosch University first-year student, Frick mentions several teaching and learning aspects which can "influence accessibility within a module" (180). Three of the these aspects pertain to this study: "the necessity of trained tutors, issues related to the lack of coherence between lectures and tutorials, and the need for support for students who lacked the

necessary foundation for a module" (Frick 180). In this chapter I will suggest strategies for addressing these three aspects.

6.2.1. Tutor training and development

Stella Clark (1998) writes that a good tutor training programme should "integrate a deep theoretical appreciation of the nature of teaching and learning with a hands-on component that would be flexible enough to suit individual needs" (124). My first recommendation on the basis of the reported data is that the tutor training programme be completely remodelled to include thorough coverage of both the theoretical and the practical aspects of tutoring in first-year English. This training should then be consolidated and expanded by a continuous tutor development programme. In this first section I will propose strategies for focused training and development that will specifically address the deficiencies in the current system[27] as identified by the tutor survey data.

As a starting point, the survey respondents' request for marking training shows their awareness of the power they have over students' academic performance. The realisation of this can be terrifying, especially to new tutors. In order to counteract tutors' fears and equip them in the best possible way for this daunting but inescapable task, I suggest that a portion of tutor training be devoted to a marking seminar in which new tutors are introduced to the Department's assessment principles and, more importantly, to why those are in place. Allardice (2013) describes "the ambiguous guidelines for marking and grading" as one of the complications in first-year assessment at Stellenbosch University's English Department, since "each tutor interprets [these guidelines] uniquely and therefore teaches distinctively" (27). Starfield (2000) also writes that "[w]ith large classes [like the English 178 year group], where a number of tutors and lecturers assess students' work, inter-marker reliability can become an issue" (106). To prevent this, it would be constructive to make use of a single, appropriate marking grid compulsory for all tutors. The grid should be explained to new tutors in detail in order to make them aware of what inadequate, adequate, good and excellent essays look like. This explanation should go hand in hand with an exposition of the course outcomes and the reasoning behind them. This theoretical seminar should be followed by an extensive moderation exercise, where all training participants have to mark at least three essays – without consulting each other, as far as possible. In the ensuing "moderation meeting", new tutors in particular should be given the opportunity to defend their marks, which more experienced tutors should then comment on. This will allow new tutors to see where they went wrong (or right) in judging the students' writing and thinking. Starfield also recommends that "the lecturer in charge

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[27] In 2012, in particular, tutor training was vastly inadequate and did not contain sufficient coverage of any of the four important aspects mentioned on p. 87. In 2011, lesson plans, outcomes and marking were at least covered to some extent, but no real-life teaching situations were created.

should still check the marking of other markers for consistency and whether they are assessing what the lecturer intended should be assessed (validity)" (106). This "checking" by resource coordinators is imperative in tutor training[28], and would go far to ensure inter-marker reliability throughout the academic year.

Secondly, from the survey data, the resource packs and material provided by the resource coordinators seem to be mostly inadequate in terms of teaching support. More detailed, well-edited and better-structured resource packs for students, along with additional material (preferably in printed format) for tutors, will contribute greatly to tutors' planning and facilitating, which will in turn contribute to the achievement of course outcomes. Better collaboration between lecturers and tutors is also the only approach that will prevent the repetition of taught content (between lectures and tutorials) that is suggested by the student survey responses. This prevention will therefore eliminate the possibility of students simply substituting lectures for tutorials. During tutor training, a firm collaborative relationship must be established between lecturers and tutors. Communication between lecturers and tutors needs to be streamlined, including the representation of the tutor team in staff meetings. Starfield suggests that "[w]ithin a department, all teachers in a particular year of study should meet regularly to discuss the kinds of assessment they are using and what competencies they believe that they are developing and assessing in the students" (106). Considering the central role of tutors as teachers in the English 178 course, discussions like these must include at least a delegation of tutors. Throughout the year, resource coordinators must provide tutors with clear outlines and objectives for lectures and tutorials (the two should be aligned, not identical). Tutors must then aim to keep to these outlines and objectives as rigorously as tutorial group behaviour allows and refrain from repeating lecture material wherever possible. As long as tutors refuse – humorously, if possible – to answer questions that have been addressed in lectures, those students who choose not to attend lectures will be passively excluded from class activities. While this may not guarantee their future lecture attendance, it will improve the learning environment for the students who do attend lectures, and it will also prevent stress on the tutor's part, whether in terms of class-time management or emotional conflict.

The responses to the tutor survey show that tutors – even those who have been tutoring for only one year – are already aware that students are seldom responsive to a "lesson plan" consisting of a list of general discussion themes. New tutors seem to learn fairly quickly that in almost every tutorial class there is also a need for a "back-up plan": a group-work activity, an individual activity, and/or questions to draw out unresponsive students. However, formulating lesson plans and activities only

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[28] While resource coordinators usually check samples of tutors' test marking as part of the marking process for each test, I am suggesting that resource coordinators start giving input into tutors' marking practices (also for essays) as early as possible in the year, i.e. long before the first actual marking takes place.

comes with the necessary theoretical groundwork, and of course trial and error (i.e. experience). According to Clark, a good tutor training programme should enable tutors to "find the language for teaching via deep immersion and engagement with the theory of language and learning" (124). Wood *et al.*, the founders of academic scaffolding as a teaching approach, also emphasise the importance of theory for tutors – interacting with existing theory, as well as formulating their own:

> The effective tutor must have at least two theoretical models to which [s/]he must attend. One is a theory of the task or problem and how it may be completed. The other is a theory of the performance characteristics of his tutee. Without both of these, [s/]he can neither generate feedback nor devise situations in which his[/her] feedback will be more appropriate for this tutee in this task at this point in task mastery. The actual pattern of effective instruction, then, will be both task and tutee dependent, the requirements of the tutorial being generated by the interaction of the tutor's two theories. (97)

It is my contention that all tutors, but new tutors in particular, need to be given at least an elementary theoretical foundation for lesson plan formulation (i.e. basic teaching theory) during tutor training. This should stand them in good stead while they still lack experience. New tutors in training should also be given the opportunity to formulate a lesson plan and, very importantly, put this lesson plan into practice in a simulated teaching environment.

To address the need for tutor training to include real-life teaching situations, I suggest that at the end of their first day of training, new tutors be asked to prepare a lesson plan at home with a view to actually teaching the class the following day. On the second day of training, the new tutors will take turns teaching a "class" composed of senior tutors. These tutors, who will be familiar with typical student behaviour, will role-play the various student archetypes to create an atmosphere that is as close as possible to the actual class environment. They will act out typical class situations, such as ideological conflict between two or more students, general disruptiveness, language issues, such as students speaking Afrikaans in class, imbalances in mixed-ability groups, or simply a complete lack of response by anyone. The new tutor will, naturally, not be confronted with all of these in one class simulation, but the idea is to take the exercise seriously. If possible, it should therefore take place with at least one lecturer or highly experienced tutor sitting in. This type of exercise could be useful in indicating to the Department which new tutors are ready to teach, and which need further training. This exercise will then also link to training in lesson plan formulation, as discussed before. The new tutors will have a practical opportunity to try out their first lesson plan after a day of training.

To provide even more support to new tutors, I also suggest co-facilitation or shadowing with an experienced tutor during the first few weeks of the academic year. Wherever possible, new tutors should attend senior tutors' tutorials, or collaborate with them to generate lesson plans which they will teach together in the new tutor's tutorials. It is also strongly advised that these tutorials be followed by a short discussion between the two tutors so that both can share their impressions and what they learned from the experience. This strategy of intensive mentorship was utilised with great success in a tutor team at UCT (Clark 128, 132), in which tutors collaborated not only on class preparation and teaching, but also marking.

I also recommend that this "community of practice" approach (Lave and Wenger 1991) be perpetuated in continuous tutor development. Johnston and Tinning (2001) describe three types of facilitator (tutor) development, namely self-, peer and group reflection. The first could be encouraged by having all tutors complete a teaching-style questionnaire at least once a year, which will serve as a reflective teaching practice and not as a test of any kind. However, "self-reflection on personal practice is a solitary affair [and] may fail to provide a critical perspective" (Johnston and Tinning 164). An alternative to this would be peer reflection, such as having a tutor (especially experienced tutors) randomly sit in on another tutor's class in order to observe the classroom dynamic and provide the other tutor with constructive feedback on their teaching style. Johnston and Tinning warn that the "[e]ffectiveness of peer-reflection is influenced by the nature of the professional and personal relationships between those involved" and that "this strategy could be psychologically damaging if colleagues are mismatched or when the focus for discussion becomes predominantly critique" (164). They suggest co-facilitation or shadowing, followed by analysis, as a possible alternative. While I have already recommended co-facilitation or shadowing as part of tutor training, it would be a worthwhile exercise for all tutors at various points in their career. In a dynamic and flexible environment such as Stellenbosch's English Department, where tutors often have more than one tutorial group to teach, and groups often change tutors in the middle of the academic year, it is dangerous to become complacent or monotonous in one's teaching style. Thirdly, Johnston and Tinning suggest group reflection as "the most promising strategy" (164) for tutor development. This would entail "a small group of colleagues meeting regularly to share and critically reflect upon personal practice" (Johnston and Tinning 164). In my opinion, this would work particularly well before or after the weekly Monday tutor meeting, where all tutors have to be present. The meeting need not be compulsory for everyone every week, but all tutors should attend at least one meeting a term, unless they teach in the suggested time slots. According to Johnston and Tinning (164), there are several advantages to group reflection, all of which would be relevant in the Stellenbosch context:

1. Working together within the context of a small group offers multiple perspectives on issues raised.

2. A small-group setting parallels the group process experience of students in tutorials.

3. The group has the chance to observe an experienced facilitator in action.

4. Tutors gain awareness and understanding of their own teaching practice.

5. Tutors' analytical thinking and problem-solving skills are honed.

As a final point, Clark writes that "the most fundamental precondition for success in tutor training […] is being able to view the tutors as developing teachers rather than as cheap and inferior substitutes who will do the most boring, repetitive and exhausting parts of university teaching" (132). It is imperative to dispel this view and provide tutors with the training and professional development they need in order to play a supportive, beneficial role to students.

6.2.2. Other recommendations

While there are students who wish to pursue a career as a literary academic, most students who take English 178 do so as a stepping stone to work in a different field. For some students this stepping stone is voluntary, and arises from the impression that English 178 is a professional communication course, and not a literary studies course. For other students, this stepping stone is compulsory as part of their Education, Sports Science or Law degree – a subject intended to help them acquire academic literacy skills – and is therefore not a subject entered into with enthusiasm. Even as the rise of electronic communication often causes language use in the workplace and media to deteriorate, students rebel against compulsory writing or communications courses that aim to ameliorate this problem. English 178 is one such course, although at the same time it is the only course at the University which offers English literary studies. Allardice questions whether a literary studies course is a suitable medium for teaching academic literacy.

He also points out the surprising and problematic lack of "a specialised, across-the-board, academic literacy or professional communications course in the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty" (Allardice 40), especially considering that the Science and Engineering Faculties at Stellenbosch University both have such courses in operation, and even more so because these courses are largely staffed by Social Sciences postgraduates. Allardice argues that "[t]here is not enough time, in a course which is attempting to provide students with a foundation for progression in the field of literary studies [i.e. English 178], to comprehensively teach academic literacy – even to the stronger students" (41). He quotes Shaun Viljoen (2007) to support his argument that the 2009/2010 reconfiguring of the first-year English curriculum as a result of an increased Departmental emphasis on staff research

and postgraduate research output "has left the students without the inclination for literary studies. Alternatively, or in addition, academic literacy is underserved by the current course pedagogy" (Allardice 41). This ultimately means that in the process of trying to achieve two incompatible objectives at the same time, the course is achieving neither. The compulsory course-takers tend to struggle with the literary side of the course content, which they also consider of no value to their career. On the other hand, strong students with a personal interest in literature may be frustrated by the academic literacy-oriented assessments and activities. The course is therefore not truly suited to the needs of either group.

My recommendation is that a separate foundation course be established as a solution to this compromise, as well as to the academic literacy issues identified by my own research. The English 178 course would then be an explicit literary studies course, and would not be compulsory for any degrees. The compulsory foundation course would focus on academic reading and writing skills and would feature literature only as a vehicle for teaching these skills. Struggling students would benefit more from this foundation course than from the current English 178 course. Students who plan to major in English Studies and continue to postgraduate level would then benefit from taking English 178, which would not need to spend time teaching skills these students have already mastered.

Furthermore, the fact is that according to the data from question AQ12, a maximum of 46% of the English 178 group are taking the course because it is compulsory. If this obligation falls away due to the establishment of a foundation course outside of the English Department, it will have serious implications for the first-year student intake, which will translate into implications for the entire Department. In an interview from Allardice's study, a focus group of tutors expressed a need for the English 178 course to return to its former streamed structure, largely because of its better ability to cater to individual student needs. This may be an alternative to the foundation course that is more favourable to the English Department in terms of future student numbers, but is unlikely to be feasible due to its conflicted history.

What must be kept in mind is that, while such a foundation course will address the skills level and content which the majority of students currently need, the valid question remains of whether such a course will have academic credibility. There are also logistical challenges inherent to the creation of such a course, including in which department or faculty it will be hosted, for which students it will be compulsory, and how its credit value will be incorporated into the various courses. These factors must be prudently considered before such a course is established.

6.3. Conclusion

This study has shown that small-group tutorials and tutors are indispensable to the heightened learning that characterises FTE, an integrated teaching and learning model appropriate to the high standards and complex needs of the 21st-century university student. I believe that in the research reported in this study makes an innovative and valuable contribution to scholarship of tutoring as a learning intervention, particular in the introduction of the model of FTE as a way of classifying this type of intervention in the context of literary studies. More specifically, I hope that the data from this study will be used to inform potential changes to the English 178 course, whether instrumentally or conceptually. I also hope that this study will encourage further research into the efficacy and value of tutoring, which will assist faculties and departments in making informed choices about their teaching and learning practices.

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ADDENDUM A: AUGUST STUDENT SURVEY

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Case Study of Learning and Teaching Interventions in the English Studies 178 Tutorial Programme, University of Stellenbosch

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jolette Roodt (HonsBA Stell) from the Department of English at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will be contributed to my MA thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are enrolled as an English 178 student for 2012.

1.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to establish the academic skills with which students arrive at the English 178 course, and to determine the academic skills acquired by English 178 students during the first semester of the academic year.

2.   PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Complete one questionnaire in August and one questionnaire in October. The subject of the questionnaires will be your academic experience of English 178. The questionnaires will contain both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The completed questionnaires will be treated as anonymous and confidential.

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You will have to complete both questionnaires.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Individual participants will not benefit directly from this study. The potential benefits to the University and future 178 students include improved course material, more effective tutor training and clearer course outcomes.

5.   PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Subjects will not receive any remuneration for participation.

6.   CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding. No names of participants will be used in the study. Each participant will instead receive a code. The data will be kept and transported safely and only the researcher will have access to the data.

When the results of the study are published, no names of participants will appear in the publication/s. Participants and their data will in no way be connected for the reader/s of the publication. Confidentiality in publication will therefore be maintained at all times.

7.   PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Your participation will be terminated by the researcher regardless of your consent if you do not complete both the July/August and the October questionnaire.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Jolette Roodt (researcher)   Shaun Viljoen (supervisor)
jolette.roodt@gmail.com   scv@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by my English 178 tutor in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

Note from the researcher

This questionnaire forms part of the research I am undertaking for my MA degree in English on learning and teaching in the English 178 tutorial programme. By responding to these questions, you will assist me in establishing your academic preparedness on starting English 178, as well as your experience of English so far. You will be asked to complete a second questionnaire at the end of the course to establish what knowledge and skills you have acquired during the year. Your responses in each case will be treated as completely confidential.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and contributing to my research.

Sincerely

Jolette Roodt

Gender: □ FEMALE   □ MALE

Home language(s):   □ ENGLISH   □ AFRIKAANS   □ ISIXHOSA   □ OTHER _____

At which high school did you matriculate? _____

Is English 178 a compulsory subject for your degree?   □ YES   □ NO

SECTION A: ENGLISH AT SCHOOL

1. Which one of these subjects did you take in Grade 12?

□ English Home Language

□ English Additional Language

2. What was the mark you received for this subject at the end of matric? _____

3. Did you study:

A novel?	□ YES	□ NO		A play?	□ YES	□ NO
Poetry?	□ YES	□ NO		Short stories?	□ YES	□ NO

4. Please name the prescribed works you indicated in Question 3.

…….…………………………………………………………
……
…………………………………………………………..……………………………………………………………

5. What kind of writing did you do at school?

□ literary analysis   □ creative writing

□ journalistic writing   □ other (please specify):…………………………………….

6. Did you study English grammar in matric?   □ YES   □ NO

SECTION B: READING HABITS

7. On average, how many books do you read per year, EXCLUDING your textbooks and prescribed literary works?

_____

8. What do you like to read? Please give as much information as possible.

………..……………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………..……………………………………………………………………………

9. Did you read the following English 178 prescribed works?

Nervous Conditions: *"Master Harold"…and the boys*:

□ I read the whole novel   □ I read the whole play

□ I read sections of the novel   □ I read sections of the play

□ I read an online summary   □ I read an online summary

Poetry:

□ I read all of the poems

□ I read some of the poems

□ I read none of the poems

 10. If you did *not* read one or more of these works, please specify why not:

………..……………………………………….

11. Which of the English 178 prescribed texts did you enjoy reading? (You may indicate more than one.)

□ *Nervous Conditions*   □ *"Master Harold"…and the boys*   □ Poetry

SECTION C: ENGLISH STUDIES 178

12. Why are you taking English 178? (You may indicate more than one.)

□ It is compulsory for my degree programme.

□ I enjoy studying literature.

□ I would like to improve my English skills.

□ Other (please specify):

………..……………………………………….

13. At the moment, are you planning to continue with

English 278?	□ YES	□ NO	English 318?	□ YES	□ NO
English 348?	□ YES	□ NO	Honours in English?	□ YES	□ NO

14. Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate box in each case, to what extent you were prepared by matric English for studying the following texts in English 178:

	not prepared at all	*somewhat prepared*	*mostly prepared*	*fully prepared*
Poetry				
Novel				
Play				

15. Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate box in each case, to what extent you were prepared by matric English to do the following English 178 tasks:

	not prepared at all	somewhat prepared	mostly prepared	fully prepared
Read and understand poetry?				
Write a poetry class test such as the Early Assessment?				
Complete a poetry assignment?				
Read and understand a novel?				
Analyse a novel critically?				
Read and understand a play?				
Analyse a play critically?				
Read and understand an academic article?				
Formulate and develop an argument in an essay?				
Reference primary and secondary sources in an essay?				
Follow an academic lecture and take notes?				
Manage your time and administrative responsibilities?				

16. How often did you attend English 178 main lectures during the first semester?

□ every week

□ sometimes

□ never

17. How did you find the English 178 course in the first semester?

□ undemanding and a little boring

□ interesting and intellectually stimulating

□ unfamiliar and mostly difficult

18. If you found the course challenging, why was this?

□ I struggled with the content.

□ I struggled with the workload.

□ Other (please specify): …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

19. Please provide any additional comments:

……….………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………….…………………………………………………………………………

SECTION D: ENGLISH STUDIES TUTORIALS

20. How often did you attend tutorials?

□ I was never absent.

□ I missed more than one due to medical reasons.

□ I missed more than three and received a warning letter from my tutor.

21. Did you find it easy to participate in tutorial discussions?	□ YES	□ NO
22. Were you able to use the feedback on your draft essay to improve it?	□ YES	□ NO
23. Did you consult with your tutor personally about your draft essay?	□ YES	□ NO

24. What did you learn through the essay draft process? (You may indicate more than one.)

□ how to write an introduction

□ how to write a conclusion

□ how to engage critically with a text

□ how to formulate and develop an argument

□ how to incorporate secondary sources into my writing

□ how to structure an essay

□ how to find legitimate academic sources

□ how to reference primary and secondary sources

□ how to use a thesaurus/dictionary to improve my essay language

25. Did the content covered in the tutorials adequately prepare you for the following English 178 first-semester tests:

April test on poetry?	□ YES	□ NO
June test on *Nervous Conditions* or *"Master Harold"…and the boys*?	□ YES	□ NO

26. Please provide any additional comments:

…….……………………………………………

……

………

………

ADDENDUM B: OCTOBER STUDENT SURVEY

Note from the researcher

This questionnaire forms part of the research I am undertaking for my MA degree in English on learning and teaching in the English 178 tutorial programme. By responding to these questions, you will assist me in gauging your experience of English this year, and establishing what knowledge and skills you have acquired during the year. Your responses will be treated as completely confidential.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and contributing to my research.

Sincerely

Jolette Roodt

Gender: □ FEMALE   □ MALE

Home language(s):   □ ENGLISH   □ AFRIKAANS   □ ISIXHOSA   □ OTHER _____

At which high school did you matriculate? _____

Is English 178 a compulsory subject for your degree?   □ YES   □ NO

SECTION A: ENGLISH STUDIES 178

1. Did you read/watch the following English 178 prescribed works?

Much Ado About Nothing:

□ I read the whole play

□ I read sections of the play

□ I read an online summary

□ I watched the film

The Truman Show:

□ I watched the film once

□ I watched the film more than once

□ I read an online summary

Jane Eyre:

□ I read the whole novel

□ I read sections of the novel

□ I read an online summary

□ I watched the film once

□ I watched the film more than once

□ I watched a BBC adaptation

Short stories:

□ I read all of the short stories

□ I read some of the short stories

□ I read none of the short stories

2. If you did *not* read/watch one or more of these works, please specify why not:

……...………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………...……………………………………………………………………

3. Which of the English 178 prescribed texts did you enjoy studying? (You may indicate more than one.)

□ *Much Ado About Nothing*   □ *Jane Eyre*

□ Short stories   □ *The Truman Show*

4. At the moment, are you planning to continue with

English 278?   □ YES   □ NO   □ MAYBE

5. If YES, has English 178 equipped you sufficiently to deal with English 278?   □ YES   □ NO

6. If NO, which particular academic skills are you least confident about?

Understanding poetry	
Analysing poetry	
Understanding a short story	
Analysing a short story	
Understanding a novel	
Analysing a novel	
Understanding a play	
Analysing a play	
Understanding a film	
Analysing a film	
Doing research independently	
Reading and understanding an academic article	
Responding critically to an academic article	
Formulating and developing an argument in an essay	
Referencing primary and secondary sources in an essay	
Following an academic lecture and taking notes	
Managing your time and administrative responsibilities	
Contributing to a small-group academic discussion	

7. Are you planning to continue with

English 318?   □ YES   □ NO   English 348?   □ YES   □ NO

Honours in English?   □ YES   □ NO

8. If you answered YES to any of these, please specify why:

□ career possibilities   □ personal interest   □ compulsory for degree

□ other: ………………………………………………………………………………………..…………………………………………..

9. Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate box in each case, to what extent English 178 has equipped you for studying the following texts:

	not prepared at all	*somewhat prepared*	*mostly prepared*	*fully prepared*
Short stories				
Novel				
Play				

10. Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate box in each case, to what extent English 178 has equipped you to do the following tasks:

	not prepared at all	*somewhat prepared*	*mostly prepared*	*fully prepared*
Read and understand a short story?				
Analyse a short story critically?				
Read and understand a novel?				
Analyse a novel critically?				
Read and understand a play?				
Analyse a play critically?				
Watch and understand a film for academic purposes?				
Analyse a film critically?				
Do research independently?				
Read and understand an academic article?				
Respond critically to an academic article?				
Formulate and develop an argument in an essay?				
Reference primary and secondary sources in an essay?				
Follow an academic lecture and take notes?				
Manage your time and administrative responsibilities?				

11. How often did you attend English 178 main lectures during the second semester?

□ every week □ sometimes □ never

12. How did you find the English 178 course in the second semester?

□ undemanding and a little boring □ interesting and intellectually stimulating

□ unfamiliar and mostly difficult

13. If you found the course challenging, why was this?

□ I struggled with the content.   □ I struggled with the workload.

□ Other (please specify): …….…

14. Please provide any additional comments:

……..……………………………………………….……………

……..…………………………………………….

SECTION B: ENGLISH STUDIES TUTORIALS

15. How often did you attend tutorials this semester?

□ I was never absent.   □ I missed more than one due to medical reasons.

□ I missed more than three and received a warning letter from my tutor.

16. Did you find it easy to participate in tutorial discussions?   □ YES   □ NO   □ MAYBE

17. Why was this? ……

……..………………………………………

18. Were you able to use the feedback on your draft essay to improve it?   □ YES   □ NO

19. Did you consult with your tutor personally about your draft essay?   □ YES   □ NO

20. If no, why was this?

……..…………………………………………

21. What did you learn through the essay draft process? (You may indicate more than one.)

how to write an introduction	
how to write a conclusion	
how to structure an essay	
how to engage critically with a text	
how to formulate and develop an argument	
how to incorporate secondary sources into my writing	
how to find legitimate academic sources	
how to reference primary and secondary sources	
how to use a thesaurus/dictionary to improve my essay language	

22. Did the content covered in the tutorials adequately prepare you for the following English 178 second-semester tests:

September test on *Much Ado About Nothing*?   □ YES   □ NO

November test on *The Truman Show* and *Jane Eyre*? (yet to be written)   □ YES   □ NO

23. Would you describe your attendance of English 178 tutorials as an

informative, positive learning experience?   □ YES   □ NO

24. How did the tutorials influence your English 178 learning experience?

……..……………………………………………………………
………..……………………………………………

25. How would you describe the role your tutors played in your English 178 learning experience?

……..…………………………………………………………………
……..…………………………………………………………………
……..…………………………………………………………………
………

ADDENDUM C: TUTOR SURVEY

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Case Study of Learning and Teaching Interventions in the English Studies 178 Tutorial Programme, University of Stellenbosch

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jolette Roodt (HonsBA Stell) from the Department of English at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will contribute to my MA thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you will be working as an English 178 tutor in the second semester of 2012.

10. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to assess how tutors implement the English 178 course material and how students respond to it. The study also aims to establish tutors' perception of their role and responsibilities in the English 178 course.

11. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Complete one hard-copy questionnaire in August. The questionnaires will be handed out and collected by the researcher. You may complete the questionnaire at home. You will have 3-5 days to complete the questionnaire. The subject of the questionnaire will be your experience with the English 178 tutorial course material. The questionnaire will contain both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The completed questionnaire will be treated as anonymous and confidential.

12. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

None.

13. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Individual participants will not benefit directly from this study. The potential benefits to the University and future 178 students include improved course material, more effective tutor training and clearer course outcomes.

14. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Subjects will not receive any remuneration for participation.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding. No names of participants will be used in the study. Each participant will instead receive a code. The data will be kept and transported safely and only the researcher will have access to the data.

When the results of the study are published, no names of participants will appear in the publication/s. Participants and their data will in no way be connected for the reader/s of the publication. Confidentiality in publication will therefore be maintained at all times.

16. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

17. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Jolette Roodt (researcher)   Shaun Viljoen (supervisor)
jolette.roodt@gmail.com   scv@sun.ac.za

18.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by the researcher in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____. He/she was encouraged and given

ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

TUTORIAL SUPPORT IN THE ENGLISH 178 COURSE:

TUTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Note from the researcher

This questionnaire forms part of the study I am undertaking for my MA degree in English Studies. The aim of my project is to determine how English 178 tutors perceive their role in the course, as well as how tutors utilise the material provided by the English Department resource coordinators in a practical classroom situation. This questionnaire will also attempt to establish your general experience of being a tutor in English 178.

I would like to thank you for participating in my study.

Sincerely

Jolette Roodt

SECTION A: TUTORING EXPERIENCE

1. How many years, including this year, have you worked as an English tutor?

2. How many of these were in the English 178 course at Stellenbosch?

3. How many workshops of tutor training have you attended?

4. Who presented these workshop/s?

□ The Department of English

□ Stellenbosch University's Centre for Teaching and Learning

□ An institution outside of Stellenbosch University

□ I don't know.

5. How long did these workshop/s usually last?

□ Half day to one day   □ Two days   □ Three days or more

6. Did these workshop/s adequately equip you for your work as an English tutor in terms of the following:

Dealing with mixed-ability groups	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Understanding what is expected of an English tutor	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Dealing with problem students	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Knowledge of the course structure	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Knowledge of the course content	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Marking and grading first-year written work	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Formulating lesson plans	**YES / NO / UNSURE**
Managing your time and administrative responsibilities	**YES / NO / UNSURE**

7. What do you think should be covered in a tutor training workshop?

8. How long do you think a tutor training workshop should be?

9. Do you think that a new tutor would benefit from working closely together with a senior tutor in a mentor/mentee relationship?

10. Please elaborate on your answer to Question 10.

11. How would you describe a good English 178 tutor?

12. Please indicate the ONE skill in each of the following columns which you believe to be the most important in an English 178 tutor:

TEACHING SKILLS

□ Ability to facilitate group discussion

□ Ability to work with students one-on-one

□ Ability to explain difficult concepts

□ Fairness in marking

□ Ability to manage time and administration

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

□ Subject/contextual knowledge

□ Familiarity with course content

□ Familiarity with course structure and objectives

□ Familiarity with course content

13. How would you describe a successful tutorial class?

14. What is the greatest challenge you have experienced in your tutoring up to this point?

15. How did you deal with the challenge mentioned in Question 15?

16. What do you see as the most positive aspect/s of tutoring in English 178?

SECTION B: TEACHING APPROACH

17. Which ONE of the following teaching styles best describes you?

□ assertive   □ facilitative

□ suggestive   □ collaborative

Assertive	**Facilitative**
Tell students answers directly	Facilitate students' expressions of their points of view about the question
Tell everything I know to the students	
Answer the questions I asked	Let students understand their strengths and weaknesses
Tell students what to do when they are wrong	Try to understand students' feelings
Point out students' mistakes directly	Let students determine their learning direction
	Keep silent in the group discussion
Suggestive	**Collaborative**
Summarise the discussion for the students	Explore students' understanding about questions
Give my opinion about the problem to the students	Facilitate students' expressions of their points of view about the question
Give suggestions to solve problems	
Raise all possible solutions to the problems	Try to explore students' true opinions

Use my own experience to help students in problem solving	Listen to students' own experiences Encourage students to express their ideas

18. Please elaborate on your answer to Question 17.

19. Do you feel that the resource coordinators provided you with enough support (in the resource packs and tutor meetings) to successfully present your tutorials?

20. Which text/s in the current English 178 syllabus do you enjoy teaching?

□ Poetry □ *Nervous Conditions* □ *"Master Harold"…and the boys*

□ Short stories □ *Much Ado About Nothing* □ *Jane Eyre*

21. Please provide a reason for your answer(s) to Question 2:

22. Which text/s in the current English 178 syllabus do you find most challenging to teach?

□ Poetry □ *Nervous Conditions* □ *"Master Harold"…and the boys*

□ Short stories □ *Much Ado About Nothing* □ *Jane Eyre*

23. Please provide a reason for your answer(s) to Question 2:

24. Do you (re)read texts before teaching them?

□ Yes, I (re)read them all □ Yes, I (re)read some □ No

25. Please provide a reason for your answer to Question 2:

26. Which one of the texts in the current English 178 syllabus do you consider yourself the most knowledgeable on? (please select only one)

□ Poetry □ *Nervous Conditions* □ *"Master Harold"…and the boys*

□ Short stories □ *Much Ado About Nothing* □ *Jane Eyre*

27. Please provide a reason for your answer to Question 4:

28. How and when do you encourage your students to read the prescribed texts?

29. How often do you use tutorials to provide students with learning support for the main lecture content?

□ Always □ Sometimes □ Never

30. How do you prepare for teaching a tutorial?

31. Approximately how long does it take you to prepare for a tutorial?

32. What do you see as your primary responsibility as an English 178 tutor?

33. What do you understand under the term "academic scaffolding"?

34. Which of the skills (on the right) do you see as the primary skill students should acquire as a result of studying each of the prescribed texts (on the left)?

Course (assignments included)	How to read and engage with a text	How to analyse a text critically	How to formulate an argument in an essay	How to support an argument using quotes	How to structure an essay	How to find legitimate academic sources	How to read and engage with an academic article	How to incorporate secondary sources into essays	How to reference primary and secondary sources
Poetry course									
Nervous Conditions course									
"Master Harold"…and the boys course									
Semester essay on poetry									
Much Ado About Nothing course									
Film studies course									
Jane Eyre course									

SECTION B: ENGLISH 178 COURSE MATERIAL

35. How did you utilise the English 178 tutorial resource packs during 2011 and/or 2012? (Please choose the option that most closely describes your approach, or that describes the option you use most frequently.)

□ I structure every lesson plan around the questions in the resource pack.

□ I sometimes have students complete the questions in the resource pack as preparation, but seldom keep to the content.

□ I never ask my students to complete the questions in the resource pack, although they are free to ask questions pertaining to the material in class.

36. Have you ever provided students with material additional to the tutorial resource pack?

□ Yes, I give students extra material in most of my tutorials or via e-mail.

□ Yes, I occasionally give students extra material in class or via e-mail.

□ No, I always keep to the material in the resource pack.

37. Please provide any additional comments: