

## **Assessing Students' Academic Writing at Tertiary Institutions: Implications for Teaching Writing**

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**ABSTRACT** The prime focus in the research is to assess whether students that write in their second language are able to write coherent texts. For the purposes of this paper, students at a tertiary institution in South Africa were given an essay to write on *Challenges Facing Education in South Africa* and those essays were marked focusing at coherence and cohesion. The findings showed that the not-so-competent students in academic writing failed to contextualize the topic. Their paragraphs and sentences were not linked. Their essays were disjoint, in the sense that what had gone before did not provide a smooth transition for what was coming next and a number of issues were discussed in one paragraph.