

You're asking them to do what? Rethinking our approach to genre when embedding academic literacy in the disciplines

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Who we are and what we do

What prompted our shift in
approach to genre

How we currently approach it

What the broader implications
might be

Who we are and what we do



Abertay University

- Campus-based university in Dundee, Scotland;
- Around 4,000 students;
- Widening-access goals.

Learner Development Service

- EAP courses;
- One-to-one appointments;
- Coursework feedback service;
- Microcredentials in academic writing;
- In-sessional workshops embedded in the curriculum.

Why we see a need to shift our approach to genre

The following example is based on a real task,
but uses a different subject area.

The opening lines of the brief

You must produce a 1,500-word report exploring the impact of coaching styles on an athlete's performance.

Your task

Imagine you are a Learner Development Advisor. A lecturer in sports science has requested a session to help their students with the academic writing aspect of this assignment.

What are your immediate thoughts about the genre and the genre characteristics you might need to help the student with?

A few more details from the brief

In the first part of this report, critically examine relevant academic literature. In your discussion, reflect on the direct and indirect impact coaching styles can have on an athlete.

In the second part of the report, reflect on your views about coaching styles and how they may impact an athlete's performance. Outline a plan of action that you might take in the future.

Your task

Discuss ...

- how these instructions seem to confirm or challenge the genre expectations you previously discussed;
- any new advice you would consider giving the students.

An example of good student work

I previously thought that the most useful approach a coach could take was to focus on physical conditioning, but I now believe in more holistic approaches. I have now acknowledged the flaws of approaches that put a narrow focus on conditioning idea after reading Smith (2020). He gave a memorable example, a critique of Mr Miyagi's "wax on, wax off" technique from the movie *Karate Kid*. It helped me to understand that ...

Your task

Discuss whether there is anything that challenges your previous ideas about the advice you'd give to the students.

Our rationale for rethinking our approach to genre



Genre is in flux and local variation (Threadgold, 1989; Carr et al., 2021)

Academic genres are being revisited (Molinari, 2022)

There are calls for authentic assessment in HE (McArthur, 2021; Bacon, 2022)

EAP might be behind the times (Molinari, 2022)

How we currently approach genre

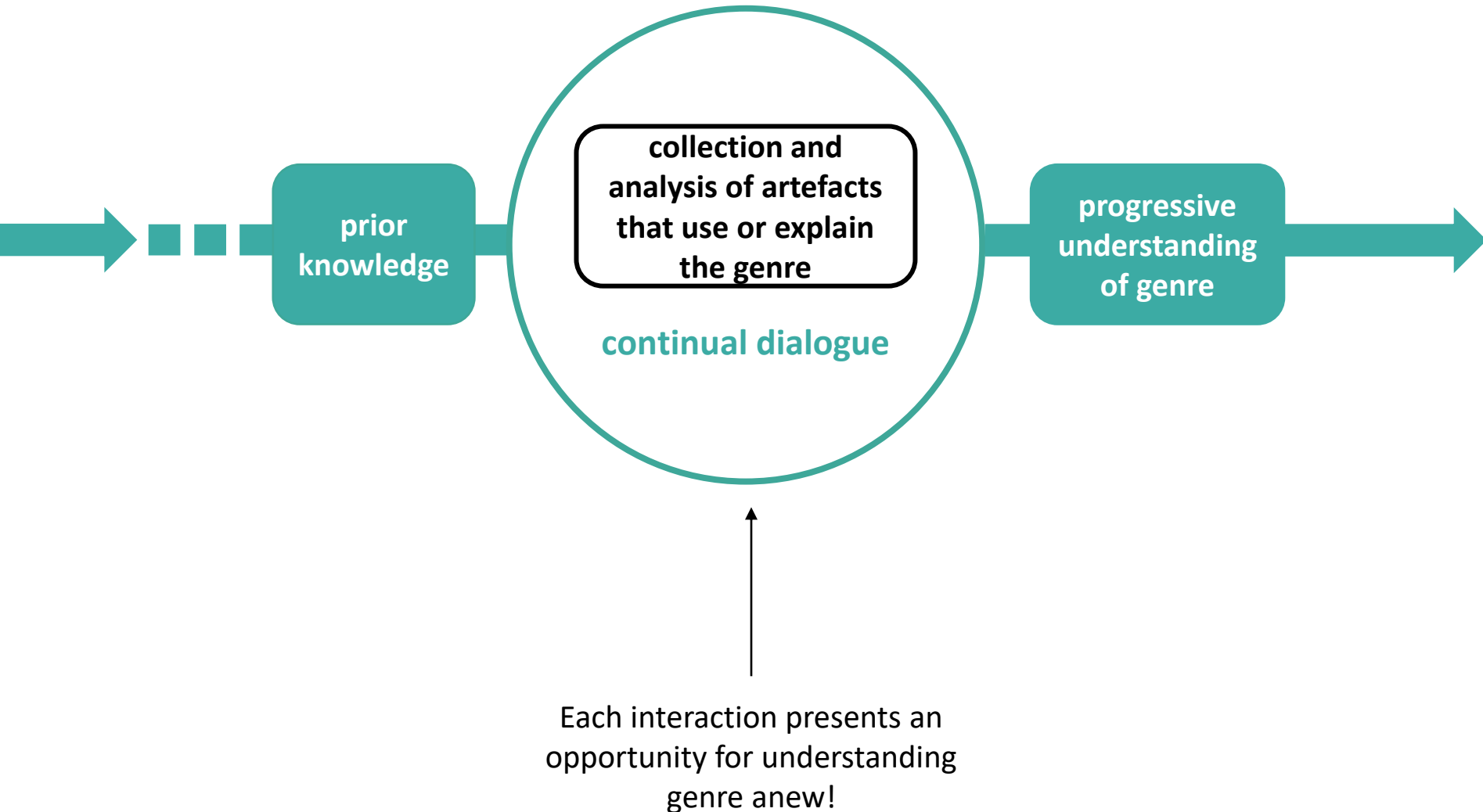
This is where the beginnings come in!

“We can and should aim for an insider ‘emic’ approach, even if we cannot always achieve it, because the effort involved in trying to become something of an insider will often produce pedagogical and educational benefits.”

“We can interview people... By doing so, we can gain insight into their conventions ... and reach some understanding of their broad discoursal aspirations.”

Swales (2019, p. 81)

Framework for taking an emic-discursive approach to genre



Context	Example actions
Coursework feedback service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requesting task outlines and any other materials the lecturer has provided;• Emailing lecturers for more clarification.
One-to-one study support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking students to share their feedback from lecturers.• Learning from student experience.
EAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emailing lecturers for models of 'good and bad' reflective writing work.
Microcredentials in academic writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving students the tools to 'begin each assignment anew'.

What the broader implications might be

Our closing thoughts

- Genre is in flux and locally determined;
- Supporting students requires an understanding of local expectations;
- Prior understanding of genre is useful, but only with continual reappraisal;
- Continual reappraisal is most fruitful when embedded in an emic-discursive approach.

Your final task

Before we take questions, we'd like to ask you to reflect on the following:

- How might continually reappraising genre be beneficial in your context?
- What challenges might you face in taking an emic-discursive approach?

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McArthur, J. (2021) *Rethinking Student involvement in Assessment*. (Working Paper No. 58). Centre for Global Higher Education. <https://www.researchcghe.org/publications/working-paper/rethinking-student-involvement-in-assessment/>

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