

# Embedding reading and writing in curriculum learning

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Genre pedagogy began over 30 years ago in Australia, with analyses of the kinds of writing that are highly valued in schools, and a strategy for teaching children to write these genres successfully, known as Joint Construction (Martin 1999). However, for the past 15 years genre pedagogy has also developed a set of strategies for embedding both reading and writing in curriculum learning, at all levels of education. The history of these developments is outlined in Martin 2000; Martin & Rose 2013; Rose 2008; 2015. They are described in detail in Rose 2016; Rose & Martin 2012. This paper provides a very brief outline of these strategies for both reading and writing.

Genre pedagogy differs from other approaches to teaching language along several dimensions:

- It integrates language learning with learning curriculum subjects, dissolving the artificial distinction between teaching language and ‘content’.
- It analyses learning tasks using a sophisticated model of language in social context, instead of cognitivist theories of disembodied ‘thinking skills’.
- It designs learning activities to enable all students in a class to succeed at the same level of learning tasks, instead of giving different tasks according to assessed ‘abilities’.
- It focuses on preparing all learners for continual success, instead of assessing their differences and focusing on their errors.
- It designs teacher/learner interactions to engage and support every student in a class, instead of privileging top students in classroom learning.

This paper addresses each of these dimensions in turn.



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## Integrating language learning with curriculum learning

Genre pedagogy can integrate language learning with curriculum learning because 1) it treats language as a resource for making meaning, and 2) it treats the social contexts of language as meanings that language makes. In this view, learning curriculum subjects like science, history or literature are not separate from learning to read, write and speak about these subjects. Integration of language learning with curriculum learning is often known as ‘embedding’ of language skills.

Genre theory analyses the social contexts of language at two levels. The first level is known as *register*. Register includes a) the subject matter, or *field* of texts, b) relations between people, such as teacher/learner or writer/reader, or *tenor*, and c) how meanings are made, including spoken, written or visual *modes*. The second level is *genre*, which is the global social purpose of a text, the goal that people are trying to achieve. Genre draws together field, tenor and mode, to give a text its overall structuring.

Within language, genre theory recognises three levels of patterns, a) patterns of meaning in texts, or *discourse*, b) patterns of words in sentences, or *grammar*, c) patterns of letters and sounds in words, or *spelling* and pronunciation. Comprehending or creating a text involves processing all these patterns of patterns at the same time. This is an immensely complex task, but fortunately each level of patterning is meaningful in its higher level context. For example with texts in school, a curriculum topic makes sense in the context of the genre, patterns in the text make sense in the context of the topic, patterns in its sentences make sense in the context of the text, and its words make sense in the context of each sentence.

This model of language in social context enables us to analyse learning tasks in school, in terms of 1) their overall purpose and structure, 2) the field or topic to be learnt, 3) how these meanings are negotiated between writer and readers, and between teacher and students, 4) how the meanings are presented and organised at the levels of texts, sentences and words.

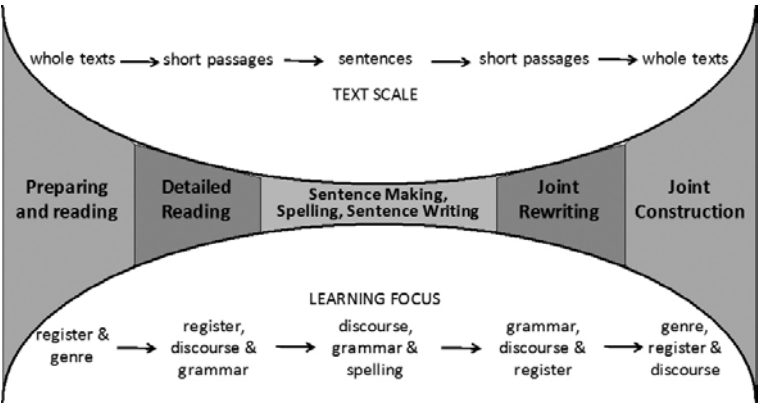
## Designing learning activities

This analysis of learning tasks then provides a foundation to design learning activities that will enable students to learn the curriculum topic, by reading, writing and discussing it. To provide effective

support for all students to manage the complexity of the language task, it is taught in an integrated sequence, based on the model of language in context.

Each teaching sequence starts with reading and leads to writing. Reading starts with the teacher summarising how the field of a text unfolds through the text. This is known as *Preparing and reading*. The text is then read and discussed. Reading then focuses in detail on patterns of meaning in sentences, known as *Detailed Reading*. It may then go down to patterns of words in sentences and letters in words, known as *Sentence Making* and *Spelling*. Writing then builds back up, first by putting words back into sentences in *Sentence Writing*, then practising writing sentences in *Joint Rewriting*, and finally constructing whole texts, or *Joint Construction*. The sequence is summarised in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Genre pedagogy teaching sequence



Each of these activities is designed as a sequence of *learning cycles*. The core of each learning cycle is the learner's *task*. The analysis of learning tasks in genre pedagogy enables us to carefully *prepare* for each learning task. The preparation enables all learners to succeed with each learning task. This success prepares them for a third step in which understandings are *elaborated* at a higher level. Probably all teaching/learning practices assume that learning happens through tasks, and most follow learning tasks with some kind of elaboration. However, genre pedagogy focuses attention on first preparing all students to succeed with each task, so that all benefit equally from each elaboration, in order to steadily build their knowledge and skills. The prepare-task-elaborate sequence in learning cycles is summarised in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: Learning cycles  
in genre pedagogy



To start thinking about how to embed skills teaching in curriculum learning, it is useful to recognise two general kinds of reading tasks, and four general kinds of writing tasks in the school. Each of these tasks have different purposes and require different sets of activities. Their purposes are briefly summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Purposes of reading and writing tasks in school

tasks	overall purposes
Reading factual texts	learning curriculum knowledge
Reading stories	engaging in literature and interpreting themes
Writing factual texts	demonstrating curriculum knowledge
Writing stories	engaging readers and presenting messages
Writing arguments	evaluating issues and points of view
Writing text responses	evaluating verbal, visual or musical texts

For each reading task, a teaching sequence starts with preparing before reading. The first step is an *overview* of the text, which gives students a step-by-step summary of what to expect as the text is read, in terms that all can understand. All students can then follow the text as it is read with general understanding, without struggling and losing attention. If it is read aloud, they will not struggle to decode the spelling of unfamiliar words. Preparing and reading thus reduces the difficulty of the task, but enables teachers to work with texts that may be well beyond students’ independent reading levels. Instead of avoiding difficult texts because students cannot read them independently, all students develop the reading skills they need for independent learning.

If the text is a factual text containing a lot of information, it may be read *paragraph-by-paragraph*. The task of understanding each paragraph is prepared with a brief *preview* of what it’s about, and elaborated by identifying and discussing its *key information*. Students use

highlighters to mark key information, guided by the teacher. If the text is a story, only an overview is needed before the entire short story or novel chapter is read, and elaborated with a discussion about its themes and interesting details. The preparation for reading ensures that all students can participate actively in this discussion.

The strategy used to prepare students to write whole texts is *Joint Construction*. For factual texts, *notes* are first made of the information that was identified in paragraph-by-paragraph reading. Note making starts as a joint activity in which students take turns to dictate and scribe information on the board, that has been collected in prior reading activities. The teacher organises the notes into categories that will be used to organise the structure of a new text, giving each category a functional label. The class then writes the new text on the board, guided by the teacher and the labels for its structure.

For stories, well written stories are used as *models*, to give the structure for a new jointly constructed story. The teacher first guides the class to deconstruct the structure of the model, giving a functional label to each phase of the text. The class then writes a new story, following the same structure as the model, but with new characters, settings and events.

For arguments and text responses, well written models are also used to give the structure for a new text. The model is deconstructed, and the class constructs a new text with different content. The content of arguments comes from studying issues in factual texts, using paragraph-by-paragraph reading and note making. The content of text responses comes from studying the themes and aesthetics in literature, film, art or music, using preparing and reading activities (or viewing and listening), as well as notes.

Students' reading skills are accelerated with the powerful strategy of *Detailed Reading*, in which *short passages* are selected from reading texts, and students are guided to read them sentence-by-sentence. Detailed Reading uses carefully planned learning cycles in which the teacher first prepares and reads a sentence, then prepares students to identify each group of words, by giving them a meaning cue, such who or what it's about, or paraphrases of unfamiliar words. Students are asked in turn to identify the words, so that each student can be praised for successful answers. All students then highlight the identified words, whose meaning is then elaborated, by defining new words, explaining meanings, and discussing students' knowledge.

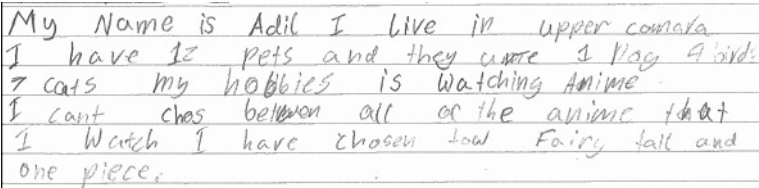
These carefully designed teacher/class interactions ensure that every student in a class is continually engaged, successful and af-

firmed. They enable teachers to simultaneously engage and enable all students to read high level texts with complete comprehension. They contrast with typical classroom discussions around the world, in which a minority of more successful students are most active and receive most benefit (Martin & Rose 2012; Nuthall 2005). The design is based on analysing pedagogic discourse in terms of learning cycles. It focuses on preparing all students for the task of identifying meanings in texts, and then using their success to elaborate (Martin & Rose 2007).

The passage of text used in Detailed Reading is then used in the strategy of Joint Rewriting. With factual texts, notes are made of the meanings highlighted in the passage, and the teacher guides the class to write a new passage, using the notes. With passages from stories, the literary language patterns in each sentence of the passage are followed precisely, with new characters, settings and events. With arguments and text responses, passages from model texts are read in detail, and their patterns of evaluative language are then followed very closely, to write about a different issue or text. Joint Rewriting is a powerful strategy that supports students to borrow the language resources of accomplished authors into their own writing. It rapidly expands their repertoire and skills in writing.

Texts 1 and 2 show the potential for improvement using the strategies of genre pedagogy outlined here. Text 1 was written by a student at the start of Year 7 (first year of secondary school in Australia). Text 2 was written by the same student one month later; it is an analysis of the music in a scene from the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*. In this time, the class had studied the film, using preparing and note making. The teacher had also guided three sessions of Detailed Reading and Joint Rewriting, using model text responses, and one Joint Construction. Text 2 was then written independently.

TEXT 1: 'Pre' writing sample (27 January)

A photograph of a student's handwritten text on lined paper. The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat messy. The text is written in five lines. The first line says 'My Name is Adil I live in upper canada'. The second line says 'I have 12 pets and they were 1 dog 4 birds'. The third line says '7 cats my hobbies is watching anime'. The fourth line says 'I cant chos between all of the anime that'. The fifth line says 'I watch I have chosen 1st Fairy tale and one piece.'

My Name is Adil I live in upper canada  
I have 12 pets and they were 1 dog 4 birds  
7 cats my hobbies is watching anime  
I cant chos between all of the anime that  
I watch I have chosen 1st Fairy tale and  
one piece.

is used  
In the film music convey the feelings and emotion of the characters. Visual elements also add emotion. At the start music is quite subtle and almost inaudible. As soon as the Constables car come the music picks up pace. The family starts to run away. The music starts to speed up as drum beat starts echoing representing the beating hearts of the family. The music slows down drastically as the car blocks the exit showing last hope. The Constable takes the girls and the music picks up again replicating energy and suspense as it forces the audience to question if the mum will save them. When all the girls are in the car the music slows down showing the audience that the girls horribal and heart bracking fate has been sealed. This makes the audience feel sympathy for the girls and there family and it emphasises the desperation they felt thing to escape the white people. This film successfully uses the audio elements including music seeing the feelings and emotions of the three girls and there family.

## Conclusion

This has been a very briefly overview of the range of strategies for reading and writing developed in genre pedagogy. The strategies are designed from the analysis of language in genre theory, and the analysis of learning cycles developed in recent genre pedagogy, and refined in classroom practice. They include strategies for reading factual texts and stories, and for writing factual texts, stories, arguments and text responses. This range of strategies, together with analyses of written genres in the school, enable teachers to embed skills development in teaching the curriculum in all subjects and stages of school. For detailed information about the strategies and teaching resources see Rose 2016; Rose & Martin 2012; 2013. For videos demonstrating the strategies, see BOSTES 2014; Rose 2016.

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