Fetch me a pen

Approaching Written Genres

Departmental strategies for teaching writing

Approaching Written Genres – Aims:

- To understand why it is important to establish which writing (and teaching and learning) genres are priorities in subjects in your schools
- To participate in an activity designed to unpick the structure and features of some written genres in school curriculums
- Reflect on your own school's approach to teaching writing across the curriculum.

Approaching Written Genres

Task: Read the texts below and consider these three questions:

- In which subject might these texts be encountered?
- Can you identify the 'genre' of writing? How do you know?
- Can you begin to pick out features of this writing? It might help to compare the texts to others.

a) This text is populated with nominalisations—that is, nouns derived from verbs or adjectives They repackage processes (normally expressed by verbs) and qualities (normally expressed by adjectives) into things (expressed in nouns).

b) Uses technical vocabulary and also everyday vocabulary which takes on a different meaning in this context. Begins with a conditional conjunction.

c) Contains nontechnical vocabulary and simple clauses that are linked into sentences through coordination (*and*) or subordination (*as, although, until*). The text replicates patterns of speech.

d) Contains a heavy load of technical vocabulary - Sentences contain embedded clauses that form long noun phrases. For example, the first sentence contains two embedded clauses.

Task: Match up the task up to the descriptors. How familiar are you with the terms used in the descriptors? Can you begin to make sense of them having matched them up to the texts?

Nominalisations

Text 3 (historical account): Behr, E. (1996). *Prohibition: Thirteen years that changed America*. New York: Arcade.

In retrospect, the Volstead Act was hopelessly inadequate, because it grossly underestimated the **willingness** of the lawbreakers to risk **conviction**, the degree of human **ingenuity** displayed to get around its **provisions**, and **the ease** with which the lawbreakers would be able to subvert all those whose job was to enforce it. Above all, its **failure** resulted from a naïve American **belief** in the **effectiveness** of law.

"They help create a world of abstractions, different from the world of action and feeling depicted in Text 1 and the world of technicality and density conveyed through Text 2."

Nominalisations

They were so **nice** to me!

I was overwhelmed with _____.

Arsenal and Tottenham **hate** each other.

The teams share a mutual _____.

I had to **explain** myself.

They wanted an _____.

She **achieved** Level 7.

Her end of Year level was an _____.

You have to be **excellent** to get a place.

The organisation only accepts _____.

niceness, **hatred**, **explanation**, **achievement**, **excellence**

Embedded clauses forming long noun phrases

Text 2 (KS4-level Science textbook): *Modern Biology*. (2006). Columbus, OH: Glencoe.

Organisms made up of one or more cells that have a nucleus and membrane-bound organelles are called eukaryotes. Eukaryotic cells also have a variety of **subcellular structures called organelles - well-defined, intracellular bodies that perform specific functions for the cell**.

Noun phrases

A 'noun phrase' is a broad term used to encompass:

•**single word nouns**

•**pronouns** (words that stand in place of nouns, such as *it, this, that, her, him, them*)

•**multi-word nouns** (i.e. phrases)

Nouns phrases name one thing but are comprised of more than one word (e.g. *the car park, Tower Hamlets*). Already, we can see that nouns phrases can contain words that are not nouns...

the car park

A determiner: a word which tells us if the noun is specific or general (e.g. *a, an, the, their, our*)

A noun adjunct: a noun behaving like an adjective (e.g. *school* pupil, *chicken* soup)

A noun
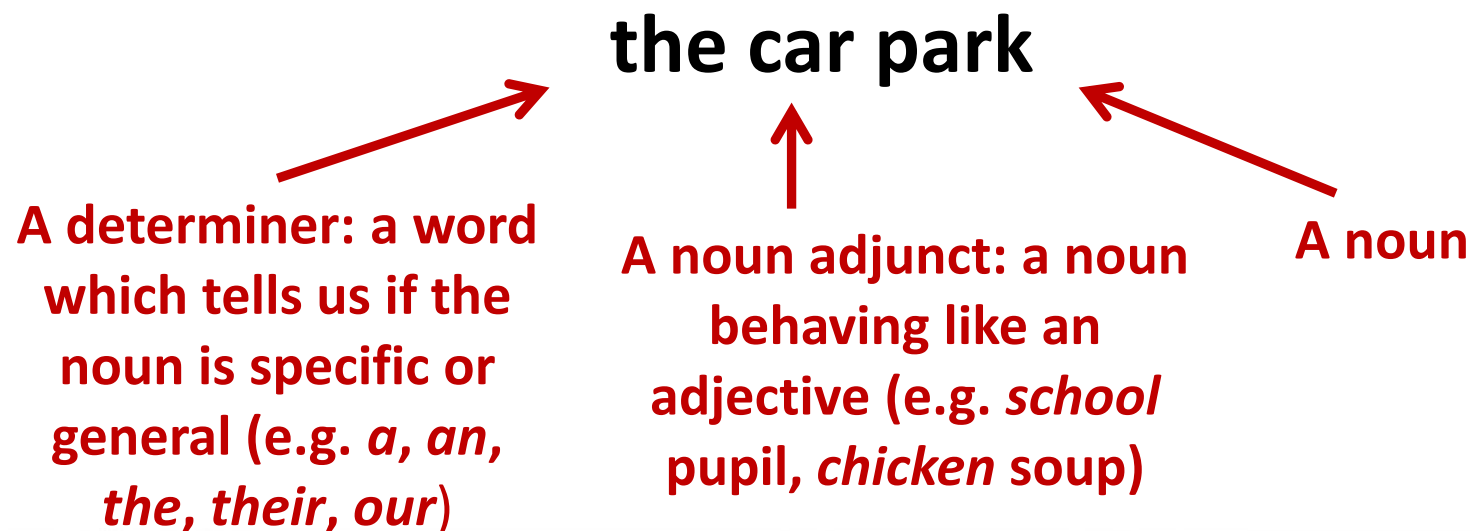
Building noun phrases

Noun phrases can be expanded (in theory, infinitely!) to incorporate many kinds of words and linguistic structures. Notice how, in each of these phrases, it is essentially the same thing (the car park) that is being named…

the car park

the dilapidated car park
Here, an adjective adds more information to the noun phrase.

the badly-lit, dilapidated car park
Here, another adjective (one in fact formed from an adverb and a verb) adds even more information.

the badly lit, dilapidated car park in the shabby part of town
In this example, a prepositional phrase, beginning with 'in', is locating the car park in question.

the badly-lit, dilapidated car park in the shabby part of town, which every responsible parent warns their child against
A relative clause, beginning with the determiner 'which', now modifies the phrase. The comma helps signal that it is the car park, rather than the part of town, that responsible parents warn their children against!

Noun phrases for academic writing

Why is it important to encourage pupils to build complex noun phrases?
Look at the following examples from different subject areas...

Noun	Noun Phrase	Expanded Noun Phrase
rhythm	the poem's rhythm	the poem's upbeat rhythm, created by the writer's use of iambic tetrameter
winds	westerly winds	westerly winds, which are strongest in the western hemisphere
cities	large cities	large cities that generate economic wealth

Each of the expanded noun phrases gives more information (allowing a student to display greater knowledge, understanding, ability to analyse/evaluate etc.) Examples like these enable students to begin to see language as a series of 'building blocks' that, though not especially complicated in themselves, can be developed to create sophisticated sentence structures.

Everyday vocabulary in a different context

Text 4 (KS4-level Science textbook): *Science explorer: Life science*. **(2001). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.**
If a rectangular **solid** has side, front and bottom **faces** with **areas** of 2x, y/2 and xy cm^2 respectively, what is the volume of the solid in centimetres cubed?

Some key verbs (or *processes*):

kills, traps, sweeps, covers, stops, destroys

Question: Why do we associate the words above with *preventing* something? Where have you heard these words used, in Science or elsewhere?

Everyday vocabulary in a different context

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A **microbe** is the name given to any microscopic organism – a tiny life form, often consisting of a single cell.

In today's lesson we are concerned with harmful microbes, often known as 'germs', 'viruses' or 'bacteria', that can cause disease.

Writing about Scientific Processes

LO: Can I explain the ways in which the body stops **microbes** causing problems?

Kill
your speed
EASTLEIGH

kills, traps,
sweeps, covers,
stops, destroys

**Everyday vocabulary in a
different context**

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A **microbe** is the name given to any microscopic organism – a tiny life form, often consisting of a single cell.

In today's lesson we are concerned with harmful microbes, often known as 'germs', 'viruses' or 'bacteria', that can cause disease.

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LO: Can I explain the ways in which the body stops **microbes** causing problems?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORY GENRES

Developed from History content descriptions, achievement standards, scope and sequence and the Literacy Capability

pp 24-25

Level 1e Typically by the end of Foundation Year	Level 2 Typically by the end of Yr 2	Level 3 Typically by the end of Yr 4	Level 4 Typically by the end of Yr 6	Level 5 Typically by the end of Yr 8	Level 6 Typically by the end of Year 10
Personal and family histories	Yr 1: *Present and past family life* Yr 2: *The Past in the present – local history*	Yr 3: **Community and remembrance** Yr 4: *First contacts*	Yr 5: *The Australian colonies* Yr 6: *Australia as a nation*	Yr 7:*The Ancient World* Yr 8: *The ancient to the modern world*	Yr 9: The making of the modern world Yr 10: The modern world and Australia
• simple sequences of familiar objects/ events e.g. *a visual timeline of key events/stages in my life so far*	• historical retellings of an event e.g. *when the bridge was built in our town*	• historical recounts of an event e.g. *the journeys of Christopher Columbus and contact with indigenous peoples*	• historical recounts of a series of events with some summative commentary e.g. *the story of Federation*	• historical recounts of a series of events with some summative commentary e.g. *the building of the pyramids at Giza*	• historical recounts of a series of events or developments within a chronological framework with some summative or evaluative commentary e.g *the events of the Freedom Rides in the 1960s and their impact on Australian society.*
narratives about the past e.g. *retell the story of a significant day for my family*	• narratives built around historical events/people e.g. *a significant person that changed our community*	• historical narratives told from a particular perspective e.g. *a diary of a convict on the First Fleet*	• historical narratives that retell past events, for example from a particular personal or cultural perspective e.g *the experiences of a post-war migrant family - their cultural practices and those existing in Australia at the time*	• historical narratives that retell past events, for example from a particular personal or cultural perspective e.g. *the story of Confucius in ancient Chinese history*	
• questions and answers e.g. *interview grandparents about where they were born and raised*	• descriptions of historical people and places e.g. *the Ngarrindjeri sites in the area*	• descriptions of a historical figure or place e.g. *significance of the old gum tree, Glenelg*	• detailed descriptions of particular places from the past demonstrating use of source material e.g. *the Goodwood Orphanage*	• detailed descriptions, for example of particular (events, people and) places form the past demonstrating use of evidence from sources e.g. *the water management system at Angkor*	• detailed descriptions, for example of particular (events, people and) places from the past demonstrating use of evidence from primary and secondary sources, using appropriate referencing • eg *the Boxer rebellion in China*
			• explanation of cause and effect of change in society e.g. *Aboriginal life before and after colonisation*	• explanations that, for example, present the causes of an event e.g. *the role of the Mongols in forging connections between Europe and Asia.*	• explanations that, for example, consider past events from a particular personal or cultural perspective e.g. *the role of the industrial revolution on the transatlantic slave trade*
			• persuasive texts, for example presenting a particular point of view in relation to an historical event or figure e.g. *Discuss the role of Australian suffragettes in changing Australian democracy*	• discussion texts with supporting evidence e.g. *Discuss the impact on the Western world of inventions and developments in the Islamic world*	• discussion texts, that for example, present historical arguments with supporting evidence. e.g. *Post World War 2 migration fundamentally changed Australian society. Discuss.*

Consultative draft Numeracy and Literacy Unit April 2014

See the p.1 Introduction for an explanation of the shading on this map

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AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM MATHEMATICS GENRES

Developed from the Literacy Capability Maths text examples pp 24-25 with reference to the Mathematics content descriptions, achievement standards, scope and sequence

Level 1e Typically by the end of Foundation Year	Level 2 Typically by the end of Yr 2	Level 3 Typically by the end of Yr 4	Level 4 Typically by the end of Yr 6	Level 5 Typically by the end of Yr 8	Level 6 Typically by the end of Year 10
Describe Patterns *e.g. materials, sounds, movements or drawings*	**Reports of steps in a process** *e.g. conducting a chance experiment*	**Reports of a process** *e.g converting mixed numbers to improper fractions and vice versa* **Procedures** *eg. how to make mathematical shapes or complete a process*	**Procedures** *eg. how to make mathematical shapes or complete a process*	**Procedures** *how to complete a mathematical task or process*	**Procedures** *how to complete a mathematical task or process*
Simple statements of comparison *e.g. in relation to mass, length and capacity*	**Word problems** *e.g. addition and subtraction*	**Word problems** *e.g. Multiplication and division*	**Word problems** *e.g. addition and subtraction of fractions*	**Word problems** *e.g. involving profit or loss*	**Word problems** *e.g. involving algebraic equations*
Days of the week *e.g. to connect order and events* **Calendars** *e.g. use to locate personally or culturally specific days*	**Maps** *e.g. to receive and give information or to describe place*	**Maps** *e.g. use scale to describe the difference in a city in Australia and Indonesia*	**Explanation** *of mathematical processes*	**Explanation** *of mathematical processes*	**Explanation** *of mathematical processes*
Yes/no questions *to collect information*	**Questions** *to collect data*	**Surveys - questions and recording**	**Surveys - questions and reports**	**Surveys - questions and reports**	**Surveys - questions and reports**
Data displays *e.g. representing responses to questions posed*	**Data displays** *e.g. picture graphs to represent one-to-one correspondence*	**Data displays** *e.g. to represent the most popular breakfast cereal in the class*	**Data displays** *with and without digital technologies e.g. as part of an investigation into representations in the media*	**Data displays** *with and without digital technologies e.g. as part of an investigation into random sampling*	**Data displays** *with and without digital technologies e.g. use parallel box plots to compare and interpret data about the age distribution of ATSI people with that of the Australian population as a whole*
		Reports of group tasks *e.g. oral or written investigations*	**Recounts and evaluations of group tasks** *e.g investigations*	**Recounts and evaluations of group tasks** *e.g investigations*	**Recounts and evaluations of group tasks** *e.g investigations*

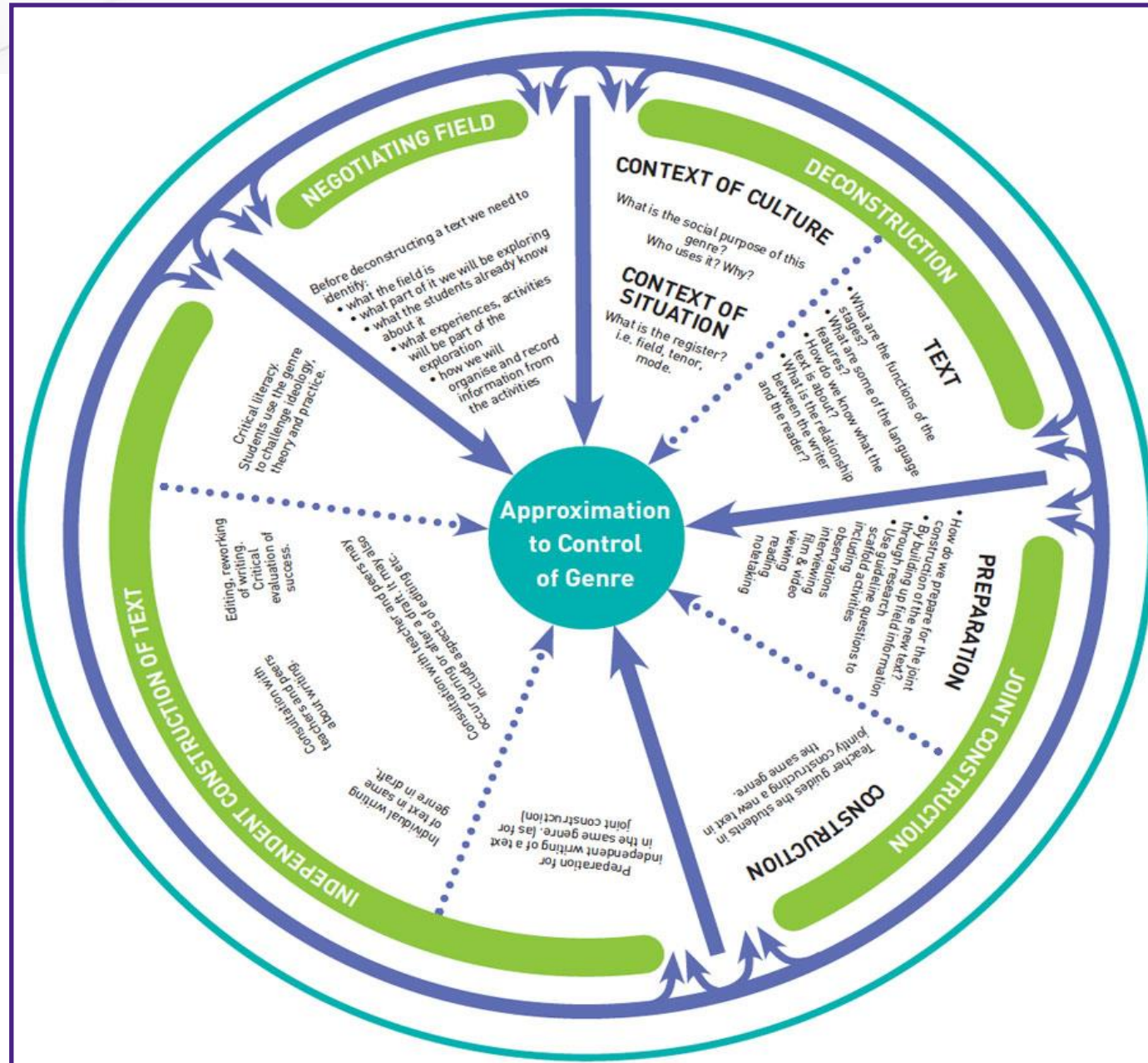Consultative draft from Numeracy and Literacy Unit, April 2014

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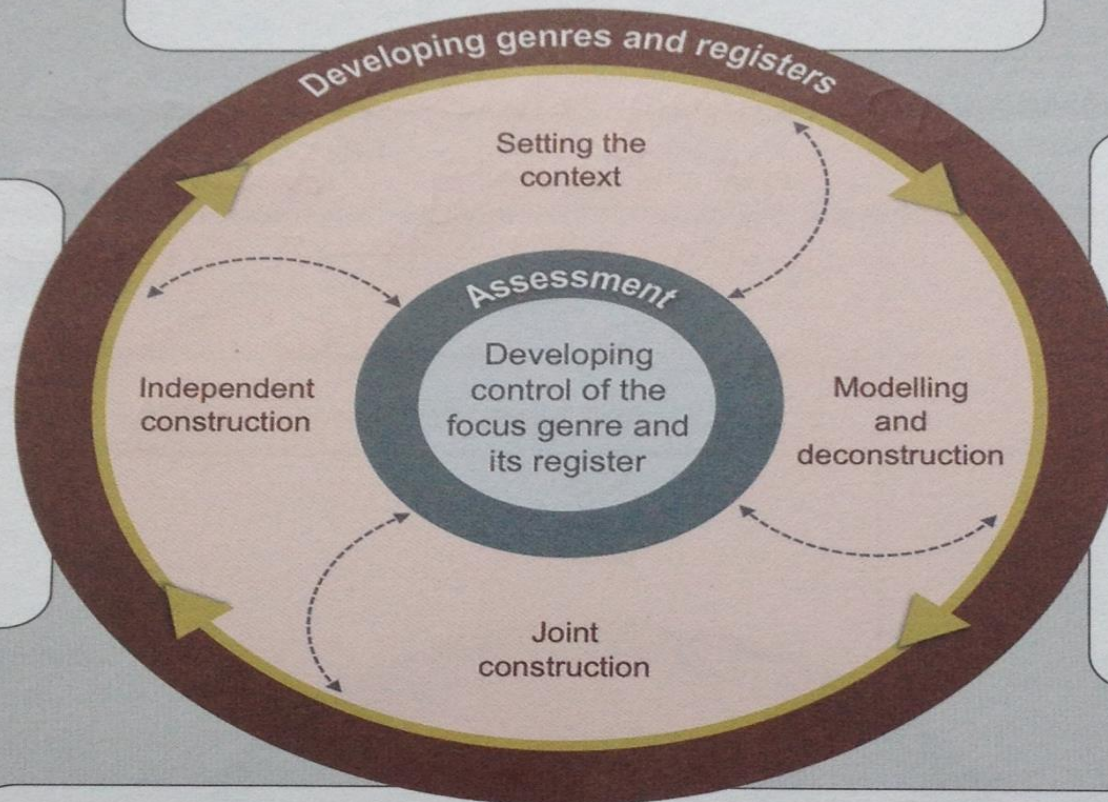# Rothery's teaching and learning cycle
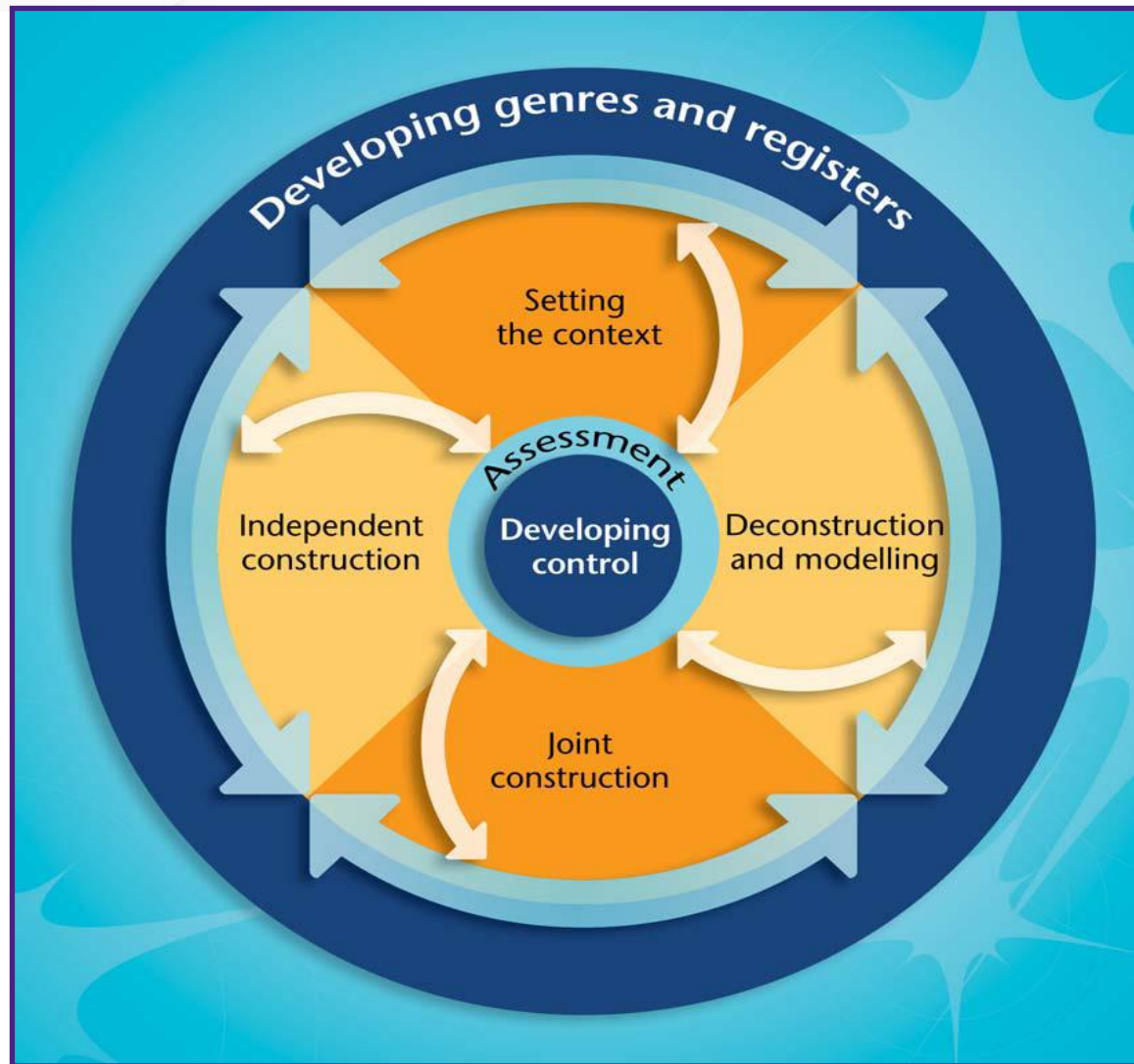
Based on M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics
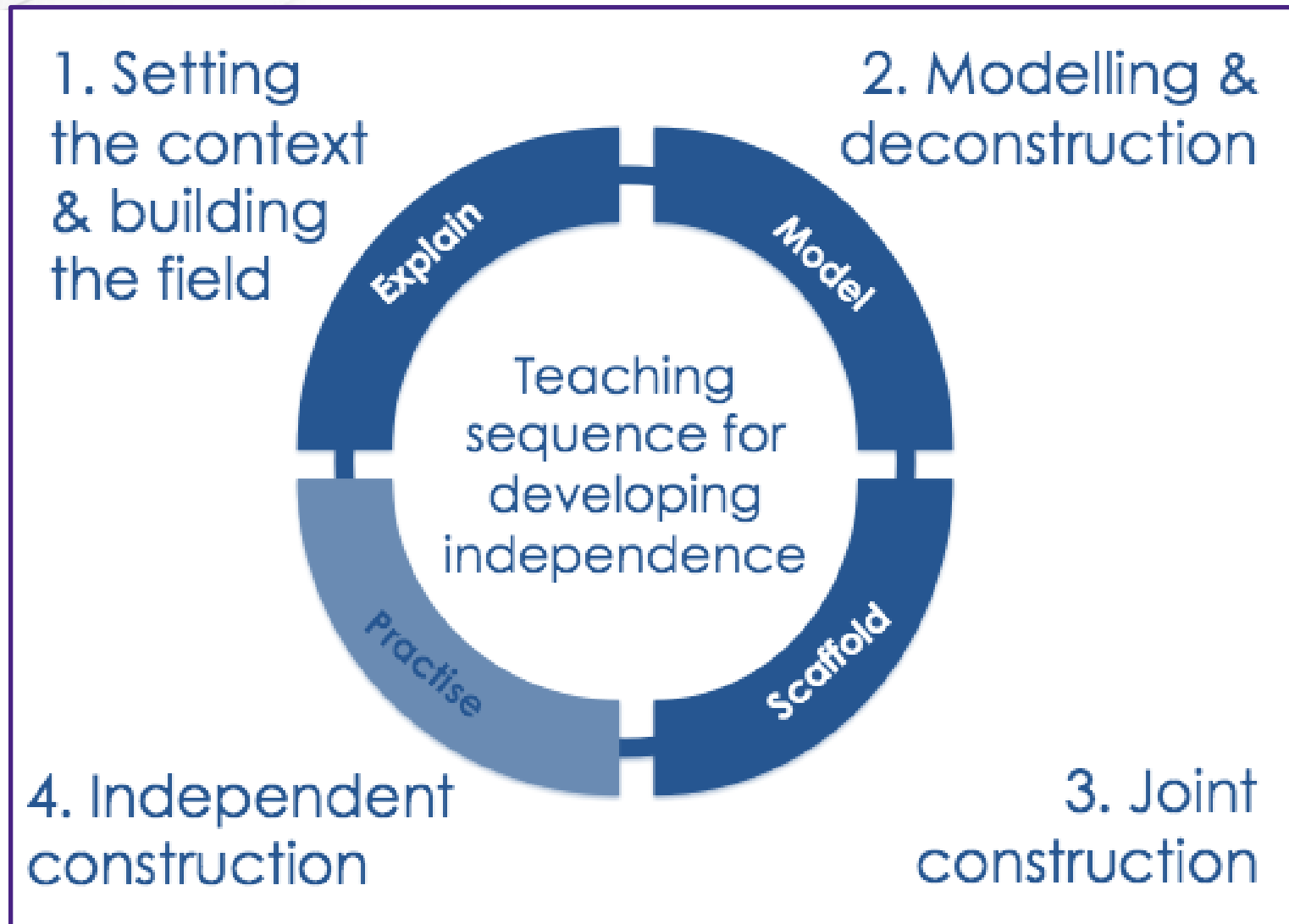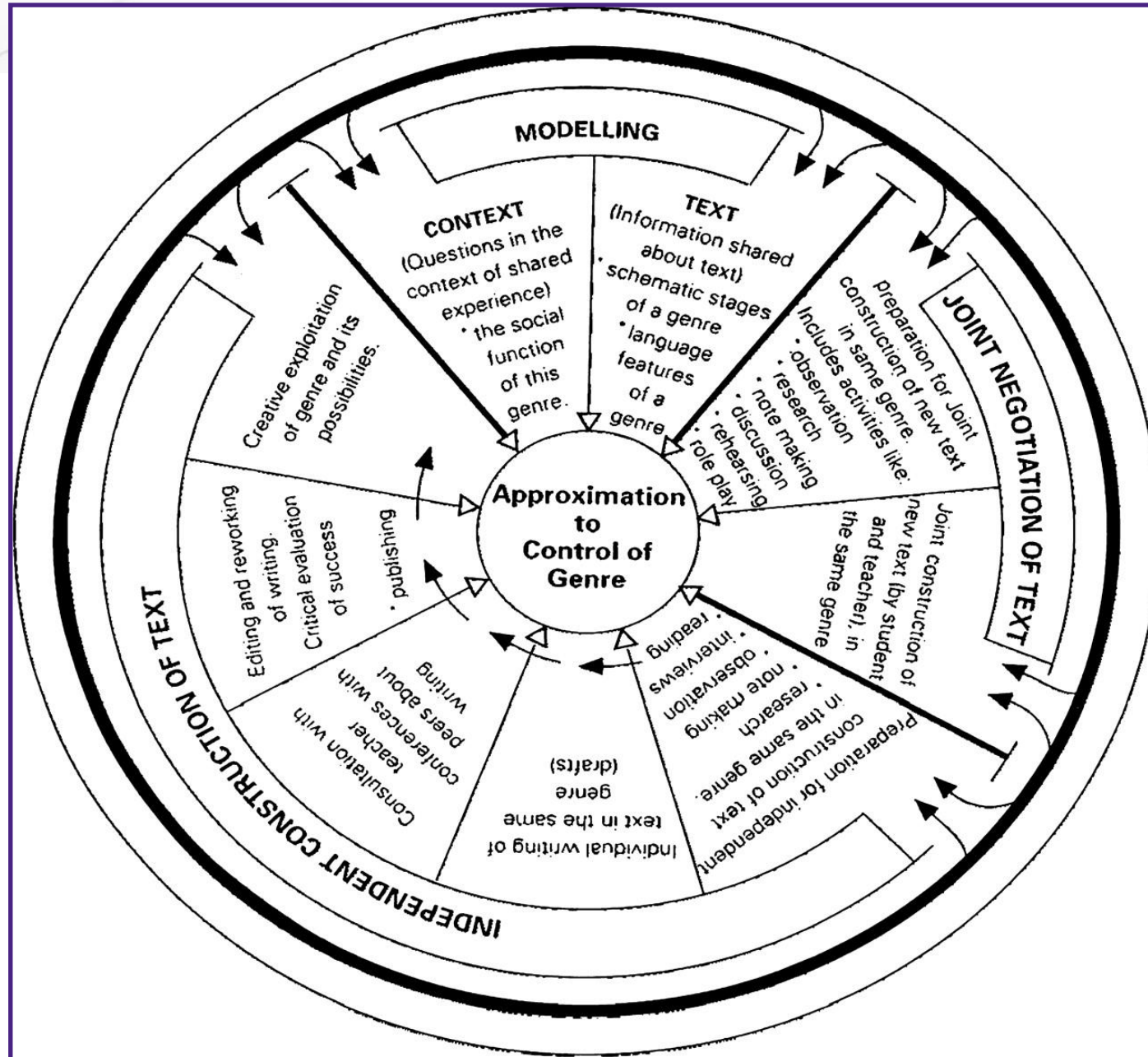
- establishing clearly the purposes and goals of the work to be done
- engaging with the students by finding out what their current ways of thinking and doing are, and where there might be potential gaps, differences and strengths

Developing genres and registers

Setting the context

Assessment

Developing control of the focus genre and its register

Independent construction

Modelling and deconstruction

Joint construction

- supporting our students to produce their own texts and, because of the shared understandings and metalanguage we have built up through the previous stages, we can provide explicit feedback on how to improve their text

- identifying the required genre and register expected by the task
- examining model texts, and asking questions to identify how and why they are structured the way they are
- making explicit, or visible, the predictable language patterns of the focus text
- developing a shared metalanguage

- working with our students to jointly produce a text by drawing on shared understandings about the topic and the chosen genre
- making explicit the processes involved in producing a text by continually scaffolding the students through ongoing micro-interactions

This stage creates an opportunity for students to participate in successful text construction—to see how to draw together what they have learnt, and to be a part of making decisions about the structure and appropriate language choices. In this way, we are scaffolding students into constructing texts beyond the level they could produce independently.

Approaching Written Genres – discussion

Task:

• **Read through and discuss the 'Australian Curriculum Genre Maps' document**

• **Consider how a formalised approach to teaching and learning around writing could operate at a departmental and whole-school level**

• **What do you already do towards this end?**

• **What are the challenges involved?**