

USING GENRE ANALYSIS TO DESIGN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TASKS

A Toolkit for HE staff involved in assessing students

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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

The primary aim of this Toolkit is to support all in higher education (HE) who are responsible for assessing students to design formative assessment tasks.

Formative assessment is key to supporting student learning and success in HE. However, there is little evidence-based, practical guidance on effective approaches to formative assessment and formative assessment design. To respond to this need, we have designed a series of professional development activities which draw on the concepts of genre knowledge (Tardy, 2009), genre analysis and genre pedagogy (Swales 1990) to raise HE teachers' genre awareness and support them in designing formative assessment tasks.



KEY IDEAS UNDERPINNING THE TOOLKIT

There is widespread agreement that formative assessment and feedback are important features of HE course design and delivery (Baughan, 2020; Carless & Winstone, 2019; Morris et al., 2021), given their potential to guide and enhance students' learning and achievement (Bennett, 2011). However, evidence-based guidance on effective approaches to FA in HE is lacking (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Box et al., 2015; Evans, 2013). This lack of practical advice is one reason why FA approaches are not regularly adopted in classroom practice (Boud et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2014). Against a backdrop of student dissatisfaction with assessment and feedback (Deeley & Bovill, 2017), there is a clear need to provide HE teachers with support in designing effective formative assessment.



There are different definitions of formative assessment in the HE literature but in our view it is a process of gathering evidence about what students have learned or can do to further guide and enhance students' learning and achievement (Bennett, 2011). We recognise similarities between formative assessment and scaffolding (Kruiper et al, 2022). Scaffolding involves a teacher providing temporary support to help a student complete a task or acquire a skill to reach their potential performance level (Bruner, 1978). This requires the teacher to be aware of the student's current skill or understanding and to design learning activities which bridge a gap between current and desired knowledge. These requirements can be informed by formative assessment.

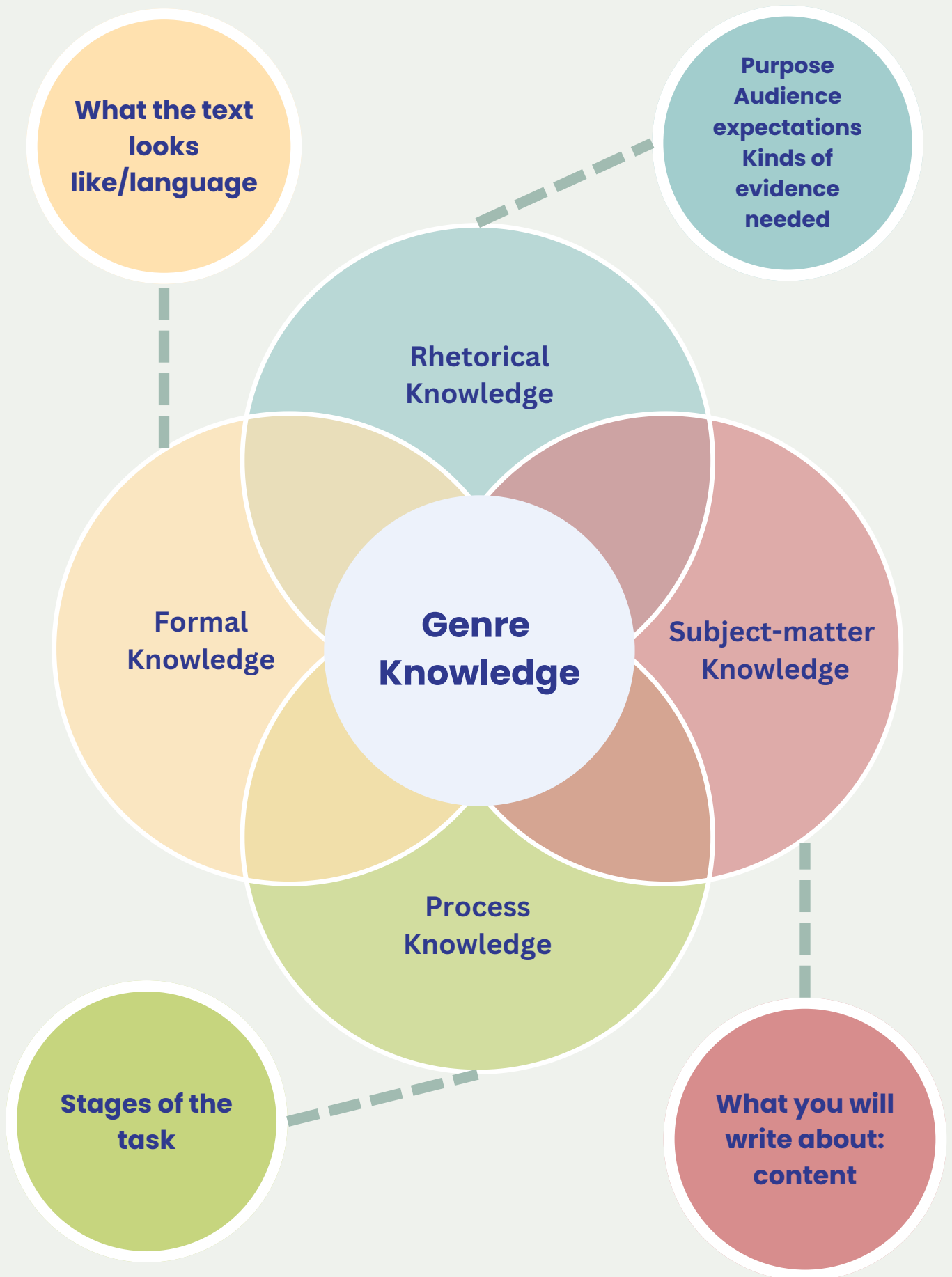
This toolkit consists of professional development activities designed to support HE teachers in designing formative assessment tasks.

We draw on the concepts of genre analysis and genre pedagogy (Swales 1990) to underpin the theoretical framing of our activities. This toolkit builds on work by McGrath and colleagues (2019) who used Tardy's (2009) framework with HE lecturers to develop lecturers' understanding of academic and disciplinary literacy through genre knowledge. While McGrath et. al (2019) focused on academic literacy understanding, our focus is on formative assessment design, using Tardy's (2009) framework to help lecturers understand the skills and knowledge students need to complete a specific assignment, and to identify aspects of the assignment which students need to be scaffolded.

During a workshop, participants will analyse a summative assessment they have brought to the workshop (from a module they teach on) to identify the four facets of genre knowledge their students need to accomplish the task (Tardy, 2009): subject matter knowledge; process knowledge (the stages the author needs to go through to complete the genre, e.g. composition/research processes); rhetorical knowledge (awareness of audience expectations, authorial purpose and positionality, the relationship between the author and audience) and formal knowledge (structure and linguistic form e.g. vocabulary choice, grammar) – see Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Genre knowledge (adapted from Tardy, 2009)



THE TOOLKIT

The Toolkit consists of slides, worksheets and accompanying instructions and notes for a workshop in which participants develop an awareness of the skills and knowledge students need to complete a specific summative assessment by carrying out a guided analysis of the assessment.

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

Workshop 1:

1) Follow the slides and accompanying instructions to introduce participants to genre analysis, using the example of the genre of a recipe to illustrate the four facets of genre knowledge (20 mins)

2) Provide participants with the link to this Guardian film review:
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/oct/01/my-zoe-review-julie-delpy>

3) In pairs, participants discuss and make notes on each of the 4 facets of genre knowledge the writer needed to produce this review (see worksheet 1). While pairs do this task, display Tardy's genre knowledge diagram (15 mins)

4) Plenary feedback: As a whole group, elicit the knowledge needed for each of the four aspects (see Film Review Genre Analysis information sheet) (10 mins)

5) Participants analyse their summative assessment individually, going through the same process of identifying the knowledge needed for each of the four aspects of genre knowledge (15 mins)

6) Pairs discuss their analysis, showing their partner the summative assessment and explaining the genre knowledge (i.e. Tardy's four aspects) students need to do this assessment. (10 mins)

7) Plenary feedback. Ask for volunteers to talk through their summative assessment and analysis. Ask participants if they have any questions or difficulties.

8) Ask pairs to discuss the following questions:

a. To what extent are the different aspects of genre knowledge taught/developed on the module?

b. What knowledge is assumed to be in place?

c. Are there any gaps in your module teaching/content?

d. What needs to be scaffolded?

e. What type of formative task could develop/assess/give useful feedback on this?

9) Pairs discuss the last two questions i.e. they talk over which aspect(s) of genre knowledge to focus on for their formative task and what kind of formative assessment task would enable a teacher to identify students' knowledge in this area and would enable the teacher to give students useful feedback on this area.

Workshop 2:

In workshop 2, participants work on their formative task.

At one or two points during this workshop, ask participants to discuss their task in pairs for 5-10 minutes to enable peer feedback.

Make yourself available to participants for discussion/feedback during the workshop.

NB Instead of a workshop, you could run this second stage as 1:1 meetings with individual participants. Although this loses peer feedback, it might be easier to schedule individual meeting.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Helen Donaghue is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Practice in the LEAD (Learning Enhancement and Academic Development) Centre at Queen Margaret University where she is the course leader for the PG CAP and provides academic development support for staff. Her research is situated within HE at the nexus of education and language. She uses applied linguistics methodologies to investigate learning, teaching and assessment in HE and to deliver innovative practices that enhance student learning. Her published work focuses on teacher talk (specifically post observation feedback), teacher and researcher identity development, academic literacy development, assessment and feedback, and doctoral pedagogies

Marion Heron has been working as an educational developer since 2017. She teaches on the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching and also mentors colleagues applying for Fellowship of Advance HE. She has a research interest in the intersection between language and higher education, including exploring how language awareness can provide a more inclusive learning environment for students.

FEEDBACK

We would very much appreciate your feedback on this toolkit, in particular finding out if this toolkit has been useful and any suggestions for improvement.

Please tell us your thoughts via this anonymous survey:
<https://forms.office.com/e/AQZmBux1zM>

or by emailing Helen Donaghue (hdonaghue@gmu.ac.uk) or
Marion Heron (m.heron@surrey.ac.uk)

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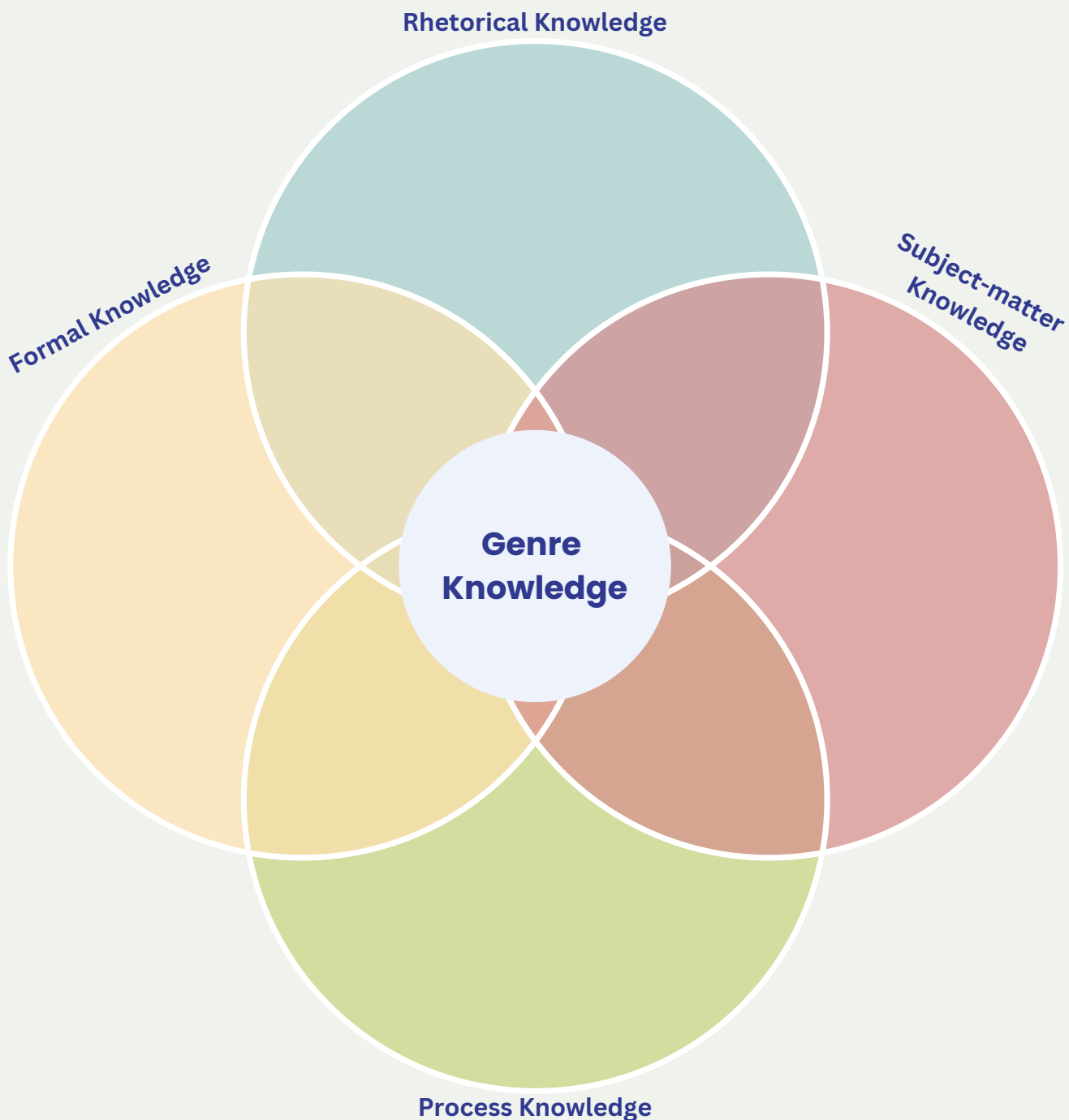
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Appendix A

Worksheet: Film review and summative assessment analysis

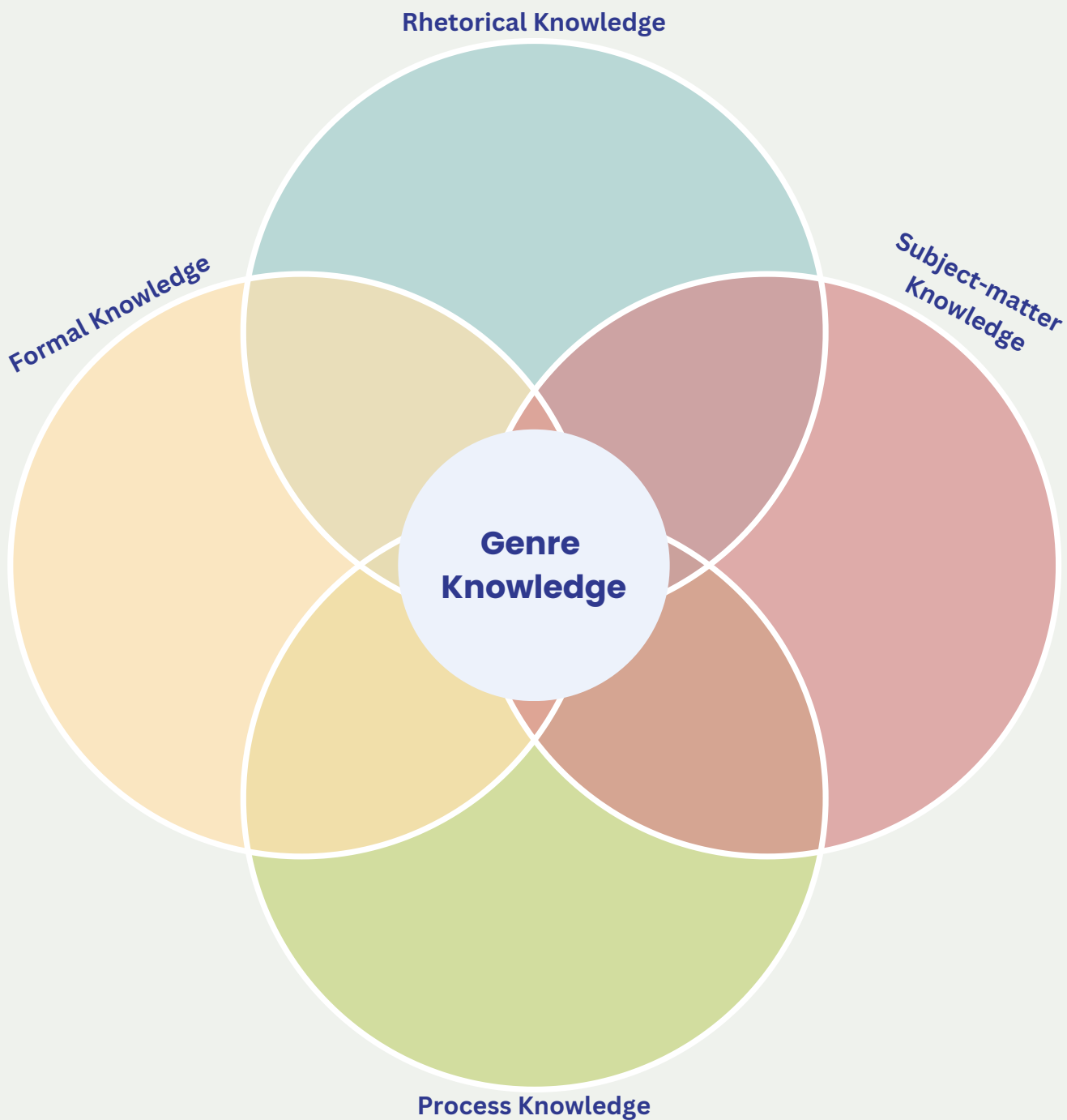
Read this film review:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/oct/01/my-zoe-review-julie-delpy>. Identify the knowledge/skills the writer needed for each aspect of genre knowledge



Summative Assessment Analysis

For the assessment you brought to the session, identify the knowledge/skills the student needs for each aspect of genre knowledge



Appendix B

Film review: Suggested answers

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/oct/01/my-zoe-review-julie-delpy>

Subject matter knowledge

Films
Film genres
Journalism
Actors and directors

Formal knowledge

Length: very short with short paragraphs
Topics of paragraphs (common to reviews)
·Introduction/opinion
·Setting and characters
·Story/plot
·Summary/evaluation

Lots of adjectives and adverb/adjectives combinations e.g. clumsily preposterous; jarringly misjudged – very complex phrases with nouns heavily modified (almost academic like)

Ability to play with words and invent words e.g. Huxley-esque; europuddingy

Ability to convey tone (clever, sarcastic, critical)

Layout – but this might not be the writer: picture, heading, subheading, star rating, by line, picture of writer

Speaks directly to the reader at one point 'look away now'

Rhetorical knowledge

Purpose: to review/critique/evaluate but also to entertain

In this genre, the writer can be highly critical (not the case in other genres)

The Guardian reader and their expectations: middle class, liberal, educated – they might like getting the references and might appreciate the witty sarcastic tone

Assumed knowledge – the actor, the genre, Huxley etc

Audience might interact in comments below the review – with the writer and each other

Process knowledge

Watch the film

Take notes

Draft and redraft maybe in response to sub editor feedback towards the end

Awareness of time and deadlines

The process will continue after the writer submits – the editor might make changes and someone else will work on layout

Appendix C

Workshop 1 slide deck

Follow this link to access the slide deck for workshop 1:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGPWcjhUQ8/sh4Vp2nILRFRK0caM_6H1w/view?utm_content=DAGPWcjhUQ8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor

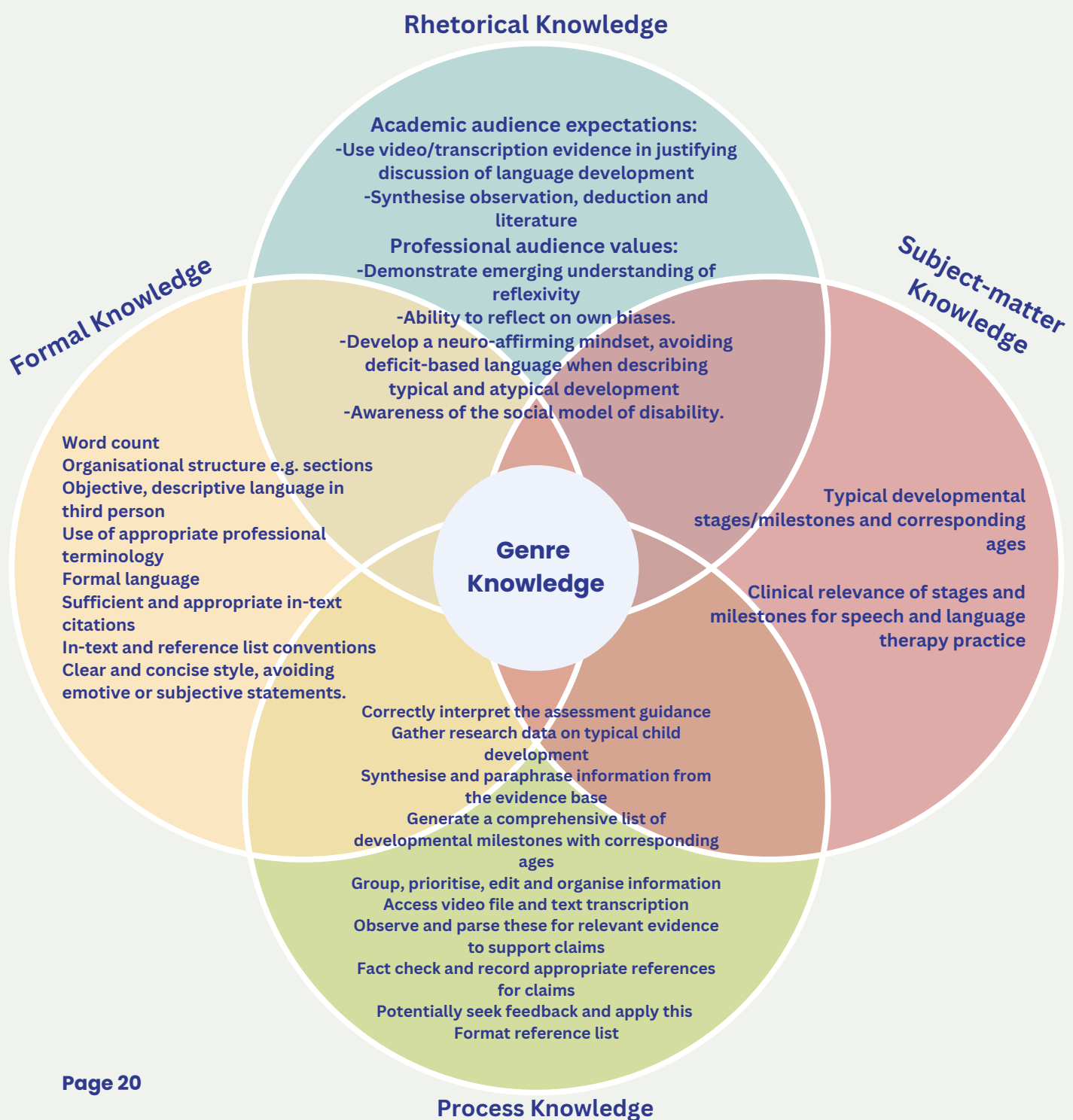
Appendix D

Example: Genre Analysis and formative task

Discipline: Speech and Language Therapy

Summative assessment: Written report on a child's language development

Students analyse a video and transcription of a typically developing preschooler interacting with her caregiver. Students then describe the different areas of typical physical, cognitive and psychological development in early childhood and relate these to their observations from the video material, followed by an analysis and discussion of this child's language development, supported with literature evidence.



Formative Task

Focus on the rhetorical knowledge aspect of using video/transcription evidence in justifying discussion of language development

1. Students match transcript extracts of a child's speech to language development descriptions from literature
2. Pairs compare their answers and decide whether the child's language development is typical or atypical compared to developmental norms, using the literature evidence they matched
3. Group discussion with feedback and guidance from the session teacher.